

Annotations

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Tate, Music, Images, and Dissociation

Tate's work began in the 1960's, and his poetry retains some of the characteristics of the neo-surrealist poetry of that era and of the overall feel of that era as well. His poetry is highly imagistic and musical, rarely narrative, and, at least on first reading, dissociative. Tate's music, to my ear, is more of the variety one might associate with experimental jazz or ultra-modern "classical" music. It is not a beautiful, melodic sort of music, but a heightening of the sonic dimension of the work.

Poem for the Sandman

The child begins to walk
toward her own private sleeping place.
In the pocket of her bathrobe
she clinches a hand grenade.
She is lumbering through the lumberyard
like a titmouse with goosebumps.
She waves goodbye to the orthodox dart games.
The noodle shops have returned
to their antholes, gulp, and a single spoor
has traveled all the way from Wichita
to tuck her in and tell her a story.
There, at a juvenile crossroads,
livestock are dragging their saliva
in a semicircle, it is like pulling taffy.
The child stands there for a moment,
sees herself as an ancient washerwoman
playing bingo on Saturday nights.
She, the child, is counting lemons
and squirming before a quiz.
She is standing in a vestibule,
an airless, gravelly vestibule,
when a hearse pulls up and offers her a lift.
Audibly aching, she swerves to miss
some typhoid victims (being shampooed by
an uncle on furlough?) (who pampers her
with infinitesimal sighs?) and bounces
into bed at last as into a cedar bough.
And the sandman stops playing pinball
to mend her cocoon, to rinse her shroud.
He has had his eye out for her all along.
Her tired little soul could not survive another war.

His images juxtaposed jar almost surrealistically, he has a sense of humor that sometimes is buried in the music of lines, the information content is frequently confusing when rational thought is applied to it, and his topics are all over the map. It is not, of course, that Tate cannot write a straightforward narrative poem ("The Lost Pilot" from the collection **The Lost Pilot** is an example of an early, direct, nearly narrative poem; "The Distant Orgasm" from the collection **Absences** is an example of a narrative poem), but he often chooses not to.

Sometimes the images are contradictory or nonsensical on the surface (*I'm a flea with a thousand microphones/for eyes* ("Sensitive Ears" in **Viper Jazz**), which reminds me of the sort of contradictory and nonsensical band names of the '60's, like *Iron Butterfly* or *Jefferson Airplane*. The images are not always ultimately nonsensical—for example, a *thousand microphones for eyes* makes us think of the difference between seeing and hearing, the actual structure of insect eyes which is a

set of mini-eyes, the intensity of each of the thousands of sense-organs, etc. The images link together in a dissociational (seeming) way just as the cult animated films of the '60's unfolded from one oddly related vision to another: *I knit the floating mouth/to the sheep called nobler; People behaving like molecular structures/with pins in them* from "Absences" in **Absences**.

Throughout is a strong sense of humor or at least a skepticism of overseriousness. One example is the poem "Lewis and Clark Overheard in Conversation" in **Hints to Pilgrims** which repeats 23 times the line *then we'll get us some wine and spare ribs*, and another, more serious example, is the prose poem "Goodtime Jesus" in **Riven Doggeries** which ends with Jesus stating (*I'll*) *Take a little ride on my donkey, I love that donkey. Hell, I love everybody*.

The poem "Poem for the Sandman," from **Constant Defender** (in **Selected Poems**, James Tate, Wesleyan University Press), reproduced above, demonstrates Tate's strengths well. A striking facet of the poem is its music, lines like these:

*She is lumbering through the lumberyard
like a titmouse with goosebumps.
She waves goodbye to the orthodox dart games.*

...

livestock are dragging their saliva

...
and squirring before a quiz.
She is standing in a vestibule,
an airless, gravelly vestibule,
when a hearse pulls up and offers her a lift.

The component of music alluded to earlier of a heightened sonic sense is demonstrated in the lines:

*The noodle shops have returned
to their antholes, gulp, and a single spoor
has traveled all the way from Wichita
to tuck her in and tell her a story.*

Rather than sounds that go together well, these are sounds that go together with difficulty. My claim is that this is a form of music. Think of it this way: There is a background level of music that ordinary speech carries. We recognize it because it is the *mode* of sounds that we hear—*mode* in the technical sense of the most common way speech sounds (as opposed to the average which can overly account for wide variation in sound). On either side of common speech is heightened speech, with one side being melodious and the other discordant. Some forms of real music fall on one side (like pop music and even blues) and other forms fall on the other (like Tony Williams and some twelve-tone music). Tate falls on the discordant side in these lines. The sounds in the words *noodle shops, returned, antholes, gulp, single spoor, traveled, all the way, Wichita, tuck her, tell her, and story* are outside of normal speech and inside, I claim, music. Think of the sounds of Ron Hansen's prose. It is very hard to say the words in many of his descriptive passages (especially in his recent work), but one could not say it isn't musical. If music in poetry is that which makes one feel the poem, then feeling it as strained and discordant is clearly music. Only in the flat, modal tone of ordinary speech is there anything that could be said to lack music.

Sometimes the music extends and echoes over longer passages so that the poem seems like the inside of a rain barrel:

*Audibly aching, she swerves to miss
some typhoid victims (being shampooed by
an uncle on furlough?) (who pampers her
with infinitesimal sighs?) and bounces
into bed at last as into a cedar bough.
And the sandman stops playing pinball
to mend her cocoon, to rinse her shroud.*

In fact, it sometimes feels like the sense of the poem follows the sounds (and sometimes it doesn't) in that the poem sometimes seems to be directed toward the jarring or fluid sounds more than toward a logical or even probabilistic sense.

The images in the poem tell the story—this is a more nearly narrative poem than many of Tate's poems. There is a girl ready to sleep but in danger—the hand grenade in her pocket. With Tate one is never sure how literally to take the images: At the end of the poem we return to the image of war, and mention of the *noodle shops in their antholes, gulp*, is an image of danger that hints at war (civilian and unimportant (ant-like) concerns gone underground). And the idea of an anthole makes sense though we've never heard of one before, only anthills. She walks slowly and heavily through a lumberyard (how else would one walk in a lumberyard except by lumbering?) and she is *like a titmouse with goosebumps*: except, a titmouse is a small bird which cannot lumber, and goosebumps are on geese—large birds. Everything is upside down or backwards and we feel the dissociational pull. *She waves goodbye to the orthodox dart games*: Things are different, dangerous, in a state that is contradictory, like a war at least within or within the age at hand—the time period or her age.

Wichita and *taffy pulling* are images from the opposite parts of the world: Wichita is nearly at the center of the continental US in the state known for being the most average and geographically central, and taffy pulling is a seashore activity. Wichita is a great sound and Wichita is a crossroads where cows (and steers) are brought to slaughter; the girl is at the crossroads and her fate might be that of the cattle. She imagines her possible end of life in a lifeless and too conventional bingo game.

She counts lemons preparing for the quiz: go on or not—she is at the vestibule of life or death and the hearse pulls up to offer a way out. She chooses life through temporary death. The sandman—the subject of the poem—is playing a game of skill mixed with chance, and we feel he has given her the choice and provided the comfort of respite in the face of the difficulties of, what?, growing up?, living in a dangerous world?, living literally with war? Doesn't matter, much because what matters is that it is difficulty itself.

What has seemed like choices made for sound, for dissociation, for oddness and the new, actually add up (perhaps only with sufficient mental effort), even the pure oddities like *she swerves to miss/some typhoid victims (being shampooed by/an uncle on furlough) (who pampers her/with infinitesimal sighs?)* contribute to the sense of the poem. *Swerves to miss* could indicate her choice to grow up (punnish way of looking at the words—*miss*=young lady), the uncle is tender on his days off, *who pampers her/with infinitesimal sighs?* indicates that maybe no one does, and an infinitesimal sigh is the smallest sigh that is still a sigh (an infinitesimal is an actual number, in certain mathematical systems, which is still larger than zero, but there is no positive real number that is smaller than it. One might argue that this is too obscure for Tate, but there is ample evidence in his work that he can be scientifically sophisticated).

When I read other poets and then return to Tate, the language and music seems supercharged and the other poets' work seems flat in contrast. Tate is a tremendous imagination, but sometimes one could feel tempted to listen just to the (anti-)music or lie back against a pillow and watch the images go by. Reading Tate is liberating to imagination and freedom.

Several of Tate's poems seem linked: For example, there are 3 or 4 poems which mention the possibility of a *world without Alps*. "Poem for the Sandman" seems linked to the next poem in the collection, "Five Years Old," reproduced below. This poem mentions a girl, the speaker's sister, whose cheek has been pierced by a dart the speaker threw. The linkage is that in the previous poem the girl *waves goodbye to the orthodox dart games*, which could mean that she has become the target in her brother's unorthodox dart game—a small link, indeed.

This is a quieter poem than the previous, and shows a world with danger and misplaced hope (burying ice chips and slivers in a stone casket for the next world is a hopeless venture).

Five Years Old

Stars fell all night.
The iceman had been very generous that day
with his chips and slivers.

And I buried my pouch of jewels
inside a stone casket under the porch,
their beauty saved for another world.

And then my sister came home
and I threw a dart through her cheek
and cried all night,

so much did I worship her.

How much the speaker worshipped his sister is a question for speculation because we don't know the circumstances of the dart throwing, and we don't know the time sequence (the stars fell all night before the sister came home) or ages (who is 5 years old?, how old is the sister who can come home after the stars fell all night?), but we can assume the speaker is a boy because of his childish (perhaps) hopes for the other world.

These two poems, despite being close in the collection, represent a fair bit of Tate's range. One could expect a good career with either style and approach, but Tate uses them both and others too. A poet to admire and steal

from.

Robert Winner: Clarity and Closure

Robert Winner writes mostly lyric poetry; it has stunning clarity and economy of means. Winner's toolbox includes music, image, stress, and a deep desire to explore himself and the world from the perspective of one human speaking to others. Winner is interested in the lives of people as demonstrated by his several mildly political poems (for example, "Thanksgiving Day, 1983" in **The Sanity of Earth and Grass**, Tillbury House), but more prominent is his interest in the search for the self, especially the poetic self which is demonstrated by the numerous poems about looking within, speaking, howling, and crowing. We'll look at one of those poems, "Learning to Mourn."

Bitter Song

The birds are fortunate,
They sing without evasions.
I concentrate like stone
all deaths in the world.

I will go wild in the forest,
a dog dumb with cruelty, the night
against my sides like leaves;
lapping water, the stream's
green stones unmoved
by my lips and tongue.

One of the first poems of his to strike my attention was the simple "Bitter Song," reproduced to the left. The poem demonstrates many of Winner's strengths:

- The unadorned language—not many adjectives (*green* is the only outright adjective, *dumb with cruelty* acts as one), no adverbs, short sentences
- a significant number of spondees (*like stone, all deaths, go wild, dog dumb, green stones*)
- a significant number of monosyllables (37 of the 48 words)
- a small number of linked images (the birds, stones, the forest, the dog)

The movement of the poem is simple but interesting. It opens with the contrast of the way birds sing *without evasion*, evoking openness and abandon, while, presumably, the speaker (the poet) concentrates *like stone*. The first 2 lines contain entire sentences, the effect being of deliberation and certainty—the poet's hand is sure. But the last 2 lines of the first stanza let loose the reins, because we are not sure how to read the sentence: is he concentrating (as in distilling) all deaths in the world into some statement, or is he concentrating on all deaths in the world? The first reading is the syntactic one, but the second is hinted at by the pause at the end of line 3. The effect, though, is not of confusion, but of ambiguity that we hope the second stanza will illuminate.

The second stanza veers off in an unexpected direction: the poet goes wild in the forest as a *dog dumb with cruelty*. Where we had a poet concentrating like something dead on deaths, we immediately jump to an exuberance tinged with danger and even horror. The setting is the night, and in fact, the night is linked with cruelty by being on the same line (read the line alone: *a dog dumb with cruelty, the night*). The night presses into the poet/dog, and the scene shifts to the dog drinking water from a stream—we've seen the dog running wild, caring little for the rest of the world, hounded by night, and now tired and drinking. The literal image at the end is of the dog drinking and the green stones not caring (literally, being *unmoved*). But the poem is not so simple: the green stones at the end are more living than the one earlier, but the stones are linked. The earlier stone could be the result of the concentration, the distillation of all deaths into something (like) the stone; such stones are now unmoved, but by what? Again, the literal image is of the dog lapping, but lips and tongue are the mechanisms of speech, and the poem is about song and starts with birds singing, so the lips and tongue of the wild dog cruel and running scared in the night are making speech or poetry, which does not move the dead—a bitter song indeed. But the stones are green (covered with moss) and hence at least covered with life—life from death, a cycle Winner returns to over and over.

The move that makes the poem work well is the closing, which immediately links all the loose ends together: lips and tongue link together the dog, the act of living (drinking water), the various stones,

Cockcrow

If we could gather up our meaning,
stand in the sun's mindless light,
crack ourselves open, run the risks
and repeat the terrifying howl of the obvious

to find what goes without saying,
cries that give the sun back
to the world of the sun,
all soft phantoms of obscurity gone,

the heart would waken in dangerous brilliance,
bells of courage tuned to major,
stone of equal determination
taking the sun to its vastest height.

the dead, the wildness, and the bitterness of the song. The end is a closure that clicks a bit, but it clicks off-center with the bitterness of the green stones remaining unmoved. The poem doesn't fall into a pre-ordained place where we will forget it, but it clicks enough to start the reader's meditation going.

But the construction of the poem is as distilled and concentrated as the stone mentioned early. With spare economy Winner has conveyed a small gem. Sure, the ambition of the poem is small, but its means certainly fill out a true poem's worth of space.



Among the topics Winner returns to over and over is poetry itself and the search for the means to

A Fire That Suddenly Wakens

I lay on concrete
in the burned out barn.
I felt the ruins
of sea-life that had died
and become limestone.
I felt the cold
marrow-silent depth of the sea,
deeper than the reach of words.
How it denied me.
How it threw the sun back into the sky.
How it looked down and down only.
How it centered on darkness:
the end of its traveling
back into stone.

It refuted happiness: the climb
through sunlit fields; the piano sonatas
taking strength from my fingers;
the smoothness of hair; the hypnotism
of water. The floor was all stone entrails
writhing towards a shape that still eluded it.
I felt the sand grains through my shirt,
ground up, slung, sifted into submission.
I lay there, a body that had lost everything
but the weight of its bones.

The sky looked in, a laughter that
began on the first serious day,
the birthday of anything that had to die.

I knew I would rise from the ground
at last, hardened by its refusal to let me enter.
Like a tree my fate still leaped in the air.
Like a kangaroo, like gravity
demanding another body, like an oar that—
pulled by water—pulls against it,
like a fire that suddenly wakens
after midnight, when the fire is out,
a lion with a red mouth leaping through
the crumbled body of a log.
the hollow fingertip of night,
the burned out center, bone cold.

speak. This is illustrated in "Cockcrow," reproduced above left. There are several connections between "Bitter Song" and "Cockcrow": concern with poetry, the danger of the enterprise, the hint of wildness, poetry as song, and stones.

This poem, along with "Bitter Song," is clear throughout and, like "Bitter Song," presents the act of poetry through an animal: the rooster. This poem has few meaningful spondees (*sun back* is really the only spondee and it's not noticeable).

The closing is also a little less stunning than in "Bitter Song." Here the closing gains its interest in the image of a vast height, which is an all-encompassing dimensionality—the word *vastest*, though, is quite musical.

The other interest in the poem is the idea that the real purpose of poetry is to *howl of the obvious*, say *what goes without saying*, and remove the *soft phantoms of obscurity*. Some might think that poetry is seeking the vastest height, but to Winner it really is the search for what is closest and least reported because it seems so little or so unworthy.



A more ambitious and perhaps less successful poem is "A Fire That Suddenly Wakens," which is reproduced to the left. The strongest part of the poem is the last stanza, which is strong enough to rescue the flaw in the earlier part of the poem. The flaw is the linkage between the sea and the material used to make concrete and the strained way Winner tries to make this link clear to the reader. The first try is the first two lines; if

the reader doesn't already know there is some connection between the concrete and the sea, these

lines are only evocative and perhaps puzzling. The next try is the lines *How it centered on darkness:/the end of its traveling/back into stone*. The third try is the lines . . . *The floor was all stone entrails/writhing towards a shape that still eluded it./I felt the sand grains through my shirt,/ground up, slung, sifted into submission*. The flaw is precisely that Winner is trying to teach us how certain types of concrete is made or to at least make sure we understand that there is a connection that he is relying on. But, if you don't already know the connection, the attempt merely confuses by making the reader wonder where, really, the speaker is lying—perhaps on the beach. The effort distracts from the building of images.

The images of the first three stanzas are trying to do the work of putting together the ideas of the fluid nature of the life of the sea, the shapes toward which a person can move, inward searching (sea looking downward), the connection between the sea and the metaphor of the shellfish becoming concrete and people (bones), the cyclical movement through time, and the beginning of enlightenment.

The first stanza also establishes the tableau of the refrain with its repeated line beginnings, *How it*. . . . The first stanza is also the leanest with the most masculine endings though the last stanza ends strongly with *log, night, and cold*.

The last stanza introduces the image of the fire as it balances the downward, gravity-heavy urge of the first three stanzas. The balance is interesting because there is so much emphasis on inward vision and heavy depth in the first two stanzas, then the turn stanza which begins *The sky looked in*, followed by the upward, lighter urge of the final stanza; the first two stanzas and the turn take up so much space that there isn't a balance, and even the last stanza begins to turn back at the end (*the burned out center, bone cold*).

The strength of the poem is in the strength of the last stanza. Through happenstance, the first page of the poem ends at the end of stanza two, which ends with a pair of lines that could be the end of the poem (*I lay there, a body that had lost everything/but the weight of its bones*). This also signals the end of the attempts to link up sea-life and the concrete floor, and in that sense it feels as if the struggle with that metaphor (or metaphorical move) were over. Then what a surprise that the poem continues on the next page to take another turn to contrast rising with falling.

The last stanza flows beautifully with bounds of iambic and anapestic rhythms building to the spondee *red mouth* which is the height of the fire image promised in the title. The refrain motif is taken up again with the similes *like a*. About half the stanza is dedicated to presenting the fire image and entwining it with the phoenix-like image of the fire rising out of the bone cold *hollow fingertip of night* (like the green stones in "Bitter Song"). In the midst of a rising and strong stanza, this extra-rising and extra-strong ending is all the more impressive and appealing. The last three lines are its own refrain of *the*. . . .

At this point, one could ask whether the other imagery of the sea and the floor and weight really pulled *its* own weight in the poem and whether, in workshop-speak, the poem really begins with the last stanza or perhaps the one before.



Winner's work, overall, is stunning in its simplicity of means, its hard, unadorned language, its clicking but questioning closures (written **Click?**), and its close swoops at sentimentality. Perhaps part of it is knowing his story, but it is hard not to deeply admire his work.

Jean Valentine: The Elusive Word and Image

The poetry of Jean Valentine is delicate, imagey, and a tad elusive—delicate in the sense of using simple language, simple diction, and common situations, in short, not esoteric. She seems to use events that happened to her or to people she knows, so that one effect of her poetry is of overhearing a monologue of someone's life. Sometimes she refers to historical figures—writers mostly—which adds some anchor points.

Juliana

Our lives went differently,
we lost touch . . .

The table is solid,
its long cloth shines.
Husband and wife lived in one house, forever,
and this was nothing wonderful, a simple fact.
Grown children gather, they bring
white tulips, forsythia.

All the guests make toasts. Sex taps at our sleeping ears
like water in another room. . .

The couples lean back, rich canvases. My hunger plays
in front of them, empty,—dozes off, day-dreaming
of true desire.
I try waking, try saying.

Well, *we're all human*,
—One outlying face smiles
and leans forward, gray and mild . . .

Later Juliana
I meet you, a minute, on the stairs,
and you stop, and hold my arms,
and tears run down your face . . .

Just waking up
she didn't remember what time of year it was,
and couldn't remember if she had a friend
in the world, Oh thank God, summer, and she
remembered last night
her husband's friend, the professor,
that he said, Waiting is what we do, in this life, we wait.

Her lines frequently profit from being read as wholes: occasionally she doesn't punctuate much (for example, "Still Life, for Matisse," in **The River at Wolf**). Death—in her family in particular—seems to form a strong topic for her. Frequently she will address a topic in a slightly forbidden way, for example, "Juliana" (from **Home. Sweet. Blue.**, Alice James Books, Cambridge, MA, 1995), reproduced at the left, which seems to be about a particular woman at a get together, perhaps a family party, with a slight sexual overtone.

Because the new poems in this collection seem to be largely about death, it is hard to read this poem among those others without some thought that Juliana is a widow. Nevertheless, Juliana is a woman whom the speaker has known before, probably as children or young women (*Our lives went differently, / we lost touch. . .*). The party is at a house where the couple has lived for a while with older children (probability points toward it being Juliana's home). There are guests, including a professor friend of, most likely, Juliana's husband.

The party is conventional in some senses: *solid*, the table's *long cloth shines*, the host couple have lived (married) together in *one house forever* (which *was nothing wonderful*, merely expected), *grown children*

bring in flowers, etc. In this context, the speaker (who is almost certainly Valentine) dreams of desire (*Sex taps at our sleeping ears / like water in another room; My hunger plays / in front of them, empty,—dozes off, day-dreaming / of true desire*). While this dream occurs, the party goes on with *one outlying face smiles / and leans forward, gray and mild*.

The two women meet on the stairs in a moment that echoes the dreams of desire. The last stanza is a scene in which Juliana (most likely) wakes up, and the speaker tells of Juliana's recollection of what the professor said, that life is waiting.

This scene is odd because the placement of the speaker seems to be where she can see and interact with Juliana when she awakens, which must be in bed. Coupled with the sexual/sensuous/desire-ridden overtones, this leads the reader to have some doubt about what is really going on. The change in prepositions confuses things somewhat, because at first Juliana is part of a *we*, and then she is a *you* (both consistent with a monologue about Juliana which moves to a direct address as the poet paints the picture of the meeting on the stairs), and finally Juliana is a *she* (or so the probabilities would say).

The overall drift of the poem is of two friends who are separated by a long marriage of one of them where there is a desire to rejoin after waiting *forever* for the intervening dull lives to get out of the way. That there is a desire to rejoin indicated by the sexual overtones, which grabs our attention as readers but which are most likely a form of rhetorical exaggeration. The poem, then, evolves as an arc from a place of closeness through distance to an anticipated closeness. Relationships and reunions seem to form an important theme for Valentine.

Valentine has a quiet music that she puts on display now and again. For example, the line *All the guests make toasts. Sex taps at our sleeping ears*. Other examples in this poem are *long cloth shines, rich canvases, dozes off, day-dreaming, and try waking, try saying*.

More elusive is the way Valentine draws together the parts of the poem. For example, the first stanza sets the theme of a lost relationship; the second stanza expounds on the scene including how Juliana has disappeared; the third stanza is the one that knocks us out of our seats (a bit) with its odd clustering,

*All the guests make toasts. Sex taps at our sleeping ears
like water in another room. . .*

By putting the completely pedestrian sentence about the party (of congratulations or celebration) on the same line with the expression of sexual awareness and possibly desire, Valentine not only wakes us up but makes us think of these two types of activities—public versus private, altruistic versus selfish—at once and reinforces that one is perhaps preventing a reunion of a deeper sort between the women. The image itself of sex driving one mad the way a dripping faucet in another room would while you try to sleep is wonderful—it makes the reader continue to try to read into it long after its primary impact is realized.

The next stanza tries the same move with

*The couples lean back, rich canvases. My hunger plays
in from of them, empty,—dozes off, day-dreaming*

The last stanza is a marvel of the sort of elusiveness I find in Valentine. The syntax of the sentence is jumbled in the middle: *Just waking up she didn't remember what time of year it was, and couldn't remember if she had a friend, Oh thank God, summer, and she remembered last night her husband's friend, the professor, that he said, Waiting is what we do, in this life, we wait.* The underlined part bears an uncertain relation to the rest of the sentence: It is not set off dramatically and it is therefore not clear whether it's an exclamation, an explanation, or a statement of address. On deep reflection it seems to be a way to efficiently show that the speaker is worried that Juliana had forgotten the speaker (*couldn't remember if she had a friend*) and then realizes that she hadn't, because Juliana had also forgotten what season it was and now, *thank God*, remembers it is summer. We get not only the sense of the movement in the speaker's mind, but we get the sense of desperation (removed) that is of similar emotional altitude as the reference to sexual desire earlier. The sequence of rememberings also leads into the closing, which ends the meditation.

It seems that a technique Valentine uses is to drop in hints in the form of words, phrases, and images that have an elusive, mysterious undertone that draws the reader in unexpected directions. Another technique is a sort of linkage that cuts across or undercuts each end of the link. I've already mentioned that this poem is in the midst of poems about death, and it could be that the setting is really a wake (which would explain the two women apparently in bed—at least this would explain why the bed is available). However, a more strongly linked poem is "Everything Starts with a Letter," which is about Juliana. It is reproduced at the top of the next page.

This poem talks about the earlier (presumably) relationship between the poet and Juliana, in which Juliana is like an evil twin, and it explains how two women can begin to drift apart (while men will

vent). These poems taken together form a picture that is, on the surface, inconsistent, but when viewed against the backdrop of real life, form an accurate picture of the messy world. This poem is more narrative and less elusive than a lot of Valentine's.

Everything Starts with a Letter

Everything starts with a letter,
even in dreams and in the movies. . . Take
J. Juliana, on a summer afternoon,
in a white silk blouse, and a pale blue-flowered skirt,
—her shoes? blue? but high and narrow heels,
because she asks Sam to carry the plate of triscuits
into the garden, because she can't manage
the brick path in her heels.
"Oh could you? I can't manage the path in these heels."

J is the letter my name begins with,
O is the letter for the moon,
and my rage shines in my throat like the moon!
Her phoniness, O my double, your and
my phoniness. . .
Now what shall we do?
For this is how women begin to shoot,
we begin with our own feet, men empty their hearts, oh
the false self will do much worse than that,
to get away. . .

♫ ♫ ♫

The two poems we've looked at have been at the plain end of the music spectrum of Valentine's work. The last poem we'll look at is short and is from the collection, **Ordinary Things**—it is reproduced at the bottom left of this page.

The first thing to notice is that each line has at most two multisyllabic words (*breaking, hollows, curved, shelter, fingers/around, bellings/hollow, <none>, <none>*). The second is that the poem is a funnel of colons, where each further post-colon description further refines the concept of forces significant to people. Some lines seem full of a

particular sound, for example, the *o* sounds in *our hold on our own hollows, the quick*. The round sound works in conjunction with the image of holding onto our hollows (our bodies), which breaks with *the quick*. There is internal rhyme and near rhyme, and repetition: *hollow(s), stone/bone/own, quick, hold/horn/bone/calm, line/live, line/smile, bellings/hollow*, etc.

There is at least one other noticeable repetition, which are the lines with the words *hollow* and *quick* on them.

Forces (2): Song

Weeds breaking up through stone:
our hold on our own hollows, the quick,
curved line of a smile: bare, our own
ribs shelter us: a boy's cold, white
fingers around a match:
heart bellings: hollow, quick,
through the live horn, the bone, to this
day, calm.

Everything about this poem is a song, and it would be easy to just let it play in our ears, but there is sense to it too. Notice that the only non-human image is the weeds pushing up through stone—and the weeds are breaking up through stone, not through a crack, which implies the force involved: slow, methodical, but powerful. The song is of the heart finally breaking

out from the hollows through the bone and ribs of the chest, yet calm, as are the weeds. Nice and simple though it risks appearing trivial. The music saves it from that, I'd say.

Gregory Orr: Sound and Image

Gregory Orr's poetry is built on imagery, clear language, and music that is sometimes particularly dramatic. A couple of themes or topic lace his work: the accidental killing of his brother Peter when Gregory was 12, the final days and death of his mother in Haiti, his family, and civil rights activities in the South in the mid and late 1960's. Many of Orr's poems have a sort of serenity to them in which there may be odd images, but their stillness is what fuels the meditation behind them. In this annotation we'll look at a number of Orr's poems in the form of a series of mini-annotations. These poems are taken from **New and Selected Poems** (Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

This poem, from **Burning the Empty Nests**, is typical of the quiet feel to many of Orr's poems, and it is also typical of the earlier work in having one or two odd images. The scenes and what happens in this poem (it is not quite narrative, being somewhere between a lyric and meditation, but it has some narrative qualities) are clear at all times, though the physical reality of those events might be in question. The first strange image is the **egg of air**. **Egg** brings to mind something that might hatch into life, and **air** brings to mind emptiness (though something necessary for animal life); also the **egg of**

air is probably invisible (an egg made of air not merely containing air). Sometimes an image will occur to a writer and its exact meaning or significance or the right way to conceive of it needs to be worked out, and such working out takes place over a number of poems. The egg of air image is further worked out in the poem entitled "Poem" in the same collection which contains the lines, **This life is like no other./The bread rising in the ditches./The bellies of women swelling/with air**. The first stanza of "Lines Written" speaks of a train in which the speaker will soon be alone (when the girl gets off). With the title we have a sense of quiet depression justified or exemplified by the imminent loneliness. But the speaker is not yet alone: There is the girl

who has not yet gotten off and the moon, its rivers, and the thorns. The scene seems to be of the speaker on a train passing through a reservation in Oklahoma. He has never lived there, and the odd image is introduced by **Let me put it this way** as an elaboration on the fact he has never lived

on the reservation. Thus the **egg of air** in the **web of <his> hands** is an image for the way he feels about the fact that he is passing through a homeland and he is not part of it. The egg could represent the hope of life in a domestic situation, and he is alone with this girl who will soon get off someplace he is not allowed. His name

Lines Written in Dejection, Oklahoma

I have never lived on the reservation.
Let me put it this way: in the web of my hands
I hold an egg of air.
When the girl gets off the train
I will be alone. Only myself and
the moon with its rivers and thorns.

For me there is no getting off.
The river writes my name on its side.
The train with my name on it races
over the dark fields. And the Indian
silhouetted against the ridge
lifts his pony, flings it at the moon.

is written on the river and the train, both things that take things away along a predetermined path. So the dejection of the title and loneliness of being solitary where there is other life are reinforced. The second odd image is the Indian (sic) who **lifts his pony, flings it at the moon**. This, of course, cannot happen, and the image is one of futility and of trying to rid oneself of the means to travel while under the influence of the moon and its meanings. The poem is overall eerie and its images work directly and subtly. The oddness of the images insures that the reader pays attention to them, and if the "meaning" of the poem escapes the reader, the images carry it. As with the images of Wright and Trakl, stillness and quiet are keys, even in far-out images.

“A Life” is in the collection **Gathering the Bones Together**. It continues with the style of quiet, somber presentation, simple language, and images to carry the poem. Here the images are of the addressed who seems to spend all of his or her time in a tree, and like nocturnal animals, the addressed sleeps during the day and is awake at night. If we follow this image a bit we could conclude that because night is when nocturnal animals do what they need to live, that is when the you in this poem does what is needed to live—in this case it would be *listening/to the howl and moan of the animals/in the darkness below*. The addressed is said to be, in the first stanza, a cloud. One might expect that the line after would be something like *Birds fly through you*, but the pronoun is *it*. This makes the reality of the cloud primary and the metaphor is turned around: *you* becomes the thing to which the cloud is compared and not the other way around. The next image is the waterhole become mirror. Just as the life of the addressed is being examined, so are the lives of the animals that would come to drink. And the reason for the transformation from waterhole to mirror is

A Life

At dawn you curl up in the top branches and sleep.
All day you are a cloud.
Birds fly through it.

At dusk animals gather at the waterhole as if to drink, but it has become a mirror, because you are dreaming:

At your feet
glass has replaced water, the way
words have replaced feeling.

All night you sit in the tree, listening to the howl and moan of the animals in the darkness below.

that the addressed is dreaming. It doesn't pay, often, to delve deeply into what an image can mean (and perhaps this is the job only of a certain sort of scholar), and a good depth for this image is that the fact that the animals can examine themselves is part of the deep structure of the human mind/psychology, a place where images and metaphors are made. At this point the leap is made words replacing feeling. This could be saying that words (in a flaw of civilization) replace feelings and hence hide them, or it could be saying that *glass has replaced water* just as the words of poetry replace feelings by way of presenting those feelings or presenting the mechanism for self-examination (examination of the poet by the poet). That is, when words replace feelings, the animals can examine themselves. And what is the result of the examination?: howling and moaning in the darkness—suffering, antagonism, self-pity, passion, all sorts of real life. The governing metaphor is dichotomy: what is above and below, what is in the air and on the ground, do you look outward or inward, what happens during the day and at night, are you presenting/writing poetry or simply feeling?

One of the stronger talents of Orr is his poetic music. This poem is typical of Orr at his best. I've underlined all the sounds that have echoes somewhere else in the poem, but notice that the densest, most interrelated music occurs in the last 9 lines or so. Fourteen of the lines end with a single syllable word, and the last 5 lines do. The sounds of the words are harshest when they speak of the butchers and what they do, and of the grown cattle. Not only does the onomatopoeia aid the reader to understand the mean-

Friday Lunch Break

New York; Virginia

At noon, still wearing their white plastic helmets and long smocks, they leave the frozen slabs of calf hanging from aluminum hooks on the loading docks and stride down the street past my window, headed for the deli on the corner. I remember the gray calf we found last spring in Virginia, hidden by its mother in a gully; at six days it scampered and wobbled. We watched it grow heavy and slow, until half a year later, fouled with its own shit and dull of eye, it stood with the other cattle hock deep in muck by the barn. Then it was gone, perhaps north to this gallows place, where the men tromp back, grinning, some with bottles in brown paper sacks, these men in spattered white smocks who are as thick and wide as the sides of beef they hug and wrestle, angels of meat.

ing of what is said and the attitude of the poet toward it, but it serves as a mechanism to slow the reader down at certain places. *Hock deep in muck by the barn* slows us down, hits us with a thick, yucky feeling, and tells us what the poet thinks about the living conditions of grown cattle. There is internal rhyme which also adds a hint at what the poet thinks should be considered related and important. When Orr is writing well, the simplicity of the language and the stillness of the images combine with his music wonderfully.

As Orr's poetry matured, he moved away from the wild image and settled on a more sedate approach, which is exemplified by this poem from **We Must Make a Kingdom of It**. The images in it have a more direct connection to the point of the poem or at least a less mysterious or fabulous connection. There are the freezing rain and the sap, desire and ashes/dust, and the song whose words are lost. The first stanza sets up one of the metaphors—spring trying to push out while winter hangs on. The second stanza states the thesis: **How desire outlasts the specific/acts that define it**. The last stanza lays out the metaphor of the song only whose melody remains. This is a love poem and perhaps a spiritual poem as well. Of note are the interesting details (as opposed to images): the bright blue truck, the pink sap from the buds, the phoenix pyre, the statuary (likened to the stone of the ash of the pyre), the red-

A Storm in March

For Trisha

1.

All night rain fell and froze.
This morning I look out
to see ice has covered
each tree and bush, covered
our neighbor's bright blue truck.
The light dazzles and a pink
sap seeps from snapped buds.

2.

How desire outlasts the specific
acts that define it—ash
of the phoenix pyre
compacted to stone—or man
and wife coupling
above their own dust
on the carved Etruscan tomb.

3.

Moving through the cold room
making morning coffee, I pause
to watch a red-faced finch
at the feeder, try to imagine
what he thinks
of this glittering world.

It's

about love, that's certain—
this song I hum as I crouch
by the open stove
to ease a slab of oak
onto coals, song whose words
I've lost or don't know.

faced finch, and the stove and slab of oak. The details in the second stanza serve to illustrate the mostly abstract statement about desire. This poem contains significant music, internal rhyme and repetition. *[P]ink/sap seeps from snapped buds* is almost overdone music; *red-faced finch/at the feeder* is less spectacular music; repetition of *covered; stove/words, truck/buds, man/tomb, and stove/oak* are all near rhymes. All of this adds to the overall peaceful music and stillness of the poem. In the New Poems section, there are a number of prose poems, and one cannot help thinking that as Orr's career went on, his interest in imagery and music declined a bit in favor of a rolling, gentle prose. In later poems the more direct statement of situation and careful but uneventful (in poetic terms) description of the primary setting and issues seems to take over from the earlier soaring Orr accomplished.

As Orr became less imagistic—at least, less inclined toward deep imagery—and wrote more prose-like poetry and prose poems, his sense of humor seemed to increase or kick in. The poem in slightly lineated paragraphs, “Live from the Garden,” about a title fight between the *mysteries of sex and death*, is full of humor and really only falls down slightly at the line *To put it mildly, it's a title fight*, which, to my ear, falls down for being a bit predictable.

In the prose poem, “Hotel St. Louis. New York City, Early 1969,” Orr throws in a solid curve with the ending sentence,

He worked quietly and quickly, and he wore, as he always did on Sunday mornings, a bright orange football helmet that glowed like the sun.

This touch is the only bright spot in the piece: Everything else in the poem speaks of a poor, drab, or debilitating existence, and so, perhaps, it is the hopeful gesture in the poem.

In all, Orr is a great craftsman.

Franz Wright: The Pure Clear Jolt

Franz Wright is James Wright's son, and he writes highly imagistic poetry which relies on surprise, quiet, simple music, and, occasionally, isolated images and statements. Wright's outlook on life and writing appears to be that of someone who feels oppressed with living and his station in life, someone who feels that few look on him and his poetic enterprise with compassion, and that he is destined to live his life alone, in a small single room in a bad part of town—there is a distinct sense of self-loathing in his work. Looking over his shoulder and popping into the work is a presence, probably of the father. It is hard to read much of Wright's poetry outside the knowledge of who his father is and without speculating about the connections between what Franz Wright is writing and how it informs us of this father-son relationship.

In addition to looking at some of this sort of poetry, we'll look at a couple of his more recent poems in which he talks about how he writes poetry and what poetry is.

Midnight Postscript

for my friend Joseph Kahn: born 1950,
drowned 1982

Walking the floor after midnight
I leaf through your pharmacopoeia
or a book on stars.

How I love the night.

It should always be
night, and the living with their TVs, vacuum cleaners
and giggling inanities
silenced.

With here and there a window lit a low golden mysterious
light,

I love the night world,
the word night.
Book & door. Joseph. Death's leaves— . . .

I'm never going to get this right.

And I can't go on forming
and tasting your name
or biting down in blinding pain
forever—no,

from now on I have entered
and live in our unspoken words.

And the space I took up in the world scarlessly closes like
water.

A good poem to start with the "Midnight Postscript" (*The Night World and The Word Night*, Carnegie-Mellon University Press, Pittsburgh, 1993), reproduced to the left. With Wright there is rarely any question what the poem is about, though the approach Wright takes is frequently oblique. In this poem, an elegy, Wright engages a couple of his poetic obsessions: night and leaves (we'll take a quick look at leaves later). The spacing of stanzas adds to the disjointed feel a lot of his poems have though in them there is rarely jarring disjointedness. Statements like *How I love the night*, being a confession and isolated on the page, is a typical move Wright makes. The pacing in his poems is based, to a large extent, on hesitation.

The next two stanzas illustrate his use of music and unmusic. The first of the two stanzas packs just about every sound in a jarring burst (to simulate the sounds of day that Wright dislikes) before gliding down to the melodious *with here and there a window lit a low golden mysterious light, / I love the night world, / the word night*. Notice o sounds (*window, low, golden*), w's, the alliteration *lit*,

light, and rhymes *light, night, night*. The line *with here and there a window lit a low golden mysterious / light* starts iambic and then hops on one foot at the spondee *low golden* before continuing iambic, sort of like the heart skipping in palpitation. This is an excellent example of onomatopoeia.

The lines *I love the night world, / the word night* is the turnaround in which Wright speaks—as he frequently does—about writing poetry or at least his writing life.

The line *Book & door. Joseph. Death's leaves— . . .* is isolated and a bit hermetic. *Book & door* probably refers to some part of Joseph Kahn's life and interests (though being behind doors at night is a fre-

quent occurrence in Wright's poems), and *Death's leaves* refers to an obsession Wright has with leaves.

The line *I'm never going to get this right* is an example of Wright speaking directly to the reader as a sort of meta-statement. With Wright, the act of writing the poem is often part of the subject of the poem he's writing.

Being upset or sad at someone's accidental death is poignant but not especially interesting as a topic for a poem—but Wright does not disappoint: He turns the poem inward toward his reaction, which is further isolation. Without having seen Wright speak of isolation throughout his work, one might feel disappointed or surprised at this reaction, but with Wright it seems like a rededication to his work.

Wright uses the technique of burying additional statements in his poems by creating lines that carry separate meaning when read in alone. There are two examples in the seventh stanza: *And I can't go on forming* and *forever—no*.

The last two lines ring with some music (*world scarlessly closes like*) and link Wright's personal gesture with the subject of the elegy.

Wright frequently returns to the same topic, and this is not the first elegy to Joseph. Another is reproduced below. This second poem is quiet, as many of Wright's are. Notice the reference to the book, and the fact he's left (perhaps metaphorically) refers to the door in the above poem. Repetition, as in *I thought, a walk—it's lovely to walk*, is usual for Wright.

Joseph Come Back as the Dusk
(1950–1982)

The house is cold. It's raining,
getting dark. That's Joseph
for you: it's that time
of the day again.

We had been drinking, oddly enough.
He left.

I thought, a walk—
it's lovely to walk.

His book and glasses on the kitchen table.



Wright has a sort of poem he calls a set of *postcards*, which demonstrates his more disjointed and jarring sort of poem. An example is "Pawtucket Postcards" (in *The Night World and the Word Night*), reproduced at the bottom right. This poem jars by presenting a series of statements, linked by the topic/theme of the poem, but which are initially disjoint seeming, their relationships just one off from what one expects. It is a contrary to narrative in blurting out statements,

which is why it's called a set of postcards: Each blurting is like a postcard. The theme is death, murder, and urban life. Things are missing (neon sign letter); guns are used in crimes; death is ever present, a constant, but it is sometimes difficult to reach, as witnessed by the existence of the prosthetics company to provide limbs to people who suffer accidents or worse; people leave, perhaps through death (notice the beautiful music in *households reflected/in the little river through the leaves*); and this is how it has always been (from prehistoric to *posthistoric* times). This is a little essay, but there is nothing essay-like about its methods aside from the way it states points and allows the reader to think about the conclusions, if any. It uses postmodern techniques such as the punning in *posthistoric* (which also hints at postmodernism).

Five of the stanzas are noun phrases (1, 2, 4, 5, 6), which is a basic technique Wright uses to create stillness in his poems.

Pawtucket Postcards

Neon sign missing a letter

Firearm with an obliterated serial number

There's always death
But getting there—
You can't just say the word

Rhode Island Artificial Limb Co.

Lights of the abandoned
households reflected
in the little river through the leaves

The posthistoric clouds

He does not lecture in a poem like this, letting the images carry the load, but the combination of the stillness of the images and the larger picture they paint do the work: the first draws and holds attention and the second makes the argument. The stillness comes from the choice of image, quiet language, quiet presentation, isolation and pausing, and no action (almost all noun phrases). As with any other poetic device, when you establish a pattern, anything that breaks it is subject to more importance and perhaps more thought and attention. Only stanza 3 is a full sentence, and it tells the odd part of the story: That it is something someone would want to do to say the word and die.



From *New Leaves Bursting Into Green Flames*

I've done it for the sake
of maybe 10 minutes when I was fifteen:
when I—when it suddenly—but why describe it?
No one will understand, no one will care
that today, while waiting for the bus
I looked up from the tedium
of untreatable things
and found them again,
here. The few newborn
leaves more light
than leaf on a branch.
They were back—or I was.
For an instant no time had elapsed:
these leaves were not new,
they were the same ones, and I was not old.
Nothing had changed, they were the same
leaves that blazed before
my eyes all those years ago, mind blazing.
That moment so long ago,
someone might say, was this moment.

Leaves form the basis for a number of Wright's images. The reason is explained in "New Leaves Bursting Into Green Flames" (in **Rorschach Test**), part of which is reproduced at the left. The diction and syntax is very different from what we've seen so far: expansive, somewhat obsessive, revealing in a new way—by running up to and back from the fact at hand, to tease toward it then away from it. To reveal that the reason for writing poetry is some mystical event at age 15 that lasted 10 minutes and to be thrall to it for that long, is embarrassing or empowering. Notice, though, that this fragment is not a bursting forth, it is a carefully contrived piece of writing: repetition (*blaze, ago, leaves*). Each line is a breath long, half the lines end with a monosyllable, there is a breathless quality to the words as they flow.



I'll end this annotation with a very quick look at some of the poems and passages in which Wright talks about writing poetry. The first is "Untitled" (in **Rorschach Test**), which begins this way:

*I like to see the individual verses
spread on the otherwise blank sheet of paper
like lines of black cocaine. Unfinished,
unincorporated into something anyone is ever going
to see:
they are mine, to deny their existence
and share with no one, as I please. They fill me
with joy while they're still unemployed, still about to be
rising up through the trunk-spine and leaf-veins of the brain: before
I shudder, close my eyes and see nothing.*

The middle of the poems speaks of what for Wright is perhaps the ultimate attraction/distracted, a beautiful, alluring, available nude woman. With that in mind the poem ends this way:

*. . .the window I, too,
continue to gaze out of,
unless I do dare to approach her, letting this page
go totally blank once again and the mere
words all blow away.*

Of course, the page did not go blank (we are reading it), and so he did not approach her and turn his back on his **black cocaine** (this is how Wright referred to poetry earlier in the poem).

In “Church of the Strangers,” in which Wright and a companion visit a church (poetry?), Wright says, *Because no symbol’s going to help us./I mean it, . . .*, and later *There are no symbols/with the efficacy we require*. In “Van Gogh’s ‘Undergrowth With Two Figures,’” Wright repeats this observation and continues with how to make a poem:

From *To The Poet*

He is in possession of the identical feelings and thoughts of anyone else, so terrible and dark sometimes, in illness. He is ill himself, that’s the point. And yet

his mask is secure, he bends to the matter at hand, spelling life or death for the sleeper in his sheet the color of a blank page. If he faltered,

if he could not suspend the aforementioned feelings and thoughts which accompany his slight nausea at what he’s seeing while he probes and explores, making himself

cold as the scalpel he holds like a pen now, or now grips in his hand like the pen the child’s using for the first time, like someone at his meat,

then how would he ever be able to gruesomely proceed and save his life; how would he, lacking this horrorlessness, locate the source of the horror, and start to heal.

In van Gogh, as in the works of most great masters, all four or five of them, there are no symbols. (Because there are no symbols.) Only things as they are as he saw them during visionary states, normal states, hangovers, etc.

In “To the Poet,” Wright presents the picture of a brain surgeon (as poet) in which he reveals the poetic gameplan (see the excerpt at the left).

In “Blank Portrait,” Wright talks about how to write and what it means to him:

And I know very well I have made nothing but that which has used me to make itself; and if I have sometimes succeeded, I have only done so because as a child I learned to do the back off look, I learned to make clear the unqualified

gladness (it seems I’ve forgotten to mention this) with which I would eat all the shit that the world could come up with, if that was required in order to become one of those who, of the hidden things trying to be uttered, would give his life to be the mouth and hand.

Finally, I’ll end by quoting the poem “The Lemon Grove,” in which Wright talks (metaphorically perhaps) about how he learned to write poetry, what poetry is, and how the (deep) image works. This is perhaps all the teaching an aspiring poet needs.

The Lemon Grove

In the windless 100 degrees of eleven o’clock in the morning I’d walk, sometimes closing my eyes, into the faintly sweet shade of the grove just past town. Every day I would go to my tree and sit down with my back to it, open my notebook and have no thoughts for a long time. It was there I learned in the course of a summer that nothing in the world can be described. Day after day and week after week, after days of frustration verging on blackout, I began to learn. One had nothing to do but remain in a state of relaxed but perpetual waiting until a sudden moment when the world was felt to turn into its own material—

so with vigilance and a mysterious sense of when to act it might be used to depict another, reminiscent of it yet entirely alien, new. All attempts at describing a place that you looked at and loved, exactly as it was, would have to be abandoned. By degrees, say a line which took all day to write, the things I saw and felt there became, in what was once their botched description, another place past touch, unseen; one I more and more knew how to enter and one which then returned me to and returned to me the world’s wordless beauty intact. The lemon grove.

Frank Stanford and Voice

The poetry of Frank Stanford stands out for its use of voice and a mythology of a youthful, far-away (in time) place. Whenever you read a Stanford poem you are clearly placed in a situation by a trusted and sure-footed narrator. Over the course of his work in his selected work (**The Light the Dead See**, The University of Arkansas Press), we see him move from a narrative that explores the place of his childhood to a more lyric—though still firmly narrative—exploration of how a man with that youth faces death.

Stanford's language is clear and regional, based on black and rural Arkansas English of the '50's and '60's. Many of his poems seem written in dialect. Syntax and diction are short and direct, punctuation is often left out. Images are sparse with wind, water, women, prows of ships, particular characters, and knives as strange attractors.

The Kite

Before he stole Mr. Charlie's sedan
Chinaman rocked along the cuts dead easy,
Chopping cotton, singing like a katydid.
It was a long time ago on a low turn row,
When he took his bimbo for a ride
in the bossman's car. They saw someone
Getting buried in the Bogue Phalia River.
When Chinaman got picked up for stealing,
He told his gal to keep her mouth shut:
"Don't say nothing, till I get out of prison."
They paroled him once, he knew he wouldn't fall,
But his Pine Bluff jelly-roll flew in a kite
That keyed off the captain to bring him back.
Now he's hoe-time floating for life.
All his tunes have lost their hinkty licks
And he can't keep up on the grassy rows,
He doesn't think about bimbos or parole,
Just a panther tail popping at his back.
It was a long time before knock-off.
The dog sergeant was twirling his bat.
But his youth was jumping in his chopping
And he wasn't going to waste it on grass.
He thought, one more time, he wanted to be:
Flatweeding, rocking dead easy.

A good example of Stanford's more dialect-like style is the poem "The Kite," which is reproduced to the left. Some of the lines are hard to make out exactly because the words and phrases are unfamiliar (and some of them do not yield to even the most detailed slang or regional English dictionaries), but we are never left thinking that they are inexactly used or that the language is slack. The story of this poem seems to be this: The person referred to as "Chinaman", who either worked for money as a cotton cutter or did it as a child, has been thrown in jail for life perhaps for a crime he didn't commit (a murder) because he was turned in by the woman he was with when it happened. The main scene is Chinaman (as an older man) on a forced work gang cutting weeds, thinking about his youth cutting in the fields while the guard in his youth is swinging his blackjack at Chinaman to get on with his work, which he is too old to do.

The poem is a cockeyed meditation on youth and age, a topic which seemed to hold Stanford's attention. Chinaman is thinking in his old age about the joys of youth, but it isn't the usual old-man-in-an-easy-chair sort of affair, but a hard-edged situation that few poetry readers would find familiar except through literature and film.

Some of the dialect is hard to make out exactly, but the sense or at least the importance of it to the poem is easy to handle. **Rock along the cuts dead easy** refers to cutting by swinging a scythe from side to side, which is an easy motion; **jelly-roll** refers to this woman (it actually refers to the vagina); **hoe-time floating for life** refers to doing life in prison on a work gang; **hinkty** means pompous; and **panther tail** is a blackjack or nightstick.

The language works well as music: **It was a longtime ago on a low turn row**; the echoes in **Bogue, bimbo, jelly-roll, hoe, parole, and grassy rows**. The other key sound is **k** as in **cuts, katydid, picked, hinkty licks, back, and knock-off**.

The diction is direct and declarative—everything is carried by the dialect, the sounds, and the simple but strange narrative.



Linger

The moon wanders through my barn
Like a widow heading for the county seat

It's not dark here yet
I'm just waiting for the bow hunters
So I can run them off

They put out licks on my land
Every summer

When it gets cool the animals are tame

I've fallen asleep
In the trees before

I dreamed someone's horse
Had wandered out on the football field
To graze
And I was showing children through a museum

The bow hunters make their boys
Pull the deer's tongue out bare-handed

At dusk when I hear an arrow
Coming through my field like a bird
I wonder what men have learned
From feathers

The animals wade the creek
And eat blackberries
The wind blows through the trees
Like a woman on a raft.

"Linger", reproduced at left in the curved fence, is an example of some of the obsessions of Stanford and the quiet he demonstrates in his some of his work. Stanford is interested in the distinctions in behavior between men and women, and

women are frequently portrayed as mysterious unapproachables, while men are violent or victims of violence.

Women are sometimes seen but not heard, sometimes they do not act but merely are, or only their body parts are interesting in the poem. Not that Stanford is some sort of sexist, but his labor is to explore his own world which is not, as a child or someone wrestling with the concept of death, filled with women. Here there are two women, the speaker, and hunters. The poem is an envelope with a widow (an older woman?) heading quietly and slowly for the county seat—to, what, take care of business, find another husband?—at the top of the envelope, and a woman sitting (lying) on a raft.

The poem is dreamlike or actually a dream. Bow hunters represent a primitive sort of danger, close to killing—their sons pull out a deer's tongue—not like other sort of hunters who kill at a distance with a machine (a

bow is a machine, but one of the most primitive). Animals, in this world, are not dangerous (*When it gets cool the ani-*

imals are tame, The animals wade the creek/And eat blackber-

ries), and the speaker is surprised at what people seem to take from the animal world (*I wonder what men have learned from feath-*

ers). Women seem identified in this mythology with the peaceful, mysterious nature of these animals that the bow hunters (and other

men) go after. That this is about the nature of life is the fact that in the dream

the speaker is showing children through a museum, which is a repository of human artifacts (in the most common connotation).

The language is simple with declarative sentences, each of which last about a stanza's length. There is a spacing to the language imposed by the 1-sentence per stanza structure. The images are mildly mysterious, but all of a kind aside from the brutality of the hunters' children. Not to be missed are the inner couplets of the last two stanzas which rhyme.

♪ ♪ ♪

From *The Snake Doctors*

I ran down the road yelling
I stepped on soda bottle caps
I ran through sardine cans
I tripped on the cassock

The hog was crazy
He ran into the church
He ran into tombstones

I said "Somebody throw me something"
Chinaman threw me a knife

I ran after the hog
He was heading for the river
I jumped on his back
I rode the hog

Stanford has a third style of poem, which is like a dream or an obsessive run-on. At the left is an early example of this style—"The Snake Doctors." This poem is filled with repetitions of syntax, words, phrases, sentences, and images. The typical line is a single, simple declarative sentence. Long stretches of the poem are repeated sentence templates like *I took...., I threw...., I watched....* When these patterns are broken we are jarred awake, and perhaps in this poem the stretches where the reader is lulled to sleep are too long. Some phrases, like *I saw the snake doctors riding each other*, are repeated several times like a refrain in a song, and the mystery of it is

I hugged his neck
I stabbed him seven times
I wanted the knife to go into me
He kept running
I ran the knife across his throat
And the blood came out like a bird

We ran into a sycamore tree

When the cloud passed over the moon
Like a turkey shutting its eye
I rowed out into the slew
Not allowing myself to sing gospel music

I woke up in a boat
It was full of blood
My feet were dragging through the water
A knife was sticking in the prow

And the sun was black

It was dark
But I saw the snake doctors riding each other

I saw my new shoes
I put them on
They filled up with blood

I took the surplice off
I threw it in the river
I watched it sink
There was hog blood in my hair

I knelt in the prow with the knife in my mouth
I looked at myself in the water
I heard someone singing on the levee

I was buried in a boat
I woke up
I set it afire with the taper
I watched myself burn
I reached in the ashes and found a red knife

I held my head under the water
so I wouldn't go crazy
It was some commotion
I rowed the boat in a circle with one oar

A hundred people were in the water
They had white robes on
Some of them had umbrellas
They jumped up and down on the bank
They rowed down the levee

both emphasized because we see it so often and diminished because repetition like this numbs us to its meaning the same way a song with a repeated phrase causes the repeated phrase to act like a marker or sign that refers to the whole song, and so hearing the phrase makes us think of the whole poem or its whole meaning or significance.

In this poem we run across familiar Stanford territory, like the knives, water, blood, the characters with odd names like *Born In The Camp With Six Toes* and *Chinaman*, and, in this case, the snake doctors.

Wondering what the snake doctors are I note that the general subject of this dream-poem is religious reawakening—in Arkansas this could involve snake handling, and so the snake doctors could be the handlers and riding each other could refer to their carnal activities.

fa fa fa

In all, Stanford uses voice, a compelling mythology derived from his youth (and later complicated by an obsession with death) to produce poems which never are unclear or obscure—only sometimes mysterious.

Knott Very Easy to Understand

This annotation is going to be a little different, a little more personal—because for years now I have struggled with Bill Knott’s poetry—and a little more random. I have considered his use of formal techniques, his oddball formal devices, his use of surprise and humor, and even done some deep delving into his personal past, and still some of his poems just sit in my head like lumpy oatmeal. I’ve talked to Dobyns and other poets quite a bit and I get this story: Try to read the easier ones first, then move on to the harder ones, and the obscurity of some of them is due largely to overcompression. In looking at **The Nights of Naomi** (Barn Dream Press, Boston, 1971), it seems that there are at least two level of difficulty, but the harder level is nearly impossible, and my question is: Is this harder level really good poetry, and, if so, how does it work?

There seems to be two Bill Knotts at work: One which is his usual funny, crazy self who looks at the world a little cockeyed, and another who attacks with difficulty difficult personal issues, such as his relationships with women and the fact of his own family and upbringing. The latter seems, though potentially more traumatic than the first, to lead to easier and more gripping poetry, like his masterpiece, “The Closet,” while the former sends him into a tizzy. We can recognize the different Knotts in many cases by how he signs his name. Most people think of him as *Bill Knott*, but there is also *Bill Knott (1940–1966)*. When Bill Knott (1940–1966) is writing, he uses crazy images—maybe it’s deep imagery, but maybe it’s simply free association—wordplay, crazy words, grammatical substitutions, and puns. When reading **Nights of Naomi**, I felt as if there were some sort of deep linkage between the poems while at the same time each seemed distinct.

Being a computer guy means not just using and liking computers, it means programming them, so I wrote some programs to analyze some of the word usage in **Nights of Naomi**—as computer science it was quite simple, and as linguistic analysis it was even simpler. Furthermore, I did not spend a lot of time—in fact, hardly any—refining the results, so some of the counts and tables I’ve produced might have errors in them, but not ones substantive to any arguments I make based on them. Nevertheless, the results might be interesting and ultimately informative. The first thing I did was to input all the poems (minus the 2 songs included). (I did this with a scanner and optical character recognition software, not by typing.) Then I canonicalized the words by reducing plurals to singulars, breaking hyphenated words into their components, and eliminating what I thought were insignificant words like pronouns, conjunctions, etc. The first thing I produced was a concordance of words to the poems they appeared in (the poems are not named, so I numbered them from 1 to 31. The first thing to notice is that of a total of about 3286 words in the 31 poems, there are 1392 distinct words. This supports the feeling that the poems are richly varied and cover a lot of sonic ground.

The next computation I did was to group the words into buckets according to how often they are used. I found 1118 words were used once, 177 twice, 54 three times, and 43 more often than that with 1 word being used 16 times (*blue*). The lists of words in each bucket is listed in the Appendix. This seemed to support the feeling that the words were unique and out of the blue (*blue* appearing 16 times has nothing to do with this judgment), and that the poems were fresh though perhaps crazy, but it didn’t account for the feeling that somehow the poems seemed connected somehow beyond their wildness.

The next computation I did was to group the words into buckets according to how many poems they appeared in, thinking that there would be a lot of poems interlinked with words. But there were 1130 words used in exactly 1 poem, 180 in 2, 50 in 3, and 32 in more than 3 poems. I had expected to see more overlap to explain the feeling of unity behind the poems.

The next and most important computation I did was to compute for each pair of poems, what words (or subwords—for example, *jelly* and *jellyfish* are considered similar enough) they have in common

rank them from those pairs of poems that have the most words in common to those with the least. I was surprised to find that several poems had extensive overlap, including the top pair, which has 38 words in common. This especially surprising because one of the pair has only 63 words in it altogether. The two poems are reproduced below.

I could try to analyze these poems, but I wouldn't get too far. The first line of poem 4 mentions animals of the sky, land, and sea; the second line speaks of the paradox of strangler's advertising themselves; the third line the paradox of a soft version of the hardest substance; the *marquee* links with *movie* in poem 13; etc. We can wonder whether the closet in poem 13 refers to the closet in "The Closet."

The overall drift I gather is some amount of self-loathing and an ambiguous gender—sometimes the speaker has a penis and other times a clitoris (though the similarity is noted when Bill Knott (1940–1966) says *Your clitoris is my boyfriend/Like a cameo on fire it has the best view in my dreams*). Some of the poems are humorous (poem 5: *Cueballs have invented insomnia in an attempt to forget eyelids*), and even the most serious have some sort of oddball humor (*the diamond-expert a turd screwed in his eye*) or grammatical substitutions (*Each glancing blow of the asterisks pumas itself* seems to substitute *pumas* for a verb, where this is similar to words like *dog*, meaning to hound (!) as if by a dog). Some apparent typos are really, perhaps, deliberate, such as marshmello for marshmallow—to imply a mood and to make the sound sense visible (*marshmello cello*).

I doubt any of it is an accident, but it sure feels like an accident to read some of these poems.

4
<p><u>Tanager moos</u> of starfish <u>Marquee</u> of <u>stranglers</u> <u>Diamond putty</u> <u>Palette</u> of <u>birthmarks</u> on <u>fatal blackboards</u> of <u>needles</u> <u>Skintight test-tubes</u> of <u>maze-breathing swoops</u> <u>Coma</u> of <u>rusty-hinged wafts</u> <u>Growing</u> on <u>decks</u> of <u>jelly pencils</u> <u>Somersault-ore tress</u> propped by <u>yodeling pings</u> <u>Key</u> flooded by <u>display-cases</u> of <u>mauve deathmarches</u> through <u>stereo cilia</u> whose <u>headhunters</u> were <u>warped</u> off by <u>tanager moos</u> of <u>sandstorm</u></p>
13
<p>The <u>yodeling blackboard</u> has 2 seasons <u>mauve</u> and <u>movie</u> Nevertheless the only one who can rest on his laurels is a closet attacking a landscape Of kidnapped wombs green as <u>rusty-hinged</u> <u>suns</u> <u>growing</u> on stumps of rainbows So that the <u>palette</u> of <u>keys</u> pulling on a <u>skintight marquee</u> Shed by a mist of <u>strangler's pencils</u> On the floor of an ocean of limping oranges Where a sleepy octopus his silver blastingpowdered eyelids <u>propped</u> open with <u>headhunters</u> Keeps watch on a <u>warp</u> of <u>breathing</u> Which the <u>diamond-expert</u> a turd screwed in his eye exclaims is a thunder-jacketed room <u>puttying</u> shut The mirrors of javelin With white tongues whose <u>cilia</u> are burnt off By <u>tanager</u> threads of <u>maze-ore</u> searching out the sweat that twists its <u>decks</u> into <u>thawing deathmarches</u> Crushing the erased <u>sandstorm</u> of <u>stereo jellybeans</u> Which lingers To unlock the marshmello cello of a <u>needle's</u> knees by twisting a <u>tress</u> of your sighs around its slowly-gouged-out <u>somersaults</u> Sprinkled on a <u>coma's</u> tail Which is reborn in mid-swoop as a trillion different escapes-by-sequin But always with the same shape <u>birthmark</u> A <u>ping-cool</u> beach that scans <u>test-tubes</u> for the <u>fatal</u> ripple of my nimbus-dimension Which suddenly caresses up into a bed of welded <u>moos</u></p>

A common line type is the *of. . .* phrase; many places it seems to fit into the grammar of the situation, as in *Draping you from head to toe in wood rasps/Of purple grease of glaciers*, and other times it doesn't as in *And glue it in the crack between my asscheeks/Of sequin rabies/So that whichever leopard spot is sprung*. This line type appears 48 times in the 31 poems.

In reading other of his works, I notice when he tries to approach what for other people would be tender feelings, this wall of obscurity rises up. Dobyms says that Knott over-compresses, but these poem don't seem as much compressed as merely avoiding the approach of feeling or even being mere free association. How else can you explain a line like *Crushing the erased sandstorm of stereo jellybeans*? Being a scientist, I can try to put a meaning to it: *stereo jellybeans* are a woman's nipples, *erased sandstorm* is their ceasing ecstasy-induced movement, and *crushing* implies that the partner is lying on them. Does it make sense? Maybe. Is it worth the effort? Not really.

On the back cover of the book it says:

Statement: I consider "Nights" my first and only book. The other books (including "Auto-necrophilia") with my name on them are, like the patent-office, full of garbage.

—Bill Knott (1940–1966)

I happen to agree that the patent office is full of garbage, but that's because I've studied what's there—to regular people what is in the patent office are monopolies, which are quite valuable, and many would say that inventions and innovations are there. And this is signed by Bill Knott (1940–1966). One wonders which is Bill and which is Knott.

I haven't given up on Knott by a long shot, but **Nights of Naomi** and other poems that put on this sort of highflying language and image play just seem like too much work.

Nights of Naomi

by Bill Knott

OCRed from the Barn Dream Press Edition
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Prefrontal lightningbolt too lazy to chew the sphinx's loudest eyelash
Not even if it shushes you with a mast of sneers
Down which grateful bankvault-doors scamper
Because of a doublejointedness that glows in the dark
Like a soliloquy of walnuts
Numbed by beaks of headless measuringtape
So the lubriciousness can tower in peace
Like a buzzsaw trapped in a perfumery of shrugs
Lemon
Or lime
Only a maze can remember your hair of buttered blowguns

But night no longer exists
Except maybe as a life spent on a trampoline
Of thimbley children
Whose yodeling amnesia caresses the blowgun face of the crowd
But just as an ocean is surrounded by its drowned
Asking a stampede for a light of black parrots
The coathangers graze on the dwarf dynamite
The orchestra is amused at the marrow replacing its instruments
The blink lies still while being examined by his genitals
Of cloud
Therefore it must be night
Unless it is a rain of rustling cosmetics
Black and blue as they should be
Like your lips at half-throe
Light is only a shadow which has learned to write its name
Upon light
Of your lips at half-throe
Of your hair that harbor of slammed windows
Which is writing an ode to prisons Alcatraz sea-god pierced by howling canteen bottles
Leavenworth corridor of luxurious winks throwing me to the vivisected jewelry of shh
Joliet sister to my breasts' scroll of bees etcetera
Therefore it must be night
But if so why is night coming like withdrawal-symptoms of satin
Sawing their way out through zebras
Galloping into a mirror that glances fearfully over its shoulder
Like the banana slicing off my left or right ear
As if to say Never mind delivering tomorrow's gypsy

Tanager moos of starfish
Marquee of stranglers
Diamond putty
Palette of birthmarks on fatal blackboards of needles
Skintight test-tubes of maze-breathing swoops
Coma of rusty-hinged wafts
Growing on decks of jelly pencils
Somersault-ore tress propped by yodeling pings
Key flooded by display-cases of mauve deathmarches through stereo cilia whose
headhunters were warped off by tanager moos of sandstorm

Cueballs have invented insomnia in an attempt to forget eyelids

Spittle gapes at my beauty
Of soft hotels
Starlight's pink fangs drifting
A breeze's tuningfork of tongues
Which have lavished me upon me
Which have swallowed my hole

I love that on your wall hangs a self portrait
No face no torso no legs no lesbian
Only strange blurred lines discolored disconnected
Which turn out to be your scars
I see when I turn you over to fuck and finger you from behind
Legendary sunlamp

After being bathed slowly in vanished eagles at no time do I find myself pulling
a tree of open-star surgery around a shiver-blue beach which is growling magic-
carpets (made by taking a single hair from every fissure in the world and
throwing them up into the wind, first whispering "scenic venom") that ripple end-
lessly as stabs of the shouting saliva found each morning on the groins of statues
of you between the paroxysms of which your tongue is

Melting at the center of an iceberg

Which has sank the 13th floor of every building

Where you negligently stretch out like being drank

By that ancient sect The Lasers of Mercy

My head between your thighs I kiss the first letter of all alphabets to fuse the
last word of all languages but before everything I kiss your clitoriscunt nothing
more or less

You lie back on a gull's lunges of incense
Clothed in a glancing lair
Of submissive purple jungles
Muzzled by a flagellant species of hair
Homaging your profile in 3 squirts of deadend
Whose jade masseuses
Blow tendrils of halo
Over the clandestine mirror-limp cattle
Of painful forced maskgrafts
Like a novice swordswallower
Who uses the xerox's throat
To sink into a comet's plush of mares

The yodeling erasers pat trumpet masks on a seated line
Of richlyrobed sages fading into the coralfusion
Of dancers smeared on leaves of echo
Each holds in his outstretched hand my head of recoilless semen
Like a razorblade choir of cocoa-steam footprints
I love only the woman who has never washed between her legs
Of unborn neon
I can remember her only when on my tongue the collision-course forgets its name
And stammers out mine
On which crouch robot cabbages spinning out the puffbode
Of gold engines fleeing
Their amputated bruises
To speed up my mask
Of luminous dogs whispering in saltmines
To seance-colored snakes
To shipwreck-orange snakes
To parachute-nosed snakes
Immune to the parachute-nooses
Plucking my caresses off a window carved by dice
Upon the electrolysis of laborpains
Felt by the streetlight when 11-toed people tell their dreams
To the nearly-cured amnesiac
Who remembers everything except his own existence
And who can impale himself only on the shallow part of the mirror
Like him I brush your hair to liberate a contempt
For the wind boring its velvet holes in plain sight

Hear one of my limbs I invented colors for the senses
Smell blue hearing blue sight taste touch blue

Like the grapes nailed to your forehead
My lipstick of shit was lit up
By inviolate seizures

The yodeling blackboard has 2 seasons mauve and movie
Nevertheless the only one who can rest on his laurels is a closet attacking a landscape
Of kidnapped wombs green as rusty-hinged suns growing on stumps of rainbows
So that the palette of keys pulling on a skintight marquee
Shed by a mist of strangler's pencils
On the floor of an ocean of limping oranges
Where a sleepy octopus his silver blastingpowdered eyelids propped open with headhunters
Keeps watch on a warp of breathing
Which the diamond-expert a turd screwed in his eye exclaims is a thunder-jacketed
room puttying shut
The mirrors of javelin
With white tongues whose cilia are burnt off
By tanager threads of maze-ore searching out the sweat that twists its decks into
thawing deathmarches
Crushing the erased sandstorm of stereo jellybeans
Which lingers
To unlock the marshmello cello of a needle's knees by twisting a tress of
your sighs around its slowly-gouged-out somersaults
Sprinkled on a coma's tail
Which is reborn in mid-swoop as a trillion different escapes-by-sequin
But always with the same shape birthmark
A ping-cool beach that scans test-tubes for the fatal ripple of my nimbus-dimension
Which suddenly caresses up into a bed of welded moos

Pale assassin of landingstrips
Your spasmelodic portrait names itself I LOVE TO SHIMMY
IN BLINDED MINARETS
Of self-induced keyhole salve
Defanged by ballrooms of sundial
Snow: inverted mouth of turtles
Orchard: spotlight of gashes
Separated by languorous attacks on the pore method of dreaming
I hate your sensible toes

A starry sweatband of cheese
Whose hands are the tallest scorchmark ever to dance scented with lifeguards
Smashing the bloodfilled who's who
Like a snowflake
Of blue antelope
Which is caning all the other snowflakes
Whose tentacle is backed into a corner
Like a whirlpool facing a pineneedle
Howling at the asbestos autopsy
Playing a flute of balconies-on-a-string
Off which the bitter lampshades that resisted our births successfully
Toss purple capsules of carousel

You held a glass of pontoons between your breasts
I flew to sip on blue terraces of eyedropper navels
Stretching out forever
Our penis cross-eyed as tapestry
The 1st and 2nd morons of your lightning-savored skin

THE FRAGILITY OF MARQUEES

Ten Tibetan lesbians join hands to form the beautiful skinraft called sleep
With bare hands of flood they caress the yellow machinery floating out of my ears
Because just as the holding hands is burned up in the embrace the
Meanwhile all the room's corners are visible in one mirror
Held up by foam

Your clitoris is my boyfriend
Like a cameo on fire it has the best view in my dreams
I kiss your clitoris of syringe laughter
With all of DroolQueen's tattoo levitations
With my asshole on a snapping cushion held forth by double sperm
Like nights sheered
By vestigial moss of nipples
The howling rubble in your scrotum carves a loftiness
Upon the applause
Purple as a sink made of swans
Where the blindfold fish blow on their abacuses
To set us floating down the semen to the ocean
Which writes help on a donut and throws it out the window
To inlay ballerinas as stop-and-go lights in the floors
Of statues of spurting pinpricks
Often a maskflurry face slashes
Incisions in my flesh then pours in your eye-makeup
So I will see for the first time

Sabertoothed with indolence on dervish cushions
Of curtains
Sparks and microphones inhale a potion of circusnets of sargasso prisms
Whose hailstones decipher your black-and-blue shoelaces of flesh with the thorn
of an enchantment
Like the solitude of apocalypses
Of parachute-skingrafts
Whose caged snowpeak of tongues made skinny by palaces
Of striates of flareguns of mosaic perfumes
Off which a dredgerboat leaps to howl alone in caves
Of seamless spasms dancing the steeple halves of a compass
The swimmingpool was so elongated it became a vampire
Chant the languorines from their stables of a halo of momentary assholes
But the pubic hair of numb planecrashes
Of inaccessible spermtips of a convulsive horizon's cuntsync
Of marshgas exhumed by exit-kidnap of visigoths
Installed in jellyfish of murmuring monocle frenzy
Where tumble-throated jewels spear your pollen-of-mirage eyelids
With comicbooks of exploded puffadder

Exactly in the same way that Bruce Wayne is Batman
John Keats is Nightingaleman
Richcheting from pore to pore in Naomi-filled rapture
Like her bigtoe up my ballerina
Using skydivers as chisels

A corpse lying on a tightrope in all the best restaurants
Refuses to join the union
A survival-manual has killed everybody
With a single misprint
A cage being skinned alive
Is born weighing itself using armpits for a scales
Despite all this
The optical illusions suffer from a growing sense of marsupialism

Fluent in all claws
Her lips flare like others' nostrils flare
Stabbed by quicksand she montages purple invisibilities
Where there are twins one is wearing a mask
Of her cleat eyes and cloudy nipples
Dressed in a dairy of sleep's shrapnel
A ripped venom grovels at her brow
Gloating like the writhe-scent
Of her sweat's landing-instruments
Of coiffured ingots
Screeching like the cocoons on her whip
Which sheds the muteness
I lick
When I pick up a new poetry book
I always glance first at the biographical note
If the poet has children I don't read the book

MURDER YOUR LANDLORD

Captain Disembody paused on the slopes to suck your cloud-hinged hair
Of incestuous torpedoes
That laminates you with echoes
Of boiling sap of statues
Desperately dinging to the finishline
Whose fur makes an incision in the ceremony
Of the human prop pile of wine-sparkles
Except Rhonda Fleming
Because a jawbone never forgets

I woke suddenly sweating your pubic-hair of conveyerbelts
Of a mouth buried in a telescope
ATTACK OF THE PERMEATE PEOPLE
You who are lighter than your aura
Of sleepwalkers whose tongues sway on the oceanfloor
Of blue bottlecaps brushing the triggers off the flames
A snowflake pinned to your bones offers me all I remember
About the long distance incest dripping from great events
The seashells pillow of infrared merrygorounds
Surge twines its nipples around the blind rocket-fuel
Which finds you inescapable
I must close my eyes to secrete your see-through fossil
Of saxophone clitorises
Of fume-pits of seagreen honey tasseled with incantation gashes
Drinking t-square juice of whitewashed eclipses
From empty bodystockings petrified by caresses
Which inhabit the giant frond crushed for millions of years by a capillary's public-notary
On which your nakedness is a sowing of electric grids
An oscilloscopic oysterbed of the horizon's blue stagefright
Each of your penises is a long fragment in the knife

Each glancing blow of the asterisks pumas itself
With theme-gun snow of indigoes tracing their family's dives back to the
vocalcords of waterfalls abandoned overnight
By butterflies razed by cheekbones of moving-vans
Get off says the slant of audible suntans
Of navels being tested by statues of navels
The gashes feed the wounds tripods of drowning echo-canyon
Flashbacking to its first voice streamlined sulk cherries
The otter of St. Petersburg's broken promises
Crowds spraying themselves with bridges
Alone in the room with the candycane saddlesores
Whose missing-persons-list stamps its feet to let out the pounang thimble of napehairs
A ropeladder's children cawed in a sweeping breeze of microscope nightgown petals
At the foot of the slave there is always his gusher
Ponies burrowing above volcanoes trap the coral with a mimed sailorsuit of
knives tuned to oracle
Muted beavertails solace the prow's milk mustache
A mistake
Of missionary apparatuses
Inside sirrocco bricks propitiate the snorkels perched in stunned lace on a kindle-
eyed vineyard of turpentine keys
Whose pollen triangulates the defusing
Of eyelashes from a flightplan cleaning clef-palates off lightning
Perfecting the fleets of pincer magic
The xylophone his foreskin had warned her of
Preening its closets of clocks sawed into parallel escape-routes of lubricious
cigar-frost
OF a polar shore of eyelets
Humming the fallout bracelet of spigots gazed into for centuries by the caste-
system of burning tollbooths
Where hairspray marrow croaks out a twilight of chimes and oculists

Green as a sentry crushed by beautiful dogs
Yellow is moist yellow is wispy and secretive as newmown rubies
Purple is broken into gusher-wings where the entrails of a caress sentence chess-
boards to claw open perfumes
White is a space surrounded by a glimpse of a volcano's olives
Blue is a whip of picture-frames that explains any sense of the absence of cheeping
Blue is a clamor-perfume of beaches where the sound of the threads being drawn
through my head changes according to the different colors
Of the orchards glued to hoofbeats
Which peer from a cracked mound-of-venue smokestack
Curtained by the control-panel air of serpents of the glacier
Perfumed by jabber she walks away a mirror at her heels
Haughty as all those who grovel on the amnesia-enriched caresses
Of your 9-bladed clitoris
Come
The swimmer's virtue is calling us
Like slinky Sinbad's penis of handpuppetry
At low-tide in the charm-bracelet explosions

To look at things in a new slant is fine
But it's more fun
To jump ino the slant and disappear forever
Like a spark's belly
Whooshing blue trisms
The circus-horse scissors used in haunting
The calendar's gills used in haunting
The keg of bees used in drowning

The pastore of blown-off heads of policemen
Like time-locks that have white beards
Waves goodbye with a bypasser's arm
To caulk a horizon of blinking eyelashes
Which are whisper-fused into a single strand
Which goes to sleep around the necks of museum-guards
Like a monk's cell of leeches
Who place their lips close to the mirror and blow your face off it
But your face doesn't fly away
It remains to fan the embers of mist
Like a skyscraper tied into a bow-knot

The fragrance of your favorite imminent rockslide
Bobs up and down like a burglar's strip of plastic
Which slams his footprints shut upon his fingerprints
In whose winds shivers the vineyard of Salome's ankles
Buzzsaw is wine to ankles
Massaging the keyholes of a prow
Splitting waves into name rank and serial number
Like the vomit of medals-of-honor saying George Washington Slept Here
Swaying over the grave saying Richard Nixon Sleeps Here
Tomorrow dolphins will pour out a beard of taillights
And sew tonguetwisters here and there
Among the rosegarden's rays of bacon
While balancing on a treefork of bloodtests

The genius of heraldic handgrenades
Thrown into the Senate
Gave your face that radiance of petals of fetish
Bloody as the dew inside a sweatdrop
Lingering on island shores to multiply the mirrors in a dive
Ravaging the shadows of stethoscope
Of a bloodclot tattooed by cheers
In sign-languages whose LP is cut
By your diamond stylus clitoris riding my mouth's grooves
Red and blue blue and lavender lavender and vertigo
Lionesses are all alike
Draping you from head to toe in wood-rasps
Of purple grease of glaciers
Spurting from a lizard's spine of spices' skylines
Which shave the hair from your armpits
And glue it in the crack between my asscheeks
Of sequin rabies
So that whichever leopard-spot is sprung
To shatter the teethmarks dangling from rockets
Herding legends through the Rasputin-tenderized echoes
Of a sundial of coiffures
Of a ocean of musk-candles
Whose favorite question they like to ask me is Shh

A shudder empties itself into your eyes
Like a diamond's waterbearers who are bleeding
A rainbow's rind of centipede keyholes
Perhaps
The giant soothants are migrating
Beaded groans set a match to a leash of caresses
Which burp the gloves
Maddened by a decibel's aroma
Of scuba eyedroppers
In a meat cleaver's forest of trapdoors
Like the obelisk flesh that covered your teeth when you were born
Fragrant as a sandgrain flooding a mirror
Whose age is reckoned by how many rings of your face pierce its nose
Because its nose is a liferaft in case a salt-shaker capsizes
In the middle of the table
Like a wax leopard-spot
Ejecting shells of oracle
So that the pie-in-the-face, purification of heiroglyphs
From which ooze
Castanets mating in a glass of catgut
Will jump up and down like a wallaby
Who mistakes wall-cracks for flashbulbs
Of your dream-karat hair
Engraved by a nest of escape-valves upon the purple mattresses of drone
Milking a cave of triphammer perfumes
Torn by your soddering groin of strangled figurines
Who gape at each other through a rudder of eagles
Who skeletonize their swordplay with whirlpool ash
Who blow bubblegum into my clitoris through its hollow fangs
Who tour the ruins of opium nuns used by magic soothstorms
Who test the water by throwing a tightrope into it
If the tightrope rolls up juries for a paperclip
If it violets so loud each of its eyelashes must be bandaged with separate islants
Then your navel of globes tripping over flying fish
Of time-elapse guitars will weep
A candle-mere
Neoned by spit like a black elbow-length purr
On which floats a palace of termite jaws
Which you rub your musk against every dial-tone's evening
Like a pointillist torturer
Like stigmata rolled in dough
Like breathing through reeds of piss
Like hunchbacked mole syrup
Like swimming under gong chessmatches with a finger of moaning display-cases

Gorged on the missing-link of semen
DETACHABLE MONUMENTS
Your kiss tastes like meat yanked from a serpent's mouth
Your tongs-of-midnight hair dissolves like cages
Tiptoeing fearfully past their occupants
You run off to harvest the end of a kitestring
Like perfumes laden with provisions for the mirror
Your smile that illegitimate ghost of tugboats
Sinks
Down through the dice that creaked as you passed
The castles fly away like a desert of ear-ache
Reaffirming my desires

Concordance Explained

There are 4 sections in the concordance. The first is a real concordance which shows for every word which poems it is in—the poems are numbered from 1–31 because in “Nights of Naomi” they don’t have names. I didn’t include the two songs in the Barn Dream Press edition. The second section lists the words used once, twice, etc in the poems as a whole. For example, *perfume* was used 5 times in all the poems taken together. The heading

Words Used 5 Times [9]

means that there were 9 words used 5 times.

The third section lists the words used in one, two, etc poems. For example, *tongue* was used in 6 different poems. The heading

Words Used in 6 Poems [2]

means that there were 2 words used in 6 poems.

The last section is the most interesting in some ways. It lists pairs of poems with the words they have in common, sorted from the pair with the most words in common to the pair with the least where each pair has at least one pair in common. Let’s look at the heading and first entry to see how to read this:

N **Pair** **Words in Common**

38 4, 13 Birthmark, Blackboard, Breathing, Cilia, Coma, Deathmarch, Deck, Diamond, Fatal, Growing, Headhunter, Hinged, Jelly, Key, Marquee, Mauve, Maze, Moo, Needle, Ore, Palette, Pencil, Ping, Propped, Putty, Rusty, Sandstorm, Skintight, Somersault, Stereo, Strangler, Swoop, Tanager, Test, Tress, Tube, Warped, Yodeling

This says that poem 4 and poem 13 had 38 words in common, and the third column is the list of those words. So, **N** means number of words in common, **Pair** means this is the poem pair, and **Words in Common** are the words in common.

I compiled these lists as follows. I used a scanner to scan in all the poems and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to convert the scanned images into words represented in the computer. So, for each poem I had the words in it in order. I then wrote a couple of simple programs to analyze the poems to produce the concordance you see.

The programs did the following things: First they canonicalized the words by eliminating what I thought were common words (I eliminated words like *a*, *an*, *the*, etc.) and by mapping plurals to singulars. The programs to compute each of the sections are quite simple. For the first and third sections, the program scans each poem and makes a table of word-poems pairs where each pair has the word as its first element and the list of poems in which it appears as the second. Then the program formats the table into the form you see for the first section. The program then aggregates words into buckets where number *n* contains the words that appear in *n* poems (so, bucket number 3 contains those words that appear in 3 poems). Then the program formats the buckets into the form you see for the third section.

For the second section, the program scans through all the poems, looking at each word, and producing a table of word-count pairs. Then the program formats this table into the form you see.

For the fourth section, the program considers all pairs of poems, computes the set of words in common (by looking at all pairs of words to see if they are the same). I programmed this part a little oddly: I considered two words to be the same not only if they were exactly the same, but also if there was at least a 4-letter word in common. So, *jelly* and *jellyfish* would be considered the same for the purpose

of computing this list. This accounts for Knott's compound words in a rudimentary way. The resulting table was then formatted into the form you see.

I wrote these programs quickly and would refine them more were I to wish to present the results broadly. In general, I would need to examine the results carefully to adjust how words are canonicalized and to refine how common subwords should be considered. To give you a rough idea, from start to finish this exercise took me about 3 hours. For your amusement (to show that this is really quite simple), I've included the source code (in Lisp) for the computation of the fourth section on the next page.

```

(defun words5 (l)
  (let ((poems (let ((n 0))
                 (mapcar #'(lambda (x)
                             (incf n)
                             (list n
                                   (remove-duplicates
                                    (copylist
                                     (mapcan #'canonicalize x))))))
                           l)))
        (alist nil))
    (do ((poems poems (cdr poems))
        ((null poems) t)
        (do ((rest-poems (cdr poems) (cdr rest-poems))
            ((null rest-poems) nil))
          (let ((in-common
                 (intersection
                  (second (first poems)) (second (first rest-poems))
                  :test
                  #'(lambda (x y)
                      (or (eq x y)
                          (let ((s1 (symbol-name x))
                              (s2 (symbol-name y)))
                            (cond ((< 3 (min (length s1) (length s2)))
                                   (cond((< (length s1) (length s2))
                                         (search s1 s2 :test #'char=))
                                       (t (search s2 s1 :test #'char=))))
                              (t nil))))))))
            (let ((n (length in-common)))
              (push (list n
                          (list (first (first poems))
                                (first (first rest-poems)))
                          in-common)
                    alist))))))
    (dolist (entry alist)
      (setf (third entry) (sort (third entry) #'alphalessp)))
    (dolist (entry (sort alist #'(lambda (x y) (< (first y) (first x))))
      (unless (= 0 (first entry))
        (format t "~D-C~D, ~D-C~{~A~^, ~}~%"
                (first entry) #\tab
                (first (second entry))
                (second (second entry)) #\tab
                (mapcar
                 #'(lambda (w) (string-capitalize (symbol-name w)))
                 (third entry))))))
  t))

```

Appendix: Concordance for “Nights of Naomi”

Concordance

13th 8	Bandaged 31	Boyfriend 18	Center 8	Coral 25
1st 16	Bankvault 1	Bracelet 25,26	Centipede 31	Coralfusion 10
2nd 16	Bare 17	Breast 3,16	Century 25	Corner 15,17
Abacuse 18	Barking 2	Breathing 4,13,31	Ceremony 23	Corpse 21
Abandoned 25	Bathed 8	Breeze 6,25	Change 26	Corridor 3
About 24	Batman 20	Brick 25	Chant 19	Cosmetic 3
Above 25	Be 3,7,31	Bridge 25	Charm 26	Course 10
Absence 26	Beach 8,13	Broken 25,26	Cheekbone 25	Covered 31
According 26	Beache 26	Brow 22	Cheeping 26	Crack 30,31
Ache 32	Beaded 31	Bruce 20	Cheer 30	Cracked 26
After 8	Beak 1	Bruise 10	Cheese 15	Creaked 32
Against 31	Beard 28,29	Brush 10	Cherry25	Croak 25
Age 31	Beautiful 17,26	Brushing 24	Chess 26	Crosseyed 16
Air 26	Beauty 6	Bubblegum 31	Chessmatche 31	Crouch 10
Alcatraz 3	Beavertail 25	Building 8	Chew 1	Crowd 3,25
Alike 30	Became 19	Burglar 29	Child 2	Crushed 24,26
Alive 21	Because 1,17,23,31	Buried 24	Children 3,22,25	Crushing 13
Alone 19,25	Bed 13	Burned 17	Chime 25	Cueball 5
Alphabet 8	Bee 3,27	Burning 25	Chisel 20	Cuntsync 19
Always 13,22,25	Before 8	Burnt 13	Choir 10	Cured 10
Amnesia 3,26	Behind 7	Burp 31	Cigar 25	Curtain 19
Amnesiac 10	Being 3,8,21,25,26	Burrowing 25	Cilia 4,13	Curtained 26
Among 29	Belly 27	Buttered 1	Circus 27	Cushion 18,19
Amputated 10	Best 18,21	Butterfly 25	Circusnet 19	Cut 30
Amused 3	Bigtoe 20	Buzzsaw 1,29	Clamor 26	Dairy 22
Ancient 8	Biographical 22	Bypasser 28	Clandestine 9	Dance 15
Ankle 29	Birth 15	Cabbage 10	Claw 22,26	Dancer 10
Antelope 15	Birthmark 4,13	Cage 21,32	Cleaning 25	Dancing 19
Any 26	Bitter 15	Caged 19	Cleat 22	Dangling 30
Apocalypse 19	Black 3,19,31	Calendar 27	Cleaver 31	Dark 1
Apparatus 25	Blackboard 4,13	Called 17	Clef 25	Darkroom 2
Applause 18	Bladed 26	Calling 26	Clitoris 18,24,26, 30,31	Deadend 9
Aquarium 2	Blastingpowdered 13	Cameo 18	Clitoriscount 8	Deathmarch 4, 13
Arm 28	Bleeding 31	Can 1,10,13	Clock 25	Decibel 31
Armpit 21,30	Blind 24	Candle 30,31	Close 24,28	Decipher 19
Aroma 31	Blinded 14	Candycane 25	Closet 13,25	Deck 4,13
Around 8,13,24,28	Blindfold 18	Caning 15	Clothed 9	Defanged 14
Asbesto 15	Blink 3	Canteen 3	Cloud 3,23	Defusing 25
Ash 31	Blinking 28	Canyon 25	Cloudy 22	Delivering 3
Ask 30	Bloodclot 30	Capillary 24	Coathanger 3	Dervish 19
Asking 3	Bloodfilled 15	Capsize 31	Cocoa 10	Desert 32
Assassin 14	Bloodtest 29	Capsule 15	Cocoon 22	Desire 32
Asscheek 30	Bloody 30	Captain 23	Coiffure 30	Desperately 23
Asshole 18,19	Blow 9,18,25,28,31	Caress 3,10,13,17, 24,26,31	Coiffured 22	Despite 21
Asterisk 25	Blowgun 1,3	Carousel 15	Collision 10	Detachable 32
Attack 14,24	Blown 28	Carper 8	Color 11,26	Dew 30
Attacking 13	Blue 2,3,8,11,15, 16,19,24,26,27,30	Carve 18	Colored 10	Dial 31
Attempt 5	Blurred 7	Carved 10	Coma 4,13	Diamond 4,13,30,31
Audible 25	Board 26	Case 4,31	Come 26	Dice 10,32
Aura 24	Bob 29	Castanet 31	Comet 9	Different 13,26
Autopsy 15	Bodystocking 24	Caste 25	Comicbook 19	Dimension 13
Away 26,28,32	Boiling 23	Castle 32	Coming 3	Dinging 23
Back 9,25	Bone 24	Catgut 31	Compass 19	Disappear 27
Backed 15	Book 22	Cattle 9	Contempt 10	Discolored 7
Bacon 29	Boring 10	Caulk 28	Control 26	Disconnected 7
Balancing 29	Born 21,31	Cave 19,31	Conveyerbelt 24	Disembody 23
Balcony 15	Bottle 3	Cawed 25	Convulsive 19	Display 4,31
Ballerina 18,20	Bottlecap 24	Cell 28	Cool 13	Dissolve 32
Ballroom 14	Bow 28	Cello 13	Copernicus 2	Distance 24
Banana 3				Dive 25,30

Doesnt 28	Expert 13	Forever 16,27	Guitar 31	Inescapable 24
Dog 10,26	Explain 26	Forget 5,10,23	Gull 9	Infrared 24
Dolphin 29	Exploded 19	Form 17	Gun 25	Ingot 22
Donut 18	Explosion 26	Forth 18	Gusher 25,26	Inhabit 24
Door 1	Eye 13,18,22,24,31	Fossil 24	Gypsy 3	Inhale 19
Double 18	Eyed 25	Found 8	Hailstone 19	Inlay 18
Doublejointedness 1	Eyedropper 16,31	Fragility 17	Hair 1,3,8,9,10,19, 23,24,30,31,32	Inside 25,30
Dough 31	Eyelash 1,25,28,31	Fragment 24	Hairspray 25	Insomnia 5
Drank 8	Eyellet 25	Fragrance 29	Half 3	Installed 19
Draping 30	Eyelid 5,13,19	Fragrant 31	Halo 9,19	Instrument 3,22
Drawn 26	Face 3,7,18,28,30,31	Frame 26	Halve 19	Invented 5,11
Dream 10,18,31	Facing 15	Frenzy 19	Hand 10,15,17	Inverted 14
Dreaming 14	Fading 10	Fronc 24	Handgrenade 30	Inviolate 12
Dredgerboat 19	Fallout 25	Front 2	Handpuppetry 26	Invisibility 22
Dressed 22	Family 25	Frost 25	Hang 7	Island 30
Drifting 6	Fan 28	Fuck 7	Harbor 3	Islant 31
Drinking 24	Fang 6,31	Fuel 24	Harvest 32	Jabber 26
Dripping 24	Fatal 4,13	Fume 24	Hate 14	Jacketed 13
Drone 31	Favorite 29,30	Fun 27	Haughty 26	Jade 9
Droolqueen 18	Fearfully 3,32	Fur 23	Haunting 27	Javelin 13
Drowned 3	Feed 25	Fuse 8	Head 8,10,26,28,30	Jaw 31
Drowning 25,27	Feet 25	Fused 28	Headhunter 4,13	Jawbone 23
Dune 2	Felt 10	Galloping 3	Headless 1	Jelly 4
Dwarf 3	Fetish 30	Gape 6,31	Hear 11	Jellybean 13
Dynamite 3	Fiagellant 9	Gash 14,24,25	Hearing 11	Jellyfish 19
Eagle 8,31	Figurine 31	Gave 30	Heel 26	Jewel 19
Ear 3,17,32	Filled 20	Gazed 25	Heiroglyph 31	Jewelry 3
Echo 10,23,25,30	Find 8,24	Genital 3	Held 16,17,18	John 20
Eclipse 24	Fine 27	Genius 30	Help 18	Join 17,21
Ejecting 31	Finger 7,31	George 29	Heraldric 30	Joliet 3
EIapse 31	Fingerprint 29	Ghost 32	Herding 30	Juggler 2
Elbow 31	Finishline 23	Giant 24,31	Himself 10	Juice 24
Electric 24	Fire 18	Gill 27	Hinged 4,13,23	Jump 27,31
Electrolysis 10	First 8,18,22,25	Glacier 26,30	Hold 10	Jungle 9
Eleven 10	Fish 18,31	Glance 3,22	Holding 17	Jury 31
Elongated 19	Fissure 8	Glancing 2,9,25	Hole 6,10	Karat 31
Ember 28	Fist 2	Glass 16,31	Hollow 31	Keats 20
Embrace 17	Flame 24	Glimpse 26	Homaging 9	Keep 13
Empty 2, 24, 31	Flare 22	Gloating 22	Honey 24	Keg 27
Enchantment 19	Flaregun 19	Globe 31	Honor 29	Key 4,13,25
End 8,32	Flashbacking 25	Glove 31	Hoofbeat 26	Keyhole 14,29,31
Engine 10	Flashbulb 31	Glow 1	Horizon 19,24,28	Kidnap 19
Engraved 31	Fleeing 10	Glue 30	Horse 27	Kidnapped 13
Enriched 26	Fleet 25	Glued 26	Hotel 6	Killed 21
Entrail 26	Fleming 23	God 3	Howl 19	Kindle 25
Erased 13	Flesh 18,19,31	Gold 10	Howling 3,15,18	Kiss 8,18,32
Eraser 10	Flew 16	Gong 31	Human 23	Kitestring 32
Escape 13,25,31	Flightplan 25	Goodby 28	Humming 25	Knee 13
Etcetera 3	Float 31	Gorged 32	Hunchbacked 31	Knife 24
Even 1	Floating 17,18	Gouged 13	Iceberg 8	Knife 25
Evening 31	Flood 17	Grape 12	Illegitimate 32	Knot 28
Event 24	Flooded 4	Grateful 1	Illusion 21	Laborpain 10
Ever 15	Flooding 31	Grave 29	Imminent 29	Lace 25
Every 8,31	Floor 8,13,18	Graze 3	Immune 10	Laden 32
Everybody 21	Fluent 22	Grease 30	Impale 10	Lair 9
Everything 8,10	Flute 15	Great 24	Inaccessible 19	Laminate 23
Exactly 20	Fly 28,32	Green 13,26	Incantation 24	Lampshade 15
Examined 3	Flying 31	Grid 24	Incense 9	Landing 22
Example 2	Foam 17	Groan 31	Incest 24	Landingstrip 14
Except 3,10,23	Foot 25	Groin 8,31	Incestuous 23	Landlord 23
Exclaim 13	Footprint 10,29	Groove 30	Incision 18,23	Landscape 13
Exhumed 19	Forced 9	Grovel 22,26	Indigo 25	Language 8,30
Exist 3	Forehead 12	Growing 4,13,21	Indolence 19	Languorine 19
Existence 10	Foreskin 25	Growling 8	Induced 14	Languorous 14
Exit 19	Forest 31	Guard 28		Laser 8

Last 8	Makeup 18	Moving 25	Orchard 14,26	Plucking 10
Laughter 18	Manual 21	Multiply 30	Orchestra 3	Plush 9
Laurel 13	Map 2	Murder 23	Ore 4,13	Poet 22
Lavender 30	Mare 9	Murmuring 19	Oscilloscopic 24	Poetry 22
Lavished 6	Marquee 4,13,17	Museum 28	Other 15,22,31	Pointillist 31
Lazy 1	Marrow 3,25	Musk 30,31	Otter 25	Polar 25
Leap 19	Marshga 19	Mustache 25	Our 15,16	Policemen 28
Learned 3	Marshmello 13	Muted 25	Out 2,3,7,8,10,13, 16,17,18,25,29	Pollen 19,25
Leash 31	Marsupialism 21	Muteness 22	Outstretched 10	Pontoon 16
Leave 2,10	Mask 10,22	Muzzled 9	Overnight 25	Pony 25
Leavenworth 3	Maskflurry 18	Myself 8	Oysterbed 24	Pore 14,20
Leeche 28	Maskgraft 9	Nailed 12	Painful 9	Portrait 7,14
Left 3	Massaging 29	Nakedness 24	Palace 19,31	Portion 19
Leg 7,10	Masseuse 9	Name 3,10,14,29	Palate 25	Pounang 25
Legend 30	Mast 1	Naomi 20	Pale 14	Pour 18,29
Legendary 7	Match 31	Napehair 25	Palette 4,13	Preening 25
Lemon 1	Mating 31	Navel 16,25,31	Panel 26	Prefrontal 1
Length 31	Mattresse 31	Nearly 10	Paperclip 31	Prism 19
Leopard 30,31	Mauve 4,13	Neck 28	Parachute 10,19	Prison 3
Lesbian 7,17	Maybe 3	Needle 2,4,13	Parallel 25	Profile 9
Less 8	Maze 1,4,13	Negligently 8	Paroxysm 8	Promise 25
Lessly 8	Meanwhile 17	Neon 10	Parrot 3	Prop 23
Letter 8	Measuringtape 1	Neoned 31	Part 10	Propitiate 25
Levitation 18	Meat 31,32	Nest 31	Passed 32	Propped 4,13
Liberate 10	Medal 29	Never 3,10,23	Past 32	Provision 32
Lick 22	Melting 8	Nevertheless 13	Pastorale 28	Prow 25,29
Lie 3,9	Mercy 8	Newmown 26	Pat 10	Prying 2
Life 3	Merrygoround 24	Night 3,18	Paused 23	Pubic 19,24
Lifeguard 15	Method 14	Nightgown 25	Peace 1	Public 24
Liferaft 31	Microphone 19	Nightingaleman 20	Peer 26	Puffadder 19
Light 3,18	Microscope 25	Nimbus 13	Pencil 4,13	Puffbode 10
Lighter 24	Mid 13	Nipple 18,22,24	Penis 16,24,26	Pulling 8,13
Lightning 16,25	Middle 31	Nixon 29	People 10,24	Puma 25
Lightningbolt 1	Midnight 32	No 3,7,8	Perched 25	Purification 31
Lime 1	Migrating 31	Noose 10	Perfecting 25	Purple 9,15,18,22, 26,30,31
Limp 9,11	Milk 25	Nose 31	Perfume 19,26,31,32	Purr 31
Limping 13	Milking 31	Nosed 10	Perfumed 26	Putty 4
Line 7,10	Million 24	Nostril 22	Perfumery 1	Puttying 13
Linger 13	Mimed 25	Not 1	Perhap 31	Question 30
Lingering 30	Minaret 14	Notary 24	Permeate 24	Quicksand 22
Link 32	Mind 3	Note 22	Person 25	Rabies 30
Lioness 30	Mirage 19	Nothing 8	Petal 25,30	Radiance 30
Lip 2,3,22,28	Mirror 3,9,10,13,17, 26,28,30,31,32	Novice 9	Petersberg 25	Rain 3
Lipstick 12	Misprint 21	Numb 19	Petrified 24	Rainbow 13,31
List 25	Missing 25,32	Numbered 1	Pick 22	Rank 29
Lit 12	Missionary 25	Number 29	Picture 26	Rapture 20
Lizard 30	Mist 13,28	Nun 31	Pie 31	Rasp 30
Lock 28	Mistake 25,31	Obelisk 31	Pierce 31	Rasputin 30
Loftiness 18	Moaning 31	Occupant 32	Pierced 3	Ravaging 30
Longer 3	Moist 26	Ocean 3,13,18,30	Pile 23	Ray 29
Loud 31	Mole 31	Oceanfloor 24	Pillow 24	Razed 25
Loudest 1	Momentary 19	Octopus 13	Pincer 25	Razorblade 10
Love 7,10,14	Monk 28	Oculist 25	Pineneedle 15	Read 22
Low 26	Monocle 19	Ode 3	Ping 4,13	Reaffirming 32
Lp 30	Montage 22	Offer 24	Pink 6	Reborn 13
Lubricious 25	Monument 32	Often 18	Pinned 24	Reckoned 31
Lubriciousness 1	Moo 4,13	Olive 26	Pinprick 18	Recoilless 10
Luminous 10	Morning 8	One 11,13,17,22	Piss 31	Red 30
Lunge 9	Moron 16	Only 1,3,7,10,13	Pit 24	Reed 31
Luxurious 3	Mosaic 19	Ooze 31	Place 28	Refuse 21
Lying 21	Moss 18	Open 2,8,13,26	Plain 10	Remain 28
Machinery 17	Mound 26	Opium 31	Planecrashe 19	Remember 1,10,24
Maddened 31	Mouth 14,24,30,32	Optical 21	Plastic 29	Replacing 3
Magic 8,25,31	Movie 13	Oracle 25,31	Playing 15	Resisted 15
Make 23		Orange 10,13		

Rest 13	Sea 3	Skinny 19	Spurting 18,30	Swordswallower 9
Restaurant 21	Seagreen 24	Skintight 4,13	Squirt 9	Symptom 3
Rhonda 23	Seamless 19	Skydiver 20	St 25	Syringe 2,18
Richard 29	Seance 10	Skyline 30	Stab 2,8	Syrup 31
Richchering 20	Searching 13	Skyscraper 28	Stabbed 22	System 25
Richlyrobed 10	Seashell 24	Slam 29	Stable 19	T-Square 24
Riding 30	Season 13	Slammed 3	Stagefright 24	Table 31
Right 3	Seated 10	Slant 25,27	Stammer 10	Tail 13
Rind 31	Secrete 24	Slash 18	Stamp 25	Taillight 29
Ring 31	Secretive 26	Slave 25	Stampede 3	Taking 8
Ripped 22	Sect 8	Sleep 17,22,28,29	Star 8	Tallest 15
Ripple 8,13	Seizure 12	Sleepwalker 24	Starfish 4	Tanager 4,13
Robot 10	Self 7,14	Sleepy 13	Starlight 6	Tapestry 16
Rocket 24,30	Semen 10,18,32	Slept 29	Starry 15	Tasseled 24
Rockslide 29	Senate 30	Slicing 3	Statue 8,18,23,25	Taste 11,32
Roll 31	Sense 11,21,26	Slinky 26	Steam 10	Tattoo 18
Rolled 31	Sensible 14	Slope 23	Steeple 19	Tattooed 30
Room 13,17,25	Sentence 26	Slowly 8,13	Stereo 4,13	Teeth 31
Ropeladder 25	Sentry 26	Smack 2	Stethoscope 30	Teethmark 30
Rosegarden 29	Separate 31	Smashing 15	Stiffled 2	Telescope 24
Route 25	Separated 14	Smear 10	Stigmata 31	Tell 10
Rub 31	Sequin 13,30	Smell 11	Still 3	Ten 17
Rubble 18	Serial 29	Smile 32	Stop 18	Tenderized 30
Ruby 26	Serpent 26,32	Smokestack 26	Strand 28	Tendril 9
Rudder 31	Set 18,31	Snake 10	Strange 7	Tentacle 15
Ruin 31	Sew 29	Snapping 18	Strangled 31	Termite 31
Run 32	Shadow 3,30	Sneer 1	Strangler 4,13	Terrace 16
Rustling 3	Shaker 31	Snorkel 25	Streamlined 25	Test 4,13,31
Rusty 4,13	Shallow 10	Snow 14,25	Streetlight 10	Tested 25
Sabertoothed 19	Shape 2,13	Snowflake 15,24	Stretch 8	Thawing 13
Saddlesore 25	Shatter 30	Snowpeak 19	Stretching 16	Theme 25
Sage 10	Shave 30	Soddering 31	Striate 19	Themselves 25
Sailorsuit 25	Shed 13,22	Soft 6	String 15	There 22,25,29
Saliva 8	Sheered 18	Solace 25	Strip 29	Therefore 3
Salome 29	Shell 31	Soliloquy 1	Stump 13	Thigh 8
Salt 31	Shh 3,30	Solitude 19	Stunned 25	Thimble 25
Saltmine 10	Shimmer 2	Somersault 4,13	Stylus 30	Thimbley 3
Salve 14	Shimmy 14	Soothant 31	Submissive 9	Thing 27
Same 13,20	Shipwreck 10	Soothstorm 31	Successfully 15	Thorn 19
Sandgrain 31	Shit 12	Sound 26	Suck 23	Those 26
Sandstorm 4,13	Shiver 8,29	Sowing 24	Suddenly 13,24	Thread 13,26
Sank 8	Shoelace 19	Space 26	Suffer 21	Three 9
Sap 23	Shore 25,30	Spark 19,27	Sulk 25	Throat 9
Sargasso 19	Should 3	Sparkle 23	Sun 13	Throated 19
Satin 3	Shoulder 3	Spasm 19	Sundial 14,30	Throe 3
Savored 16	Shouting 8	Spasmelodic 14	Sunlamp 7	Throw 18
Sawed 25	Shrapnel 22	Spear 19	Suntan 25	Throwing 3,8,31
Sawing 3	Shrug 1	Species 9	Surge 24	Thrown 30
Saxophone 24	Shudder 31	Speed 10	Surgery 8	Thunder 13
Saying 29	Shushes 1	Spent 2,3	Surrounded 3,26	Tibetan 17
Scale 21	Shut 13,29	Sperm 18	Survival 21	Tide 26
Scamper 1	Sigh 13	Spermtip 19	Swallowed 6	Tied 28
Scan 13	Sight 10,11	Sphinx 1	Swan 18	Tightrope 21,31
Scar 7	Sign 30	Spice 30	Sway 24	Time 8,18,28,31
Scenic 8	Silver 13	Spigot 25	Swaying 29	Tipoeing 32
Scent 22	Sinbad 26	Spine 30	Sweat 13,22	Toe 14,30
Scented 15	Single 8,21,28	Spinning 10	Sweatband 15	Toed 10
Scissor 27	Sink 9,18,32	Spit 31	Sweatdrop 30	Tollbooth 25
Scorchmark 15	Sip 16	Spittle 6	Sweating 24	Tomorrow 3,29
Scream 2	Sirrocco 25	Splitting 29	Sweeping 25	Tone 31
Screeching 22	Sister 3	Spot 30,31	Swimmer 26	Tong 32
Screwed 13	Skeletonize 31	Spotlight 14	Swimming 31	Tongue 6,8,10,13, 19,24
Scroll 3	Skin 16	Spraying 25	Swimmingpool 19	Tonguetwister 29
Scrotum 18	Skingraft 17,19	Sprinkled 13	Swoop 4,13	Too 1
Scuba 31	Skinned 21	Sprung 30	Swordplay 31	

Torn 31	Volcanoe 25
Torpedoe 23	Vomit 29
Torso 7	Waft 4
Torturer 31	Walk 26
Toss 15	Wall 7,31
Touch 11	Wallaby 31
Tour 31	Walnut 1
Tower 1	Wandering 2
Tracing 25	Warned 25
Trampoline 3	Warp 13
Trap 25	Warped 4
Trapdoor 31	Washed 10
Trapped 1	Washington 29
Tree 8	Watch 13
Treefork 29	Water 31
Tress 4,13	Waterbearer 31
Triangulate 25	Waterfall 25
Trigger 24	Wave 28,29
Trillion 13	Wax 31
Triphammer 31	Way 3,20
Tripod 25	Wayne 20
Tripping 31	Wearing 22
Trism 27	Weep 31
Trumpet 10	Weighing 21
Tube 4,13	Welded 13
Tugboat 32	Where 8,13,18,19, 22,25,26
Tumble 19	Whichever 30
Tuned 25	Whidh 22
Tuningfork 6	While 3,29
Turd 13	Whip 22,26
Turn 7	Whirlpool 15,31
Turpentine 25	Whisper 28
Turtle 14	Whispering 8,10
Twilight 25	White 13,26,28
Twin 22	Whitewashed 24
Twine 24	Whooshing 27
Twist 13	Wind 8,10,29
Twisting 13	Window 3,10,18
Two 13	Wine 23,29
Unborn 10	Wing 26
Under 31	Wink 3
Union 21	Wispy 26
Unless 3	Withdrawal 3
Unlock 13	Woke 24
Used 27,31	Woman 10
Using 20,21	Womb 13
Valve 31	Wood 30
Vampire 19	Word 8
Van 25	World 8
Vanished 8	Wound 25
Velvet 10	Write 3,18
Venom 8,22	Writhe 22
Venue 26	Writing 3
Vertigo 30	Xerox 9
Vestigial 18	Xylophone 25
View 18	Yanked 32
Vineyard 25,29	Year 2,24
Violet 31	Yellow 17,26
Virtue 26	Yodeling 3,4,10,13
Visible 17	Zebra 3
Visigoth 19	
Vivisected 3	
Vocalcord 25	
Voice 25	
Volcano 26	

Words Used Once [1118]

13th	Belly	Carpet	Corpse	Droolqueen	Fleeing	Great
1st	Bigroe	Carve	Corridor	Drowned	Fleet	Grid
2nd	Biographical	Carved	Cosmetic	Dune	Fleming	Groan
Abacuse	Birth	Castanet	Course	Dwarf	Flew	Groove
Abandoned	Bitter	Caste	Covered	Dynamite	Flghtplan	Growing
About	Bladed	Castle	Cracked	Eclipse	Float	Guard
Above	Blastingpow- dered	Cargut	Creaked	Ejecting	Flood	Guitar
Absence	Bleeding	Cattle	Croak	Elapse	Flooded	Gull
According	Blind	Caulk	Crosseyed	Elbow	Flooding	Gun
Ache	Blinded	Cawed	Crouch	Electric	Fluent	Gypsy
After	Blindfold	Cell	Crushing	Electrolysis	Flute	Hailstone
Against	Blink	Cello	Cueball	Eleven	Flying	Hairspray
Age	Blinking	Center	Cuntsync	Elongated	Foam	Halve
Air	Bloodclot	Centipede	Cured	Ember	Foot	Handgrenade
Alcatraz	Bloodfilled	Century	Curtain	Embrace	Forced	Handpup- petry
Alike	Bloodtest	Ceremony	Curtained	Enchantment	Forehead	Hang
Alive	Bloody	Change	Cut	Engine	Foreskin	Harbor
Alphabet	Blown	Chant	Dairy	Engraved	Forest	Harvest
Amnesiac	Blurred	Charm	Dance	Enriched	Form	Hate
Among	Board	Cheekbone	Dancer	Entrail	Forth	Haughty
Amputated	Bob	Cheeping	Dancing	Erased	Fossil	Headless
Amused	Bobstocking	Cheer	Dangling	Eraser	Found	Hear
Ancient	Boiling	Chesse	Dark	Etcetera	Fragility	Hearing
Antelope	Bone	Cherry	Darkroom	Even	Fragment	Heel
Any	Boring	Chess	Deadend	Evening	Fragrance	Heiroglyph
Apocalypse	Bottle	Chessmatche	Decibel	Event	Fragrant	Help
Apparatus	Bottlecap	Chew	Decipher	Ever	Frame	Heraldric
Applause	Bow	Child	Defanged	Everybody	Frenzy	Hersding
Aquarium	Boyfriend	Chime	Defusing	Exactly	Fron	Himself
Arm	Brick	Chisel	Delivering	Examined	Front	Hold
Aroma	Bridge	Choir	Dervish	Example	Frost	Holding
Asbesto	Brow	Cigar	Desert	Exclaim	Fuck	Hollow
Ash	Bruce	Circus	Desire	Exhumed	Fuel	Homaging
Ask	Bruise	Circusnet	Desperately	Exist	Fume	Honey
Asking	Brush	Clamor	Despite	Existence	Fun	Honor
Assassin	Brushing	Clandestine	Detachable	Exit	Fur	Hoofbeat
Asscheek	Bubblegum	Cleaning	Dew	Expert	Fuse	Horse
Asterisk	Building	Cleat	Dial	Explain	Fused	Hotel
Attacking	Burglar	Cleaver	Dimension	Exploded	Galloping	Howl
Attempt	Buried	Clef	Dinging	Explosion	Gave	Human
Audible	Burned	Clitorisunt	Disappear	Eyed	Gazed	Humming
Aura	Burning	Clock	Discolored	Eyelet	Genital	Hunchbacked
Autopsy	Burnt	Clothed	Disconnected	Facing	Genius	Iceberg
Backed	Burp	Cloudy	Disembody	Fading	George	Illegitimate
Bacon	Burrowing	Coathanger	Dissolve	Fallout	Ghost	Illusion
Balancing	Buttered	Cocoa	Distance	Family	Gill	Imminent
Balcony	Butterfly	Cocoon	Doesnt	Fan	Glimpse	Immune
Ballroom	Bypasser	Coiffure	Dolphin	Feed	Gloating	Impale
Banana	Cabbage	Coiffured	Donut	Feet	Globe	Inaccessible
Bandaged	Caged	Collision	Door	Felt	Glove	Incantation
Bankvault	Calendar	Colored	Double	Fetish	Glow	Incense
Bare	Called	Come	Doublejoint- edness	Fiagellant	Glue	Incest
Barking	Calling	Comet	Comicbook	Figurine	Glued	Incestuous
Bathed	Cameo	Comicbook	Dough	Filled	God	Indigo
Batman	Candycane	Coming	Drank	Fine	Gold	Indolence
Beache	Caning	Compass	Draping	Fingerprint	Gong	Induced
Beaded	Canteen	Contempt	Drawn	Finishline	Goodby	Inescapable
Beak	Canyon	Control	Dreaming	Fire	Gorged	Infrared
Beauty	Capillary	Conveyerbelt	Dredgerboat	Fissure	Gouged	Ingot
Beavertail	Capsize	Convulsive	Dressed	Fist	Grape	Inhabit
Became	Capsule	Cool	Drifting	Flame	Grateful	Inhale
Bed	Captain	Copernicus	Drinking	Flaregun	Grave	Inlay
Before	Carousel	Coral	Dripping	Flashbacking	Graze	Insomnia
Behind		Coralfusion	Drone	Flashbulb	Grease	

Installed	Lessly	Middle	Obelisk	Poetry	Ropeladder	Shatter
Inverted	Letter	Midnight	Occupant	Pointillist	Rosegarden	Shave
Inviolate	Levitation	Migrating	Oceanfloor	Polar	Route	Sheered
Invisibility	Liberate	Milk	Octopus	Policemen	Rub	Shell
Island	Lick	Milking	Oculist	Pontoon	Rubble	Shimmer
Islant	Life	Million	Ode	Pony	Ruby	Shimmy
Jabber	Lifeguard	Mimed	Offer	Potion	Rudder	Shipwreck
Jacketed	Liferaft	Minaret	Often	Poungang	Ruin	Shit
Jade	Lighter	Mind	Olive	Preening	Run	Shoelace
Javelin	Lightningbolt	Mirage	Ooze	Prefrontal	Rustling	Should
Jaw	Lime	Misprint	Opium	Prism	Sabertoothed	Shoulder
Jawbone	Limping	Missionary	Optical	Prison	Saddlesore	Shouting
Jelly	Linger	Moaning	Orchestra	Profile	Sage	Shrapnel
Jellybean	Lingering	Moist	Oscilloscopic	Promise	Sailorsuit	Shrug
Jellyfish	Link	Mole	Otter	Prop	Saliva	Shudder
Jewel	Lioness	Momentary	Outstretched	Propitiate	Salome	Shushes
Jewelry	Lipstick	Monk	Overnight	Provision	Salt	Sigh
John	List	Monocle	Oysterbed	Prying	Saltmine	Sign
Joliet	Lit	Montage	Painful	Public	Salve	Silver
Juggler	Lizard	Monument	Palate	Puffadder	Sandgrain	Sinbad
Juice	Lock	Morning	Pale	Puffbode	Sank	Sip
Jungle	Loftiness	Moron	Panel	Puma	Sap	Sirrocco
Jury	Longer	Mosaic	Paperclip	Purification	Sargasso	Sister
Karat	Loud	Moss	Parallel	Purr	Satin	Skeletonize
Keats	Loudest	Mound	Paroxysm	Putty	Savored	Skin
Keep	Low	Movie	Parrot	Putting	Sawed	Skinned
Keg	Lp	Moving	Part	Question	Sawing	Skinny
Kidnap	Lubricious	Multiply	Passed	Quicksand	Saxophone	Skydiver
Kidnapped	Lubricious-	Murder	Past	Rabies	Scale	Skyline
Killed	ness	Murmuring	Pastorale	Radiance	Scamper	Skyscraper
Kindle	Luminous	Museum	Pat	Rain	Scan	Slam
Kitestring	Lunge	Mustache	Paused	Rank	Scar	Slammed
Knee	Luxurious	Muted	Peace	Rapture	Scenic	Slash
Knife	Lying	Muteness	Peer	Rasp	Scent	Slave
Knife	Machinery	Muzzled	Perched	Rasputin	Scented	Sleepwalker
Knot	Maddened	Myself	Perfecting	Ravaging	Scissor	Sleepy
Laborpain	Make	Nailed	Perfumed	Ray	Scorchmark	Slept
Lace	Makeup	Nakedness	Perfumery	Razed	Scream	Slicing
Laden	Manual	Naomi	Perhaps	Razorblade	Screeching	Slinky
Lair	Map	Napehair	Permeate	Read	Screwed	Slope
Laminate	Mare	Nearly	Person	Reaffirming	Scroll	Smack
Lampshade	Marshga	Neck	Petersberg	Reborn	Scrotum	Smashing
Landing	Marshmello	Negligently	Petrified	Reckoned	Scuba	Smearred
Landingstrip	Marsupialism	Neon	Pick	Recoilless	Sea	Smell
Landlord	Maskflurry	Neoned	Picture	Red	Seagreen	Smile
Landscape	Maskgraft	Nest	Pie	Reed	Seamless	Smokestack
Languorine	Massaging	Nevertheless	Pierce	Refuse	Seance	Snapping
Languorous	Masseuse	Newmown	Pierced	Remain	Searching	Sneer
Laser	Mast	Nightgown	Pile	Replacing	Seashell	Snorkel
Last	Match	Nightingale-	Pillow	Resisted	Season	Snowpeak
Laughter	Mating	man	Pincer	Rest	Seated	Soddering
Laurel	Mattresse	Nimbus	Pineneedle	Restaurant	Secrete	Soft
Lavished	Maybe	Nixon	Pink	Rhonda	Secretive	Solace
Lazy	Meanwhile	Noose	Pinned	Richard	Sect	Soliloquy
Leap	Measuring-	Nosed	Pinprick	Richcheting	Seizure	Solitude
Learned	tape	Nostril	Piss	Richlyrobed	Senate	Soothant
Leash	Medal	Not	Pit	Riding	Sensible	Soothstorm
Leavenworth	Melting	Notary	Place	Right	Sentence	Sound
Leeche	Mercy	Note	Plain	Rind	Sentry	Sowing
Left	Merrygor-	Nothing	Planecrashe	Ring	Separate	Space
Legend	ound	Novice	Plastic	Ripped	Separated	Sparkle
Legendary	Method	Numb	Playing	Robot	Serial	Spasm
Lemon	Microphone	Numbered	Plucking	Rockslide	Sew	Spasmelodic
Length	Microscope	Number	Plush	Roll	Shaker	Spear
Less	Mid	Nun	Poet	Rolled	Shallow	Species

Speed	Stop	Swimmer	Themselve	Trampoline	Vampire	Wayne
Sperm	Strand	Swimming	Thigh	Trap	Van	Wearing
Spermtip	Strange	Swimming-	Thimble	Trapdoor	Vanished	Weep
Sphinx	Strangled	pool	Thimbley	Trapped	Velvet	Weighing
Spice	Streamlined	Swordplay	Thing	Tree	Venue	Welded
Spigot	Streetlight	Swordswal-	Thorn	Treefork	Vertigo	Whichever
Spine	Stretch	lower	Those	Triangulate	Vestigial	Whidh
Spinning	Stretching	Symptom	Three	Trigger	View	Whisper
Spit	Striate	Syrup	Throat	Trillion	Violet	Whitewashed
Spittle	String	System	Throated	Triphammer	Virtue	Whooshing
Splitting	Strip	T-Square	Throw	Tripod	Visible	Wing
Spotlight	Stump	Table	Thrown	Tripping	Visigoth	Wink
Spraying	Stunned	Tail	Thunder	Trism	Vivisected	Wispy
Sprinkled	Stylus	Taillight	Tibetan	Trumpet	Vocalcord	Withdrawal
Sprung	Submissive	Taking	Tide	Tugboat	Voice	Woke
Squirt	Successfully	Tallest	Tied	Tumble	Volcano	Woman
St	Suck	Tapestry	Tiptoeing	Tuned	Volcanoe	Womb
Stabbed	Suffer	Tasseled	Toed	Tuningfork	Vomit	Wood
Stable	Sulk	Tattoo	Tollbooth	Turd	Waft	Word
Stagefright	Sun	Tattooed	Tone	Turpentine	Walk	World
Stammer	Sunlamp	Teeth	Tong	Turtle	Wallaby	Wound
Stamp	Suntan	Teethmark	Tongue-	Twilight	Walnut	Writhe
Stampede	Surge	Telescope	twister	Twin	Wandering	Writing
Star	Surgery	Tell	Too	Twine	Warned	Xerox
Starfish	Survival	Ten	Torn	Twist	Warp	Xylophone
Starlight	Swallowed	Tenderized	Torpedoe	Twisting	Warped	Yanked
Starry	Swan	Tendril	Torso	Two	Washed	Zebra
Steam	Sway	Tentacle	Torturer	Unborn	Washington	
Steeple	Swaying	Termite	Toss	Under	Watch	
Stethoscope	Sweatband	Terrace	Touch	Union	Water	
Stified	Sweatdrop	Tested	Tour	Unless	Waterbearer	
Stigmata	Sweating	Thawing	Tower	Unlock	Waterfall	
Still	Sweeping	Theme	Tracing	Valve	Wax	

Words Used Twice [177]

Alone	Cilia	Favorite	Instrument	Our	Shape	Therefore
Amnesia	Claw	Fearfully	Invented	Palace	Shed	Thread
Ankle	Close	Find	Join	Palette	Shh	Throe
Armpit	Closet	Finger	Jump	Pencil	Shiver	Toe
Asshole	Cloud	Fish	Language	People	Shore	Tomorrow
Attack	Color	Flare	Lavender	Petal	Shut	Tress
Back	Coma	Floating	Leave	Ping	Sight	Tube
Ballerina	Corner	Fly	Leg	Pollen	Skingraft	Turn
Beach	Crack	Footprint	Leopard	Portrait	Skintight	Using
Beard	Crowd	Forever	Lesbian	Pour	Slowly	Venom
Beautiful	Crushed	Gape	Lie	Propped	Snow	Vineyard
Bee	Cushion	Giant	Lightning	Prow	Somersault	Wall
Best	Deathmarch	Glacier	Limp	Pubic	Spark	Wave
Birthmark	Deck	Glance	Line	Pulling	Spent	Way
Blackboard	Dice	Glass	Marrow	Rainbow	Spot	While
Blowgun	Different	Green	Mauve	Ripple	Spurting	Whip
Book	Display	Groin	Meat	Rocket	Stab	Whirlpool
Born	Dive	Grovel	Missing	Rusty	Stereo	Whispering
Bracelet	Dog	Gusher	Mist	Same	Strangler	Wine
Breast	Drowning	Half	Mistake	Sandstorm	Suddenly	Write
Breeze	Eagle	Halo	Musk	Saying	Sundial	Year
Broken	End	Haunting	Nose	Self	Surrounded	
Buzzsaw	Everything	Headhunter	Oracle	Sequin	Sweat	
Cage	Eyedropper	Hole	Orange	Serpent	Swoop	
Candle	Fang	Incision	Orchard	Set	Syringe	
Cave	Fatal	Inside	Ore	Shadow	Taste	

Words Used 3 Times [54]

Always	Escape	Glancing	Love	Nipple	Single	Throwing
Away	Every	Growing	Magic	Other	Sink	Tightrope
Breathing	Except	Held	Marquee	Parachute	Slant	White
Case	Eyelid	Hinged	Mask	Penis	Snake	Wind
Children	Flesh	Horizon	Maze	Pore	Snowflake	Window
Dream	Floor	Howling	Moo	Room	Tanager	Yellow
Ear	Forget	Key	Needle	Semen	Test	
Empty	Gash	Keyhole	Never	Sense	There	

Words Used 4 Times [20]

Around	Diamond	Kiss	Name	One	Sleep	Used
Because	Echo	Light	Navel	Open	Statue	Yodeling
Black	Eyelash	Mouth	Ocean	Remember	Time	

Words Used 5 Times [9]

Be	Eye	Head
Blow	First	Night
Can	Hand	Perfume

Words Used 6 Times [5]

Being	No
Clitoris	Tongue
Lip	

Words Used 7 Times [2]

Only
Purple

Words Used 8 Times [3]

Caress
Face
Where

Words Used 10 Times [1]

Mirror

Words Used 11 Times [1]

Hair

Words Used 14 Times [1]

Out

Words Used 16 Times [1]

Blue

Words Used in 1 Poem [1130]

13th	Before	Capsize	Convulsive	Dredgerboat	Fire	Gong
1st	Behind	Capsule	Cool	Dressed	Fissure	Goodby
2nd	Belly	Captain	Copernicus	Drifting	Fist	Gorged
Abacus	Bigtoe	Carousel	Coral	Drinking	Flame	Gouged
Abandoned	Biographical	Carpet	Coralfusion	Dripping	Flare	Grape
About	Birth	Carve	Corpse	Drone	Flaregun	Grateful
Above	Bitter	Carved	Corridor	Droolqueen	Flashbacking	Grave
Absence	Bladed	Castanet	Cosmetic	Drowned	Flashbulb	Graze
According	Blastingpow-	Caste	Course	Dune	Fleeing	Grease
Ache	dered	Castle	Covered	Dwarf	Fleet	Great
After	Bleeding	Catgut	Cracked	Dynamite	Fleming	Grid
Against	Blind	Cattle	Creaked	Eclipse	Flew	Groan
Age	Blinded	Caulk	Croak	Ejecting	Flghtplan	Groove
Air	Blindfold	Cawed	Crosseyed	Elapse	Float	Growling
Alcatraz	Blink	Cell	Crouch	Elbow	Flood	Guard
Alike	Blinking	Cello	Crushing	Electric	Flooded	Guitar
Alive	Bloodclot	Center	Cueball	Electrolysis	Flooding	Gull
Alphabet	Bloodfilled	Centipede	Cuntsync	Eleven	Fluent	Gun
Amnesiac	Bloodtest	Century	Cured	Elongated	Flute	Gypsy
Among	Bloody	Ceremony	Curtain	Ember	Flying	Hailstone
Amputated	Blown	Change	Curtained	Embrace	Foam	Hairspray
Amused	Blurred	Chant	Cut	Enchantment	Foot	Half
Ancient	Board	Charm	Dairy	Engine	Forced	Halve
Ankle	Bob	Cheekbone	Dance	Engraved	Forehead	Handgrenade
Antelope	Bodystocking	Cheeping	Dancer	Enriched	Foreskin	Handpup-
Any	Boiling	Cheer	Dancing	Entrail	Forest	petry
Apocalypse	Bone	Cheese	Dangling	Erased	Form	Hang
Apparatus	Book	Cherry	Dark	Eraser	Forth	Harbor
Applause	Boring	Chess	Darkroom	Etcetera	Fossil	Harvest
Aquarium	Bottle	Chessmatche	Deadend	Even	Found	Hate
Arm	Bottlecap	Chew	Decibel	Evening	Fragility	Haughty
Aroma	Bow	Child	Decipher	Event	Fragment	Haunting
Asbesto	Boyfriend	Chime	Defanged	Ever	Fragrance	Headless
Ash	Brick	Chisel	Defusing	Everybody	Fragrant	Hear
Ask	Bridge	Choir	Delivering	Exactly	Frame	Hearing
Asking	Brow	Cigar	Dervish	Examined	Frenzy	Heel
Assassin	Bruce	Circus	Desert	Example	Fron	Heiroglyph
Asscheek	Bruise	Circusnet	Desire	Exclaim	Front	Help
Asterisk	Brush	Clamor	Desperately	Exhumed	Frost	Heraldric
Attacking	Brushing	Clandestine	Despite	Exist	Fuck	Herding
Attempt	Bubblegum	Cleaning	Detachable	Existence	Fuel	Himself
Audible	Building	Cleat	Dew	Exit	Fume	Hold
Aura	Burglar	Cleaver	Dial	Expert	Fun	Holding
Autopsy	Buried	Clef	Dimension	Explain	Fur	Hollow
Backed	Burned	Clitorisunt	Dinging	Exploded	Fuse	Homaging
Bacon	Burning	Clock	Disappear	Explosion	Fused	Honey
Balancing	Burnt	Clothed	Discolored	Eyed	Galloping	Honor
Balcony	Burp	Cloudy	Disconnected	Eyelet	Gave	Hoofbeat
Ballroom	Burrowing	Coathanger	Disembody	Facing	Gazed	Horse
Banana	Buttered	Cocoa	Dissolve	Fading	Genital	Hotel
Bandaged	Butterfly	Cocoon	Distance	Fallout	Genius	Howl
Bankvault	Bypasser	Coiffure	Doesnt	Family	George	Human
Bare	Cabbage	Coiffured	Dolphin	Fan	Ghost	Humming
Barking	Caged	Collision	Donut	Feed	Gill	Hunchbacked
Bathed	Calendar	Colored	Door	Feet	Glimpse	Iceberg
Batman	Called	Come	Double	Felt	Gloating	Illegitimate
Beache	Calling	Comet	Doublejoint-	Fetish	Globe	Illusion
Beaded	Cameo	Comicbook	edness	Fiagellant	Glove	Imminent
Beak	Candycane	Coming	Dough	Figurine	Glow	Immune
Beauty	Caning	Compass	Drank	Filled	Glue	Impale
Beavertail	Canteen	Contempt	Draping	Fine	Glued	Inaccessible
Became	Canyon	Control	Drawn	Fingerprint	God	Incantation
Bed	Capillary	Conveyerbelt	Dreaming	Finishline	Gold	Incense

Incest	Lavished	Maybe	Nixon	Pineneedle	Restaurant	Seated
Incestuous	Lazy	Meanwhile	Noose	Pink	Rhonda	Secrete
Indigo	Leap	Measuring-	Nose	Pinned	Richard	Secretive
Indolence	Learned	tape	Nosed	Pinprick	Richcheting	Sect
Induced	Leash	Medal	Nostril	Piss	Richlyrobed	Seizure
Inescapable	Leavenworth	Melting	Not	Pit	Riding	Senate
Infrared	Leeche	Mercy	Notary	Place	Right	Sensible
Ingot	Left	Merrygo-	Note	Plain	Right	Sentence
Inhabit	Legend	round	Nothing	Planecrashe	Ring	Sentry
Inhale	Legendary	Method	Novice	Plastic	Ripped	Separate
Inlay	Lemon	Microphone	Numb	Playing	Robot	Separated
Insomnia	Length	Microscope	Numbed	Plucking	Rockslide	Serial
Installed	Less	Mid	Number	Plush	Roll	Sew
Inverted	Lessly	Middle	Nun	Poet	Rolled	Shaker
Inviolate	Letter	Midnight	Obelisk	Poetry	Ropeladder	Shallow
Invisibility	Levitiation	Migrating	Occupant	Pointillist	Rosegarden	Shatter
Island	Liberate	Milk	Oceanfloor	Polar	Route	Shave
Islant	Lick	Milking	Octopus	Policemen	Rub	Sheered
Jabber	Life	Million	Oculist	Pontoon	Rubble	Shell
Jacketed	Lifeguard	Mimed	Ode	Pony	Ruby	Shimmer
Jade	Liferaft	Minaret	Offer	Potion	Rudder	Shimmy
Javelin	Lighter	Mind	Often	Pounang	Ruin	Shipwreck
Jaw	Lightningbolt	Mirage	Olive	Preening	Run	Shit
Jawbone	Lime	Misprint	Ooze	Prefrontal	Rustling	Shoelace
Jelly	Limping	Missionary	Opium	Prism	Sabertoothed	Should
Jellybean	Linger	Moaning	Optical	Prison	Saddlesore	Shoulder
Jellyfish	Lingering	Moist	Orchestra	Profile	Sage	Shouting
Jewel	Link	Mole	Oscilloscopic	Promise	Sailorsuit	Shrapnel
Jewelry	Lioness	Momentary	Otter	Prop	Saliva	Shrug
John	Lipstick	Monk	Outstretched	Propitiate	Salome	Shudder
Joliet	List	Monocle	Overnight	Provision	Salt	Shushes
Juggler	Lit	Montage	Oysterbed	Prying	Saltmine	Sigh
Juice	Lizard	Monument	Painful	Public	Salve	Sign
Jungle	Lock	Morning	Palate	Puffadder	Sandgrain	Silver
Jury	Loftiness	Moron	Pale	Puffbode	Sank	Sinbad
Karat	Longer	Mosaic	Panel	Puma	Sap	Sip
Keats	Loud	Moss	Paperclip	Purlfication	Sargasso	Sirocco
Keep	Loudest	Mound	Parallel	Purr	Satin	Sister
Keg	Low	Movie	Paroxysm	Putty	Savored	Skeletonize
Kidnap	Lp	Moving	Parrot	Puttying	Sawed	Skin
Kidnapped	Lubricious	Multiply	Part	Question	Sawing	Skinned
Killed	Lubricious-	Murder	Passed	Quicksand	Saxaphone	Skinny
Kindle	ness	Murmuring	Past	Rabies	Saying	Skydiver
Kitestring	Luminous	Museum	Pastorale	Radiance	Scale	Skyline
Knee	Lunge	Mustache	Pat	Rain	Scamper	Skyscraper
Knife	Luxurious	Muted	Paused	Rank	Scan	Slam
Knife	Lying	Muteness	Peace	Rapture	Scar	Slammed
Knot	Machinery	Muzzled	Peer	Rasp	Scenic	Slash
Laborpain	Maddened	Myself	Perched	Rasputin	Scent	Slave
Lace	Make	Nailed	Perfecting	Ravaging	Scented	Sleepwalker
Laden	Makeup	Nakedness	Perfumed	Ray	Scissor	Sleepy
Lair	Manual	Naomi	Perfumery	Razed	Scorchmark	Slept
Laminate	Map	Napehair	Perhap	Razorblade	Scream	Slicing
Lampshade	Mare	Nearly	Permeate	Read	Screeching	Slinky
Landing	Marshga	Neck	Person	Reaffirming	Screwed	Slope
Landingstrip	Marshmello	Negligently	Petersberg	Reborn	Scroll	Smack
Landlord	Marsupialism	Neon	Petrified	Reckoned	Scrotum	Smashing
Landscape	Maskflurry	Neoned	Pick	Recoilless	Scuba	Smearred
Languorine	Maskgraft	Nest	Picture	Red	Sea	Smell
Languorous	Massaging	Nevertheless	Pie	Reed	Seagreen	Smile
Laser	Masseuse	Newmown	Pierce	Refuse	Seamless	Smokestack
Last	Mast	Nightgown	Pierced	Remain	Seance	Snake
Laughter	Match	Nightingale-	Pile	Replacing	Searching	Snapping
Laurel	Mating	man	Pillow	Resisted	Seashell	Sneer
Lavender	Mattresse	Nimbus	Pincer	Rest	Season	Snorkel

Snowpeak	Stammer	Surgery	Tendrils	Torturer	Union	Wax
Soddering	Stamp	Survival	Tentacle	Toss	Unless	Wayne
Soft	Stampede	Swallowed	Termite	Touch	Unlock	Wearing
Solace	Star	Swan	Terrace	Tour	Valve	Weep
Soliloquy	Starfish	Sway	Tested	Tower	Vampire	Weighing
Solitude	Starlight	Swaying	Thawing	Tracing	Van	Welded
Soothant	Starry	Sweatband	Theme	Trampoline	Vanished	Whichever
Soothstorm	Steam	Sweatdrop	Themselves	Trap	Velvet	Whidh
Sound	Steeple	Sweating	Therefore	Trapdoor	Venue	Whisper
Sowing	Stethoscope	Sweeping	Thigh	Trapped	Vertigo	Whitewashed
Space	Stifled	Swimmer	Thimble	Tree	Vestigial	Whooshing
Sparkle	Stigmata	Swimming	Thimbley	Treefork	View	Wing
Spasm	Still	Swimming-	Thing	Triangulate	Violet	Wink
Spasmelodic	Stop	pool	Thorn	Trigger	Virtue	Wispy
Spear	Strand	Swordplay	Those	Trillion	Visible	Withdrawal
Species	Strange	Swordswal-	Three	Triphammer	Visigoth	Woke
Speed	Strangled	lower	Throat	Tripod	Vivisected	Woman
Sperm	Streamlined	Symptom	Throated	Tripping	Vocalcord	Womb
Spermtip	Streetlight	Syrup	Throe	Trism	Voice	Wood
Sphinx	Stretch	System	Throw	Trumpet	Volcano	Word
Spice	Stretching	T-Square	Thrown	Tugboat	Volcanoe	World
Spigot	Striate	Table	Thunder	Tumble	Vomit	Wound
Spine	String	Tail	Tibetan	Tuned	Waft	Writhe
Spinning	Strip	Taillight	Tide	Tuningfork	Walk	Writing
Spit	Stump	Taking	Tied	Turd	Wallaby	Xerox
Spittle	Stunned	Tallest	Tiptoeing	Turn	Walnut	Xylophone
Splitting	Stylus	Tapestry	Toed	Turpentine	Wandering	Yanked
Spotlight	Submissive	Tasseled	Tollbooth	Turtle	Warned	Zebra
Spraying	Successfully	Tattoo	Tone	Twilight	Warp	
Sprinkled	Suck	Tattooed	Tong	Twin	Warped	
Sprung	Suffer	Teeth	Tongue-	Twine	Washed	
Squirt	Sulk	Teethmark	twister	Twist	Washington	
St	Sun	Telescope	Too	Twisting	Watch	
Stabbed	Sunlamp	Tell	Torn	Two	Water	
Stable	Suntan	Ten	Torpedoe	Unborn	Waterbearer	
Stagefright	Surge	Tenderized	Torso	Under	Waterfall	

Words Used in 2 Poems [180]

Alone	Claw	Favorite	Jump	Palace	Shape	Syringe
Amnesia	Close	Fearfully	Language	Palette	Shed	Tanager
Armpit	Closet	Find	Leave	Parachute	Shh	Taste
Asshole	Cloud	Finger	Leg	Pencil	Shiver	Thread
Attack	Color	Fish	Leopard	People	Shore	Tightrope
Back	Coma	Floating	Lesbian	Petal	Shut	Toe
Ballerina	Corner	Fly	Lie	Ping	Sight	Tomorrow
Beach	Crack	Footprint	Light	Pollen	Skinraft	Tress
Beard	Crowd	Forever	Lightning	Pore	Skintight	Tube
Beautiful	Crushed	Gape	Limp	Portrait	Slant	Used
Bee	Cushion	Giant	Line	Pour	Slowly	Using
Best	Deathmarch	Glacier	Marrow	Propped	Snow	Venom
Birthmark	Deck	Glance	Mask	Prow	Snowflake	Vineyard
Blackboard	Dice	Glass	Mauve	Pubic	Somersault	Wall
Blowgun	Different	Green	Meat	Pulling	Spark	Wave
Born	Display	Groin	Missing	Rainbow	Spent	Way
Bracelet	Dive	Grovel	Mist	Ripple	Spot	While
Breast	Dog	Gusher	Mistake	Rocket	Spurting	Whip
Breeze	Drowning	Halo	Moo	Rusty	Stab	Whirlpool
Broken	Eagle	Headhunter	Musk	Same	Stereo	Whispering
Buzzsaw	End	Hole	Night	Sandstorm	Strangler	Wine
Cage	Every	Incision	Oracle	Self	Suddenly	Write
Candle	Everything	Inside	Orange	Sequin	Sundial	Year
Case	Eyedropper	Instrument	Orchard	Serpent	Surrounded	Yellow
Cave	Fang	Invented	Ore	Set	Sweat	
Cilia	Fatal	Join	Our	Shadow	Swoop	

Words Used in 3 Poems [50]

Always	Dream	Floor	Hinged	Magic	No	Single
Away	Ear	Forget	Horizon	Marquee	Other	Sink
Be	Empty	Gash	Howling	Maze	Penis	Test
Black	Escape	Glancing	Key	Navel	Remember	There
Breathing	Except	Growing	Keyhole	Needle	Room	Throwing
Can	Eyelid	Hand	Kiss	Never	Semen	White
Children	Flesh	Held	Love	Nipple	Sense	Wind
						Window

Words Used in 4 Poems [17]

Around	Echo	Lip	Ocean	Perfume	Time
Because	Eyelash	Mouth	One	Sleep	Yodeling
Diamond	First	Name	Open	Statue	

Words Used in 5 Poems [6]

Being	Eye
Blow	Head
Clitoris	Only

Words Used in 6 Poems [2]

Face
Tongue

Words Used in 7 Poems [3]

Caress
Purple
Where

Words Used in 10 Poems [1]

Mirror

Words Used in 11 Poems [3]

Blue
Hair
Out

N Pair Words in Common

- 38 4, 13 Birthmark, Blackboard, Breathing, Cilia, Coma, Deathmarch, Deck, Diamond, Fatal, Growing, Headhunter, Hinged, Jelly, Key, Marquee, Mauve, Maze, Moo, Needle, Ore, Palette, Pencil, Ping, Propped, Putty, Rusty, Sandstorm, Skintight, Somersault, Stereo, Strangler, Swoop, Tanager, Test, Tress, Tube, Warped, Yodeling
- 19 25, 31 Back, Blow, Escape, Eyed, Eyelash, Hairspray, Lace, List, Magic, Milk, Mistake, Napehair, Navel, Oracle, Slant, Sweeping, Tested, Trap, Waterfall
- 15 13, 31 Blackboard, Breathing, Caress, Diamond, Escape, Eye, Mirror, Mist, Ping, Rainbow, Reborn, Rest, Test, Thunder, Tress
- 15 13, 26 Beach, Blackboard, Caress, Different, Green, Growing, Headhunter, Mirror, Open, Ping, Shed, Thawing, Thread, Where, White
- 15 3, 31 Amused, Be, Black, Blowgun, Caress, Cloud, Delivering, Face, Hair, Life, Mirror, Pierced, Rain, Scroll, Throwing
- 15 3, 10 Amnesia, Caress, Except, Exist, Hair, Leavenworth, Light, Mirror, Name, Never, Only, Out, Trampoline, Window, Yodeling
- 14 30, 31 Candle, Clitoris, Crack, Diamond, Face, Hair, Leopard, Lingering, Mirror, Musk, Purple, Spot, Sundial, Teethmark
- 14 13, 24 Around, Attacking, Caress, Closet, Eye, Floor, Green, Ocean, Ping, Shed, Suddenly, Sweat, Tongue, White
- 14 10, 31 Boring, Caress, Dream, Everything, Hair, Hole, Leave, Love, Mirror, Neon, Nosed, Saltmine, Unborn, Whispering
- 14 8, 13 Around, Beach, Floor, Head, Last, Less, Open, Out, Pulling, Ripple, Slowly, Tongue, Vanished, Where
- 13 18, 31 Blow, Clitoris, Dream, Eye, Face, Fish, Flesh, Floating, Purple, Set, Syringe, Throw, Time
- 12 10, 13 Can, Caress, Head, Mirror, Never, Only, Orange, Out, Sight, Tongue, Washed, Yodeling
- 12 3, 25 Being, Blowgun, Children, Crowd, Hair, Light, Marrow, Night, Out, Stampede, Therefore, Thimbley
- 11 19, 31 Black, Cave, Flesh, Hailstone, Hair, Jellyfish, Murmuring, Palace, Perfume, Stable, Swimmingpool
- 11 13, 25 Always, Closet, Escape, Key, Mist, Out, Ping, Room, Tail, Test, Where
- 11 8, 31 Clitoriscunt, Eagle, Every, Everything, Groin, Hair, Magic, Throwing, Time, Whispering, Word
- 11 8, 10 Every, Everything, Hair, Head, Less, Out, Stretch, Tongue, Tree, Whispering, Wind
- 10 24, 26 Blue, Caress, Clitoris, Crushed, Fume, Penis, Seagreen, Sleepwalker, Sowing, Whitewashed
- 10 8, 18 Clitoriscunt, First, Floor, Kiss, Out, Statue, Throwing, Time, Where, Wind
- 10 3, 18 Blowgun, Face, Howling, Light, Night, Ocean, Out, Throwing, Window, Write
- 10 3, 13 Black, Caress, Galloping, Mirror, Never, Ocean, Only, Out, Rain, Yodeling
- 9 26, 31 Caress, Chess, Clitoris, Cracked, Mirror, Perfume, Perfumed, Purple, Wing
- 9 24, 31 Caress, Clitoris, Empty, Eye, Fume, Giant, Hair, Permeate, Seashell
- 9 13, 28 Around, Cello, Closet, Headhunter, Mirror, Mist, Sleepy, Unlock, White
- 9 10, 18 Carved, Dream, Hole, Mask, Out, Semen, Streetlight, Wind, Window
- 9 4, 31 Blackboard, Breathing, Case, Diamond, Display, Ping, Starfish, Test, Tress
- 9 3, 8 Being, Blue, Hair, No, Out, Throwing, Unless, Vivisected, Window
- 9 1, 31 Because, Blowgun, Door, Even, Eyelash, Hair, Loudest, Measuringtape, Perfumery
- 8 28, 31 Blow, Blown, Eyelash, Face, Fused, Mirror, Mist, Time
- 8 26, 30 Blue, Clitoris, Cracked, Glacier, Glued, Head, Mirror, Purple
- 8 13, 30 Diamond, Headhunter, Linger, Mirror, Ocean, Ping, Sequin, Sweat
- 8 13, 22 Always, Eye, One, Shed, Sleepy, Sweat, Thread, Where
- 8 10, 26 Amnesiac, Caress, Colored, Dog, Hand, Head, Mirror, Plain
- 8 8, 26 Beach, Being, Blue, Clitoriscunt, Head, Open, Throwing, Where
- 8 8, 24 Around, Blue, Clitoriscunt, Find, Floor, Hair, Surgery, Tongue
- 8 3, 29 Light, Name, Out, Slammed, Therefore, Tomorrow, While, Window
- 8 3, 26 Amnesia, Being, Blue, Caress, Mirror, Sawing, Surrounded, Throwing
- 7 26, 32 Away, Beache, Mirror, Perfume, Perfumed, Serpent, Slinky
- 7 25, 30 Dive, Echo, Hairspray, Inside, Napehair, Petal, Shore
- 7 25, 26 Being, Bracelet, Broken, Burrowing, Gusher, Volcanoe, Where
- 7 22, 26 Claw, Grovel, Purple, Read, Shed, Where, Whip
- 7 19, 25 Alone, Hair, Palace, Pollen, Shoelace, Snowpeak, Where
- 7 18, 30 Clitoris, Face, Ocean, Purple, Spurting, Tattoo, Throw

7 18, 25 Blow, First, Light, Night, Out, Statue, Where
 7 18, 24 Blindfold, Clitoris, Eye, Floor, Light, Nipple, Ocean
 7 18, 19 Asshole, Cushion, Fish, Flesh, Howling, Sperm, Where
 7 14, 31 Defanged, Dreaming, Keyhole, Love, Separated, Spotlight, Sundial
 7 13, 29 Out, Shut, Sleepy, Tail, Test, Tongue, Twist
 7 13, 17 Caress, Marquee, Mirror, One, Out, Room, Sleepy
 7 10, 29 Footprint, Hole, Name, Out, Tongue, Wind, Window
 7 10, 24 Brush, Caress, Hair, People, Remember, Tongue, Washed
 7 8, 29 Drank, Last, Out, Shiver, Tongue, Tree, Wind
 7 8, 25 Being, First, Hair, Magic, Out, Statue, Where
 7 7, 10 Discolored, Leg, Line, Love, Only, Out, Self
 7 3, 30 Blue, Face, Hair, Mirror, Ocean, Shadow, Shh
 7 3, 24 Blue, Bottle, Caress, Hair, Light, Ocean, Right
 7 3, 7 Be, Coathanger, Face, No, Only, Out, Trampoline
 6 25, 28 Blow, Clock, Closet, Eyelash, Lace, Mistake
 6 24, 30 Blue, Clitoris, Hair, Mouth, Oceanfloor, Rocket
 6 24, 28 Around, Close, Horizon, Remember, Sleepwalker, Whitewashed
 6 22, 24 Eye, Nipple, Shed, Sleep, Sweat, Twin
 6 19, 24 Blue, Hair, Horizon, Perfume, Pubic, Tongue
 6 18, 22 Eye, First, Maskflurry, Nipple, Purple, Where
 6 16, 25 Crosseyed, Eyedropper, Lightning, Navel, Out, Skin
 6 15, 31 Backed, Ever, Other, Purple, String, Whirlpool
 6 13, 18 Eye, Floor, Ocean, Out, Ping, Where
 6 10, 30 Echo, Hair, Hand, Head, Line, Mirror
 6 10, 25 Coralfusion, Echo, Footprint, Hair, Line, Out
 6 10, 23 Echo, Except, Forget, Hair, Line, Never
 6 10, 14 Dream, Himself, Hole, Impale, Love, Name
 6 9, 31 Back, Blow, Hair, Mirror, Purple, Swordswallower
 6 8, 28 Around, Fuse, Head, Single, Time, Whispering
 6 8, 19 Blue, Hair, Less, Stab, Tongue, Where
 6 3, 32 Blink, Ear, Fearfully, Hair, Mirror, Night
 6 3, 22 Children, Cloud, Glance, Instrument, Lip, Therefore
 6 2, 3 Blue, Child, Leave, Lip, Out, Spent
 6 1, 25 Blowgun, Eyelash, Hair, Lightningbolt, Lubriciousness, Trapped
 6 1, 10 Can, Even, Hair, Headless, Only, Remember
 5 28, 32 Away, Blinking, Fly, Mirror, Pastorage
 5 25, 29 Foot, Out, Prow, There, Vineyard
 5 24, 32 Fume, Hair, Mouth, Permeate, Tongue
 5 24, 25 Bone, Close, Gash, Hair, Snowflake
 5 22, 31 Cloudy, Eye, Other, Purple, Wearing
 5 22, 25 Always, Children, First, There, Where
 5 21, 31 Born, Despite, Everybody, Lying, Tightrope
 5 17, 31 Because, Caress, Floating, Flood, Mirror
 5 17, 26 Beautiful, Caress, Hand, Mirror, Yellow
 5 14, 24 Attack, Blinded, Gash, Mouth, Snow
 5 13, 19 Blackboard, Eyelid, Kidnapped, Tongue, Where
 5 10, 32 Dice, Hair, Mirror, Semen, Tongue
 5 10, 17 Caress, Hand, Hold, Mirror, Out
 5 8, 30 Blue, Clitorisunt, Hair, Head, Language
 5 8, 22 First, Stab, Vanished, Venom, Where

5	7, 31	Be, Face, Finger, Love, Wall	3	18, 26	Clitoris, Purple, Where
5	6, 31	Fang, Gape, Hole, Spittle, Swallowed	3	18, 23	Incision, Makeup, Statue
5	3, 28	Blink, Blowgun, Face, Lip, Mirror	3	17, 29	Meanwhile, Out, Sleep
5	3, 19	Black, Blue, Hair, Howling, Jewelry	3	17, 18	Floating, Held, Out
5	3, 17	Caress, Ear, Mirror, Out, While	3	16, 31	Eyedropper, Glass, Navel
5	3, 16	Asking, Blue, Breast, Light, Out	3	16, 18	Held, Lightning, Out
5	2, 13	Darkroom, Needle, Open, Out, Shape	3	16, 17	Held, Out, Skin
4	29, 31	Bloodtest, Fingerprint, Grave, Keyhole	3	15, 26	Blue, Hand, Purple
4	27, 31	Jump, Slant, Thing, Used	3	15, 18	Asbestos, Howling, Purple
4	26, 28	Away, Head, Mirror, White	3	15, 16	Blue, Ever, Our
4	25, 32	Hairspray, Missing, Mustache, Napelhair	3	14, 29	Keyhole, Landingstrip, Name
4	24, 29	Sleepwalker, Sway, Tongue, Twine	3	14, 25	Ballroom, Gash, Snow
4	23, 31	Because, Cloud, Hair, Paused	3	13, 32	Mirror, Test, Tongue
4	23, 25	Echo, Hair, Prop, Statue	3	13, 23	Hinged, Nevertheless, Propped
4	23, 24	Hair, Incestuous, Jawbone, Wine	3	13, 21	Growing, Reborn, Rest
4	19, 32	Caged, Hair, Perfume, Tongue	3	13, 14	Attacking, Palette, Room
4	19, 26	Blue, Curtain, Perfume, Where	3	11, 13	Limp, One, Sight
4	18, 32	Kiss, Night, Semen, Sink	3	9, 32	Hair, Mirror, Sink
4	18, 29	Light, Out, Pour, Window	3	9, 30	Hair, Mirror, Purple
4	15, 30	Blue, Ever, Hand, Purple	3	9, 19	Hair, Halo, Throat
4	15, 22	Other, Purple, Scented, Sweatband	3	9, 18	Blow, Purple, Sink
4	14, 30	Mouth, Spotlight, Sundial, Toe	3	9, 10	Hair, Maskgraft, Mirror
4	13, 15	Birthmark, Needle, Nevertheless, Sweat	3	8, 27	Blue, Everything, Nothing
4	11, 26	Blue, Color, Limp, Sense	3	8, 16	Blue, Out, Stretch
4	10, 28	Head, Mirror, Remember, Whispering	3	7, 30	Face, Legendary, Line
4	10, 19	Hair, Hole, Parachute, Tongue	3	7, 14	Love, Portrait, Self
4	10, 15	Dancer, Everything, Hand, Never	3	7, 8	No, Out, Self
4	9, 26	Comet, Limp, Mirror, Purple	3	4, 30	Diamond, Headhunter, Ping
4	9, 25	Back, Blow, Glancing, Hair	3	4, 25	Key, Ping, Test
4	8, 32	End, Hair, Kiss, Tongue	3	3, 27	Amused, Bee, Blue
4	8, 21	Being, Every, Fuse, Single	3	3, 4	Black, Galloping, Yodeling
4	8, 15	Blue, Every, Everything, Star	3	2, 24	Blue, Empty, Year
4	4, 26	Blackboard, Growing, Headhunter, Ping	3	2, 22	Child, Lip, Stab
4	3, 23	Cloud, Except, Hair, Never	3	1, 19	Hair, Numbed, Perfumery
4	3, 15	Blue, Howling, Life, Never	3	1, 18	Blowgun, Doublejointedness, Lightningbolt
4	3, 9	Blowgun, Hair, Lie, Mirror	3	1, 13	Can, Maze, Only
4	2, 31	Empty, Leave, Syringe, Wandering	2	25, 27	Drowning, Slant
4	2, 25	Child, Darkroom, Glancing, Out	2	23, 30	Echo, Hair
4	2, 8	Blue, Open, Out, Stab	2	23, 27	Paused, Sparkle
4	1, 28	Blowgun, Eyelash, Headless, Remember	2	22, 29	Sleep, There
4	1, 24	Even, Hair, Perfumery, Remember	2	22, 28	Lip, Sleep
4	1, 3	Blowgun, Hair, Lightningbolt, Only	2	21, 25	Being, Using
3	30, 32	Hair, Mirror, Mouth	2	20, 25	Skydiver, Using
3	28, 30	Face, Head, Mirror	2	19, 30	Blue, Hair
3	28, 29	Beard, Sleep, Wave	2	19, 29	Numb, Tongue
3	22, 30	Coiffured, Purple, Sweat	2	19, 23	Hair, Spark
3	21, 26	Being, Growing, Sense	2	18, 20	Ballerina, Night
3	19, 27	Blue, Circusnet, Spark	2	17, 32	Ear, Mirror
3	19, 22	Comicbook, Flaregun, Where	2	17, 30	Hand, Mirror
3	18, 28	Blow, Face, Time	2	17, 28	Mirror, Sleep

2	17, 25	Out, Room	2	2, 16	Blue, Out	1	12, 26	Forehead
2	17, 24	Caress, Sleep	2	2, 15	Blue, Needle	1	11, 32	Taste
2	17, 22	One, Sleep	2	2, 10	Leave, Out	1	11, 31	Hearing
2	16, 27	Blue, Forever	2	1, 32	Hair, Perfumery	1	11, 30	Blue
2	16, 26	Blue, Penis	2	1, 30	Hair, Headless	1	11, 27	Blue
2	16, 24	Blue, Penis	2	1, 26	Headless, Perfumery	1	11, 24	Blue
2	16, 19	Blue, Skin	2	1, 23	Because, Hair	1	11, 22	One
2	15, 27	Blue, Ever	2	1, 17	Because, Doublejoint- edness	1	11, 21	Sense
2	15, 25	Backed, Snowflake				1	11, 19	Blue
2	15, 24	Blue, Snowflake	2	1, 9	Blowgun, Hair	1	11, 17	One
2	15, 21	Asbesto, Ever	2	1, 8	Hair, Headless	1	11, 16	Blue
2	15, 19	Blue, Howling	2	1, 2	Dark, Prefrontal	1	11, 15	Blue
2	15, 17	Corner, Hand	1	29, 32	Tonguetwister	1	10, 27	Everything
2	14, 19	Snow, Spasmelodic	1	29, 30	Favorite	1	10, 21	Unborn
2	14, 18	Dreaming, Spotlight	1	27, 30	Blue	1	10, 16	Out
2	13, 16	Out, Skintight	1	27, 28	Used	1	10, 12	Head
2	10, 22	Mask, Washed	1	26, 27	Blue	1	9, 24	Hair
2	10, 11	Colored, Sight	1	24, 27	Blue	1	9, 23	Hair
2	9, 28	Blow, Mirror	1	23, 32	Hair	1	9, 17	Mirror
2	9, 22	Maskgraft, Purple	1	23, 29	Wine	1	9, 11	Limp
2	9, 15	Back, Purple	1	22, 23	Cloudy	1	8, 17	Out
2	9, 13	Limp, Mirror	1	21, 32	Cage	1	8, 14	Myself
2	8, 23	Hair, Statue	1	21, 30	Armpit	1	8, 12	Head
2	8, 9	Hair, Word	1	21, 28	Single	1	8, 11	Blue
2	7, 29	Finger, Out	1	21, 24	Restaurant	1	7, 28	Face
2	7, 26	Discolored, Hang	1	20, 30	Skydiver	1	7, 23	Line
2	7, 25	Line, Out	1	20, 21	Using	1	7, 16	Out
2	7, 18	Face, Out	1	19, 28	Horizon	1	7, 11	Discolored
2	7, 17	Lesbian, Out	1	19, 21	Caged	1	7, 9	Wall
2	7, 13	Only, Out	1	18, 21	Best	1	6, 32	Tongue
2	6, 29	Hole, Tongue	1	17, 23	Because	1	6, 25	Breeze
2	6, 19	Hole, Tongue	1	17, 21	Join	1	6, 24	Tongue
2	6, 18	Hole, Starlight	1	17, 19	Skingraft	1	6, 22	Lavished
2	6, 14	Fang, Hole	1	16, 30	Blue	1	6, 7	Swallowed
2	6, 13	Lavished, Tongue	1	16, 29	Out	1	5, 23	Forget
2	6, 10	Hole, Tongue	1	16, 21	Skin	1	5, 19	Eyelid
2	6, 8	Starlight, Tongue	1	15, 32	String	1	5, 13	Eyelid
2	4, 23	Hinged, Propped	1	15, 28	Lifeguard	1	5, 11	Invented
2	4, 19	Blackboard, Jelly	1	15, 23	Ever	1	5, 10	Forget
2	4, 18	Ping, Starfish	1	15, 20	Bloodfilled	1	4, 32	Test
2	4, 17	Flooded, Marquee	1	14, 32	Mouth	1	4, 29	Test
2	4, 15	Birthmark, Needle	1	14, 26	Orchard	1	4, 28	Headhunter
2	4, 10	Headhunter, Yodeling	1	14, 22	Landingstrip	1	4, 27	Breathing
2	4, 8	Headhunter, Starfish	1	14, 20	Pore	1	4, 24	Ping
2	3, 20	Night, Way	1	14, 17	Ballroom	1	4, 21	Growing
2	3, 14	Light, Name	1	14, 15	Snow	1	4, 16	Skintight
2	2, 26	Blue, Open	1	13, 27	Breathing	1	4, 14	Palette
2	2, 19	Blue, Stab	1	13, 20	Same	1	3, 21	Being
2	2, 18	Out, Syringe	1	12, 30	Forehead	1	3, 11	Blue
2	2, 17	Darkroom, Out	1	12, 28	Forehead	1	3, 6	Light

1	2, 30	Blue
1	2, 29	Out
1	2, 28	Lip
1	2, 27	Blue
1	2, 11	Blue
1	2, 9	Glancing
1	2, 7	Out
1	2, 4	Needle
1	1, 29	Buzzsaw
1	1, 21	Doublejointedness
1	1, 16	Lightningbolt
1	1, 7	Only
1	1, 4	Maze

Knott's Sense of Line

While reading **The Naomi Poems, Book One: Corpse and Beans** (Follett Publishing Company, Chicago, 1968), I ran across a prose poem Knott later revised only by adding lineation. In this annotation I will try to see whether we can learn anything from them. Before I get on with the poems, I should note that Knott published this under the name Saint Geraud (1940–1966). In the foreword to this book, Paul Carroll explains why Knott signs his name *Bill Knott (1940–1966)*: Apparently Knott sent or had someone else send letters to some poets and critics which stated that Knott had committed suicide at 26 in his room in a tenement on North Clark Street in Chicago, and that his body was on its way back to Michigan for burial. The letter was also published in *Epoch*. The letter explained that Knott killed himself because he was an orphan and a virgin and could not stand having no one love him.

The foreword also explains that Saint Geraud was the name of the hero of an 18th century French pornographic novel. Saint Geraud was the director of an orphanage for both sexes in which all sorts of sexual perversions took place.

PROSEPOEM

Each evening the sea casts starfish up on the beach, scattering, stranding them. They die at dawn, leaving black hungers in the sun. We slept there that summer, we fucked in their radiant evolutions up to our body. Ringed by starfish gasping for their element, we joined to create ours. All night they inhaled the sweat from our thrusting limbs, and lived. Often she cried out: Your hand!—It was a starfish, caressing her with my low fire.

Poem (The Starfish One)

Each evening the sea casts starfish up on the beach,—
scattering, stranding them. They die at dawn, leaving
black hungers in the sun.
We slept there that summer, we
fucked in their radiant evolutions up to our body. Ringed
by starfish gasping for their element,
we joined to create
ours. All night they inhaled the sweat from our thrusting
limbs, and lived.
Often she cried out: Your hand!—It was
a starfish, caressing her with my low fire.

The Saint Geraud version of the poem is reproduced to the left and the **Poems 1963–1988** (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989) version is just below it.

I won't try to analyze or closely read this—just point out some interesting things that Knott does. One of the poem's main "images" is of two people fucking. The scene is otherwise common, yet the concept of starfish up on the beach during the lovemaking is odd enough to catch our attention. There is a link between the speaker (a male lover) and the starfish in the sense that his hand is like the starfish (his lover has confused a starfish for his hand), who **die at dawn, leaving black hungers in the sun**. What would it mean for his hand or him to die at dawn? Obviously Knott would believe that his life would leave dead hungers behind, if we believe the feelings behind his fake suicide note.

Further, the sea casting the starfish up on the beach to die from lack of water to breathe is probably exactly how Knott felt life had treated him.

A phrase like *we/fucked in their radiant evolutions up to our body* is a minor masterpiece in stating both the setting of the lovemaking and the fact that lovemaking is part of the evolutionary thing that led (at least in popular belief) from starfish to people (people did not evolve from starfish). By meaning-preserving (but content-reducing) grammatical transformation we can delete the prepositional phrase *in their radiant evolutions* to get *we/fucked up to our body*. The phrase *fuck up* can obviously mean *make a mistake*, or it could be taken in its fuller context to mean that the couple made love until there was one body (and not two). Another split bit of word play is *radiant evolutions*, which has evolutionary meaning but also a *radiant evolution* could be ~~radiant~~ *evolution* = *revolution*, meaning spinning in a circle around the couple or revolting in the face of their situation or even finding the lovemaking revolting. Also, *evolution* can mean that the starfish, by coming up on dry land, are enacting the (popular myth) of evolution.

The phrase *Ringed/by starfish gasping for their element,/we joined to create/ours* shows the starfish longing for something the couple has, and which perhaps one or some starfish gets in the end by “caressing” the woman. The next line tells us that when the couple create their element—their united body—the sweat provides moisture for the starfish to breathe and live, as it, presumably, provided a life for the couple or at least Knott.

At the end a starfish is attached to the woman who confuses it for heavy passion from her lover, and the two, in a sense, make love to her, both drawing life from her while she is in this state. So this is a very passionate poem about love and Knott’s view of his life. An incidental question is whether this poem (and Knott’s repeated use of the word *starfish* in **The Naomi Poems** is because of his relationship with Star Black, which Dobyns pointed out to me as a possibility.

When I read the prose poem version about a year after having read the poem version, I felt that the prose poem one differed not only in lineation but by being wordier and less focussed. I was surprised to see only lineation and some punctuation as the differences.

The stanzas are arranged as interlocking stanza fragments which, if you pushed them together, would make a whole, just like the message in the poem, and mimicking the action of the people. The whole made up by pushing the dropped stanza together would not be exactly the original poem because the end words would be different. The end words of the original are *scattering, in, their, gasping, they, often, with, fire*, and in the revised are *beach, leaving, sun, we, ringed, element, create, thrusting, lived, was, fire*. Notice that the number of end words has been increased by 50%. This second list is much stronger as well. The “poem” you get by reading the first and last words of each line in the revised version is interesting and strong.

Each beach
scattering, leaving,
black sun.
We, we
fucked, Ringed
by element,
we create
ours. Thrusting
limbs, lived.
Often was
a fire.

I looked for patterns in the stresses per line and came up with a numerically interesting sequence but nothing that stands out (7-5-3-2-5-3-2-5-2-4-6). Each 3-2 pair is the dropped line and its companion, so shoving them up gives us 7-5-5-5-5-5-6-6, which is fairly regular. The only two lines that don’t begin with a stress begin - *starfish*, which makes the starfish stand out. Because one can read this poem as the lower creatures standing for Knott who finds sustenance in the sweat of lovemaking, the emphasis on the starfish is sensible, and the starfish, really, are the only interesting characters in this poem. It’s an interestingly odd way to stress something by starting it off in a weak position, which, again, shows Knott’s self image.

This is one of Knott’s easiest poems, and still one of my favorites.

Some of Knott's Tricks

Bill Knott uses a variety of effects to achieve the overall effect of his poetry. Among them are the use of tangled syntax, puns, clever wording, humor, and associations. "The Signs of the Stopsign" (Be-cos, Random House, 1983) is an example of these effects at the height of Knott's maturity as a poet. It is reproduced below. As are many of his poems, this one is about his loneliness and inability to

connect with others—the last line is a typical cleverness: *I lie on a bed covered with stolen contact-lenses*. Its cleverness lies in the fact that lost contact lenses are searched for assiduously by partially blind and hence extra-vigilant wearers (and their friends)—you can picture them crawling on hands and knees to find them. This is what Knott wants: People, maybe almost anyone, crawling on his bed looking for their contact lenses while he lies there hoping they will find him. Not to mention the pun that acting as the lenses would be as a means to bring people together in his fanciful plot, the lenses would be *contact-lenses*—things which magnify the likelihood of contact.

The first sentence is typical of his grammatical gyrations: *Howsoever longer than life the entity they/proceed from is they are here termed too late or/to micro it, never*. The tricks Knott plays in this sentence/series of lines would fill up a regular poet's poem. *Longer than life* sets up a play of size in time versus size in space—the phrase he's playing off of is *larger than life*. The second line, taken as a unit, is crazy and forgettable: *proceed from is they are here termed too late or*. The syntax is tangled and not helped by either lineation or punctuation. It should be, if Knott wanted to give the reader the easy way out, *Howsoever longer than life the entity they proceed from is, they are here termed too late or, to micro it, never*. This sentence also plays on the phrase *better late than never*. And there is the description of *never* as a micro-miniaturized version of *late*, even though *never* seems like an expanded version of *late*.

When, I asked an approaching closeup, do/I arrive seems to play on the idea that other people are merely closeups and not real, cinematic rather than flesh. Knott is asking when he himself will finally be in the scene. The next sentence is another syntax twister: *Gazes as found as mine in your are/are sure to be lost amongst this sun dubbing/its gold into all tongues beneath stoplights*

THE SIGNS OF THE STOPSIGN

Howsoever longer than life the entity they
proceed from is they are here termed too late or
to micro it, never. Names or signs it seems must

be functional or cease—scars too—until,
gentled genderless, they interrupt my babytalk
with teethingring-razors. . . then I woke up:

When, I asked an approaching closeup, do
I arrive? Gazes as found as mine in yours are
are sure to be lost amongst this sun dubbing

its gold into all tongues beneath stoplights that
change to go and ergo are not true, not whole?
Yet no sun holds us gunpoint as this, no sky:

in the hurt shirt of my breath worn
by no one I stand unbabbling another theory
(amnesiacs are laconic by necessity, not choice),—

to wit it's common data that 2 strangers are
sufficient for infinity's quorum, as long
as they never meet or is that lovers? Those

parallels called you and I prolong themselves past us
till at last we're wavelengthed through a room whose
wallpaper will eventually lapse back to

civilization in 2 or 3 hundred lousy rotten years,
we hope. For ever the speaklouders we hear now how
a spacesuit filled with dried feathers enters heaven

(pure alp up which the gaze drowns all hands lost)
to save us (our face chewed by drool of last dosages),
to zap the commies (in Sahara's waitingroom

the authentic and the false Sphinx continue
to ostentatiously ignore each other):—yet
persistent reconnaissance scanbacks show no one act-

ually evacuating his body despite these lethal warnings,
these vital-signs. . . And so the minus condition
of my nerves tonight alarms and the slow race

of my heart to repeat that somewhere
on the stopwatch is a time no sprinter
shall ever reach: can I believe them;—how can they

be mass enough medias for me to agree
to follow their old course? War, famine, morals
that have lost their fables: the signs

of the stopsign are everywhere. You my heart,
my head through which untold photographs zip.
I lie on a bed covered with stolen contact-
lenses.

that/change to go and ergo are not true, not whole? It extends over lines and a stanza break. The twisted syntax enables him to say *are/are*, which is a sort of laugh. The cinematic metaphor continues with the image of the *sun dubbing its gold into all tongues*, implying that the sun's golden light is something it is saying which needs to be interpreted for its audience. *Stoplights that/change to go and ergo are not true, not whole?* demonstrates Knott's play with sounds: *change to go and ergo*. A stoplight that changes from red to green demonstrates its fickleness, lack of truth, and wholeness—its inconstancy and flaky nature.

Knott loves to mix great sounds with great strangeness: *in the hurt shirt of my breath worn/by no one I stand unbabbling another theory/(amnesiacs are laconic by necessity, not choice),—/to wit it's common data that 2 strangers are/sufficient for infinity's quorum, as long/as they never meet or is that lovers?* *Hurt/shirt, amnesiacs/laconic, to wit/it's, data/stranger*—these are tricky sonic pairs typical of Knott's ear, which is subtle and plays well in the world of sensibility. *Infinity's quorum* being 2 strangers who never meet or 2 lovers is demonstration of Knott's cleverness with image and concept, and of his self-loathing in which he sees himself as being one of these 2 strangers or unmet lovers.

Amnesiacs are laconic by nature, not choice not only contains sounds of interest but humor—who would really think an amnesiac laconic when he/she really cannot remember anything to say?

These parallels called you and I shows Knott is knowledgeable about mathematics to some extent: not only would two people be parallels in that they are similar, but also if they never meet (parallel lines are lines with no intersections), and two people never meeting are two lines through time. Light travels in straight lines, more or less, and the more or less has to do with light being both particles (which travel in straight lines) and waves (which travel throughout a place, sort of filling it uniformly). This is very sophisticated imagery, and all I've read of Knott says this is no freak or accident. He fills this passage with its difficult metaphors with beautiful, echoing sounds: *past us, at last, and lapse back*.

Speaklouders has a sense of people who talk over others to prevent them from taking control of a conversation, and it is a simple pun/transposition of *loudspeakers*, which indicates the mode of broadcast that those who lecture might choose.

Another difficult phrase is *pure alp up which the gaze drowns all hands lost*. I'm not sure what it could mean, but its sense is visible through a fog: *pure alp up* alludes to hope (looking up or moving up as at or in the alps). *Which the gaze drowns* harks for *gaze down* to match *alp up*; it also shades in a hint of disappointment or promises of the alp-up thwarted or ignored. *All hands lost* is the way a ship sinking would be reported if all were lost. Later we will see the metaphor of news in *how can they/be mass enough medias*. In this phrase, as with many Knott constructs, something familiar is made unfamiliar so that we might take apart the idioms constructed for us to ease us back into thinking rather than just hearing.

Sounds echo all the time in Knott's lines: *persistent reconnaissance scanbacks show no one act*. . . . The sonic effects are knotty just as Knott seeks to exploit the knott (not) of his existence or at least loves. Even a pair like *famine, morals/fables* seems a linkage in sound, complex though it is combining the sound parts of a pair of words to construct a third—and the construction is as sensible in meaning as in sound (a famine of morals results in fables)—that is, there is some sense and some sound, but not total in either dimension.

Knott is not merely clever and punful: His images weave and tangle at least through *light* (sun, wave-length, gazing, stoplights, and contact lenses) and *stoppage* (stoplights, stopsigns, stopwatches).

I don't always understand him, but he's always fun and makes a reader think. I find him liberating.

How Knott Revises

In **Rome in Rome** (Release Press, 1976) and **Becos** (Random House, 1983) we see before and after versions of “Lourdes” (reproduced below). The second version differs from the first by a series of medium revisions. In this annotation we will examine each of these revisions to see what Knott was looking for while revising later in his writing career.

On the left (earlier) version I’ve underlined the places where Knott revised.

The first change seems to be for sense (!)—given some of Knott’s crazy poems it seems like he is perfectly happy to let his poems make no sense. The first couple of lines of the earlier version are difficult to parse: *There are miracles that nobody survives observers of to remember where or when*. The most likely parse is *There are miracles that nobody survives observers of, and therefore nobody survives to remember where or when*. One could also read it this way: *There are miracles that no-body survives, (no) Observers of to remember where or when*. This latter reading is less likely than the other, and the other suffers from emphasizing a lesser strangeness: not surviving observers of a miracle rather than not surviving the miracle (which is stranger). The revision makes it clear that it’s the miracles that are not survived, not the observers of them. It seems that because Knott often makes his lines the units of sense, Knott meant that it was the miracles that are not survived and he tried to complicate it by the possibility of sense-altering enjambment, but what resulted was less strange and less interesting. The revision makes it clear that no one survives the miracles and that therefore there is no one to scream *where, what, when*.

The revision also changes the accentual landscape. Before the revision the first stanza had 3 or 4 stresses in the first line and 4 stresses in every line after that. After the revision it’s 3 or 4, 5, 4, 5. The revision also gives us three stresses in a row at the end of the second line, which emphasizes the routine nature of a possible reporting situation (get down *where, what, when*).

The second revision (*hear* ⇒ *hear tell*) adds the 5th stress in the line so that the first stanza could be 4,5,4,5, and also makes the diction a little more down home to contrast with the lofty nature of what people think of as surrounding miracles.

LOURDES	LOURDES
There are miracles that nobody survives <u>Observers of to remember where or when</u> And these are the only true miracles Since we never <u>hear</u> about them_	There are miracles that nobody survives No one comes screaming of where what when And these are the only true miracles Since we never hear tell about them—
Since we never <u>hear</u> about them It increases their chance of being common Everyday <u>things</u> without witness without Us even <u>how</u> absently close we brush	Since we never hear tell about them It increases their chance of being common Everyday events without witness without Us even—how absently close we brush
Teeth sneeze cook supper mail <u>post</u> <u>Cards in contrast official miracles take _</u> <u>A far off locale verifiable visitable</u> <u>Some backwater never heard before of since</u>	Teeth sneeze cook supper mail postcards In contrast official miracles take a far Off locale some backwater—or podunk Which although unverifiable is visitable
Not pop the map but part the pilgrim’s <u>lips</u> it Springs up hospitals <u>hotdog</u> stands pour in <u>Testeroniacs pimple victims even</u> <u>For credentials cripples pour in</u>	Not pop the map but part the pilgrim’s Lips it springs up hospitals hot dog Stands pour in testosteroniacs pimple Victims but most of all cripples—their
<u>Their limbs hung all whichway on them</u> <u>Signslats nailed on a slanting</u> <u>Direction-post at a muddy crossroads</u> In the boondocks of a forgotten place	Limbs misled and skewed and crisscross Like—roadsigns that point everywhere On a signpost bent over a weedy crossroads In the boondocks of a forgotten place

The next revision separates the two stanzas with punctuation, and the one after that (*bear* ⇒ *hear tell*) retains the repetition of lines from the first version.

The next revision (*things* ⇒ *events*) adds precision because a miracle is an event not a thing.

The next revision (_ ⇒ —) adds punctuation and hence a bit of clarity.

The revisions in the third stanza accomplish a couple of things while improving the sense. The first line is given a better strange sense (or a more complete strange sense) by becoming *Teeth sneeze cook supper mail postcards*. The next line then becomes more like a real sentence while retaining a level of strangeness (*In contrast official miracles take a far*) and adding an enjambment that pulls the reader along. The next line in the original version really goes against the sense Knott is after: if *official miracles take a far off locale verifiable visitable*, then perhaps the official miracles are verifiable (as a reading). Knott wants the locale to be visitable (which means it's a verifiable place which his original wording was intended (I believe) to mean) but he wants the miracles to remain possibly unverifiable. In general he wants the place of such miracles to imply hick backwaters, and so his revision gets in the word *podunk* and the resulting line is full of mouthy words and sticky sounds, *Off locale some backwater— or podunk*. The last line in the original version of this stanza contains a little dyslexic turn which might have been an accident in an early draft which Knott retained for strangeness, *Some backwater never heard before of since*, and it adds a funny sort of compression for *Some backwater never heard of before or since*. The new last line is not as interesting as this but at least gets the sense a little more exactly and the previous three lines are improved in sound and rhythm with a pulling enjambment.

The fourth stanza in the original version contains a couple of weaknesses: First is the simple mistake, *Testeroniacs*—there is no such word. Next is the repetition of *pour in*, used once as an imperative/id- iom and the other as a simple verb phrase. The second use of *pour in* seems to be as much for in- creasing the length of the last line as for the repetition, which actually accomplishes little and distracts from the main drive of the poem. The length of the last line being an issue starts with the first line which is too long both in letters but also in rhythm, where there's really a perfect rhythmic place to break it, which Knott finds in the revision. This leaves nice enjambment and a nice second line, which can be read like this: *Lips! It springs up hospitals. Hot dog! Hotdog* becomes *hot dog* to in- crease the visual length of the line to balance it with the ones around it. *Hot dog stands* is broken after *dog* to put in another nice enjambment. Knott seems to want the last couple of stanzas in the poem to rush forward more than the original does, so fewer parsing difficulties and interesting enjamb- ments are called for. In the original, for example, *pour in/Testeroniacs pimple victims even/For creden- tials cripples pour in* makes it tough to parse *For credentials cripples*, and this doesn't add to the poem to have to pause there to think. The revision is clearer, the lines are tighter and more interesting, and the rhythm pulls the reader forward better. The last line of this stanza in the revised version enjambms with the next stanza, adding to the pull.

The last stanza in the original has one interesting word, *signslats*, and what surrounds it is muddy (including the word *muddy*) and has as a low point the phrase *hung all whichway*, which is nicely back- woods but also sounds like an imprecise observation. *Signslats*, though nice, makes for *direction-post* rather than *signpost* (a nicer sounding word than Knott's locution), which puts two made-up words into the stanza which does not very much for it, taking up mindshare from the last line, which is a mildly interesting closure at best. The new first line is much stronger even with the Heminwayesque *and's* with good sound variation and alliteration with the *ess* sounds. The weak enjambment of *criss- cross/Like* is strengthened by what the second line becomes—it can be read, *Like roadsigns that point everywhere*. *Crisscross* pairs up with *crossroads* and gives it a more subtle Jesus-miracle quality that the original muddled up and hit us with in *Their limbs hung all whichway on them/Signslats nailed....* The sense of the first line, moreover, adds some commentary to the essay with the words *misled*, *skewed*, and *crisscross*—a subtlety that the original makes blatant.

The change from *muddy crossroads* to *weedy crossroads* not only improves the sound (to my ear) but also the sense because a muddy crossroads is a well-traveled one while a weedy crossroads isn't, and Knott's gesture is to move toward a more distant, less well-traveled place. And the sense that miracles can happen everywhere is reinforced by roadsigns that point everywhere while *Signslats nailed on a slanting/Direction-post* doesn't get to that.

If we look at the end words of lines, the revision wins 5–3 in my opinion:

survives	survives
when	when
miracles	miracles
them	them
them	them
common	common
without	without
brush	brush
post+	postcard
take	far
visitable	podunk+
since+	visitable
it	pilgrim's+
in	dog+
even	pimple+
in	their
them	crisscross+
slanting+	everywhere
crossroads	crossroads
place	place

In all this is a modest poem by Knott, and the revision is a definite improvement. Of interest to me is that his revisions are not only for sound, movement, rhythm, and pace, but for improved clarity.

Brenda Hillman: Mildly Postmodern Language Poet

Just the other week, Brenda Hillman's fifth book of poetry was published by Wesleyan University Press (**Loose Sugar**, Wesleyan University Press, 1997). I was able to get a copy of it the afternoon before she read at a local bookstore. At Warren Wilson we don't study language poets much (and we rarely look seriously at postmodern poets), so I thought it would be interesting to have a look at her work. I've known Brenda Hillman for about 6 years, and she was the first poet to encourage me to work seriously at poetry.

The book is organized in 5 sections, titled: **space/time**, **time/alchemy**, **alchemy/problem**, **problem/time**, and **time/space**. For a number of years, Brenda has been interested in gnosticism, and

horizontal series

(Come in, you said
but the day did not hear you.
And you saw for the first time

it wouldn't be as you supposed,
the heart would always hurt
from not being chosen;

doves lined the longing streets
with their east-colored silks, their latitudes—
you didn't have to be just like those,

you could pretend the other magic
also had returned,
even if it hadn't)

his depression, his
writing it's hopeless, he'll
try the new drug

third stage—sublimation
Jupiter: dry refinement

and I explained the rules
of football to her:
"wide receiver"

more recently has focused on alchemy and current theories of existence and creation (in particular, the Big Bang theory as explained by Stephen Hawking). Brenda told us at the reading that one of the important things about alchemy is that some alchemists believed they had succeeded, when, as she put it, "no, you really didn't." Alchemy is trying to make one thing fundamentally into another when physics says there is no way (even though

through fission and fusion you sort of can achieve some alchemical transformations).

Language poetry and postmodernism in general reject the idea that a poem is about some other thing and raises the poem itself as an object of art to a more important level than do modern and romantic poetry. Language poets reject closure and whatever lyricism there is comes from the material of poems, namely words, phrases, fragments, and sentences, more as items of ink on the page and sonic utterances imagined in the head than as units of "meaning". Brenda is perhaps one of the least languagey of the language poets.

The poem "horizontal series," reproduced above, is from a cycle of poems called "Blue Codices" in the section **alchemy/problem**. This section is, she told us, about the abandoned female and is influenced by her readings in alchemy. Most of the poems in this section have what she calls *drippings* and what Bob Hass calls *ash*: they are the unrelated (-seeming) fragments at the bottom of the poem. Brenda says she writes in pencil on a large pad and frequently jots down thoughts and phrases in the margins and at the bottom of the page. In earlier work she tried to integrate these fragments into the poem, but here she said she's trying just putting them on the page—isolated, just as they are in her notebook. Some of the drippings concern Brenda's daughter (she is the *her* in the third dripping).

Though close reading is not what language poetry (and postmodern poetry) is about, this poem can succumb to it: It's about a person who is depressed that she (Brenda told us the gender at the reading) was rejected. She spends her days in bed (*horizontal series* and *the day did not hear you*). The

doves reflect the mood, and there is a pun between *latitudes* and *attitudes*. In the end the advice is to pretend that everything is ok, just as the alchemists pretended that their procedures worked.

Notice that the poem is in a form: 4 3-line stanzas. But the poem rejects pure closure by being a parenthetical statement.

The drippings are more like language poetry. The leftmost one seems to be talking about the subject of the poem (depression), but changes the gender (though the poem announces nowhere that it is about a woman). There is the hint that depression and writing are synonymous, and that there is an (al)chemical alternative (*the new drug*). The second one talks about a third stage: Earlier poems spoke of the first and second stages, which seem to be stages in an alchemical process. *Jupiter: dry refinement* seems to be there solely for the sounds and rhythm. The last dripping tells of Brenda explaining football to her daughter. The concept of “*wide receiver*” is funny because the receiver is not wide, but his location is far from the center and hence makes the formation wide. This collection of poetry makes Brenda’s dry sense of humor more obvious than her previous ones did.



The last section of the book has a series called “Loose Sugar” which is about a trip Brenda took with her mother back to Brazil, which is where Brenda’s mother is from—Brenda lived until she was 14 in Brazil. In this section Brenda uses another language-poetry technique which is somewhat the opposite of drippings, but she has no name for it. At the top of the page is the phrase or idea that set off the poem in her head. So we can see how the “concept” of the poem evolved. An example is “Two Mothers,” reproduced below. The two mothers seem to me to be the two languages the mother and daughter spoke, even though Brenda and her mother are both mothers. Brenda told us she was trying to remember/relearn Portugese during this trip.

(sometimes the text looks down like an adult when you’re trying to remember the content—)

Two Mothers

We had two mothers who shifted their same borders like countries. One did our best;

the other put secret sugar in our milk; stirred it; laughed.

Bosses of sweetness built Brasilia out of little nerves.

How to live without the concept of “being better”?

In the door to the left I start to feature her as the space;

I love her more than I am not here;
she loves us more though near is never reached.

Less fond of eating, I practice numbers;

the moment curve meets straight in the 5 is the “point” where
time meets space.

At the moment it is missing I start to love her—; (or,
at the moment I start to fear it I start to love her)

The origin of the poem seems to be the language poet’s credo: the text is superior to the childish *content* or meaning. We can make out some of the things Brenda was thinking about during the period including the composition of this poem: Her mother and being close to her, Brazil and its dirty history, time and space, and language.

The lines are separated from each other and represent thoughts or blurts. We tend to and are intended to read each one separately while making some connections between them. Brenda reads them as if they were separated stanzas—in general Brenda reads her poems as if they were a run-on sentence. *Bosses of sweetness built Brasilia out of little nerves*: sugar cane was the reason Brasilia was built, and it was a designed city, as I recall, with radial

spokes to indicate nerve centers or a drawing in from the outskirts. *Less fond of eating, I practice numbers*: While her mother eats, Brenda practices numbers in Portugese; this segues into a reference to space/time from Hawking in the next lines, and in an earlier poem in this series, she says: *I make numbers, my mother’s darkness to the left, soon she’ll be/the curve in a 5*, indicating that while Brenda

makes a number, her mother makes only part of one. *I love her more than I am not here;/she loves us more though near is never reached*: if time and space are confounded into one type of concept, then so should be space and love. This is a sentence where we can “get it” better than we can explain it. There is a sense of distance to the love while being apart isn’t indicative of the real relationship. There is a run-on or dissociative quality to the first clause because we expect it to complete like “I love her more than I <love something else>,” but the “I . . .” is completed with a different sort of sentence—one that is related but not in a linear way.

This poem starts to get at the non-linearity I expect from language poetry.



The last poem we’ll look at has more of a language poet’s feel to it. It’s called “Somewhat Anthem” and is reproduced on the next page. It is a series of one-line statements which sometimes are linked into larger syntactic units. This poem tells a bit of a story: A couple of people go to vote and are confronted by a beggar on the street or on campus. The anthem is a meditation on politics, alchemy, the results of helping, and the details of voting. There are some occasional puns (*light struck the error of his right face*), some language outbursts (*lemon savage mercury, fragrant moon metalwork, index universe other*), and outright obscurities (*address to the triple figure deprived//of sunsets right now, ivy climbed that building that latin of leaves//crickets in books a muffled excellence*). One of the outbursts of language (*fragrant moon metalwork*) is really an abbreviation of an earlier, more sensible sentence (*and I was aware of you hovering in the trees//your fragrant moon your metalwork your healing*).

The overall effect of the poem is to be a strange, disconnected, dreamy view of how politics, obligation to government, and obligation to mankind in the face of war and craziness play out. Even though this poem is in some ways the most language poetry-like, it still retains a fair amount of sense and is subject to close reading.



Brenda herself identifies her poetry as concerned with deep imagery and surrealism. I think she is not as extreme in these directions as many other poets I’ve read. She is certainly less surrealistic than Knott at his most surrealistic and less disjointed than Tate. I heard Brenda giving some advice to a young writer who was sending out material that many small magazines rejected—she said, “if they aren’t taking it, make it stranger.”

Somewhat Anthem

Address to the triple figure deprived
of sunsets right now
in election time whom do we elect
squares of simple shadows coming down
who would help others help them
we scratched the scraps for the nonevent
put our heads on the table to ask again
the table a rusted prairie all aflame
ivy climbed that building that latin leaves
crickets in books a muffled excellence

A man lay in front of the library on an arm
air a glazed pavilion surrounding him
light struck the error of his right face
lemon savage mercury
lifting was calmer than the second time
we offered him food that was stranger of us
a version of what we were already thinking
at the end of this the poorest space of time
only some deep noticing was possible
and some spare change

Filling out the ballot it's hard to aim
inevitably overfilling the squares
we were the citizens of the missing flame
what if at the end of personal healing
this is why I've called you up dear one
Paracelsus not having succeeded
what with chlorine in the water
this is being written on ancient scraps I-XII
filling out the ballots during the metal
table squeaking of the polling volunteers

I saw the four of swords reversed
the ten of pentacles people twirling stars in wheels

wise economy in conflict with yawn and riches
and I was aware of you hovering in the trees
your fragrant moon your metalwork your healing
what could we do but spend less money
the prone one lying on his arm
others using lattés for transformation
chocolate into foam into coffee into
and on the side streets
those cakes still dreaming of vanilla

And we were aware of you hovering
in the trees not counting the ballots our
little fear surveys
Grenada various gulfs Somalia Haiti
a prone one lying on her arm
Creusa having stumbled from the ruins
and if at the end of personal healing
no one helped was helped what then
for those who could never what then
love was between us and the time of them

And we were aware of you hovering
lifted our heads from the ballots
the gray planks handed to the polling volunteers
and if at the close of the personal what then
voting even if hurt
not like the flag like the wind
each controlled by a different what then
fragrant moon metalwork
the alchemy of trying again
water working the deepest fields
index universe other

César Vallejo: Trilce

Trilce (translated by Rebecca Seiferle, The Sheep Meadow Press, 1992) was perhaps Vallejo's masterpiece, the last collection of poetry published in his lifetime (published originally in 1922). This work is possibly too difficult to translate outside Vallejo's particular brand of Spanish because he relies on sounds, puns, typography, and Inca influences which can have almost no correlatives in contemporary English. In the difficulty of understanding his wordplay, he is on a par with Paul Celan.

In translation we can get a rough sense of what Vallejo is up to, but the overall work, I find, is dense and frequently impenetrable. Without, I presume, the sonic qualities at the right places to hold up the poems as they are in Spanish, I believe that these translations fail to capture enough to make for a compelling presentation.

Vallejo was a major influence on James Wright, and in fact, Wright and Bly translated a significant portion of Vallejo's work. Vallejo is a deep image poet, perhaps with some dips into surrealism.

IX
I proVoke to reVolve this for that.
Her two ample leaves, her valve
opening in succulent reception
of multiplicand to multiplier,
her condition excellent for pleasure,
every readied truth.

I provoke re volving this for that.
At her pleasure, I invein bolivarian thicket
to 32 cables and their multiples,
they lace themselves together, hair by hair,
the sovereign blubberlips, the two volumes of the Work,
and then I don't live absence,
not to the touch.

I fail to volve this for that.
We'll never saddle the bullish I slavvver
of egotism and that mortal rub
of the sheet,
not what woman is—
How much she weighs in general!

And female is the soul of the absent one.
And female is my soul.

Fortunately, when Vallejo speaks of sex, he speaks plainly! To the left is IX, which represents a valiant attempt by Seiferle to render in English the orthography and stuttering in Vallejo's original Spanish. The images take on a couple of threads: turning, returning, recurring; the dichotomy of the two sexes; expansive reproduction; and the sensuality of the moment.

We see the turning/returning theme through the series *reVolve*, *re volving*, and *volve*. The dichotomy of the sexes is reflected in the images of coupling, obviously, and in the ending gesture of identifying part of the male as female. The expansive reproduction in the numerical calculations of multiplying by 2 ($32=2^5$, which is the result of 5 generations producing 2 offspring each). And the sensuality is everywhere: *her two ample leaves*, her *valve/opening in succulent reception*, *blubberlips*, and the many words containing *v*'s, which echo *vulva* and *vagina* (there are many *v*

sounds in the original Spanish).

The interesting thing is how what could be a very sappy topic—every male contains a female side—is handled in such a way that there is sexuality and sensuality along with the near sentimentality.



The next poem, "XXX", is one of the more difficult ones; it is reproduced on the next page. A footnote in the translation points out the following:

The first stanza evokes St. Rosa de Lima (1586–1617) patron saint of South America and the first saint born in the New World. Her parents wished her to marry; she painted her face with chili pepper so that the sores would drive away any suitor.

The poem is about sex and abstinence, moral and immoral love, love and sex, life and death, and the higher and lower realities of human existence. Vallejo lived in two worlds at the same time: The

XXX

Second degree burn
in desire's every tender excrescence,
spike of vagrant hot chili,
at two in the immoral afternoon.

Glove of borders, edge to edge.
Fragrant truth touched at the quick, connecting
the sexual antenna
to what we are without knowing it.

Washwater of maximum ablution.
Travelling cauldrons
that bump together and splash bold shade
unanimous, the color, the fraction, the hard life,
the hard eternal life.
Let's not be awed. Death is like this.

The sex blood of the beloved that moans
sweetly, from bearing so much
for such a ridiculous point.
And the circuit
between our meager day and the great night,
at two in the immoral afternoon.

Catholic Christian world descended from Spanish invasion, and the "heathen" native world of the Incas and the high plains of Peru. The first stanza brings this home with the local, hot chilis acting as the antidote to marriage and sexual desire. Vallejo's images place us at a certain time so that we know the story is real and not merely philosophical. The *glove of borders* reveals that borders in the Western, made-up world are things that are placed on top of what is natural, just as Christian abstinence is a glove on natural desires. People are like two *travelling cauldrons/that bump together and splash bold shade*. Why *shade*? Perhaps because the heat of life is something that, in Western, Christian artificiality, must be played out in the shade and away from view, or perhaps it implies a contrast to the heat of chili. Or maybe it all means that the two cauldrons that bump are really just temporary, to be followed by death.

The last stanza tells us that even though sexual desire is necessary, it is *ridiculous* because *the great night* comes soon anyway, measured in time commensurate with the time given as *two in the immoral afternoon*. The afternoon is immoral because it is as real as the need and desire for sexual pleasure.



LXII

Carpet

When you go to the room that you know,
enter it, but carefully half open the screen
that so much has left ajar,
couple the bolts well, so that they can't
revolve to other backs.

Crust

And when you leave, say you won't be long
in naming the canal that separates us:
fiercely seized by the canto of your luck,
I am inseparable from you,
and you drag me at the edge of your soul.

Pillow

And when we must die alone—who knows!
Oh no. Who knows!

then we will be separated.
Moreover, changing the pace, the unknown flag
makes me slightly crazy, I have to wait for you there
in the confluence of breath and bone
like long ago,
like long ago in the corner of the bride and groom
west of the earth.

And from there I will follow you
to other worlds, and at least they will serve
you, me, us, mossy and stiffening with cold,
so that you will bend your knees
on the seven falls of this infinite slope,
and so be hurt less.

The last poem we'll look at is "LXII", reproduced at the left. It seems to be a meditation on death of half a couple and the wait for the other to die. When they are rejoined, they will make a journey either up or down *an infinite slope* to some desired or inevitable place. There are a number of mysteries to this poem: What are the *carpet*, *crust*, and *pillow*? *Carpet* might refer to the journey together in life; *crust* the shell of life when one dies and the other waits; and *pillow* is the death of the other. What is the *so much* that has left the screen ajar? I don't know. What are the *backs* in *couple the bolts well, so that they can't/revolve to other backs*? I have no clear idea. (Could they be the backs of other lovers?) What is the *canto of your luck*? Not sure, but maybe it's the poetry of fate. What are the *seven falls of this infinite slope*? Not a single clue.

This is the magic and frustration of deep imagery poetry: I think it is clear enough what is going on, the details evoke, the poem is not easily paraphrasable, but not every detail yields to a close reading.

This is the second time I have read Vallejo extensively, and each time his work yields a little bit more. I doubt this is the last time I'll return.

C. K. Williams: I Am the Bitter Name

Written during the Vietnam War era, *I Am the Bitter Name* (in *Poems: 1963–1983*, Noonday Press, 1988) reflects the liberal attitude of the time, which was angry about war-related events and critical of policy. In this collection, Williams had not yet developed his very long punctuated lines and was working in short almost unpunctuated lines in a sort of run-on style which seems to fit the times well. The sort of run-on sentences I mean are visible in “This is a Sin,” reproduced below. In Williams’s hands and with the topics and themes Williams used, such run-on sentences come across as a rant rather than a monologue or meditation.

Right away we see this is going to be a rant: *right off we started inflicting history/on each other day after day first thing this*. The sparseness of punctuation forces us to try to read the poem with attention, and once the tone of the poem is understood, which it is in the first 2 lines, there are few missteps in getting where the punctuation should be. The run-on character of the poem is aided by the many en-

This Is a Sin

right off we started inflicting history
on each other day after day first thing this
is historical and we gave dollars for it
and this and we gave movies and sad poems
and obviously newspapers and a little less
valentines and sometimes it got right
up against us and into us we would squeeze
it out like a worm it would come back
by itself through the pancreas through
the eye or womb and with great tenderness
on the faces of wives and babies we
would reinflict it until there was
such beauty it was unbearable because
it was too much history too much suffering
and also birds suffering their leaps
from branches dogs
lifting their dark mouths the paths
of mantises cows plopping were we afraid
of what would be left of us? sometimes
a person was erased entirely
and children dead of shame stuck
upright in the snow like pipes the wind
screaming over them or I would forget
you darling your breasts the wind
over them our lips
moving darling the child the wind breasts
our lips over them

jambments—I count only 8 lines of the 27 which are end-stopped or could be considered an end-stopping place—which pull us through the poem. Some of the enjambments are truly jarring, like *...and sometimes it got right/up against us...* Here we expect some relief from *sometimes it got right*, but immediately we are pulled back into the quagmire.

An interesting twist—I don’t really know what else to call it—is the elevation of *this* in the first 4 lines. The second line is *on each other day after day first thing this*. We can read this as a sentence (fragment): *Day after day, first thing, this*. Then we see that the sentence should be read *...day after day, first thing. This is historical....* Or so we think until we see the next two lines: *...we gave dollars for it/and this and we have movies and sad poems*. Do we read this as *we gave dollars for it and for this <poem>, and we have movies...* or as *we have dollars for it and <a reference back to the other this>?* The possibility of the latter, though strange and unlikely, makes us go back to the second line to read it again to see whether we really understood or at least properly parsed the lines; in a sense, the pronominal reference of *this* did its job in a new way by referring back to a relatively vague or undefined portion of an earlier part of the text.

Looking at lines by themselves we see the unsettled and unsettling nature of the poem: *by itself through the pancreas through, on the faces of wives and babies we, such beauty it was unbearable because, and from branches dogs*, for example. Notice that these unsettled lines occur from line 9 until line 16, forming a sort of transition from the first part which is slightly more abstract and certainly less personal to the end which is less abstract and very much more personal, so that the poem is a kind of telescoping structure with the telescoping part this unsettling transition zone.

Though the poem’s punctuation is sparse, it has some—not just the line breaks—there is a question mark. It occurs in a sentence which when extended to the end of its last line reads: *were we afraid/of what would be left of us? sometimes*. There is a kind of double question(ing) here, one signaled by the question mark and the other with the small whimpering *sometimes* that follows it. I’d argue that this is the emotional center of the poem, like the eye of the storm, where the swirling violent rant before is matched by the wrenching, desperate emotionality of the end:

...the wind

screaming over them or I would forget
you darling your breasts the wind
over them our lips
moving darling the child the wind breasts
our lips over them

This ending, though a bit overwrought when viewed in isolation, is hopeful nonetheless in contrast to the general horror of the rest of the poem.



“The Sting,” reproduced below, is harder to understand as a statement, though the sentiment is easy enough and along the same lines as “This Is a Sin.” The key to reading this poem for meaning is to understand or somehow grok what *the not want* is. Williams gives some hints. The first line declares at least partially that *not want* is a thing or a single concept like a leaf or an emotion, that there is such a thing as *the not want* and *a not want*. The emotion or intention called *not want* is the opposite of

The Sting

the not want
jesus
I didn't know this the not want
for woman country daughter the man
hit rocked back crying holding him
the not want
for wounding myself for your mouth
for what my hand is opening getting sleepy
the not want
to ride hooked in you like a thistle
for long grass the earth broken to take breaths
in you
jesus
not want
for dreaming
to be president
to take the whole nation and kiss it
awake being born being desired
not new minds not even not
this grown into the big
and fuller
not want
for being able to not want
for trees taking me underneath clouds
taking me fury
exaltation
why? why baby? why dog? why wife?
why
not want president?
why not want friend with no anguish?
why
angel I love you god I love you why
not want heart in my body in each hand
picture guitar
holy
leave this
let this be here
let me
not want this not

want—logically it could be the simple negation of *want*, obviously, but there is already that construction in English, the familiar: *I do not want an ice cream cone*. Here the poet is telling us that we need the opposite of *want*: ***not want***.

The third line is, *I didn't know this the not want*. This is the clearest statement of this program of teaching the reader a new concept; we could punctuate this line like this: ***I didn't know this: the not want***. Much of the poem is simply showing us this concept of *not want*, using it in places where it is a noun (*not want/for dreaming/to be president*) and others where it is an adjective (*why/not want president?*).

The form of expression of this new anti-desire, *not want*, opens up a staccato type of language which Williams uses in this poem: ***for long grass the earth broken to take breaths/in you/jesus***.

Once we have learned this new language, Williams can use it to say the thing he wants to say: ***let me/not want this not***. This enables him to make an ambiguous and clever statement. One reading is that Williams would like to eliminate the negativism—the *not*—he sees in the Vietnam era, and another is that now that he has the concept and language of *not want*, he would like to eliminate it by eliminating its *not*.

About the title, all I can say is that the concept of *not want* is related to Williams's attitude about the US in the Vietnam era, and one of the definitions of *sting* (as slang) is:

a complicated confidence game planned and executed with great care, especially an operation organized and implemented by undercover agents to apprehend criminals.

Perhaps the confidence game is the one that the government is pulling off by staging the Vietnam War and accompanying crackdown on liberal views, or perhaps, more happily, it is the confidence game that poets pull off like redefining language for, one hopes, better purposes, such as defining *not want* and then using it to eliminate itself.



This last one is easy and fun. “The Last” is reproduced below. (In the book I have, Williams’s long lines are wrapped in the typesetting; because I have smaller fonts, I can typeset them as long lines and

The Last

when I was sleeping this morning one of my feet
fell out of the covers and my daughter
came in and covered it up with her little dolly blanket

I was dreaming right then that flames were shooting out of my cock
and when I woke up with her patting the soft cloth down on me
I believed I understood the end of eternity for the first time

don’t ever make me explain this

I will.) This poem has the feel of something Williams wrote right after waking with the experience he reports. Moreover, he tells us at the end that he cannot explain the poem, and certainly he cannot because the statement is as clearly and precisely made as it can be by the poem itself—this, after all, is poetry’s project: to explain in clear and concrete terms what is beyond the set of simple

words and concepts humans have.

But, I can explain some aspects of it, though not as well or as concisely as the poem does. The *end of eternity* is a paradox: eternity cannot end, because if it could it would not be eternity. Thus, the poem is about paradoxes (which cannot be explained, which is another reason for Williams to say so). The cock (this is possibly the most violent-sounding word for the penis) is the source, in some sense, of men’s violent natures and hence of war (and thus the flames shooting out), but also of the gentle daughter who tries, most likely unsuccessfully, to warm her father’s foot. Children are likely, in Vietnam era warfare, to be killed or maimed, so the act of kindness of a potential victim toward a potential killer or mutilator is another paradox of sorts. Finally, there is the paradox that in one context the dream of flames shooting from one’s cock could result in sexual or other violence, while in another it results in a fun poem like this.

C. K. Williams: Long Lines

In later poetry, C. K. Williams took up a longer, more luxurious line and a more relaxed cadence. In most collections, these lines are wrapped around and give an odd look to the poems, which I believe alters how they're read and obscures some of the more subtle things Williams does in those lines. Because I am able to fit his lines in the width of the page in the font (and size) I normally use, we can see these long lines perhaps as Williams intended for them to be seen. **Tar** (in **Poems: 1963–1983**, Noonday Press, 1988) represents Williams at a mature level writing long lines. The poem “On Learning of a Friend’s Illness,” (reproduced below) holds a special interest because it is written for (and about) James Wright.

I find the long lines typeset this way very much different to read than the wrapped lines one usually sees. The wrapped lines seem to hurry along while these lines are sensuous and languorous.

The long lines are not syllabic, though there appears to be a regularity about them: The first two stanzas have lines with the following lengths in syllables: 20, 23, 25, 26 and 23, 21, 21, 23. The lines are not accentual either, though there is also a regularity about them: the first two stanzas: 8, 9, 10, 11 and 7, 11, 11, 9.

The lines are long and so are the sentences. There is not much enjambment—certainly no jarring enjambment, with the only interesting abutting being the line:

It is a long while since the issues of mortality have taken me this way. Shivering,

On Learning of a Friend’s Illness

For James Wright

The morning is so gray that the grass is gray and the side of the white horse grazing is as gray and hard as the harsh, insistent wind gnawing the iron surface of the river, while far off on the other shore, the eruptions from the city seem for once more docile and benign than the cover of nearly indistinguishable clouds they unfurl to insinuate themselves among.

It is a long while since the issues of mortality have taken me this way. Shivering, I tramp the thin, bitten track to the first rise, the first descent, and, toiling up again, I startle out of their brushy hollow the whole herd of wild-eyed, shaggy, unkempt mares, their necks, rumps, withers, even faces begrimed with patches of the gluey, alluvial mud.

All of them at once, their nostrils flared, their tails flung up over their backs like flags, are suddenly in flight, plunging and shoving along the narrow furrow of the flood ditch, bursting from its mouth, charging headlong toward the wires at the pasture’s end, banking finally like one great, graceful wing to scatter down the hillside out of sight.

Only the oldest of them all stays with me, and she, sway-backed, over at the knees, blind, most likely deaf, still, when I move towards her, swings her meager backside to me, her ears flattening, the imperturbable opals of her eyes gazing resolutely over the bare, scruffy fields, the scattered pines and stands of third-growth oak I called a forest once.

I slip up on her, hook her narrow neck, haul her to me, hold her for a moment, let her go. I hardly can remember anymore what there ever was out here that keeps me coming back to watch the land be amputated by freeways and developments, and the mares, in their sanctuary, thinning out, reverting, becoming less and less approachable, more and more the symbols of themselves.

How cold it is. The hoofprints in the hardened muck are frozen lakes, their rims atilt, their glazed opacities skewered with straws, muddled with the ancient and ubiquitous manure. I pick a morsel of it up: scentless, harmless, cool, as desiccated as an empty hive, it crumbles in my hand, its weightless, wingless filaments taken from me by the wind and strewn

in a long, surprising arc that wavers once then seems to burst into a rain of dust. No comfort here, nothing to say, to try to say, nothing for anyone. I start the long trek back, the horses nowhere to be seen, the old one plodding wearily away to join them, the river, bitter to look at, and the passionless earth, and the grasses rushing ceaselessly in place.

Shivering actually modifies Williams's *tramping*, but placed here it serves to modify two things at once.

The only short sentence is *How cold it is*. This sentence is so short next to the others in this poem that it really stands out, and connected by sense to *shivering*—just about the only interestingly placed word in the poem—it sums up the tone of the poem and Williams's feelings about what is about to befall Wright.

The lines have a relaxed feel to them, as if they were spontaneously written (perhaps as a first draft),

but the music of the lines and the way the rhythm shifts and sways betrays a lengthy revision process—at least lengthy in attention. Notice that the first two lines slur between the sounds of **g, gr, s, har, sh, s, w, r, s, and r**. There are some perhaps overdone conglomeration of sounds, like *gluey alluvial mud*. The majority (18/28) of the lines are stopped on single syllables. The sounds are beautifully made and placed together. How unlike the harsh, rant-like sounds of **I Am the Bitter Name**.

A Blessing

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

This poem connects with James Wright in three ways: The description of the horses as they run toward a fence then veer away from it *finally like one great, graceful wing* echoes Wright's occasional reference to one wing; the contrast of the forest and the natural setting with the encroaching city is reminiscent of Wright's ongoing battle

with his native Ohio and the filth he found there; and the entire poem is a takeoff on Wright's poem, "A Blessing" (from **The Branch Will Not Break** and reproduced above), and a quiet homage to him.

Wright made several references in his collected works to a single or solitary wing. Some commentators have attached this reference to his mysterious or lost love, Jenny. Here is a stanza from "Son of Judas" (**Two Citizens**):

*I'm getting out this time.
Out of that body I prayed to get out of,
Out of that soul that only existed
In the Jenny sycamore that is now the one wing,
The only wing.
I had little shadows of mark on it
That looked like feathers.
I never peeled off a single one.
You did.*

The sweep of the mares in Williams's poem presents this image beautifully, and this image stands at the very center of the poem.

Later in the poem, Williams refers to the *weightless, wingless filaments* of crushed, desiccated manure, which speaks, perhaps, of Wright's impending freedom from the emotional difficulty of Jenny and the single wing.

In all of Wright's poetry we see him struggling to come to grips with the Ohio River Valley where he grew up and the contrast between the beautiful natural setting at least partially visible beneath civilization and the dirty river towns especially Wheeling, West Virginia, which is right across the river for Martins Ferry, Ohio. In Williams's poem, this dichotomy is presented in the overall setting and the plot (Williams goes to his favorite nearby forest and observes civilization eating it up). The river makes an appearance: *the river, bitter to look at, and the passionless earth*. This passage sounds very much like Wright.

Finally, there is the scene in "A Blessing" in which Wright would like to hold one of the ponies: *I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms*. Williams plays this out in his poem where he says: *I slip up on her, hook her narrow neck, haul her to me, hold her for a moment, let her go*. There are only two multisyllabic words in this line, *narrow* and *moment*, and Williams has described in this poem a narrow moment that comes directly from Wright and his work.

Roethke: The Lost Son Sequence

The Lost Son Sequence contains the following poems: “The Lost Son,” “The Long Alley,” “A Field of Light,” and “The Shape of the Fire” from **The Lost Son and Other Poems**; “Praise to the End!,” “Unfold! Unfold!,” and “I Cry, Love! Love!” from **Praise to the End!**; and “O, Thou Opening, O” from **The Waking** (all collected in **The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke**, Doubleday, 1966).

These poems do not submit well to close readings—it seems possible to attach a meaning to them starting with one of the following assumptions about what the sequence is about: Roethke and his father, Roethke growing up and old, evolution from a simpler to a more complex (and back?) form, fatness, underwater versus ground-dwelling versus air-borne life, and the life of Jesus. Without doubt there are consistent images throughout the sequence: the strange creature that seems to live underwater and sometimes seems like an otter, a fish, an eel, and a frog; bones and bone-ache; and fat.

On the other hand, why bother? I recall an evening when I was sitting in a dark, dirty living room in Denver with my old highschool buddy, John Kurkjian, who had become a psychologist. Despite lots of ups and downs between us—with the downs deeper than the ups high—we were still friends enough after almost 30 years for us to share my poetry. He sat there reading and smiling, laughing at times. I was puzzled because he was reading what I thought was my most dense work (a style I’ve since, I hope, given up or at least am able to give up). I asked him what he was “getting” from the poems, and he said, “nothing: I just like the sounds the words make and the rhythms against rhythms and the new ways of saying things about what you see.”

I find that reading the Lost Son Sequence requires reading like this. There certainly is some point to the poems as their recurring images and 2 or 3 distinct voices suggests, but the point eludes me (and most readers, I suspect). But while reading the sequence I focused on the sounds and words, the implied or evoked emotions rather than any sense that comes through.

I spent the most time thinking about what the different voices meant and what the creature or creatures were that appeared in the sequence (and mostly in the voices). Here is what I learned (which isn’t much):

There seem to be three “voices” judging by the degree of indentation—I suppose the publishers and typesetters were more lax about this in the ’40’s and ’50’s, but there are three degrees (at least) of indentation in the 8 poems. One of the voices seems to be either an animal or something that identifies with one:

*Stay close. Must I kill something else?
Can feathers eat me? There’s no clue in the silt.
This wind gives me scales. Have mercy, gristle;
It’s my last waltz with an old itch.*

...

*Rich me cherries a fondling’s kiss.
The summer bumps of ha:
Hand me a feather, I’ll fan you warm,
I’m happy with my paws.*

...

*Call off the dogs, my paws are gone.
This wind brings many fish;
The lakes will be happy:
Give me my hands:
I’ll take the fire.*

These excerpts from “The Long Alley” hint at some temporary, at least, animal identity. Notice, also, the music in lines like *This wind give me scales. Have mercy, gristle;/It’s my last waltz with an old itch*, which mixes **s**, **s/tl**, and **ch** sounds.

In "Praise To The End!" we see references like these:

*It's a great day for the mice.
Prickle-me, tickle me, close stems.
Bumpkin, he can dance alone.
Ooh, ooh, I'm a a duke of eels.
...
Can the bones breathe? This grave has an ear.
It's still enough for the knock of a worm.
I feel more than a fish.
Ghost, come closer.*

These references hint at some sort of animal and, one view at least, is that there is some development regarding that animal—maybe it's reverting, maybe it's advancing.

In "I Cry, Love! Love!" we see these:

*I've traced these weeds in sand with a vestigial tail;
Now the gills are beginning to cry.
...
We met in a nest. Before I lived.*

And in "O, Thou Opening, O":

*The rat's my phase.
...
Oh, what a webby wonder I am!
...
This frog's had another fall.
...
I'm king of another condition*

It seems the animal identity is variously a mammal, a fish, and an amphibian. We can lay this to youthful imagination, but the complexity of the poems don't suggest something so simple. Take, for example, some of the references to wisdom or prophecy:

*Eternity howls in the last crags,
The field is no longer simple:
It's a soul's crossing time.
The dead speak noise.
...
What a whelm of proverbs, Mr. Pinch!
Are the entrails clear, immaculate cabbage?
...
Sing, sing, you symbols! All simple creatures,
All small shapes, willow-shy,
In the obscure haze, sing!*

The above is from "Unfold! Unfold" and the following is from "O, Thou Opening, O":

*Dazzle me, dizzy aphorist.
Fling me a precept.
I'm a draft sleeping by a stick;
I'm lost in what I have.*

This seems to invite us to read the poem more than just for sound and loose sense, yet the poem simply does not easily yield. There are repeated references to things like bones, old age, and graves while there is in every poem in the sequence syntax, rhythms, and statements that are childlike, emphasizing that the sequence has something to do with aging or the relationship of parent to child or growing up.

The sequence is rich and intriguing to read. I found it frustrating that it did not yield to the sort of analysis I thought it should. The sounds alone and intertwined rhythms make it worthwhile, and the

deep imagery pulls us in. This sequence and the North American Sequence are really the best of Roethke.

Translating “Age Seventeen” by Shinji Terayama

This semester I attempted my first translation, and the task was made difficult by my not knowing the original language (Japanese) and by choosing a partner with limited English skills. Nevertheless, I found it to be a challenging and rewarding experience. This annotation explains the process, provides by example a definition of the *poem chart* which I used to aid translation, and my translation of the poem.

I have never translated a poem before, and so the methodology I used was ad hoc and based on the tools available to me. I chose Japanese poetry because there seems to be very few translations available of modern Japanese poetry. The task was difficult, and rewarding after a fashion.

The poem was selected essentially at random. Last October I spent a week in Tokyo giving a series of talks, and the American company that sponsored me provided a guide/translator: Masako Omata. She had been living in the US on and off for 4 or 5 years. I asked her to take me to the largest bookstore in Tokyo, where we selected 3 volumes of contemporary poetry. Masako did not know anything about poetry, and her education in literature was spotty or nonexistent. We selected the first volume by reading a single poem for the ones available until Masako felt the chosen poem was “interesting”. Then we selected the second volume the same way, except picking a volume when the chosen poem was both “interesting” and seemed “very different” from the chosen poem in the volume already selected. The third volume was selected in a similar way to the first.

When we returned to the US, I asked Masako to pick any number of poems for any of the books and to transliterate them into English and let me know when she had some ready. Masako is young and busy, and so it was in late April that she had some transliterations done. She transliterated 6 poems, and I chose the one that seemed hardest to formulate in English. Here is her transliteration:

Seventeen

*When a bird's words became a lie in front of everyone,
the window inside me was shut violently.*

*Hanging my head down, I, enduringly, went down the
stairs in the dark part of me, to return.*

*But, a volcano happened to be so beautiful in the
clear sky that I, in a cherry-blossoming garden,
decided to put my hand on my chest.*

I then met with Masako for a number of hours to talk about the poem. The first thing I learned was that Masako had not transliterated, but had tried to translate the poem, retaining some of its poetic qualities. I soon realized that she didn't understand the concept of transliterating. I asked her to read the poem aloud in Japanese the way it would be spoken, and then we tackled each line. I asked her to read a line, then tell me what each word/syllable signified to her as she read it. I also asked her to make sure to tell me the actual first and last words on each line, and to note any interesting rhymes or sound effects either within the line or between lines. In several cases where she could not transliterate, I asked her to come up with a series of situations or scenarios which could be partly described with the word or words (or syllables) that were in question and to point out the part of the situation

or scene that corresponded to the word or words in question. After a long time I came up with this *poem chart*.

	Seventeen Years Old	
sudden reality	everyone (in) front (of)	
	(small bird) words lie become when	
	I inside hard window shut	
	_____ stanza break	
dark & childish	I (little bit) }	[looking down head down feeling down]
		continuing
	this phrase is ungrammatical and I and (little bit) rhyme	
	[suffering endurance]	[as if but not] dark I inside
	[stairs steps]	going down returning / the going-down is the returning
	_____ stanza break	
	However / intellectual diction	
	volcano nicely / feminine way of saying it	[fine day clear] existing (happens to be) [so that and then therefore]
more playful	cherry-blossom blooming (elementary-school campus)	
	I hand flat / in a meditative way, enjoying it	
	chest [touches as in applying a bandage or healing]	[did it as on a whim that struck his fancy at the moment] [past tense]

Parenthesized phrases indicate that the phrase is a good translation of a Japanese word, and a bracketed set of words indicate that the Japanese word or phrase (or syllables) require an explanation or scenario to be drawn to understand it. The vertical annotation to each stanza indicates its tone.

From this detailed poem chart we see that the craft is actually sophisticated, though the description of the collection in the volume speaks of how the poet had gone back to a youthful, more innocent time in his life. These poems were written right before his death, and one suspects that perhaps he knew of his death, not only by the subject of his poems (growing up) but also because of his age (early or mid-fifties).

Masako pointed out that in Japan, the alignment of cherry-blossom time, the start of the school year, and graduation is a significant event and time (the school year begins and ends in Spring). I decided there was no real way to capture this confluence but I could grab some of the magic that cherry-blossom time signifies even to western readers. My translation appears below.

Age Seventeen

(Translation of a poem by Shinji Terayama)

In front of everyone
this small bird's voice fell from words to song,
and inside, my window shut hard.

In small ways I looked down;
with hard slow steps and in darkness
I went down the stairs within, returning.

However,
a volcano—clear on a sweet day—appeared before me and so
with the sakura blossoms surprised in bloom at school,
I lay my hand flat
on my chest, healing, by chance, myself.

I found that doing the translation—as good or as poor as it happens to be—made me focus in great detail on craft elements. I found that working with Masako was difficult because of her limited English abilities and lack of knowledge of poetry. This required me to explain very difficult poetic concepts to her so that she could see what it was I was looking for. I found I was lecturing her on poetic technique as much as anything else. On the other hand, I don't know what would have happened had I been working with someone very fluent and knowledgeable about poetry, who

therefore might have held an opinion about the poem and how it should be translated. As it was, I spent a lot of time looking at dictionary entries that Masako pointed out.

The poem chart seems to be a good way of capturing the nuances of a poem, though it might seem cold and artificial. I found that in going back to the chart over and over, I was able to mine it while working on the translation. I would say I spent 1 hour studying Masako's initial transliteration, 5 hours making the poem chart with her, and 3 hours doing the translation, including long periods of time during each revision of the translation to let it settle.

I wish that she had chosen a deeper or more challenging poem, though the simplicity of it probably was a good choice to start with. I also feel that it would have been better to have had poem charts for all the poems in the volume before starting any translations.

This was hard work.