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Echoes in a concrete canyon : Graham, Cummings, and Apollinaire

Robin L. Adams-Hays

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ECHOES IN A CONCRETE CANYON:
GRAHAM, CUMMINGS, AND APOLLINAIRE

by

Robin L. Adams-Hays
Bachelor of Arts, University of Iowa, 1993

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

May

2003

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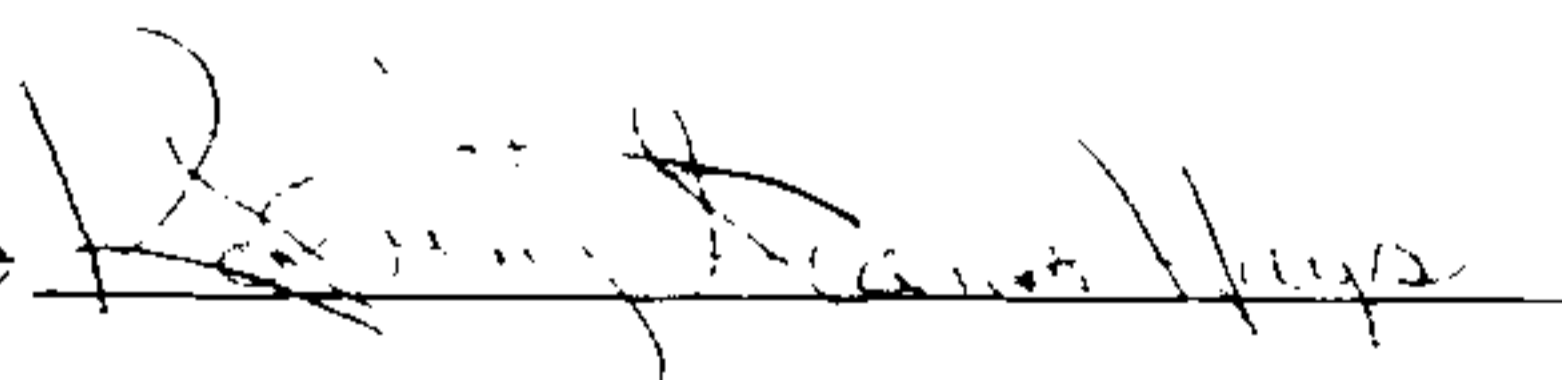
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To David J. Hegge

ABSTRACT

This study explores the poetry of Jorie Graham, E.E. Cummings, and Guillaume Apollinaire, focusing particularly on the rich tradition of concrete and visual poetry and the concept of rule breaking in writing. The connection between Cummings, taking elements of visual poetry and free verse to experimental new heights with typographic techniques, and Apollinaire, whose poetry explores similar aesthetic challenges, is obvious. Graham may seem to be the one who doesn't belong, but part of my emphasis is to demonstrate how she does fit into this study. Her poetry, as is Cummings' and Apollinaire's, is as visual as it is audible. All three of these poets went beyond the constraints of poetry trapped in traditional form.

Additionally, I am including my own work of poetry, The Manipulation of Echoes in a Shallow Canyon in this study. I am a poet and a breaker of rules. Part of my desire to begin this study in the first place is to exonerate my poetry and myself, and to be taken seriously as a writer.

THE WORD IS DEAD...
THE WORD IS IMPOTENT
asthmatic and sentimental poetry
the "me" and "it"

which is still in common use
everywhere...
is influenced by an individualism fearful of space
the dregs of an exhausted era...

psychological analysis
and clumsy rhetoric
have KILLED THE MEANING OF THE WORD...

the word must be reconstructed
to follow the SOUND as well as
the IDEA

if in the old poetry
by the dominance of relative and
subjective feelings

the intrinsic meaning of the word is destroyed
we want by all possible means

syntax
prosody
typography
arithmetic
orthography

to give new meaning to the word and new force to
expression

the duality between prose and poetry can no longer
be maintained
the duality between form and content can no longer
be maintained
Thus for the modern writer form will have a directly
spiritual meaning
it will not describe events
it will not *describe* at all
but *ESCRIBE*
it will recreate words in the common meaning of
events
a constructive unity of form and content...

(Theo van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian,
and Anthony Kot as qtd. in Solt 11)

Painters Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian along with Anthony Kot created a manifesto for poetry which first appeared in Doesburg's avant-garde magazine *De Stijl* in April 1920 (Solt 11). This poetry manifesto was written thirty-five years before the movement of concrete poetry, but it voices the rallying cry of concrete, and visual, poets so well. The issue at the center of the modern poet's dilemma is found in line seven, "...an individualism fearful of space." Every poet and writer is faced with the same difficulty, and fear, of the blank page and how to fill it. The elements that make up concrete poetry are reliance on the visual and the breakdown of the illusion that written language functions only to transcribe.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rules are everywhere. There are rules of man, codified rules and laws like “no parking” and “don’t spit on the sidewalk” that shouldn’t be broken, but often are. There are rules of nature, physical rules, which can not be broken, rules of convention which can be broken, and the rules of genre, a particular sub-category of the rules of convention, which can be broken because they are not enforced by actual law. Tzvetan Todorov wrote in The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to Literary Genre that “every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example alters the species. We might say that in art we are dealing with a language of which every utterance is agrammatical at the moment of its performance” (Todorov 5) meaning that creativity requires forging a new set of rules. But according to Northrop Frye in his essay the “Theory of Symbols,” “[p]oetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels” (Frye 97). In the arts one often breaks the mold, but consequently these rules, however groundbreaking they are, are perceived as another set of rules which other writers have to account for. After all, “[l]iterature shapes itself, and is not shaped externally” (Frye 97). A writer can, quite simply, drown in rules both the inherited ones and the self-imposed ones. I began writing poetry because I felt that there were fewer rules to follow. I felt that I could be more free to express myself in my writing with poetry than with any other genre. But I

soon found far too many rules in traditional poetry, rules of meter and rhyme, and I didn't understand why they were there. Why couldn't the rules be broken? Why must all poetry be in properly punctuated sentences and in metered lines shoved up against the left margin? I was thrilled to find the poetry of Jorie Graham and E.E. Cummings, and, later, Guillaume Apollinaire. Rule breaking is central to their poetic enterprise.

In 1955 a meeting took place between Eugen Gomringer and Decio Pignatari in Ulm, Germany, and the movement of concrete poetry was born (Bann 7). Shape and visual poetry finally had a name. Its roots are far older, however, reaching back at least as far as the emblem poetry of the seventeenth-century. George Herbert's emblem poem called "Easter Wings," in the shape of two outstretched wings symbolizing flight and resurrection, is a concrete poem, very often called a pattern poem, even though it was written long before concrete poetry was named.

Lord, who createdest man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more
Till he became
Most poor:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin;
And still with sicknesses shame
Thou didst so punish sin,
That I became
Most thin,
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day's victory
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.
(Herbert 35)

The typography of Herbert's "Easter Wings" is so effective because of what is echoed visually in the layout of the lines. At their longest, the lines of this poem soar in divine flight, and at their shortest, they decrease in length and content, "Most poor," "Most thin," and represent the flightlessness, both physical and spiritual, of man. The poet plays with words and lines. In lines nineteen and twenty he proclaims that "For, if I imp my wing on thine, / Affliction shall advance the flight in me." To imp means to add feathers to improve flight or repair a wing, and as his lines grow in length, the poet is not only imping his poem but his spirit as well.

The possibility of concrete poetry is as old as, and older than, writing itself. Cave paintings, pictographs, hieroglyphics, and the fancy lettering and flamboyant capitals of decorated manuscripts are a testament to this fact. Man often turns to the visual to tell his story. The art critic reads a painting just as the literary critic reads a text. Northrop Frye examines this concept in his essay "The Theory of Myths." He writes, "[i]n looking at a picture, we may stand close to it and analyze the details of brush work and palette knife. This corresponds roughly to the rhetorical analysis of the new critics in literature" (Frye 140). Frye is not just comparing paintings to texts; he is stressing that we may *read* them in similar ways. This fits in well with my argument that writing, specifically poetry, is just as strong visually as it is audibly.

In 1865, Lewis Carroll created a concrete poem, most likely without even realizing it, in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" when Alice encounters a talkative mouse.

"Fury said to
 a mouse, That
 he met in the
 house, 'Let
 us both go
 to law: *I*
 will prose-
 cute *you*. —
 Come, I'll
 take no de-
 nial: We
 must have
 the trial;
 For really
 this morn-
 ing I've
 nothing
 to do.'
 Said the
 mouse to
 the cur.
 'Such a
 trial, dear
 Sir. With
 no jury
 or judge,
 would
 be wast-
 ing our
 breath.'
 I'll be
 judge
 I'll be
 jury,'
 said
 cun-
 ning
 old
 Fury:
 I'll
 try
 the
 whole
 cause,
 and
 con-
 demn
 you to
 death.'

(Carroll 35)

This term concrete poetry is used to describe shape or pattern poetry, or, more simply, poetry that is as important visually as it is audibly. When Carroll's mouse speaks, his

words wind down the page getting smaller and smaller. The size of the font reduces eight times from 12-point font to 5-point font, forming the shape of a mouse's tail and creating a whimsical and engaging visual image for the reader. But this was not the first version of the mouse's *tale* that Carroll penned. In 1864 a slightly shorter and handwritten version of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" was published as "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" (Jones and Gladstone xi). The differences between the two versions is, at first glance, obvious; the handwritten version is rough and the type set version is more polished. I find my eye drawn to the handwritten version. Being handwritten, it has the essence of being organic, more real. A mouse is a living creature, and the handwritten *tale* has more life to it.

(Jones and Gladstone 182)

Each version of Carroll's mouse's tail has its own special appeal. Each is the product of a writer's vivid and wonderful imagination. Concrete poems stretch the writer's imagination and the resources of the printing apparatus and, ultimately, exploit those resources moving concrete poetry beyond the realm of conventional poems, thus not all concrete poems can be read conventionally. Instead, many are meant to be experienced and perceived very much like a painting or a sculpture finally bridging that gap between writing and art.

The modern movement of concrete poetry was created from two "separate, if convergent, traditions": the Noigandres Group of Brazil and Gomringer of "the German-speaking nations of Europe" (Bann 7). In the years following, an international phenomenon occurred, and "a variety of innovations and experiments [began] revolutionizing the poem on a global scale and enlarging its possibilities for expression and communication" (Solt 7). Concrete poetry is a vastly unique form of poetry that is not grounded in form, not the same form anyway. The traditional rules are stripped away, sentences and words are separated, punctuation and capitalization are visual tools, and language is reconfigured or reconceptualized. The basic units of language (words) are still present, but they are reduced to their visual elements (letters) and often their audible elements (syllables). The *essential* element of concrete poetry is, ultimately, according to writer and editor Mary Ellen Solt, "reduced language" (Solt 7). This reduction in language results in an art form (poetry) that is not often dependent on grammar, syntax, or form in the traditional sense, although it still can be. The meaning of a concrete poem is traditionally shaped or altered by its visual presence. For instance, Claus Bremer's concrete poem "abcdef" is more "concerned with legibility and

Archibald MacLeish proclaimed in his 1926 poem “Ars Poetica” that “A poem should not mean / But be.” MacLeish didn’t have concrete poetry in mind when he wrote these words, but the concept still applies. Just as concrete is a mix of sand, gravel, and other particles poured into a form to come together as a new shape, concrete poetry brings words, letters, and space and, thus, poetry into a new shape, or context. Wendy Steiner in The Colors of Rhetoric calls concrete poetry an “artistic theory [that] reflects the new possibility of considering the work a thing in itself, not merely a sign of a more important reality beyond it” (Steiner 197). Certainly there is meaning behind a concrete poem, but visually the poem is first a poem. For instance, a painting is a painting; a sculpture is a sculpture. Both may have many meanings, but first and foremost, they are *things*. Martin Heidegger, again not writing about concrete poetry but still articulating its ideals, sums up this notion well in “The Origin of the Work of Art” where he writes, “all works have this thingly character. [...] The thingly element is so irremovably present in the art work that we are compelled rather to say conversely that the architectural work is in stone, the carving is in wood, the painting in color, the linguistic work in speech, [and] the musical composition in sound” (Heidegger 19). Works of art have the ability to move beyond this *thingliness* because we, as spectators, allow them to. We see the art in the thing, the sculpture, painting, and poem. And thus the poem is a visual thing. So what this all comes down to is that by way of modern theorists that are writing outside of the concept of concrete poetry, the argument ultimately comes back to this same shift of attention to the visual.

Consider Gertrude Stein's famous quote "a rose is a rose is a rose." Wendy Steiner calls this "an archetype of concrete thinking" (Steiner 197). A thing is a thing is a thing. A poem is a poem is a poem. That first rose is no more, or less, a rose than that third rose. And then I wondered what really constitutes a rose? Is this group of four letters, r-o-s-e, a rose or merely a representation of a rose? Does the spoken word bring us closer to the reality of a rose than its written equivalent? Aristotle states in On Interpretation that "[w]ords spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken" (Aristotle 115). There is a long history of a mistrust or dislike of the written word. Plato's Socrates, in conversation with Phaedrus, states that "writing cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable readers; [...] it is quite incapable of defending itself" (Plato 97). Saussure draws attention to this examined distrust of the written form of language when he writes that "language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first" (Saussure 23). Derrida examines the linguists' long held suspicions of the written word when he states that "writing will be 'phonetic,' it will be the outside, the exterior representation of language" (Derrida 31). And, more recently, John Lydon (formerly Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols) echoes Plato when he laments in his song "Rise" that "[t]he written word is a lie" (Lydon). Perhaps concrete poetry can call attention to this schism. By very definition, this movement brings together the visual, the written, the spoken, and the unspoken.

Revisiting the question of the rose, let's consider a concrete poem called "Rose."

eeeEee
ssssSssss
oooOooo
rrrRrrr

e
s
o
r
e e e
s s s
o o o
r r r
e
s
o
r
e
s
o
r r
e
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s e
o r o
r e r e
s e s e
o s o s
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s s
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r
e
s
o
r
e
s
o
r

(Adams-Hays)

One of the founders of the Noigandres Group, Augusto de Campos, calls the concrete poem "an object in and by itself, not an interpreter of exterior objects and/or more or less subjective feelings. It's material: word (sound, visual form, semantic charge)" (Augusto de Campos as qtd. in Steiner 197). My "Rose" poem certainly is not a rose, but it has *roseness*, joining the visual form and concept of a rose as the letters that make up and represent the word *rose* rise up from the page. It is a picture with letters, a picture poem.

I labored long and hard at placing each letter on the page. Space, and the way it is used, or not used, is supremely important to concrete poetry. This poem is not meant to be read, but perceived. It joins the written, the visual, and the representational.

Wendy Steiner categorizes as “cubist” a group of writers which includes E.E. Cummings and Guillaume Apollinaire (Steiner 178). What Steiner terms as “cubist writing” falls neatly into the category called concrete poetry. What makes a writer cubist? The association, living at the same time as cubist painters, or “actual contact between certain writers and the Cubist painters. [...] Apollinaire lived in the same [Montmartre] tenement as Picasso and [Juan] Gris” (Steiner 178). Cummings lived and wrote in Paris. “They were all friends, all in Gertrude Stein’s circle of intimates, all poor, all foreign, all living on the outside of French bourgeois life” (Steiner 178).

This very “act of naming a style is burdened with presuppositions” (Steiner 177). Theorists, critics, and those of us in the academic world always feel the need to label art or literary movements. It is perhaps unavoidable. This results in “purely stylistic terms” like “cubist, surrealist, [and] abstractionist” that are perhaps “more precise [or] more descriptive than mere chronological slices like ‘modern’ or ‘twentieth-century’” (Steiner 177). But this is shaky territory. Many poets may be reluctant to label themselves as concrete poets. It may be argued what is meant by ‘concrete’ (Solt 7). I am finding in my examination of the term concrete poetry that there are multiple definitions and divisions on a narrow level within the broad definition and some disagreement on what is and is not concrete poetry. In fact, editor Stephen Bann writes that “concrete poetry is all too often confused with the ‘Calligrammes’ of Apollinaire, and their modern equivalents, in which lines of text are ingeniously manipulated in order to imitate natural

appearances” (Bann 11). For my purposes, I will use the term concrete poetry to describe poetry that takes a shape or is made up of words or letters arranged visually on the page, overlapping with other stanza forms that are incidentally visual. Concrete poetry, as defined by Pierre Garnier, is simply poetry “working with language material, creating structures with it, transmitting primarily esthetic information” (Garnier 79). And from concrete poetry other kinds of poetry evolve. For example, Garnier goes on to describe “phonetic poetry” which is poetry that uses primarily the phonemes and all sounds emitted by the vocal organs of man and worked out on a tape recorder; “objective poetry” focuses on pictorial, graphic, and sculptural poetry; “visual poetry” takes the word or its elements as objects and centers of visual energy; and “phonic poetry” is composed directly on magnetic tape where words and sentences are taken as objects of auditory energy (Garnier 79). These kinds of poetry break away from the old rules and traditions. The future of poetry holds much promise with the possibility of cyber poetry and the online and electronic journals and magazines that are popping up everywhere on the Internet.

The connection between E.E. Cummings and Guillaume Apollinaire as concrete (or cubist) poets is obvious. Cummings experimented with typographic techniques to create his visual poetry and free verse, and Apollinaire explored motion, shape, and meaning in his poetry. Jorie Graham may seem to be the poet who doesn’t belong, but she does. I won’t go so far as to label Graham a concrete poet, but I will argue that her poetry does explore many of the same aesthetic challenges as Cummings’ and Apollinaire’s work. All three of these poets went beyond the constraints of poetry trapped in a conventional form, moved words across the page, dislocated letters, used

punctuation and space, and even the size and shape of words and letters to create truly stunning works of poetry that are works of art. Much of my own poetry explores the use of space and placement of words on the page, and in my quest to examine the work of Cummings, Graham, and Apollinaire, I will also explore my own writing.

CHAPTER TWO

VISUAL ASPECTS OF THE POETRY

toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
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hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
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toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
hsurbhtoot

(Adams-Hays)

Form is certainly very important in a concrete poem. In the case of my concrete poem called "Toothbrush," the form goes hand in hand with the functional motion of the title object, the toothbrush. I took one word and let its form echo its action, or function. Some concrete poetry is playful and some is dark, but one fact is certain, they all are as exciting visually as they are audibly, sometimes more.

E.E. Cummings

Words can do much more than describe an event, an emotion, or an object. They can become that event, emotion, or object. E.E. Cummings used his words to “[dramatize] experience by using visual and spatial forms. Patterns and typography are his means of presenting things in motion” (Schulman 23). This is much of what drew me to Cummings’ work in the first place. I can feel his poetry. His words do not stagnate. They move about, take hold of the reader, and evoke emotion.

l(a

le
af
fa

ll

s)
one
l

iness

(Cummings 673)

In this poem, a single leaf falls and signifies loneliness. Cummings imitates the falling pattern of a leaf with the spacing of his words. One space depicts a slightly quicker falling than two spaces, and the leaf flutters to the ground. This poem is much more than four simple words printed on a page. It is a visual event, a concrete poem that can not be read in a conventional way. The words, “a leaf falls,” are set inside the word, “loneliness,” interrupting its flow and its wholeness. The letters are set apart so that a complete word does not occupy the same line, except in line six with the word, “one,” a part of the word “loneliness.” The eye is naturally drawn to this word, sustaining this

poem's perception of solitude as its central theme. There is limited punctuation in the poem, parentheses only, and the letters are all small case suggesting a muted tone, a whispered utterance.

A great deal is left unsaid, or unwritten, in this poem, and yet it speaks volumes. First and foremost this poem is an action played out with words, and secondly, it is an enigma. It is riddled with assumptions and suggestions and quiet strength. So, ultimately, the act of a single leaf falling from a tree assumes loneliness and solitude and suggests age and sorrow.

Cummings dislocates letters, interrupts words and syllables with parentheses, commas, and capital letters. This punctuates the concept of the poem being an object to be perceived before being a poem to be read. The concrete poem is a visual object very much like a painting, and "the concrete poet makes the boundary between poem and painting as indistinct as possible" (Steiner 199). A great deal of attention is focused on Cummings' use of typography just as an art critic will focus attention on the brush strokes of a painter or the framing of a photograph by a photographer.

birds(
 here,inven
ting air
U
)sing

tw
iligH(
t's

v

va

vas(
vast

ness.Be)look
now
 (come
soul;
&:and

who
 s)e

voi

c

es

(

are

ar

a

(Cummings 448)

Here Cummings breaks up his lines to guide his reader through the poem. His typography ignores convention. A natural pause occurs when the lines break unnaturally “birds({pause} here,inven {pause} ting air {pause}.” The difficulty of flight is represented by the illusion of birds “inventing air” and using “twilight’s vastness.” Cummings arranges the words as if they were being pushed about by fluttering wings. A

different kind of pausing occurs in the next lines where a capital letter draws the eye of the reader in, “U /)sing / tw / iligH(/ t’s.” The capital letters create a stumbling effect. They come not just at the beginning of the word, but towards the end of the word as well. Cummings even creates a stutter in the following lines “v / va / vas(/ vast / ness” to slow the reader’s pace even more, again suggesting flight and emphasizing the vastness of the sky where flight takes place. This poem flaps and flutters as if it had wings. The reader is told to “look now,” and, finally, the poem trails off with the voices of the birds.

the sky
 was can dy
 lu nous mi ed
 ble i
 spry pinks
 shy lem
 ons greens
 cool
 choco lates
 un der
 a lo
 co
 mo tive s pout
 ing
 vi
 o lets

(Cummings 937)

Cummings wrote twelve poems that he called *Experiments 1916-17*. The above is number five. This poem uses space in a brilliantly unusual way. There is no picture or identifiable shape forming from the typography. It is an apparently random scattering of highly descriptive words that do paint a picture... that of a child’s storybook or watercolor. Stringing the words back together we get, “the sky was candy luminous

edible spry pinks shy lemons greens cool chocolates under a locomotive spouting violets.” Much of the charm of an E.E. Cummings’ poem lies in the more traditional component of his word choice. He puts words together that are not usually found together. In this case we have a sky that is “candy luminous” and is filled with “edible spry pinks” and “shy lemons” and “greens” rather than stars, and perhaps it is the “cool chocolates” rather than railroad tracks that lie “under a locomotive” that is “spouting violets” rather than smoke. The words that make up this poem appear to be nonsense words that lie broken up and scattered about the page in a seemingly uncaring fashion. And that is perhaps Cummings’ greatest art.

swi(
 across!gold’s

 rouNdly
)ftblac
 kl(ness)y

 a-motion-upo-nmotio-n

 Less?
 thE
 (against
 is
)Swi

 mming

 (w-a)s
 bIr

 d,

(Cummings 429)

In 1935, E.E. Cummings wrote the manuscript for No Thanks. The above poem is number forty-six. This poem, like many of Cummings’, moves quite quickly across

and down the page. At times the words are almost incomprehensible. The reader's eye stops and stumbles. In this poem, a reader can find almost all of Cummings' typographical techniques: "grammatical deviation, punctuation deviance, ellipses, word splits, unconventional use of parenthesis, word coinage, and an unresolved ending" (Landles 164). A common theme in Cummings' work is the unsaid. He does not make it easy for his reader. Only the "most basic of information – a descriptiveness of color, shape, speed, and direction" (Landles 164). The ultimate meaning of the poem is left up to the reader to determine. Neither the poet nor the reader is addressed in the poem. There is no *you* in the poem. There is no *I* in the poem. Broken words and blank space are this poem's protagonist and antagonist. Words move swiftly through a blackness or a darkness creating "a motion upon motion." This poem, and all of Cummings' work, stands at odds against everything traditional poetry and traditional form dictate.

Guillaume Apollinaire

Guillaume Apollinaire may be famous for his concrete, or shape, poetry, but much of his poetry does not fall under the label of concrete. It may fall into the wide category of free verse, experimental poetry, or into a category unique to Apollinaire. The representative poems of Apollinaire that I will be looking at have been translated by Anne Hyde Greet a professor of French at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His poem "Saillant" ("Salient") takes the moving of words around on the page a step farther. This poem definitely can not be read conventionally. It must be taken in as a whole and read in pieces. "Salient" was written for André Level, a collector of modern paintings. Apollinaire befriended Level and corresponded with him during WWI (Greet

and Lockerbie 423). When I first came across this poem, I was fascinated by it. I still am. It has an eye catching form and is filled with strong, stunning images. This poem most likely alludes to Apollinaire's time spent as an "agent de liaison" in WW I where he would carry information, either on foot or by horse, to the rear echelon (Greet and Lockerbie 423).

A André Level

*Rapidité attentive à peine un peu d'incertitude
 Mais un dragon à pied sans armes
 Parmi le vent quand survient la*

	S	torpille aérienne	
Salut	A	Le balai de verdure	Grain
Le Rapace	L	T'en souviens-tu	de
	U	Il est ici dans les pierres	blé
	T	Du beau royaume dévasté	

Mais la couleuvre me regarde dressée comme une épée

*Vive comme un cheval pif
 Un trou d'obus propre comme une salle de bain
 Berger suivi de son troupeau mordoré
 Mais où est un cœur et le svastica*

*Aÿ Ancien nom du renom
 Le crapaud chantait les saphirs nocturnes*

Lou	VIVE
Lou Verzy	LE
	CAPISTON

Et le long du canal des filles s'en allaient

(Apollinaire 156, 158)

For André Level

Wary haste just a little uncertainty
But a dragoon on foot weaponless
In the wind when arrives the

		aerial torpedo	
	H	Broom of greenery	
Hail	A	Do you remember	Grain
Bird of Prey	I	It is here among the stones	of
	L	Of the beautiful ruined kingdom	wheat

But the snake poised like a sword watches me

As lively as a horse bang
A shell crater as clean as a bathroom
Shepherd followed by his bronze flock
But where is a heart and the swastika

Aÿ Ancient name of renown
A toad sang nocturnal sapphires

Lou
Lou Verzy

LONG LIVE
THE
CAPTAIN

And along the canal girls were walking

(Apollinaire 157, 159)

The short, crisp lines of this poem do create the feeling of being under gun or artillery fire, and phrases are scattered about like bullets. Apollinaire begins his poem with a hasty gallop into uncertainty. A fact of reality in war time. He takes his reader on a visual tour of what he sees, a soldier on foot without a weapon, a torpedo, wheat, ruins, a snake. He laces together, and juxtaposes, the destruction of war with the life of the

countryside that goes on despite the war. The aerial torpedo that sweeps through the trees like a broom is hailed as a bird of prey, and placed on the opposing side of the poem to a grain of wheat.

The poet's eye can be unique. A poet may see the world far differently than anyone else. Apollinaire is an interpreter. He sees the same events and objects that every other soldier sees, but he sees them through the eyes of a poet. This makes what he sees special. Through his poetry, he creates a vision that is entirely his own with heightened emotions and near mystical experiences. *Salient* means to leap or jet upward like a fountain or the spray of exploding dirt from an artillery shell hitting the earth. This poem does, in fact, leap. It comes across as random thoughts springing from the poet's mind, a stream of consciousness that acts like a monkey leaping from tree branch to tree branch. Strikingly deliberate in its form, it is "an artistic montage" that goes far beyond "conventional description" (Greet and Lockerbie 424). Apollinaire chooses not to take the time to weight his words down with detailed description of what he sees or experiences. That would be far too easy for the poet, and it would destroy the pulse-quickening atmosphere of the poem.

Douces figures posées
 MIA
 YETTE
 ANNIE et toi
 où
 vous
 jeunes filles
 Chères lèvres fleuries
 MAREYE
 LORIE
 MARIE
 êtes-
 ô
 MAIS
 près d'un
 jet d'eau qui
 pleure et qui prie
 cette colombe s'extasie

Tous les souvenirs de guerre ?
 O mes amis partis en guerre
 Jaillissent vers le firmament
 Et vos regards en l'eau dorment
 Meurent mélancoliquement
 Où sont-ils Braque et Max Jacob
 Derain aux yeux gris comme la
 Où sont Raynal Billy Dalize
 Où sont les noms si mélancoliques
 Comme des pas dans une église
 Où est Cremnitz qui s'engagea
 Où sont-ils morts déjà
 De souvenirs mon âme est pleine
 Et deau pleure sur ma pierre

CEUX QUI SONT PARTIS A LA GUERRE AU NORD SE BATTENT MAINTENANT
 Le soir tombe
 O sanglante mer
 Jardins ou saigne abondamment le laurier rose fleur guerrière

(Apollinaire 122)

e
b d

Gentle faces stab **D**ear flowered lips
 MIA MAREYE
 YETTE LORIE
 ANNIE and you MARIE
 where are
 you oh
 young girls
 BUT
 near a
 fountain that
 weeps and prays
 this dove is enraptured

All memories of long ago
 Oh my friends who have gone to war whose names melancholize
 Spring upward toward the sky whose footsteps in a cathedral
 And in stagnant pools your gaze like here is Cremlnitz who enlisted
 Where have Braque and Max Jacob gone perhaps already dead who
 Derain with eyes gray as the dawn
 My soul is full of memories
 in weep for my sorrow

THOSE WHO LEFT FOR THE WAR IN THE NORTH ARE FIGHTING NOW

Evening falls **O** bloody sea
 Gardens where rose-laurel warlike flower bleeds in abundance

(Apollinaire 123)

This poem, "La Colombe Poignardée" ("The Bleeding-Heart Dove and the Fountain)," is beautifully representational of Apollinaire's talent to create shape poems. The poet's words form the shape of his subjects, a dove and a fountain. The lines are laid out in beautifully skillful fashion. The bold "O" at the base of the fountain is heavier and

darker type makes a strong base for the poem and a clear center for the fountain.

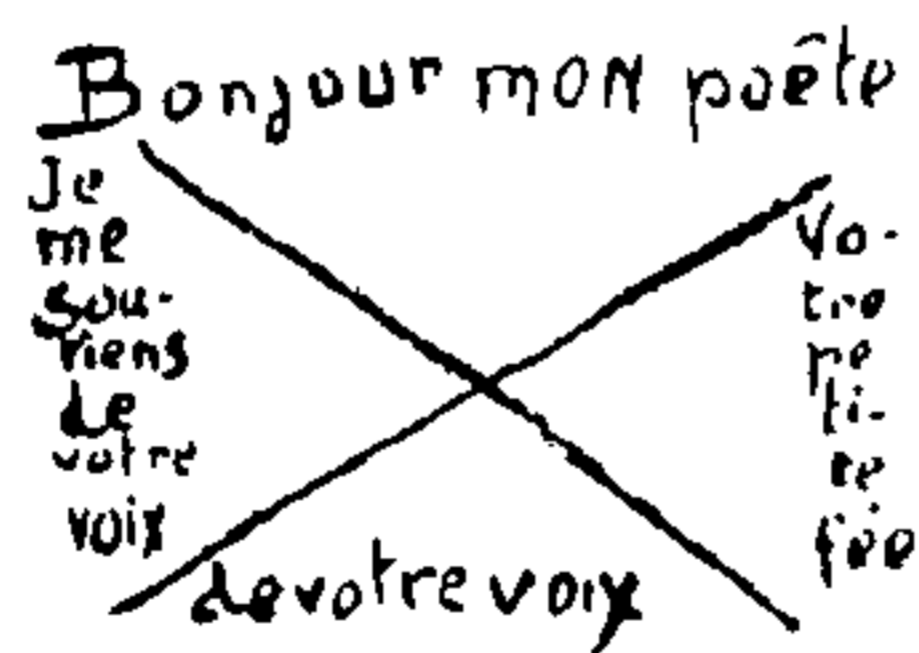
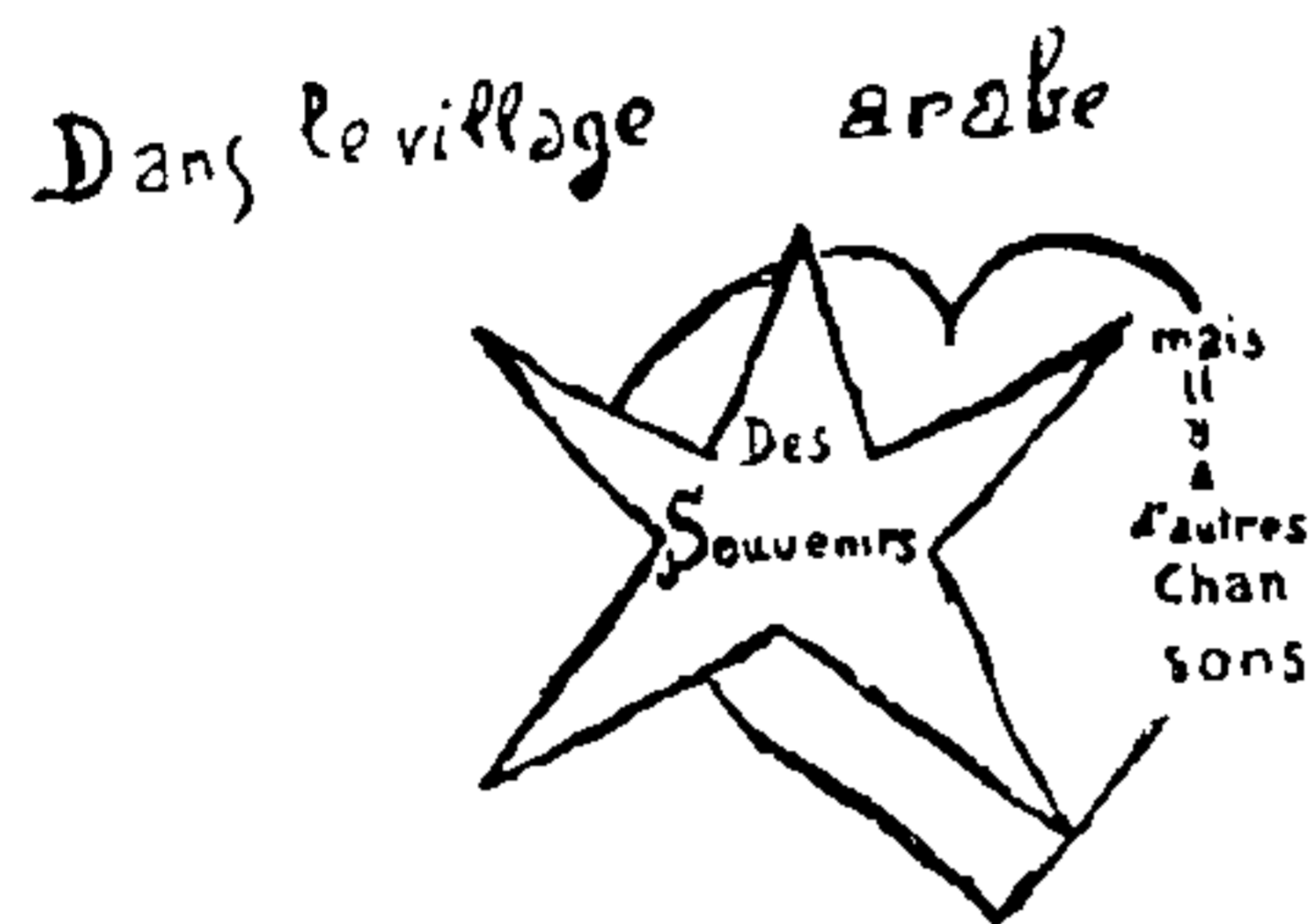
Additionally, the “O” represents “the drain hole in the center of the fountain... through which water and life can drain” (Greet and Lockerbie 410) and suggests “the center of the eye” (Greet and Lockerbie) that takes in these dark images of life and death. The bold question mark in the center of poem draws the reader’s eye upward with the center spray of the water. The title of the poem is simple and descriptive, and the arrangement of the words follows suit.

The dove in this poem, the *colombe poignardée*, the bleeding-heart dove, is named for the bright red, somewhat heart-shaped spot on its breast surrounded by a scattering of red spots (Greet and Lockerbie 409) suggesting blood and a bleeding heart. The dove is a time-honored symbol of peace and love. Apollinaire plays with these images and the allusions to violence as he paints a picture with words. A wounded dove is a striking image. It suggests “the cruel destruction wrought by time on love” (Greet and Lockerbie 409), the ultimate destruction of peace, and the pain of loss. The dove with its wounded, bleeding heart spreads its wings, suspended above the jetting waters of a fountain.

All of the names in the poem are of once close friends of Apollinaire (Greet and Lockerbie 409) strengthening the message of loss conveyed by the image of the poem. The lines of the poem that make up the splashing water of the fountain are [in French] in regular rhyming octosyllables (Greet and Lockerbie 409). These octosyllables are lost in the translation from French to English. Visually, too, the poem is more successful in French. The curved shape of the dove’s head and beak represented by the strong, bold “C” is more apparent.

Apollinaire ends his poem with particularly dark and somber lines. He forms the fountain base with a final cry of friends lost, "Those who left for war in the north are fighting now," and a garden of bleeding flowers, "Gardens where rose-laurel warlike flower bleeds in abundance."

Bridging that gap between visual artist and poet, Apollinaire very often used handwritten script and little sketches in his poetry. In the poem "Madeleine," the visual images take on just as much central importance as the words.

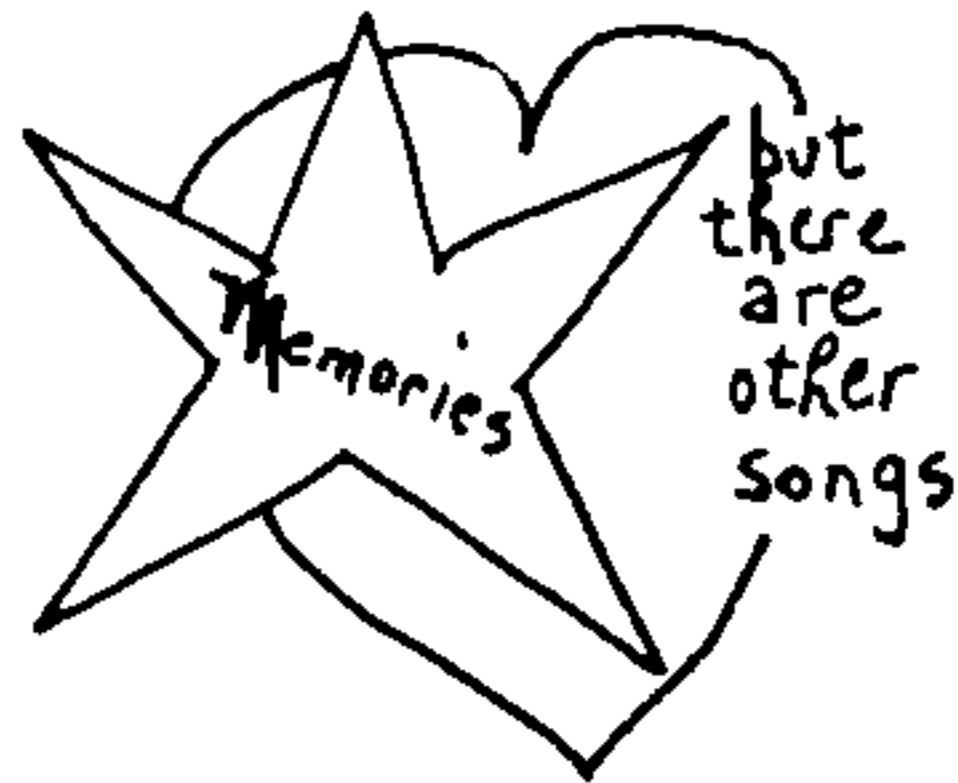


Photographie
tant attendue



(Apollinaire 192)

In the Arab village



Hello my poet
I remember your voice
Your little elf
your voice

Long awaited
snapshot



(Apollinaire 193)

Apollinaire writes to his beloved Madeleine, imagining her in an Arab village, surrounded by notions of romance, being far from civilization in an exotic setting (Greet and Lockerbie 437). Symbolism is strong in oriental poetry, and the heart and star symbols of this poem “fit well into [this] implied oriental setting, where such emblems are common” (Greet and Lockerbie 437). This poem is short and passionate. Songs of

love and far away memories are implied and sent as a message to Madeleine in the opening lines of the poem. Madeleine's reply follows in the shape of an envelope, greeting the poet and remembering, fondly, his voice. The poet's desire for Madeleine continues as he yearns for a simple snapshot. And he ends the poem with strongly suggestive sexual images, the phallic gun and cannon crossed below a fiery ball. The words that surround these last images are far less important than the symbolism. The spiritualism of the message goes beyond the limitations of mere words. This love poem of strong and sexual images finally ends with the word "rose," a long lasting symbol of love and sex and a favorite of Apollinaire's.

Je traverse la ville nez en avant
et je la coupe en **2**

J'étais au bord du Rhin quand tu partis pour le Mexique
Ta voix me parvient malgré l'énorme distance
Gens de mauvaise mine sur le quai à la Vera Cruz

Juan Aldama Les voyageurs de l'Espagne devant faire
le voyage de Coatzacoalcos pour s'embarquer
je t'envoie cette carte aujourd'hui au lieu

Correos
Mexico
4 centavos

YPIRANGA

REPUBLICA MEXICANA
TARJETA POSTAL

11 45
29 - 5
14
Rue des Beignolles

U. S. Postage
2 cents 2

de profiter du courrier de Vera Cruz qui n'est pas sur
Tout est calme ici et nous sommes dans l'attente
des événements.

Vive la République
Hou le croquant
Zut pour le Zin
Arre le cu cher
Vive le
Sur la rive gauche devant le pont d'Iena
Des clefs j'en ai vu mille et mille
L'vivra il Papi
Jic, La Tu ne sie tu fondez, un journal
bas A
te lot ca la
ques c'é
fait de li
ciens
ain si vous avez une moue tache
la sucate maou vieux pad

BONJOUR ANOMU
ANORA
TU, NE CONNAITRAS JAMAIS BIEN
LES

Mayas

(Apollinaire 58, 59)

I cross the city
nose in the air
and i cut it in **2**

I was on the banks of the Rhine when you left for Mexico
Your voice reaches me in spite of the huge distance
Seedy-looking people on the pier at Vera Cruz

Juan Aldama

Since the travelers on the *Espagne* are supposed
to go to Coatzacoalcos in order to embark
I send you this card today instead

Correos
Mexico
4 centavos

YPIRANGA

REPUBLICA MEXICANA
TARJETA POSTAL

11 45
29-5
14
Rue des Buissonelles

U. S. Postage
2 cents 2

of profiting by the Vera Cruz mails which aren't dependable
Everything is quiet here and we are awaiting events.

Long live the Republic
Nuts to Mr. Zun
Sto p dry er
Long li ve the King
Boo the peasant
On the left bank
I have seen thousands of keys in front of Iéna bridge
Evviva il Papa
Down with priests
Jac ques it was de li cious
Tu ni sia you're starting a news paper
Shut up my old pad
if you have a mus tache

T

S

F

BONJOUR

ANOMU
ANORA

YOU WILL NEVER REALLY KNOW

THE

Mayas

(Apollinaire 60, 61)

“Lettre-Océan” (“Ocean-Letter”) is “undoubtedly [Apollinaire’s] most radical experiment in typographical simultaneity” (Greet and Lockerbie 380). As the title implies, it represents a letter posted at sea. It is written in a postcard-like style with short sentences and brief detail. Mexican and U.S. postage marks are clearly seen. The wavy lines in the poem may represent the waves of the ocean that separate Apollinaire and his brother Albert or the wireless waves that could bring them closer together (Greet and Lockerbie 381). This poem “celebrates the global awareness of modern man through developments in worldwide communications” (Greet and Lockerbie 380). The circular image in the lower half of the poem represents “radio communication with radio waves departing in all directions” (Greet and Lockerbie 381) and just below the words form the shape of a gramophone. The verbal content that makes up the radio waves and the gramophone grooves is made up of “random snippets of speech and sound” (Greet and Lockerbie 381). The poem comes together the way a postcard to friends on the last day of a vacation would with jotted down last minute thoughts and words crammed in here and there. And “the final result is a combination of order and disorder” in which a “random reading” is possible in many of the parts of the poem, but the general structure is compatible with a “process of reading” which begins at the top of a page and proceeds from left to right to end on the bottom of that page (Greet and Lockerbie 381). The poem ultimately remains strong and intriguing with its bold use of graphic form and typography and disjointed language.

Jorie Graham

The use of space to accentuate the work is not at all uncommon in modern poetry. In fact, white space may be used as an icon of space, whiteness, emptiness, distance, a void, or a duration of time, time past or time expected. Jorie Graham makes great use of the white space. She often moves words around on the page, begins sentences in the middle of a line, or puts spaces between words and sentences.

2

The clinic's layers of glass door glide open. Tiny hiss.

Outside the protest continues –

from inside a muffling
 sound, making us feel, in the waiting room,
ourselves unborn. . . .

I try to feel it, beneath my
magazine,
 the immaculate spot within – the freedom of
choice, illustrious
 sleep, bloody spot. . . .

Now I lay me

down to

sleep – tick tock – I pray thee Lord
 to make these words have
materiality –

(Graham, Materiality, 16)

This poem, “Concerning the Right to Life,” has a difficult topic, abortion. Graham slows her reader down with spaces between words and lines and punctuation, giving greater emphasis to her words. As the numbered section two of the poem opens, “layers of glass door glide open. {pause} Tiny hiss.” The pause after the action of the gliding glass door

allows the reader to take a moment and hear the hiss. Graham manipulates this pause by using more space, five rather than the conventional two, between the end of the sentence and the beginning of her next. A space between the lines and an indent, turn the reader's attention to an action outside the glass door, "{pause} Outside the protest continues – {pause}," another space between the lines and the reader is taken inside, "{pause} from inside a muffling / sound...." The arrangement of these word makes them much more interesting than if they were written in a more traditional form, lined up on the left margin. These words have been given motion and strength by Graham's placement.

Graham creates an illusion of randomness and isolation with this placement of words and use of language. She plucks a piece of a familiar childhood prayer, "Now I lay me / down to / sleep." She inserts the words "tick tock" reminiscent of another childhood rhyme, and begins a prayer of her own, "I pray thee Lord / to make these words have / materiality." She prays for her words to have *materiality*, a material existence, a reality, materialism, a grounding of the spiritual in the material world.

The empty space is an important aspect of Graham's writing. It is more than a mere gap breaking up the flow of the words. It is a device to give the reader pause and direct, or redirect, the reader's attention. The empty space is, in fact, not at all empty. It is filled with the unsaid that actually speaks volumes. It is a moment, a break, a leap, an unutterance.

make there be a tiny draft
just underneath them – there – make them displace something to
be – something that opens – sliding

back – firm
over the fault – *a subject* – indifferent to rot as matter,
rotting. is
indifferent. . . . Out there (framed by the gleaming levelors) some
voices screaming *right to life*, some others screaming
choice choice –

(Graham, Materiality, 16)

In this section of her poem, Graham uses many devices. She is moving the words around on the page, she uses a dash and parenthesis to further separate her words, and uses Italics to indicate another voice or change to the tone of a word. When she italicizes the words, “*a subject*,” she is highlighting the word, drawing attention to it, and creating a very different meaning from the italicizing of the words, “*right to life*” and “*choice choice*” spoken by voices other than the author.

The underlined blank space is another visual tool used by Graham in her poetry. In her book, The End of Beauty, Graham uses the underlined blank twelve distinct times. Thomas J. Otten calls these blanks “word-length line segments denoting language’s absences” (Otten 239). This use of the blank space is far more deliberate than white space. It is bolder than an unwritten or unsaid word. In her poem “To the Reader,” Graham uses the underlined blank to not reveal a name to her reader. This device forces the reader to stop at the blank and quite literally fill in that blank space.

(Miss _____ lets out a shattering scream.)

(Graham, The End of Beauty, 23)

This line does so much in such a small space. The line's message, "a shattering scream," is muted by the parentheses. These words are held in check by punctuation just as the unnamed protagonist is held in check by her unwritten name. Thomas Otten writes that "[T]he blank begins to emerge as a stark graphic representation – an utterly simple picture – of lyric" (Otten 239-240). As the poem continues, Graham uses the underlined blank as a continuing riddle for her reader.

(as if to expose *what* of the hills –
the white glare of x, the scathing splendor of y,
the wailing interminable _____?)

(Graham, The End of Beauty, 23)

The questions of "x" and "y" and "_____" are isolated as thoughts in the back of the poet's mind, whispered, unanswered questions that we all have. "[T]he blank reduces to their purest expression the alienating distance and opacity that give lyric its distinctive and painful privacy" (Otten 240). The blank fills its own space with nothingness, and the poet expands and fills the gaps that are all around us "like the gap between persons or between poet and reader" (Otten 240).

In "Room Tone," Ms. Graham again writes in riddles to her reader.

Turn around (wind in the sycamore).
Did you see that did you hear that (wind in the
_____?) can you touch it.
what can you touch? will you
speak back to me,
will you look up now, please?

(Graham, The End of Beauty, 73)

In this section, she plays with words, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and the blank. "By now it should be clear that connection and separateness are what is at issue in

the blank and in the substances that give the blank their substance” (Otten 246). In “Room Tone,” two lovers come as close as one can to each other, fall down for the world to see, and have little more than room tone to hear, to listen to as background noise. The things that surround them, the noise, the lack of noise, fill and create gaps, and Graham’s blanks accentuate them. So Graham’s lovers hover between this world and the next, and the blanks hover between being space and filling space, and the question remains as “whether the spaces between us connect or divide, whether the transitory is present or absent, [and] whether the amorphous is solid or dissolved” (Otten 246).

kind of visual music. It represents a strong, heavy rain and the strong visual appeal of concrete poetry. It consists of a single word that ultimately puddles at the bottom of the page as rains fall. This poem is a beautiful example of how concrete poetry moves the written word of poetry closer and closer into the realm of visual art.

E.E. Cummings

The rain, to Cummings, is not the traditional embodiment of “sadness, melancholy, and despair,” but rather “[it] is one of the truest expressions of cheerfulness, life, and love” (Gillyboeuf 87). The image recurs again and again in Cummings’ poetry showing his fondness for rain. I will examine a select few of his poems where rain is a theme.

but the other
day i was passing a certain
gate rain
fell(as it will

in spring)
ropes
of silver gliding from sunny
thunder into freshness

as if god’s flowers were
pulling upon bells of
gold

(Cummings 86)

Spring is the traditional time associated with welcomed rain. Rain in spring will wash away the mud of winter’s thaw and suggest rebirth. In this poem, Cummings takes his reader for a stroll and weaves an idyllic picture of a cityscape. This rain is not the rain of a treacherous storm, but a gentle spring shower coming down in “ropes / of silver gliding from sunny / thunder into freshness.” The thunder is sunny. The scent of rain is fresh,

clean, and inviting. This rain is bright and pleasing, not at all dark. The flowers from the earth below, rather than being beaten down by a heavy rain, are rejoicing in this rain and are “pulling upon bells of / gold” being lifted up by the rain, exalted. Silver and gold are precious metals, and Cummings gives his rain a high value equal to that of something precious. For Cummings the rain is precious and beautiful.

Take for example this:

if to the colour of midnight
to a more than darkness(which
is myself and Paris and all
things)the bright
rain
occurs deeply, beautifully

(Cummings 182)

Here, too, the rain is a bright and highly valued rain probably reflecting the lamps on the city streets adding color and brightness to the night, a beautiful and comforting image. Cummings compares himself and Paris and all things to “a more than darkness” where “the bright / rain / occurs deeply, beautifully.” Rain is an inner essence. It penetrates, touches all parts of the city, and all life in the city. Paris comes alive in the rain, and Cummings adored that city. To him, perfection is a spring rain in Paris. The rain is what breathes life into him, Paris, and all things.

and i(being at a window
in this midnight)
for no reason feel
deeply completely conscious of the rain or rather
Somebody who uses roofs and streets skillfully to make a
possible and beautiful sound:

(Cummings 182)

Cummings is wholly aware of the rain, and the power it has over him. The rain is personified as an all-consuming musician playing the rooftops and streets like instruments, and, ultimately, making a beautiful sound. The rain is god-like, a mystical creator, a giver of life.

Rain is also visual. Many people, myself included, take great pleasure in watching the rain fall. In the rain there are so many images for the artist, the writer, and the painter, to explore. Cummings was both a painter and a poet, and the poet is a painter of words in addition to being “a creator of images” (Gillyboeuf 91). Oddly, Cummings does not represent rain visually in his work except in one poem where he uses typography to represent the rain falling down from the sky into puddles on the ground.

t
he rai

n
th
e
raintherain

(Cummings 696)

This poem takes the reader on a journey with the rain, falling with the rain. There is a sadness in this poem that is not usually found when Cummings writes about rain. Perhaps, this sadness is what Cummings was trying to capture by the unique placement of his words in this particular poem.

Guillaume Apollinaire

In July 1914 at Deauville Guillaume Apollinaire wrote “Il Pleut” (“It’s Raining”) (Greet and Lockerbie 402), a beautiful concrete poem that captures the essence of rain running down the glass pane of a window.

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(Apollinaire 100)

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 r e g r e t
 a n d
 d i s d a i n
 w e e p
 a n
 a n c i e n t
 m u s i c

 l i s t e n
 t o
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 f e t t e r s
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 t h a t
 b i n d
 y o u
 h i g h
 a n d
 l o w

(Apollinaire 101)

This poem is sad and haunting in its movement, although some may find it exuberant in its message. It is printed in a small font (10-point) signifying the trickling of soft rain down a window. The poet captures that action beautifully. We have all stared out a window at one time or another and watched the rain. We recognize the image

immediately. Words are softly raining down the page, trickling delicately towards the right of the page. This poem begins by stating that “its raining womens voices” personifying the rain, putting a voice, many voices, soft and feminine, to the rain. As the poem continues, we read that “its raining you too” again placing a human element, both sad and longing, to the rain. There is a strong “appealing visual quality” to this poem (Greet and Lockerbie 402). In fact, there is a strong appealing quality to rain in general. This is evident in how many times rain is represented by artists in poetry, prose, painting, and film.

“The first function of the lines as graphic form is to sustain and enhance the verbal music” (Greet and Lockerbie 402) of the poem. Poetry is lyrical. It is music to the ears, and, thanks to concrete poetry, it is music to the eyes as well. The visual representation of this poem is very important. It is said that Apollinaire sketched out the shape of the poem on the page before he even had the words (Apollinaire 1085). So one must doubt the statement made by editor P.A. Birot that Apollinaire attached “little importance” to the typographical layout of this poem and left it up the printer (Themerson 23).

Écoute s'il pleut écoute s'il pleut

<i>puis</i>	<i>sol</i>	<i>des</i>	<i>con</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>é</i>	<i>dats</i>	<i>Flan</i>	<i>fon</i>	<i>pluie</i>
<i>cou</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>dres</i>	<i>dez-</i>	<i>si</i>
<i>tez</i>	<i>veu</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>vous</i>	<i>ten</i>
<i>tom</i>	<i>gles</i>	<i>l'</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>dre</i>
<i>ber</i>	<i>per</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>vec</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>la</i>	<i>dus</i>	<i>go</i>	<i>l'</i>	<i>pluie</i>
<i>pluie</i>	<i>par</i>	<i>nie</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>si</i>
<i>si</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>sous</i>	<i>ri</i>	<i>dou</i>
<i>ten</i>	<i>les</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>zon</i>	<i>ce</i>
<i>dre</i>	<i>che</i>	<i>pluie</i>	<i>beaux</i>	
<i>et</i>	<i>voux</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>ê</i>	
<i>si</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>tres</i>	
<i>dou</i>	<i>fri</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>in</i>	
<i>ce</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>pluie</i>	<i>vi</i>	
	<i>sous</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>si</i>	
	<i>la</i>	<i>ten</i>	<i>bles</i>	
	<i>lu</i>	<i>dre</i>	<i>sous</i>	
	<i>ne</i>	<i>et</i>	<i>la</i>	
	<i>li</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>pluie</i>	
	<i>qui</i>	<i>dou</i>	<i>fi</i>	
	<i>de</i>	<i>ce</i>	<i>ne</i>	

(Apollinaire 294)

Listen to it raining listen to it rain

then	bl	of	min	the
lis	ind	Flan	gle	rain
ten	sol	ders	with	so
to	diers	in	the	ten
the	lo	a	ho	der
rain	st	go	ri	the
fall	a	ny	zon	rain
ing	mong	un	beau	so
so	the	der	ti	gent
ten	che	the	ful	le
der	vaux	thi	in	
ly	de	n	vi	
and	fri	rain	si	
gent	se	the	ble	
ly	un	rain	be	
	der	so	ings	
	the	ten	un	
	li	der	der	
	qui	and	the	
	d	so	thi	
	mo	gent	n	
	on	le	rain	

(Apollinaire 295)

The visual representation of rain turns up in another Apollinaire poem, “Du Coton Dans Les Oreilles,” (“Cotton in Your Ears”). The rain of this poem is a heavier rain, falling in bold lines rather than a trickle even though the rain is “falling so tenderly and gently.” In this poem Apollinaire places whole words or parts of words on each line rather than single letters as in “It’s Raining.” Furthermore, the falling rain in “Cotton in Your Ears” is printed in 12-point font rather than the 10-point font of “It’s Raining.” Apollinaire instructs his reader to “Listen to it raining listen to it rain.” The music of the rain is

juxtaposed to the horrible sounds of war as it falls gently, and ironically, around the soldiers. The rain is obviously preferable to bombs.

These two poems represent different kinds of rain and evoke some of the many different moods of rain. "It's Raining" is a soft, dark, perhaps wintery rain, a sad rain. A muted, murmuring tone is echoed in the slant and delicacy of the words flowing down the page. "Cotton in Your Ears," in contrast, is a strong, bright, summery rain, a welcomed rain. This is the rain that washes away mud and filth. The rain is contradictory itself and Apollinaire in his skill of writing has captured some of the rain's contradictory magic on paper.

Jorie Graham

Rain, to Jorie Graham, is metaphysical and mystical... a tool for the visual and spiritual elements of poetry. In her poem, "Self-portrait as the Gesture Between Them [Adam and Eve]," she uses rain as a component in her unconventional imagery.

6

Every now and then a quick rain for no reason,

7

a wind moving round all sides, a wind shaking the points of view out
like the last bits of rain. . . .

(Graham, The End of Beauty, 4)

These numbered sections create a montage, a mosaic, of which rain is an integral part.

The sections echo the rain in its quickness and randomness. The wind is creating movement as the rain comes to its end or its "last bits." As the poem progresses, Graham continues to use the rain as ambience.

as the apple builds inside the limb, as rain builds
 in the atmosphere, as the lateness accumulates until it finally
 is,
 as the meaning of the story builds,

(Graham, The End of Beauty, 5)

Here the rain is used to give the poem a sense of time and urgency. The rain “builds / in the atmosphere.” One can usually sense the coming of rain; its scent lingers in the air. It builds and makes its presence known. The rain and time march forward until they both simply are. The pulse of the poem quickens as the words themselves spill out of the numbered sections like liquid seeping through a membrane.

Rain shows up again in Graham’s poem “Chaos [Eve].” And again the poet reaches back to Biblical imagery for her topic as she flavors her words with rain.

Here is the skin of days in the one hand of God,
 drooping, the face running like ink in rain.

(Graham, Region of Unlikeness, 46)

Graham craftily softens the horrific image of the drooping skin of a face by using rain as a simile. The face droops and runs “like ink in rain.” Ink in rain is dark and difficult to see. Words run together. The rain distorts them. The rain also distorts sight. Objects are not always clearly seen in the rain; rain obscures.

Some of the eyes are bandaged with rain.

Some of the eyes wait for the gun to be fired.

(Graham, Swarm, 27)

In Graham's poem, "The Spectators," some obscure their eyes with rain, and others see more clearly. The rain is not necessarily bad. It simply has its function, as we all do.

It rains. Roof leaks.

God stands alone in the corner.

The crowd overflows

to get a better view.

It rains. Thoughts leak.

(Graham, Swarm, 27)

As "The Spectators" continues, the rain continues to fall, the roof leaks, God is present, but alone, and a nameless, faceless crowd hovers and stares. The rain continues and thoughts, most likely the poet's, spill onto the page.

Ultimately, the rain means something very different to Graham. To her, the rain represents a loss of something, an escape of reality, a leakage, a less exuberant melancholy. But, never the less, there is still a beauty in her rain, a dark beauty that is just as strong as the beauty in Cummings' and Apollinaire's rain.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics defines visual poetry as “poetry composed for the eye as well as, or more than, for the ear” (Preminger and Brogan 1364). Poetry can be, and is, so much more than metered lines and the blocked stanzas that show where each utterance pauses or end. The poet, in my opinion, writes for his or herself first. And for every poet, there is an audience. There is certainly safety in the familiar and in the traditional form. I have chosen to look at poets who have transcended the boundaries of traditional poetry. And with their influence, I, too, have transcended those boundaries. But, as I look over my completed thesis, I see that I can not escape rules. I am a breaker of rules working within a set of rules that I can not break.

And as a rule breaker, I engaged in a bit of soul searching. I began to feel guilty about my being a teacher. I place many rigid rules on my students; rules for essay writing that they can not break. But, I do honestly believe that this fits into my philosophy. You see, Reader, we must learn to crawl before we can walk. My students will learn the rules of essay writing, and, someday, hopefully, they will excel at all writing. I hope that they will take with them an acknowledgement of the rules and the power that that acknowledgement brings with it. I learned the rules many years ago.

We all test our boundaries from infancy to adulthood. Pushing the envelope just to see what we can get away with or see just how far we can go, ultimately finding our own special place in the universe where we, and our rules, fit in. My students push me, I push my committee and the graduate school, and in doing so I now not only walk, I run.

I did discover that in the end, it is the little things that are the hardest. The rewriting, the futzing. Getting it all to look and sound right. So when do we know it's right? When are rules carved in stone, when breakable? There simply is no hard and fast answer. For every group of rule makers, there is a group of rule breakers, and for every set of rules, there is an exception. The rules, finally, are independent of us, and in the end, we make our own rules, and we exist in our own constructed convention.

And so I take with me, after this long journey through writing and poetry, an understanding and an acceptance of the rules that surround me. I have labored at putting my thoughts down on paper, I have labored at making sure the pages have the proper margins and each word and letter is where it should be. I have become more familiar with my computer and what it can and can not do. I am much more aware of its, and my own, limitations, and I accept them all. And I will continue to write poetry that does not necessarily follow any specific set of rules, which the reader will see in the following pages.

APPENDICES

THE MANIPULATION OF ECHOES IN A SHALLOW CANYON

SECTION ONE

Of Unknowing

Here endeth the cloud of unknowing.

- The Cloud of Unknowing
- Anonymous 14th century

1.

I stand before the world . . . transparent, without substance . . .

2.

Now the gray rain thickens like a black wall of glass . . .

3.

Here there is always a shortage of soap and matches.

Here it is dark. My voice grows shallow and pale, softens
my hearing.

I do not deny that I desire the safety of shadows.

(comfort)

I wonder why I am drawn to this place. I am drawn to its dark
light nightly. Naturally. Drinking.

(blind)

Hoping, wishing, praying to tear down half the world.

I know I am small.

4.

Here: Now: This very moment: Time is only time, never silent,
never still.

I keep my curtains drawn. Tiny splinters of light bleed onto the walls.

Figures like spiderwebs form on my windows,
the sound of breaking ice, the movement of winter,
a kind of shadowlessness.

Black chair against black wall.

Fear of saying the wrong thing.
Fear of speaking out of turn.

Breathe deeply. Breathe audibly.

5.

I am warmed by my Irish coffee. And Emily smears whipped cream on her lips.

6.

I feel as if the earth will shatter; I think the earth will shatter.

7.

This must be a beautiful story.
... deceit, lust, betrayal, sin ...
And we who worship gods want miracles.

8.

I feel like I have been walking into walls for years. The morning after you left me, I realized it would not take long for someone else to take your place. To be human is to grow weak at another's touch.

What if two people loved the same person?
What if that person doesn't love you at all?
A cloudburst is a violent downpour of rain.
A deluge.

9.

My nightmares and my headaches keep me awake.
(nothing new)

Here is the erosion of broken dreams like broken mirrors. A mere breath of wind stirs a thin layer of dust, rising toward the sky like a rolling stone column.

10.

You held my hand while we sat in that little outdoor café. I drank hot tea with lemon. You licked two sugar cubes and stuck them together; my last image of you.

11.

If I am telling you what I am, then I am speaking in riddles.

A September Afternoon Spent in Kyoto

1.

I love black and white.
All the charcoal shades of my days and nights.
My eyes are growing dark. Curious.

When my last lover left me, I crawled into a hole and
drank myself to sleep night after night.
Now I take long walks; pick up twigs.
Yesterday, I pulled a splinter from my finger. It was
stuck deep. I cringed. I put my finger in my mouth.
There was blood.

2.

a picture of two people kissing
two decapitated heads fused at the mouth

this woman ties knots for a hobby
all her faucets leak . . . she's a little deaf
no one knocks on her door anyway

wrap my arms around myself
feel my own bones . . . feel safe

this man chews on a wooden match
a masculine habit . . . he's distant and quiet
never speaks to me

3.

My life is black and white.
A film noir. More Billy Wilder than Otto Preminger.
I'm happy now. I sit up at night, play pick-up-sticks
with long matches. And search for the perfect pastel black.

Dream Landscape

In this dream landscape, things are often foggy. Or maybe it is the real landscape that is foggy? I only remember passing the steaming ducts in the street. A gothic and romantic feeling came over me . . . but, only for the steam. Landscapes, to me, are often foggy. Dreams, to me, are often foggy.

I believe in desire and the silent, naked ghosts that we were. Passion is so clumsily stupid. Trace the outline of my body with your fingers.

Here are two bodies stretched out, nude, shuddering. These bodies pour into each other.
Dim lights. White come. Liquid. Stomachs convulsing.
Damp touch. Eyes wide open. Swallow hard.
Hands. Fingernails. Arms.
Grasp. Touch. Hold.

I leave behind me the steam, the fog, and the dream.
In memory of that landscape.

An Image of Movement

1.

Enter this emptiness. A dark, distant place deep within the soul.

2.

My eyes see less and less now. The last candle has burned out.

3.

A strange desire unravels itself, moves through this emptiness
like
thick, combustible fluids.
I want to be close to you . . . somehow . . . nearer to you.

4.

Your face is so much like the sunrise. I see you as you sleep.
I remember the gesture between us; the gesture that had rooted
itself, like a seed, inside the earth . . . inside me.
You are a momentary blur in my eyes. I feel you in the dark.
You become smooth like reflected light on a polished marble floor.
The clarity of your open hands on my body is charged with pain.
Grows more rhythmic as it slips into this emptiness.

5.

Now two lovers stare into each other's eyes.
Now the sun going down into the water slowly; little lines
converging on each other (they vow they love each other)
until it all becomes just a murmur; until it vanishes all vanishes.

Now one voice and then another until they all sound the same.

Now an image, every now and then a soft muttering.
inching blue and black with age. The movement is subtle.

Drunk Driving in November

It seems as if everything I write is
far away and not real at all.

Poetry is a scarred embryo curled up
inside of me, pounding to get out,
but it can't.

Words burn like incense, a levitating
of ash and smoke.

Look, I'm only halfway.

And, it's cold.

i can no longer set pen to paper,
you see,
i would either write a word and
say this is me; this is who i am,
or i would write something that is
too close to tell anyone.

And, I would await the spills of the past
that are like the sour yellowing of flowers in a vase.

There is something purplish, an electric glare
weaving just before dawn.
Anne is asleep in the backseat.
We are adrift. Paralyzed, or perhaps in a trance.
The windshield wipers push away falling wet snow.

My tongue is bone white china.
Breaking into a hundred pieces like a tasseled chime.

Morning comes, crashing like a chilly god.
Look, we're already halfway home.

Meshes

I will control the world.

This is a calm night. The strain of the darkness hurts my eyes.
How long have we been here?

Your touch is like a subtle
whisper.
Somewhere glass shatters
quietly.

Time is tied in threads. If I told you I loved you, it
would be a lie. Obsession is a necessity. Without which
we would be alone. Without which there would be nothing.
All of the tragedies of man are passed off as history.

I think I could talk myself out of sad
memories, if I would only try.

With religion man gained truth.
With truth man gained God.
With God man gained faith.
(or despair)

Thank God we are free. We are free to
kill, to steal, to commit suicide.

(Here is an illusion of movement: a butterfly trapped in a jar)

I love you.
I could tear you apart.
The glint of fresh blood on a blade like teeth.

(Lie.)

(Loss.)

(Echo.)

In a dream I stand before you
like a raped child.
But I am not to blame, one could
make anything out of it.

I was here a long time ago. I recognize the moment. A touch like ice. And the cold. And winter's want of warmth. The trees are still here. Bloated and bare of leaves; reaching toward the sky like the claws of some dead animal. The sky is unfamiliar and absurd.

Like human thoughts, the world will someday burn to ashes.

Spending March in a Foreign City

1.

sing me a kiss that is the memory of a
 kiss lurid and dim; do not betray me.
elsewhere rotted teeth bite me to the
 sound of breaking glass; a
chilling rain knits shivers to tap inside
my wrists and temples
 building monuments to lonesome.

2.

sometimes at night I lie awake.
 the rain here is very much like the fog;
 heavy wet sheets, somewhat frayed.
 it stops as suddenly as it starts,
as if someone turned off the tap.
 I could take a razor blade and cut
my way through the city. I could take a razor
 blade, all full of rust, and cut.

3.

headlights at 3:00 am flood my room
 through unshaded windows; a
 movement fleeting and fading.
sound and space are in timid exile. I strain
 to hear the last few squalls
 of a cat fight.
now somewhere a tiny, creeping patriot
 licks solitary wounds.
a pure white ceiling and pure white walls.
 thick cold like cream heavy cream;
 breeding the desire for warmth.
the world is as fragile and magical
 as cobwebs.

Spirits

1.

This night is so quiet, so empty; the beating of my heart echoes like a blacksmith's hammer striking a dense metal. I am cold.

2.

The rot and the death won't ever go away, no matter how much pleasure we achieve. I am afraid.

3.

This girl is at home in the shadows, in the dark. She leaves the warmth and comfort of his arms for the cold walk home. She understands this hollow world. Her feet gently scrape against the damp pavement.

(. . . look up and laugh . . .)

She whispers his name like a word spoken in the dream of a prophet. Her eyes have grown tired. She searches for her keys.

4.

I don't believe in spirits. I turn away and laugh. I see you in the window; smile; put your face in your hands. I feel you touching me like silk pressing against an open wound.

This passing time cuts slowly. The glance becomes the stare; and my eyes are stained by the lingering mist. I want to be moved, transformed. I want to leave this behind. I can't help but laugh.

(. . . ice in my eyes . . .) (. . . now that you're gone . . .)

SECTION TWO

Getting Tattooed in the Czech Village

Leaning back in the chair and loosening my shirt.
My heart beats a low drum pulse.

The ceiling white and gritty.

The fizzing buzz.
Ink drips from a needle.
Flesh ripped. Torn.
Every nerve set a flame.
The needle scratches deep.

I can feel the cool beads of blood form and roll
gently off my shoulder.
Wiped clean with gauze.

Again and again.
The buzz is hot and muffled.
Unspooled.

Quiet now. A mirror.
An image before me.
Silent and wicked and forever.

Meditation

Of meditation and pensive thoughts.
Of loneliness and ice cold winters.

My own eyes like those of a cat ripped
from their sockets, yet still see the

thin, bony hands that tear at my flesh
and shred my skin.

Of meditation and pensive thoughts.
Of thunder, rain, and cries in the night.

My hands are bound.
My body hurts.

And I splinter.

Of meditation and pensive thoughts.
Of the voices that lie and keep me awake.

I am wrapped in a tight, somewhat silky
web
like a larva
feeding
upon their remains
Murderous it is. Their brains were split apart,
oozing a thick,
yellowish liquid.
A mixture of sawdust, syrup, peppermint extract,
and human limbs.

Not knowing what hit them.
Not knowing what hit me.
An axed off arm splatted blood on the wall of
a pure white kitchen.
Color so vivid . . .

Of meditation and pensive thoughts.
Of darkness and bleak isolation.

Madeleine learns a Striptease

a savage screaming;
vicious.
take off my flesh,
ignite this disease in my blood.
consume me; burn me.
a gesture under iridescent light; there
 is no justice.
and she's falling)
and she's fucking)

here I am.
creamy and blurred; desire me.
I need the affection more than they
 need the money.
writhing for an eternity; I am old.
I am a creature in a mask; go out of
 my body.

colors flicker and rot.
in one final, violent moment, I
drown;
noiseless
 like a stone.

A Lover

I remember the first time I saw you.
I wanted to see you ravaged
and beaten,
weeping.
Cry tears for real sorrow,
real pain.

It's some cunning secret, this:
Eyes that are deep and liquid with sentiment. And the moon's
yellow light that touched your body as I touched your shadow.

You're beautiful.
Or is it your innocence that makes you so good to torture?

As cruel as I am, I could not let you slip through my fingers.

A spark happened to fall between us.
And it burned hot.

. Another Lover

You can always trust me, Dear.
I will never lie to you, or
stab you in the back.

No, Dear, never in the back.

You will see it coming.

I will take a large, sharp blade
and thrust it deep inside your chest.
Piercing flesh, muscle, and nicking bone.
I will twist the blade just a little . . . just a little.

As you breathe your last breath,
you may see your own blood splatter on my face.

And you will always know that I never, never lied to you.

Watercolor

1.

I love the taste of whiskey in my coffee . . .
like the warmth of your mouth against mine.
I am rigid to your memory.

I have stood staring at the darkened sky for hours.
The horizon opens up and bleeds; the mild light
creeps coldly around me.

How many times did I lie shivering in your arms?

2.

An old man polished coins.
They are ancient by the time they reach him;
ancient and withered as his tired hands.
He can only shine them; never repair the scratches
Even new coins have scars.

When I forget, I sometimes cry.

3.

I don't understand the process of the human condition.
Somewhere between the exploits of idleness and
occasional tears, I will be the overlooked snapshot
carried around inside your wallet; my colors fading,
corners crumpling up, crushed behind bills and credit cards.

Lines Written for Clytaemestra upon Reading Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*

Has to do with this storm that is man and woman.
Has to do with a bitterness that becomes strangely tranquil.
Fear breeds a kind of splendor that ripens horribly . . .

This place is a slaughterhouse.

None are innocent (completely)

To live alone . . . apart. Mortal thoughts give way
to desires of the flesh.

Has to do with pain.
Has to do with _____.

Tell me about the ocean. (He was gone so long.)
Tell me about the whirls and drifts that ruin reason and create
speed. Tell me about the taste of salt on your lips.

The bewilderment . . .
And the mist . . .

Be quiet now.
Inside passion and suffering there is a captive heroine.
No blame shall fall upon this woman. It was he . . . he who brought
home a mistress.

The spoils of war . . .
And that bitch . . .

She was alone. She took a lover.
In a rush his death came. There was blood flowing dark, and a
splash of tyranny in her eyes.

What brings a woman to murder her husband?
What brings a man to sacrifice his child?

Has to do with a great betrayal.
Has to do with a love gone terribly wrong.
Has to do with a woman . . .

She was driven to violence.

Crushed by righteousness and sin, and grim rage of murder. Her
lover and his touch. There was tragedy. There was so much
tragedy.

Anger for anger. Lust for lust. This house bleeds with death
and guilt

Has to do with waiting and wanting.
Has to do with gods and furies and injustice.
Has to do with all the trappings of power.

Now it is done. She will never be free of the blood.
The blood that is so thick on her hands.

In tears she touches dirt. And out of the earth comes a flower
that is as beautiful as it is treacherous.

The end is not the end.
And passion merely burns.

The Goddess of Rape

We are defined by what we are not.
We are not beautiful.

How far will it go?

I stand before this vast sea of mythological maidens,
without voice,
without identity.

Sad and emotionless . . . They stand outside themselves.

This is a mythology created out of cliches and the commonplaces.

Merkuta, Slave Goddess, struggles always struggles. Torn asunder
for an eternity, oppressed and beaten. Hands and feet are bound.
All the ages of Violence against women are seen in her bloodied
face.

Phra, Guardian of Brides, holds her sewing needle scepter. She utters
not a word. Has no tongue. Will never speak against him.
Silent. Spitting blood.
Well-behaved.
Such a good girl.

Shrika, Priestess of Whores, the insect-headed, begs for offerings of food,
drink, and other worldly possessions.
Cheap and owned and exploited.
The tiny goddess.
She clatters with coins and keys.
Men carry her around inside their pockets.

Nameless is the Goddess of Rape – pregnant with Lifeless
Ambition and spread open
for Despair.
Static. She is cold.
Orchid-petal skin. Cut to pieces.
She is not heroic, not supernatural.

I wonder how far can it go?

The Song of the Needle

A prison of self-obsession.

Once an addict . . . always an addict. It's so easy to say. So easy to dismiss.
The nature of the drug is to want more.

This desire. Sexual. All consuming.
Debts of my own making from choices of long ago.

A white squall. A storm out of a clear sky.
Waves and waves and shipless oceans.

Living in filth like a gutter rat.
We extract pleasure from horror. And in the battle for beauty, it is the ugly that gets crowned.

Flame burns cold. Twisted spoon bubbles. Dirty needles get clean.
I am desperate for sleep. Tired, but sleep does not come.

I enter dark places that *only* sleep deprivation and drunkenness bring on.
And, I stay up all night reworking words that never stood a chance in the first place.

SECTION THREE

Subtle and
strong. I
will lose
my self.
I will seek
p l e a s u r e.
This pleasure.

This imagined escape. Pour
this fluid over my tongue
slowly. Violent and sweet.
A volatile liquid . . . aromatic.
Drifts of smoke and oak tap a
fever-pulse in my blood. Molten
amber causes my eyes to water
and my mind to dazzle. A burning
landscape. I mistily descend into
this mire searching for lost gods in
murky randomness. I am pale
marble. Castled. Wearing pearl
gloves. My senses caged in ecstasy.
I think that the meaning of life is
swimming somewhere near the
bottom of a bottle of single malt
scotch. Bowmore. 21 year old.
That perfect caramel color.
(gorgeous finish)
That perfect scotch scent.
That perfect swirl in the glass.
One sip will seem to last forever.
I am lost. (pleasure) And
somewhere in the back of my mind,
at the base of my skull, I hear a
deep chanting... like the chorus of a
Greek tragedy. Rhythmic and macabre.

t
h
e
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a
i
n
f
a
l
l
s
d
o
w
n

into puddles below

eeeEee
ssssSssss
oooOooo
rrrRrrr

e *e s e*
s *s o s*
o *o r o*
r *r e r e*
e e e *s e s e*
s s s *o s o s*
o o o *r o r o*
r r r *e r e r*
e *s s*
s *o o*
o *r r*
r *r*
e *r*
s *s*
o *o*
r r
e
s
o
r

toothbrush
 hsurbhtoot
toothbrush
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Headache

You are my constant companion
Familiar.

I heard tell of a poisonous snake once.
It was fast and angry and deadly.

You feed upon my flesh and soul.
Hated one.

Its behavior was anti-social and extremely nervous.
This snake did not bluff.

You slither around my neck.
Consume me.

It would lie in wait for the intended victim.
Ready to deliver quick and multiple bites.

You creep over my head reaching from the base of my skull.
And take refuge in my temples.

It would inject a highly potent toxin
from short, fixed fangs.

I no longer have a shadow.
Only you.

The time from bite to death
was an agonizing and brief eternity.

Take over my life.
(over my life)

The Distance from Here

1.

Within the circle, closer and closer, we move. Dizzying. Shifting left and right.
Elevating. Rising to a height of difficult breathing.
Gasp and fall.

Now floating.
Now flowing.
Liquids move.

Surge and seep.

There is a certain fluidity.

Fidgeting. Searching.

Reaching and reaching . . . we will never touch. The swarm thickens. I am caught up
in the motion of the wind gust and the emotion of the descent.

No more . . .

No more . . .

2.

And here there is a slowly dreaming silence.

My arms and legs are light. My skin is warm. The flow of my blood has slowed.

And here there is a loud rumbling.

And here . . .

3.

To see things clearly isn't always the best way.

I have been blind for so long. I have been asleep for so long.

Asleep . . . Asleep . . . And asleep again . . . It is a tedious circle.

4.

Now there is a pause that is not a pause --

More a slowness in reading.

Now a string of words with no clear ending or beginning.
It's not at all linear.

This is where difficulty begins.
I cannot keep starting this story over, but I do.

Once upon a time . . .
A long time ago . . .
My story, your story . . .
It's always the same . . .

5.

Here I am still. Traveling the same distance again and again and again.

The Bachelor Room

It is early afternoon. The smells in the street of this crowded Chinese town are of roasted meat, soup, dust, the charcoal fire, and of jasmine.

It is beyond the alley that this room lies.

A simple room. A bookcase, a table, and a chair. Bamboo shutters show stripes of bending light.

This place is cold. Sheets of thin, white cloth hang near the windows and over the door. Ancient furniture and hard wood floors. Two jade columns stand just past the entryway. A step down, and the bed.

Here is this girl. She exists with the pain of little food in the house and the shame of poverty. She is new to men.

A small girl. Delicate

The softness of her skin. The softness of her sex.

Bone thin and tiny breasts.

She will always remember this afternoon even if she forgets his face, his name. She will remember this room. Its dust and its age.

Young, rich Chinese men have many mistresses. And, this they call the bachelor room.

Dusk

1.

Not quite dark, yet far from the light of day. I see shadows of once clear and defined images. Everything grows more distant in the dark.

2.

In the dark, small crevices are deep, cavernous holes. And everything sharp becomes soft and blurred. This is the place of nightmares.

3.

My emotions are poisoned.

I exist in a time past . . .

in an almost forgotten dream.

Transparent and empty. I am lost.

4.

My memory becomes more clear at sunset.

5.

I remember stepping into the garden.

The cobblestones were veined with moss like plate of greenish marble.

Here the scent of mold and age is thick.

I remember seeing shadows made by a broken window,

and the road as it turned dark,

and the shiny parts of the street after the rain.

6.

I've wasted so much time waiting for the light.

7.

Our daily dreams like our daily bits of bread are devoured by some ravenous creature.

8.

The light, too, falls prey to the darkness.

Upon Shooting My First Grackle

I saw him in the tree. Black, glassy
eye darting back and forth. Black, almost
purplish feather just catching the dwindling sunlight.

I saw him stretch his wing. It spread out like a
row of thick, fat fingers. The wind caused a rustling
of the leaves – all still and all silent – except for the rustling.

I lifted the gun to my eye. I saw him through a
narrow tube of glass and metal. He seemed so close.
I hesitated. I had the shot, but I hesitated. I flexed my
fingers. I watched the bird. And, I felt that he watched me too.

My finger stroked the trigger. A tiny bit of pressure.
Then more. Then more. Squeeze. The gun fired and pushed
back into my shoulder. Within an instant the bird fell. The bird
shuddered and fell. I watched as his wings spread and then collapsed.

A dead weight falls hard. A dead weight.

I rushed over to him. He cannot suffer. He must die quickly.

I stood over him. (I'm sorry) My gun positioned to fire again. (I'm sorry)
But he was quite dead. His blood spilled on the earth beneath him. A deep red.
His black eye was still now. I'm sorry, but this was how it had to be. The bird had to
die.

I stroked his near purplish feathers and repositioned his head. More blood came trickling
out of his throat and down his tongue. A brighter red than before.

I took two tail feathers and left him. The cats will clean him up.

Poem of Blood

Blood is the fluid which circulates through the arteries and veins of the human body, and of other animals, which is essential to the preservation of life carrying nourishment and oxygen. This fluid is generally red

We are filled with blood.

Kindred blood.

Relation by natural descent from a common ancestor. Consanguinity.

The unravelings and the resolutions.

God hath made of one blood, all nations of the earth.

(Acts 17)

Royal lineage.

Blood royal.

A prince of the blood.

The difficulties that are met with. The execution.

The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground.

(Genesis 4)

Honorable birth.

High extraction.

A gentleman of blood.

The design of the end of an action.

Shall I not require his blood at your hands?

(2 Samuel 4)

Life

I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.

(Hosea 1)

Blood slaughter.

Bloody murder.

Bloodshedding.

Because the life of very creature is its blood.

(Leviticus 17)

Guilt and punishment.

Your blood be upon your own heads.
(Acts 18)

Man.
Human wisdom.
Reason.

*Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father
who is in Heaven.*

(Matthew 16)

A sacramental symbol of the blood of Christ.

*This my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the
remission of sin.*

(Matthew 26)

The death and sufferings of Christ.

*Being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from
wrath through him.*

(Romans 5.3)

The price of blood
That which is obtained by shedding blood.
And seizing goods.
Firmness of the mind under sufferings.

Wo to him that buildeth a town with blood.
(Habakkuk 2, Acts 1)

Temper of mind. State of the passions. But in this sense, accompanied with cold or warm, or another qualifying word. To commit an act in cold blood, is to do it deliberately, and without sudden passion. Warm blood denoted a temper inflamed or irritated. To warm the blood is to excite the passions.

A hot spark.
A man of fire.
A rake.

*The juice of anything, especially if red; as "the blood of
grapes."*

(Genesis 49)

Whole blood.

To let blood.

To bleed by opening a vein.

To stain with blood.

To enter; to inure to blood; as a hound.

Poetry is . . .

Someone who
thinks
poetry is defined

as words beginning
at the left margin
in metered lines

has a meek
imagination.

I think

poetry is

I magic.
(Eye magic.)

So what makes a poem?
Snowfall.
Snowflake.
Quiet madness.
Rain?

I wonder . . .
does
a lie become

the truth
if it is told enough?

This is all
human drama.

And
poetry is
too dark.

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