

LINES BY SOMEONE ELSE: THE PRAGMATICS OF APPROMPTED POEMS

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Over the last sixty years, overtly intertextual poems with titles such as “Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery” and “Poem Ending with a Line by George W. Bush” have been appearing at an increasing rate in magazines and collections. These poems wed themselves to other texts and authors in distinct ways, inviting readers to engage with poems which are, themselves, in conversation with lines from elsewhere. These poems, which I refer to as “apprompted” poems, explicitly challenge readers to investigate the intertextual conversation, and in doing so, they adopt inherent risks. My thesis will chart the various effects these poems can have for readers and the consequences they may hold for the texts from which they borrow.

Literary critics such as Harold Bloom and J. H. Miller have described the act of borrowing as competitive and parasitic—“agon” is Bloom’s term for what he sees as the oedipal anxiety of poets and poets’ texts to their antecedents, but an investigation of this emerging genre in terms of linguistic pragmatics shows that apprompted poems are performing a wider range of acts in relation to their predecessors.

Unlike Bloom’s theory, which interprets the impulse of poetic creation through psychoanalysis, I employ linguistic terms from Brown and Levinson’s linguistic Politeness theory to analyze apprompted poems as conversational speech events. Politeness theory provides a useful analysis of these poems by documenting the weight of threats to the positive and negative “faces” of the participants in each poetic conversation. I have documented these “face-threatening-acts” and used them to divide apprompted poems into five major speech events: satire, revision, promotion, pastiche, and ecclesiastic. Ultimately, this paper serves at the

intersection of literary criticism and linguistics, as I suggest a theoretical approach to the interpretation and criticism of apprompted poems by way of linguistic pragmatics.

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I would like to thank my committee members—Haj Ross, Bruce Bond, and Deborah Armintor—for the valuable support and advice given during this project.

It is difficult to trace the germ of an idea, and this one has been gestating for several years. At first, I had assumed that these poems with titles declaring they possessed lines from elsewhere were part of a well-established form before learning that the form had no name and that there was little criticism on the theory of their operation. I thank William Virgil Davis for drawing this to my attention.

I also want to thank the poets who answered my emails and queries about their prompted poems. These poets include Sarah Messer, Lisa Jarnot, John Tranter, and Joseph Heithaus. Without the information about sources they provided, I would have interpreted a few of these poems differently.

Thanks also to Nick McRae and Gayla Byerly for helping me find many of these poems.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my parents—literal and literary. May I never escape your influence.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Good poets borrow; great poets steal.

-a misquote of T. S. Eliot

Apprompted Poems Defined

I have chosen the word “apprompted” to refer specifically to poems which borrow lines from elsewhere and pronounce the referents in their titles (e.g., "Variations on a Text by Vallejo" or "Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima"). The word "apprompt" is an archaic, Anglo-Norman adaptation from Old French (OED). The word itself means “to borrow,” and is a cognate with the word “prompt,” used today to mean cueing a performer. These senses seem simultaneously expressive of what the poems in this set do. The borrowed line prompts the subsequent poem--textually and thematically.

Origins

The earliest apprompted poems appear to draw from the idea of musical variations, a technique practiced formally since the sixteenth century (Sisman 2001). Musical variations often served to extend a composition for a dance, working primarily from repetitions of segments in the original melody. The musical form, according to Sisman, has often been looked down upon as “parasitic” in nature. Though the idea of variation extends naturally from the urge to imitate in art, it seems likely that the use of the word “variation” in apprompted poem titles transferred from the use of the word in the titles of musical compositions.

The Rise of Apprompted Poems

Apprompted poems have been spiking in popularity since the turn of the millennium, according to the general steady increase in the number published each year. The graph below

shows the number of these poems I have found published in English-language literary magazines and collections over the last sixty years, roughly.

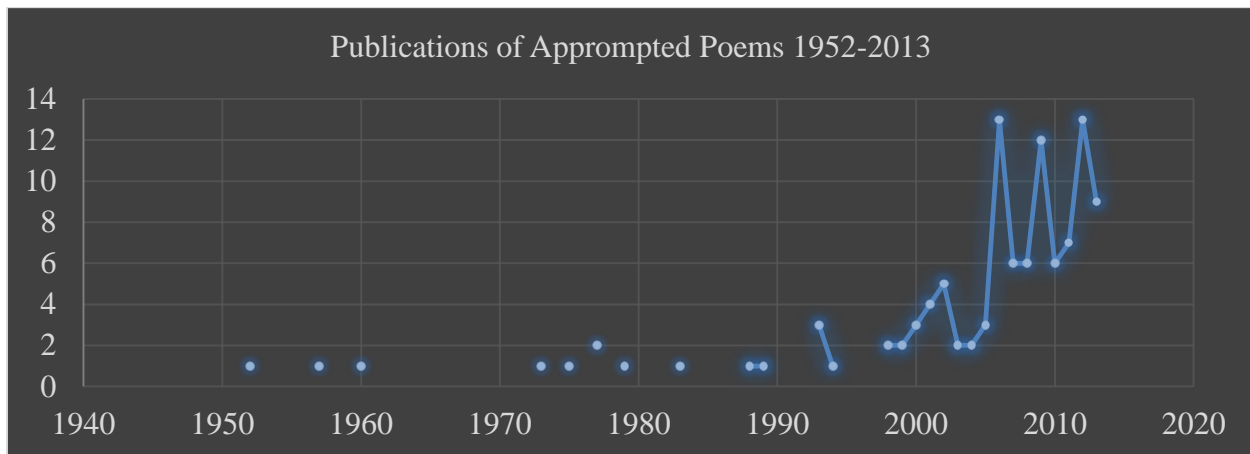


Figure 1. Publications of Apprompted Poems 1952-2013.

What appears to be the first “variation” poem is a poem by Robert Browning composed in the mid-1800s (*Browning* 2007). The poem consists of two lines and represents Browning’s revision of lines spoken by his friend and fellow poet Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). The story is that the aged Landor was dismissed from his house by his wife, and the Brownings saved him from the streets of Florence. While staying with them, Landor, in reference to his callous wife, reportedly said: “Out of his Paradise an Angel drove Adam, a Devil now drives me from mine.” Browning, in his version, revises the lines and gives them the title “Variation on Lines of Landor.” When first published, the variation on the lines was mistakenly attributed to Landor, but was later recognized as Browning’s. Here is the poem:

Variation on Lines of Landor

An Angel from his Paradise drove Adam:
 From mine, a Devil drives me: *thank you, Madam!*

Because of the brevity of Browning’s poem, the title is thrown into stark relief. It is the most interesting line of the poem for the communication it delivers—that Browning is revising a fellow poet’s lines to make them more poetic. “Variation” in Browning’s title is a generous name

for the act of revision, as it mitigates the affront to Landor's reputation by respecting the source material, which, as far as anyone knows, was only spoken. Clearly, Browning would not have chosen the title if he did not mean to exalt Landor's clever statement, but the fact that he takes on a revision of the lines himself makes a certain statement about his own prowess and benevolence. Poems, like any use of language, constitute acts of speech, and apprompted poems in particular attempt to bring intertextual conversations to the forefront. These few lines by Browning and Landor hint at the complexities and inherent risks involved in apprompted poems, and these actions will be examined in further detail in chapter 2.

It is not possible, of course, to declare with certainty the order of influence apprompted poems have exerted on one another, but that they are of the same breed is apparent when comparing the patterns of the various titles. [Appendix A](#) constitutes the full list of the titles in chronological order with highlighting to show the intertextual correspondences. There appear to be three main veins of apprompted poem titles.

1. Variations
2. After a phrase/line
3. Beginning/ending

(1) seems to have the oldest tradition, beginning with Browning's "Variation on Lines of Landor," though over 100 years passed before Merwin published "Variation on a Line by Emerson." Merwin is by no means working from Browning. He may have taken hold of the idea from musical compositions or even another poem or work yet to be found. In fact, if both Browning and Merwin arrived at the idea of variations separately, it may further support the notion that the poetic form borrows its style from the musical form. (2) contains fewer poems than the other forms, but the word "Abandoned" from Donald Justice's "After a Phrase

Abandoned by Wallace Stevens" is borrowed into a few cross-breedings of (2) and (3). In the appendaged list, the word "abandoned" is highlighted in red.

(3) appears to be largely inspired by Duncan's "A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar" published in 1960. However, a few years before Duncan's piece, Donald Justice had written "Sestina on Six Words by Weldon Kees." Several poems out of (3) seem to follow Justice's by declaring a particular type or form of poem. In the list, these poems are highlighted in pink. There is an important cross-breeding between (1) and (3) that can be found in some of the poems through the word "variation," highlighted in yellow. A few other highlights trace obvious intertextual connections and patterns between the titles.

Once again, there is little to be gained from arguing the particular parentage and intertextuality of the titles. What the connections do show, however, is that these poems belong together in a form that has been built primarily over the last half-century—a form that draws intertextuality expressly into the conversation, a form I call the prompted poem.

Intertextuality: Parents, Parasites, and Permutations

In his essay on "The Limits of Pluralism," J. H. Miller (1977) assumes a parasitic view of intertextuality. Miller asks, "Is a citation an alien parasite within the body of its host, the main text, or is it the other way around...Or can host and parasite live happily together...feeding each other or sharing the food?" (439). The parasite analogy, shared by Sisman (2001) on musical variations, is one colorful way of looking at the problem of intertextuality, as is Harold Bloom's argument in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) that poets consciously or unconsciously engage in "agons" or competitions with their literary fathers in an oedipal attempt to vanquish them.

Since its appearance, Bloom's theory has been a subject of wide-ranging debate, and there are many poets and critics hesitant to apply such a violent perspective to the complexities

of intertextuality. In an introduction to theories of intertextuality, Allen (2000), in reference to gynocriticism and the community women writers make for themselves, recognizes that intertextuality between women writers is often “a matter of legitimation rather than of emasculating belatedness” (146). The reference to “emasculating belatedness” directly references and refutes Bloom’s theory about the “anxiety” associated with accepting and admitting influence, accusing Bloom of limiting his theory by aligning the psychological impulse to male competition. Allen, on the other hand, suggests that the act of quoting another may, in fact, be an act of uplifting, a celebratory alignment through influence. This hesitance to side with Bloom likely stems from the scope of Bloom’s theory, which is ultimately a wide, psychoanalytic profile of the collective egos of poets past and present. Bloom’s theory is perhaps too big to account for the individual inspirations and impulses of poets expressed through intertextuality or the subtlety in their performance, interesting as his perspective is on the collective anxiety of English writers living after Shakespeare and Milton.

Perhaps the most quoted words about influence come from T. S. Eliot’s “Good poets borrow; great poets steal” remark, which turns out to be misquoted from Eliot’s essay on “Philip Massinger” (1920: §5) where he says the following:

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.

Eliot’s remarks are interesting for the judgments and observations of what he believes are qualities that make mature borrowing possible. Eliot talks of borrowing in terms of technique

and artistry. According to Eliot, the mature poet's borrowing improves on the original text or gives it a new reading, but poets must be judicious in their borrowings—ensuring that some difference in time, language, or subject exists between the texts. Presumably, the closer a poem is to the borrower's time or culture, the more difficult it is for the new work to survive by comparison with the original.

Indeed, there is some underlying struggle for survival that poems partake in which lends credence to the arguments of Bloom and Miller. This survival revolves around the amount of respect a poem is able to accrue in a reader's memory, the space it is allowed to take up. On a much larger scale this legacy of success would be preserved in the literary canon. Apprompted poems challenge themselves in this respect: they have to fight the redundancy of quoting someone else's words. A strong first-born advantage can exist in poems. We naturally value the source of the original line or idea over what seems derivative. Thus, apprompted poems take on an additional challenge for survival. They must face a natural comparison or competition with their predecessors in a reader's memory. In this sense, the somewhat violent analogies of parasitism and agonism are understandable, though this competition does not need to drive the tone of a poem itself.

Whether or not Bloom's theory proves accurate is not as interesting or useful as is Eliot's implied argument—that intertextuality can function as a deliberate poetic device for a poet's own artistic purposes. Jameson too, in his description of the impulses of postmodern art, identifies intertextuality “as a deliberate, built-in feature of the aesthetic effect” (1991: 20). This deliberateness is a defining quality of apprompted poems, which admit influence in their titles. In stating their intertextuality up front, apprompted poems call their predecessors to the stage to begin a dialogue in the reader's presence. By supplying the referent in the title, apprompted

poems are submitting to the primacy of the source text and reiterating its centrality in the new context. The action of this communication, for poems are communicative events to begin with, might be analyzed along the lines of an invocation, a call to conversation with earlier voices—literary and cultural. By beginning a conversation, not only with the reader but also with a previous text, apprompted poems also perform certain actions in those conversations, actions that reveal the writer’s attitude to the original text or author, as well as actions that attempt to influence a reader’s relation to the quoted material. Though an apprompted poem may perform numerous acts upon its source text, the forms of these discourses fall in certain similar patterns that allow for some characterization. I intend to tease out the actions performed in apprompted poems and examine them critically with Eliot’s judgments in mind.

Apprompted Poems as Speech Events

The term “speech event” comes from the field of linguistic pragmatics. Pragmatics is separate from the other fields of linguistics—syntax, phonology, phonetics, morphology, and semantics—in that it is concerned with meaning created from context. It is often tied to semantics, which is concerned with meaning coded into morphemes. Pragmatics often overlaps with studies in sociolinguistics, which look at differences in the languages of speech communities, and it has ties to cultural anthropology.

In referring to apprompted poems as speech events, I am analyzing them in terms of conversations. Indeed, there are two main conversations in apprompted poems—the conversation between the reader and the poem and the conversation between the poem and the text it borrows from. Apprompted poems directly address the poems they reference, and a reader of an apprompted poem is given the opportunity to reconstruct that conversation.

During a speech event, certain actions are performed that direct the aims of a

conversation. These actions are called “speech acts,” a term coined by Searle (1969) and based on the analysis of J. L. Austin (1962). When Austin and Searle analyze speech acts, they take individual utterances and find the underlying “performative verbs” such as “I hereby grant you permission,” or “I hereby declare you unfit for duty.” In these cases, the utterances are neither true nor false, rather, they effect an actual change in the condition of the situation—allowing one person to commence and activity (the former) or ending the assignment of another (the latter). In the speech event of an prompted poem, various speech acts may be performed, though they are at the mercy of the interpreting reader. In this paper, I will describe the major actions of prompted poems (what they do or attempt to do to their predecessors) in the following terms:

- Satire: ironically twisting the quote to make fun of or criticize some aspect of the referent’s character/abilities
- Revision: pointedly modifying the original text for personal artistic effect
- Promotion: lifting the quote from obscurity to prominence
- Pastiche: mimicking the quoted person’s style for personal artistic effect
- Ecclesiastic: raising the quoted line to the level of scripture

The acts are listed in order of most threatening to most celebratory, and a full list of the data arranged by these speech act categories is available in [Appendix B](#). If one were to search for the underlying performative verbs in the broad actions listed above, one might find the following implied utterances:

- Satire: “I hereby declare this text unfit for readership or admiration.”
- Revision: “I hereby find this text lacking and alter it for my needs.”
- Promotion: “I hereby declare this text praiseworthy and share it with the public.”
- Pastiche: “I hereby declare this text admirable and adopt its structure.”

- Ecclesiastic: “I hereby sanctify this language and submit to its authority.”

One might ask on what authority apprompted poems presume to make these judgments and declarations, and the exploration of that accusation is an interesting one. Indeed, when speech acts are performed, they must meet certain “felicity conditions” to “come off” (Austin 1962). For example, only a certified individual may declare two people “husband and wife,” and only the Pope could canonize a saint. What, then, gives the writers of apprompted poems this authority? Simply because poets can say whatever they want does not mean they are legislators. However, what they can do is what any speaker can do: make the declaration productive in an unacknowledged world—the world of imagination. The ultimate judge and arbiter in a poetic speech event is the reader, in whose mind the poem finds life and voice. Stanley Fish (1980) makes similar arguments regarding the authority of the reader in a literary context, adding that “literature... is the product of a way of reading, of a community agreement about what will count as literature.... (1980: 97). Therefore, a reader and a community of readers could give an apprompted poem the performative power to which it aspires. On the other hand, the reader might judge the action of the poem inappropriate and moot. These sorts of judgments rely on the capacity of a reader to identify the conversations in apprompted poems and apply the instinctual, interpretive tools of pragmatics to calculate their relative success. The pragmatic tool this paper will apply to apprompted poems is linguistic politeness theory.

Linguistic Politeness of Apprompted Poems

The formulators of linguistic politeness theory are Brown and Levinson (1987). Their theory operates on the concept of “face” and “face-work,” terms borrowed from Goffman (1955). The concept of “face” they use operates on a conscious level in human cultures as a quality that may be lost or maintained. One’s face represents the carefully constructed social

personae that each person seeks to maintain in an interaction. Brown and Levinson identify two major aspects of face, Positive face and Negative face (hereafter referred to as PF and NF). PF refers to an individual's desire for approval from others, while NF is the desire for autonomy. According to politeness theory, utterances and speech acts in a conversation contain inherent threats to an individual's PF or NF. These are referred to as "face-threatening acts" (FTAs). For example, an apology inherently threatens the positive face of the speaker because to apologize is to admit to wrongdoing—compromising the speaker's need for approval and respect. Using the imperative mood threatens the negative face of the addressee, whose time and autonomy are being challenged by the speaker. In any cooperative conversation, each participant is expected to make moves to preserve her own PF and NF as well as the PF and NF of her interlocutor(s). For example, in an apology to one's friend, instead of stating the apology on the record with "I'm sorry," one might instead imply the apology indirectly by giving an excuse for the action. The indirectness mitigates the FTA to the wrongdoer's PF. However, the apology must be of a tone that is acceptable to the wronged party in order to mitigate the threat to PF or NF that the action incurred. Therefore, there are some calculations that take place when a speaker is performing an FTA to either himself or his hearer. A speaker who performed an FTA to the hearer's PF might also attempt to mitigate the threat with another statement that boosts the hearer's positive face. For example, an instructor might say to a student: "Your work over this term has been, for the most part, excellent. That is why the quality of your last paper surprised me. Were there any outside circumstances that interfered?" In this instance, the major FTA is to the student's PF (i.e., the need for the instructor's approval) in that it issues on-record disapproval. The instructor's lines use quite a bit of face-work to mitigate the affront. She reinforces the student's PF by stating her approval of the students' past performance, implying that the student is generally a

top-performer. In the last sentence, she boosts the student's PF by paving the way for his apology—offering an avenue for excuse. A typical student's response would be to deliver an excuse—mitigating the threat to his own PF. After an excuse, the student might courteously apologize for taking up the instructor's time and promise to not make such mistakes in the future—mitigating a threat to the instructor's NF. The student might also gratify the instructor's own PF and NF by thanking her for the attention and concern.

In this thesis, I argue that prompted poems and their conversational participants must employ the tactics outlined in politeness theory to mitigate similar FTAs. The degree to which an prompted poem anticipates these threats and mitigates them can determine the extent of its success and survival. In this way, politeness theory offers useful tools in analyzing and interpreting prompted poems. In the seemingly simple act of quoting another poem, prompted poems perform FTAs to their own PF and NF (admitting to influence and risking their own autonomy), to the referent's NF (risking the original text's autonomy), and to the reader's NF (requesting that a reader make the effort to locate and read the source text). In order to explore threats to PF and NF in prompted poems, the various conversational participants should be teased out. Poems, especially prompted poems, invite a plurality of conversations. (1) The text itself might be considered a participant along with (2) the borrowed text or (3) the reader. Additionally, (4) the author of the text might address (5) the author of the borrowed text.

These conversants participate in each prompted poem, and the conversations can take place simultaneously, resulting in multiple face-threatening acts. The murkier conversations take place through the unique experience of the reader. In prompted poems, there are always at least two readers—(3) the one reading in real-time, and (4) the author of the prompted poem who read, and was addressed by the text he or she borrowed from. In the real-time reading, the

apprompted poem is primary, but in the past reading, the borrowed-from text is primary. Therefore, the real-time readers (you and I) are removed in a way that makes it possible to eavesdrop, or at least to conjecture about the earlier conversation, and this is where speculations about speech events can be addressed in criticism.

The conversations prior to the real-time reading are, of course, like letters and not strict dialogues, though certain lines might address other lines. In this way, all writing is epistolary. In order to imagine the conversations in apprompted poems, it is necessary to be abstract and anthropomorphic at times—to see a poem as a being with a positive face which seeks approval and a negative face which seeks independence. In fact, this is no new or strange anthropomorphism. When readers engage with poems and share the experience with others in a classroom setting or otherwise, it is not unusual for a reader to say “The poem argues...” or “The poem wants to be...” In stretching a poem to personhood, an extension is automatically made to include a poem’s PF and NF.

The manner in which apprompted poems and their participants maintain or threaten face will depend on the kind of action taken in the poems. The speech acts of satire, revision, promotion, pastiche, and ecclesiastic each perform unique combinations of FTAs, and these will be examined individually in chapter 2. Aside from the different FTAs performed in each apprompted speech act category, all apprompted poems perform automatic FTAs by quoting text and declaring so in their titles. The threats or impositions distinctly inherent in apprompted poems are listed below. For ease of reference, I will repeat the numbered conversational participants before listing the face-threatening acts they perform:

- (1) The text of the apprompted poem
- (2) The text of the borrowed poem

(3) The real-time reader

(4) The author of the apprompted poem/The earlier reader

(5) The author of the borrowed text

- Imposing upon the reader to research a text/referent: NF threat from (1 or 4) to (3)
- Offending the reader by assuming knowledge of the text/referent: PF threat from (1 or 4) to (3).
- Losing face by admitting influence in the title: NF threat from (2 or 5) to (1 or 4).
- Losing face by being perceived as derivative: PF threat from (3) to (1 or 4).
- Challenging the originality of the quoted text: NF threat from (1 or 4) to (2 or 5).

Each of these threats is a direct result of the apprompted poem form, and each threat must be mitigated by the offending performer. What separates apprompted poems from poems which simply quote other lines in their text is the expression of the referent in the title. By identifying the source in the title, apprompted poems make a claim for the quoted material's centrality to the new context and to the theme of the apprompted poem. The title implies a strong borrowing, and this increases the level of the threat. However, the act of identifying the referent performs an act of mitigation for the inherent threat to (2) the borrowed text and (5) the original author. By identifying the referent, apprompted poems prevent the total theft of originality from the source, preserving a measure of the source's PF and NF.

As far as (3), the reader, is concerned, the severity of the FTAs will depend on the particular knowledge that the reader brings to the text. The threat arising from (3) in potentially not approving of the poem is left entirely up to the reader, and in a broader sense, to the community of readers. From the perspective of this paper, poems whose referents and borrowed texts could be identified and located will not be deemed offensive to this reader's PF or NF.

Politeness theory provides useful tools for examining the acts of apprompted poems. However, the fact that Brown and Levinson's "face-threatening acts" are inherent in the communication of these texts does not imply an alliance with the psychological anxiety and violence of Bloom's theory. Rather, the "threats" in apprompted poems correspond to the delicate expression and defense of "face" in everyday conversation. In fact, compliments, requests, thanks, and praise all contain inherent FTAs to PF and NF for the various conversational participants. In thanking or giving a compliment, the speaker performs a potentially face-threatening act in assuming acceptance on the part of the receiver. In apprompted poems, the judgement of these threats is left up to the reader's knowledge and observation. Even if, for example, John Ashbery takes no offense at being quoted in "Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery," the reader may still perceive the inherent threats on Ashbery's behalf in the reconstruction of the conversants' identities within the speech event of the apprompted poem. Being able to identify threats to PF and NF assists the reader in interpreting and judging an apprompted poem in relation to its predecessor.

CHAPTER 2

THE SPEECH ACTS

The gestures poems make are the same as the gestures of ritual injunction--curse, exorcism, prayer; underlying everything perhaps, the attempt to make someone or something live again.

-Frank Bidart (2013: 109)

Introduction

I formed these five speech act categories according to close readings of apprompted poems and the texts they borrow from. The speech acts of all apprompted poems I have encountered can be couched in these terms. The acts themselves each contain unique combinations of face-threatening acts (FTAs) in addition to the inherent FTAs apprompted poems perform naturally. Once again, the common FTAs in apprompted poems include the following actions:

- Imposing upon the reader to research a text/referent: NF threat from (1 or 4) to (3)
- Offending the reader by assuming knowledge of the text/referent: PF threat from (1 or 4) to (3).
- Losing face by admitting influence in the title: NF threat from (2 or 5) to (1 or 4).
- Losing face by being perceived as derivative: PF threat from (3) to (1 or 4).
- Challenging the originality of the quoted text: NF threat from (1 or 4) to (2 or 5).

For ease of reference, here are the numbered categories of conversational participants:

1. The text of the apprompted poem
2. The text of the borrowed poem
3. The real-time reader
4. The author of the apprompted poem/The earlier reader
5. The author of the borrowed text

By their nature, apprompted poems treat the referents in their titles as names one ought to know. If the reader is ignorant of the referent and references, the reader's PF is threatened, and a reader could take offense at the assumption. A way that poets might mitigate this threat is to indicate clearly what portion of the poem is borrowed (e.g., italicizing, using quotation marks, or indicating in the title if the quote is at the beginning or end). One sure threat, however, is to the reader's NF. No matter if a reader knows both the referent and the source text, unless the original poem is memorized, the reader is tasked with looking it up, and the casual reader, if not invested in the poem, may take or leave this challenge. A list of all apprompted poems in this set, organized by speech act category, can be found in Appendix B.

Satire

The satire is a bald-faced threat to the referent's PF and possibly to the reader's too, if the reader is a fan or acolyte of the referent. If not mitigated properly, the risk to (4) the writer's PF is severe. The satire is strongest when the reader can identify the referent and has some knowledge of the referent's work.

An example of this type is Donald Hall's "Poem Beginning with a Line of Wittgenstein" (1979). Here is its text:

The world is everything that is the case.

Now stop your blubbering and wash your face.

The humor of Hall's poem is evident in a few ways: the full rhyme, the surprise turn in the second line, and the terseness of the poem. The surprise in the second line is delivered through the bald, on-record imperative which is clinched with the word "blubbering"—meant to belittle the addressee. The tone takes on the reprimanding voice of a parent replying to a whining child, but the joke is really at the expense of Wittgenstein who came up with a vague, dismissive

witticism akin to “Because I said so!” Hall’s poem is one of the earliest satires in the apprompted poem set, and it also illustrates that the satire is not the expected action of the apprompted poem. Rather, part of the humor of the satire comes from the surprise in the text, which the title does not foreshadow.

Since the title of an apprompted poem acts as a topicalizer and announces its referent, not all apprompted satires are able to utilize the feature of surprise that Hall’s poem does. For example, if the referent is a celebrity or political figure, this cues a reader’s to prepare for satirical material. The examples of satires triggered by their titles in this set include Merrill’s “Poem Ending with a Line by George W. Bush,” Epstein’s “Poem Beginning with a Line by George W. Bush,” Jensen’s “Poem Beginning with a Line from a Yoko Ono Installation,” Bly’s “A Poem Beginning with a Line by Seal Scholars,” Gay’s “Poem Beginning with a Line Overheard in the Gym,” and Roggenbuck’s “poem beginning with a line by ts eliot who was alluding to king lear I am pretty sure.” Each of these titles triggers an attention to satire through the referent--George W. Bush, Yoko Ono, seal scholars, or someone at the gym. The direction of the Bush satire is easy to anticipate since it was something of a national pastime to lampoon the president and his speech when he held office. Of the two in this set, the stronger poem is [Merrill's](#) which ends with the Bushism "There's no cave deep enough / For America, or dark enough to hide." The full text of this poem is included in [Appendix C](#). Merrill describes a scene at a film screening "on genocide" where the projectionist refuses to dim the lights, and in the confusion someone quotes Bush. Not only does the poem satirize the president's speech, but it openly links him to the word "genocide" in the first line of the poem. In order to mitigate this PF threat, Merrill removes the voice of the speaker to "someone" and says "the president" instead of George W. Bush. The fact that the poem ends rather than begins on the line is an advantage over

the other Bush poem in the set which is repetitive and overlong, giving the reader the quote too quickly without developing much of an alternative interpretation. In Merrill's, the reader has to wait a bit and wonder which Bushism will be used, and the quote used has an ambiguous and menacing interpretation.

In apprompted poem satires a certain amount of mitigating must take place in order for the poem to succeed—not out of respect for the referent, but in order to gauge the appropriate level of affront a typical reader will accept on behalf of the referent. In order to find a satire funny, a reader must share values similar to the author. This is what makes writing satires in this form difficult and why political satires are always divisive. Whereas in the other speech act categories of apprompted poems there are typically two conversations at the surface level—the one in real time with the reader and the one between the texts—in the case of satires which borrow quotes from speeches or from someone “overheard in the gym,” it can be impossible for the real-time reader to locate the source material. If the reader has no access to the source of the borrowed material and the context, he or she cannot be privy to the fuller textual conversation, and indeed there may not even be one. The stray line may be all there is of the borrowed text. The additional burden of trust for the reader and the pressure on the poem to succeed based heavily on the one real-time conversation generates a face-threatening act toward the writer's own PF. On the other hand, by obscuring the source text, a satire might ensure that its version is primary in the reader's memory. By doing so, an apprompted satire might mitigate the inherent threat to its own NF though the influence of the quote. More than the other acts, apprompted satires create a schism between their theme and the message of the source, potentially lending the satire more originality than other apprompted poems are able to attain.

Pastiche

Fredric Jameson, in his analysis of movements in postmodern art, defined pastiche in the following terms:

“Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists” (1991: 17).

Jameson recognized the growth of the pastiche in postmodern art in its seemingly random and varied borrowings, and apprompted pastiches certainly fit within this tendency. However, the apprompted pastiche is anything but a neutered parody. It is an imitation of structure from another source, and therefore it borrows more than it claims to in the title, but the very act of borrowing a structure is a communication with and about that borrowed structure. In fact, an apprompted pastiche is almost always a celebratory borrowing of another’s work, imitating the structure with enhancements and variations—like the formal variations of musical compositions. The fact that apprompted pastiches find a form worth imitating serves as a boost to the PF of their referents.

Like satires, apprompted pastiches offer little to readers if the reader has no knowledge of the referent beyond simple name-recognition. In order for an apprompted pastiche to survive and succeed, the reader needs to know something of the referent’s writing style. If the reader does not, the pastiche is riskier and likely to perform FTAs to the reader’s PF. A poet might mitigate this threat by clearly identifying the quoted material in order for the reader to look up the source text for comparison. Poets must also be careful of the tone of the pastiche—to keep it from

turning into a satire. If ill-executed in this way, the poem (1) threatens (5) the referent's PF. The poem may also threaten the referent's PF if it does not convincingly mimic the style to poetic effect. The latter failure is worse than the former, for if the pastiche is warped into a satire, a reader might still think it a successful satire, and the (4) poet's PF would be preserved.

Let's look at a few examples of the prompted pastiche. John Tranter wrote two poems "Beginning with a line by Kenneth Koch" in which he quotes the line "This Connecticut landscape would have pleased Vermeer" from Koch's long poem "Fresh Air." The full text of Tranter's poems can be found in [Appendix C](#). Both of Tranter's poems are meant to be humorous rhyming sonnets, making fun of Vermeer's prestige and of those snooty enough to say something like "This Connecticut landscape would have pleased Vermeer." The problem with Tranter's poems is that they don't make it clear that Koch's line is already, in fact, ironic and spoken by a speaker intending it to be in section 5 of the rambling "[Fresh Air](#)." If a reader of Tranter's poems is unaware of Koch's work and the sharp diatribe lampooning the Academy found in "Fresh Air," he or she might misread Tranter's poem as a satire threatening Koch. The quoted line about the Connecticut landscape gives little direction as well. For a reader first encountering the Tranter poems, without the context or memory of Koch's poem, the first line might read as a flat observation without irony, and because the tone of Tranter's poems leans toward satire, a reader could likely conclude that Koch is a fan of Vermeer's landscapes. The reality, however, which becomes clearer if one reads the Koch poem, is that Tranter's poems are really a pastiche of Koch's. Tranter is admiring the tone and direction of the Vermeer line and attempting to borrow it into his poems where he will continue in Koch's vein of irony. But after investigating Koch's poem, it becomes apparent that Tranter either misread or misquoted the line, which is not a satire of Vermeer—as Tranter's poems suggest—but a satire of those who

would give high marks to a person just for referencing Vermeer. Ultimately, Tranter's poems don't communicate well as satire or pastiche, though he is trying for the latter, and a reader who doesn't know Koch but is amused by the Tranter poems is in danger of accepting the threat to Koch's PF without question.

Tranter's poems illuminate one of the implicit face-threatening acts in apprompted poems. By attributing the quoted line to the original writer as in "Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch," the poet is suggesting that the referent is the direct speaker and subscribes to the beliefs held in the quote. It is a fallacy to assume the speaker of a poem is the writer of that poem, but for ease, apprompted poems do it anyway and ask the reader to tease out the meanings through her own knowledge. This fact is the heart of the danger in misreading apprompted poems or misreading the referents, and a keen reader ought to be immediately suspicious of an apprompted poem claiming to borrow a line by someone else.

Another risk of the pastiche is that of being too similar to the source material. One might see this as a danger to all apprompted poems in that they are inherently parasitic, borrowing language and theme from elsewhere. Being too similar is, of course, a threat to the apprompted poem's positive face and its survival, and in particular, an apprompted pastiche runs more of a risk of imitation than the other forms in this set.

An example of a pastiche which risks being too derivative is Kate Marchetto's "Sand Dance: Beginning with a line by Lisa Jarnot from a poem she began with a line by Frank Lima." This poem is an example of a triple reading—an apprompting of an apprompting. This phenomenon will be discussed in depth in chapter 3. Marchetto's poem borrows a line from Jarnot's and twists the line through numerous repetitions and variations. There is very little new material added, and the theme is consumed with mechanically replicating Jarnot's effect.

One of the more interesting pastiches I have collected is Jasper Bernes' "Terminal Oriente: Beginning with a Line by César Vallejo." The opening line is "I don't suffer this pain like César Vallejo," which borrows from Vallejo's poem "I am Going to Talk about Hope" (trans. Bly 1993: 241). In Bly's translation, the line is "I do not feel this suffering as César Vallejo," though Bernes draws closer to the Spanish syntax in Vallejo's "Yo no sufro este dolor como César Vallejo." The line is part of a prose poem and is available in [Appendix C](#).

Translation, as Eliot suggests in his essay on Messer, may serve as a distancing mechanism—allowing a poet to borrow without sounding derivative. Therefore, Bernes' poem begins with an advantage over many other apprompted poems. I have included the text of Bernes' poem below.

There are several structural similarities that Bernes borrows from Vallejo into his poem, and these are highlighted in yellow. He mimics the repetition in Vallejo's poem with "I don't...I don't...Even if...even if..." By using similar sentences, Bernes is preserving the hypothetical observations of Vallejo in a new context. Also, the final portion of the poem, like Vallejo's, focuses on another poor figure with a unique kind of suffering. But Bernes avoids writing the same poem as Vallejo by using the ambiguity in the line for a different meaning. When Vallejo says, "Yo no sufro este dolor como César Vallejo," he means that his suffering is an abstracted form of general, basic human suffering. Bernes, on the other hand, by saying, "I don't suffer this pain like César Vallejo" automatically has a new context because he is not referencing his own pain, but rather that of César Vallejo, and what he says is a twist away from Vallejo's original meaning. Bernes' line differentiates his kind of suffering from Vallejo's, suggesting that no two sufferings are the same. Despite the difference in meaning, Bernes' poem ultimately admires Vallejo's and boosts Vallejo's PF by directing the reader to the original poem. Bernes' poem is an example of a solid apprompted pastiche which manages to survive a comparison between the

two poems because it adds a newness in its variation.

I don't suffer this pain like Cesar Vallejo.

I don't have to get on at Pino Suarez singing
or get off at La Catolica with my voice cracked.

The pain doesn't look like 1916 from a trench
or 1929 from a skyscraper's edge
or the next train the poor kid begged just enough for.

Even if I'd gone to Barcelona
and a god crawled into my ear and died
in 1936, or Paris, and I stayed in LA--chances are
it would still be 3 AM or 4 AM and fierce,
I'd still need a place to suffer like myself
in 10,000 BC, before the zeros,
or a New York City empty for just one hour
where I could build my LA
out of the living graffiti--and even if I get off
at La Catolica, even if I yank the emergency cord
as the doors kiss closed like a hurried wedding, and the boy
is there, or gone, and the doors open, like a divorce,
and his eyes register like dark circuits,
like the sole survivor of my nightmares vice-versa,
there would be something unique, something
unclassifiable in his suffering.

Figure 2. Terminal Oriente: Beginning with a Line by César Vallejo.

Promotion

An prompted promotion requires that the referent be a lesser-known poet or that the quoted line be obscure or obscured (e.g., by being in another language). In an prompted promotion, the action of the poem is to elevate the borrowed text, bringing it to the reader's attention as a worthy text. The promotion performs face-work through (a) boosting the PF for the (4) writer and (b) boosting the PF of the (5) referent. Promotional poems contain fewer FTAs

than most of the other categories because there is less pressure on the PF of the reader to know the referent. There is still the FTA to the reader's NF, imposing on the reader's time to look up the appompted line's context, and some of the source material may be difficult to locate. The inadvertent FTA, unique to the promotional poem, is threat of blowback to the writer's PF. In lifting a line from obscurity or from an inaccessible text, the writer of the apprompted promotion performs a boast: "I have read widely and deeply," or "I read other languages," or "Let me introduce you to this new text." The risk in this inadvertent boast is that in the act of boosting the PF of the original author, the poem will backfire on the writer's own reputation. It is not absolutely necessary that a promotional be promoting an obscure poet, but it is necessary that the quote itself be more obscure. Therefore, the writer of an apprompted promotional may simply be promoting a lesser-known work of a famous writer. A few examples of these can be found in poems which form themselves around an "abandoned" line by a famous poet.

Another inadvertent threat a promotional might perform is by borrowing a non-spectacular line, a line which has no poetic sense of uniqueness—a phrase which might have been spoken by anyone. Rachel Abramowitz runs this risk in her "Poem Beginning with a Line from Jack Gilbert," which starts with "I was carrying supplies back up the mountain." The line carries expositional elements, but it is a line of prose, a beginning to a story anyone might tell. A poem which borrows a very ordinary line performs a threat to (4) the writer's own PF for failing to elevate a deserving line. The original author's NF may also be threatened since the later writer robs the original of autonomy and uniqueness without the mitigation of properly promoting the quoted text.

An example of a clear, functional promotional in this set is Anthony Robinson's "Poem Beginning with a Line from David Shapiro." The opening line is "I never gave up my love of

what I already loved,” which turns out to be from an interview of Shapiro rather than a line from one of his poems. The borrowed line does not deviate much at all from Shapiro’s meaning, but Robinson makes it his own by making the rest of the poem flow from his own speaker. Since the line itself is fairly un-ambiguous, it serves merely as a reference. By quoting, Robinson wants to send the reader to the Shapiro interview. Shapiro’s interview is interesting too, for in it he directly addresses the idea of borrowing and “influence.” Shapiro says, “I think there should be more of the joys of influence than the anxieties of influence.” He then goes on to criticize the male-dominated voices in poetry which seek out influences under competition. Robinson would seem to agree with Shapiro’s view since he writes a poem openly and positively influenced by Shapiro’s interview.

Apprompted promotionals, out of the poems in this set, hold the greatest threats to the reader’s NF. Finding some of these lines is very difficult. I was never able to locate the line “The summer’s broad emptiness dwarfed the invented world” from George Albon’s “Poem Beginning with a Line of Prose / of Robert Glück.” Therefore, the conversation between the two texts was closed to my reading, and Albon’s poem fails to promote the work borrowed from. Likewise, I was unable to find the Frank Lima poem which inspired Lisa Jarnot’s “Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima,” even after soliciting Jarnot directly. Jarnot’s poem, I might add, has received much attention on the internet, prompting an artistic video and even another poem. The popularity of Jarnot’s poem and the inaccessibility of Lima’s generates a strong FTA to the NF of (2) Lima’s text. As long as Lima’s text remains in complete obscurity, Jarnot’s text usurps the originality. But why, then, does Jarnot give Lima the credit? A trusting reader will assume Jarnot is faithful to the Lima poem, but a skeptic who has tried and failed (as I have) to find the original text may feel duped.

A promotional may also suffer when it fails to do justice to the quoted line. This seemed to be the problem with Christopher DeWeese's "Poem Beginning With a Line by Lionel Messi" and Randall Mann's "Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery." Both texts are available in [Appendix C](#). The Lionel Messi poem had quite a lot of potential as the borrowed line was connotatively ambiguous. The line was "It's true I still have a thorn inside me," and was from an [interview](#) with the soccer player. The fuller quote is "It's true I still have a thorn inside me about the final," which should alert a native speaker's ears to the incongruity of the metaphor and the preposition "about." The specific image of "a thorn inside me" seems to reference the Apostle Paul's thorn in the side. However, DeWeese's poem squanders the opportunity of this reference by not borrowing any real thematic material from Messi's truncated line. Instead, it is a sort of incongruous, free-association poem which lessens the potential Pauline weight of Messi's line.

Randall Mann's "Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery" is not terrible. It borrows a very interesting line from an early Ashbery poem in *Some Trees*. The line is "Jealousy. Whispered weather reports," from the poem "Errors." Mann's poem attempts to create a more cohesive and tangible theme for the line involving a serious and bloody secret which remains mysterious, but Mann's poem is not nearly as interesting as Ashbery's [original](#), which is much more linguistically varied—the lines themselves being more mysterious than any theme present.

Apprompted promotions, like the other positive varieties of apprompted poems, can only have a chance of surviving if they provide a worthy context for the borrowed line. If the context is unworthy, the poem threatens the PF of the previous poet (5) and the NF of the previous poem (2).

Ecclesiastic

Apprompted ecclesiastics are fairly easy to recognize. Their attitude is worshipful, and

the referents quoted are often well-known and respected. In more successful poems, the sanctification is less about the referent and more about the language itself. The greatest risk in these poems is the threat to the reader's PF if the referent is not recognized. There may be some small threat to the (4) writer's PF if the reader does not agree with the sentiments or sentimentality of the poem. The ecclesiastic may also threaten the (4) writer's PF if the writer fails to deliver a praise-worthy referent or attempts to elevate a referent who does not deserve elevation in the reader's estimation. In these cases, it may even be possible to misread the ecclesiastic as a satire, if the reader is generous. The ecclesiastic is the most positive apprompted form that can be encountered as it pays, or attempts to pay, the highest compliment possible to another poem—taking it as scripture.

A creative example of the ecclesiastic is Chris Price's "Poem that wanted to begin with a line by Kafka." The poem's title suggests a few things. First, the idea that a poem "wanted to begin" with a line from someone indicates the strength of the prompt in borrowed lines. The line so often seems like a beginning, and the rest of the poem an expansion. Price takes this theme and makes a meta-poem in which it instead ends with Kafka's line "A cage went in search of a bird." The tone of the poem, in ending on Kafka's abstraction, becomes elevated thematically in the form of a parable. The reflective nature of the poem also aids us in identifying the worshipful tone of the ecclesiastic. Of all the speech act categories, ecclesiastics have the most poems which end on the quoted line. The ending position lends itself well to a meditative line. To end on the quoted line also allows for the illusion of originality in the apprompted poem. Until the ending line, a reader may not know if words or themes from the line are borrowed earlier.

Certain ecclesiastics are almost immediately apparent after reading the title. There is little doubt that such poems as "Poem Ending with a Line by Rumi" or "Meditation Ending with a

Line from Celan” or “Invoking a Line by Wallace Stevens” or “Poem with Lines from Rilke’s Elegies” can be anything but a worshipful praise of the quoted poet. To twist any of these lines into a satire would be extremely risky because of the near-universal approval of the poets and because it would be a sharp foiling of expectations for the reader. Since titles serve as topicalizers for poems (They are, after all, the first lines.), readers who do not quickly recognize the drift of a satire might feel they have been duped by the end of such a poem. There is perhaps a kernel of potential in this form of prompted satire—quoting an inconsequential or torrid line from a literary or cultural giant at the end of the poem. There may be readers who would laugh with such a poem, but I have yet to see one published. Hall’s “Poem Beginning with a Line of Wittgenstein” comes the closest to it that I have seen.

Revision

I have saved the prompted revisions for last because they are the most poetically interesting and complex subset in my collection. Easily identified, the prompted revision changes words in the original text. The revision is not only a recasting of the language of the source text but also a recasting of its theme. The poems which best illustrate the act of revision are those which announce themselves as “variations” on a text. By announcing in their titles that they are variants, the poems are immediately more honest than those claiming simply to begin or end with a borrowed line. This honesty helps to mitigate the threat to the referent’s PF. Since, by its nature, a revision attempts a new take or twist on a line, successful revisions emerge as some of the more mature and original poems in the prompted form.

Bloom (1973) uses the term revision to describe the attempt of writers to throw off their literary forefathers, or at least lessen the directness of the influence. He lists six “revisionary ratios”: Clinamen, Tessera, Kenosis, Daemonization, Askesis, and Apophrades. The ratios are

techniques of revision writers might employ to mitigate influence. In plainer terms, these techniques include acts like misreading, curtailing, reacting against the theme of the original, or submitting in apprenticeship to the influencer. Bloom's ratios, if studied, may be useful in categorizing acts of writers, but the acts seem to have a narrow application and are described in difficult terms. I find it more productive to analyze prompted poems in terms of the face-threatening acts they perform in their conversations and specific ways they might mitigate those threats. By seeing an prompted poem as a conversation and the conversants as identities possessing positive and negative face politeness, readers can become more comfortable with confronting a poem as a speech event with rules similar to those of everyday communication.

In this paper, the term revision will simply refer to a textual change that the writer (4) imposes on the original text (2). When a revision is made to the original text, there is an inherent threat to (5) the first author's PF in the change. This threat is more severe if the title does not mitigate it with a declaration that the poem is a "variation." Those that do declare themselves to be variations draw attention to a difference in focus from the original poem. The variation might be seen as an artistic improvement (a strong FTA to the original author) or it might be a sort of admiring extension of the original—offering another version of the poem rather than a replacement of it. However, an prompted poem can never truly be said to vanquish its predecessor. The form and its expression in the titles of prompted poems ensures that they will always rely on the original, and if the prompted poem is well-received, the originals are bound to gain attention as well.

Revisions, especially the variations, hold the greatest potential for success and recognition out of all the prompted poems. For starters, there is more to analyze between the texts. By openly admitting a deviation from language and theme, the reader is invited to closely

examine the new context of the borrowed material. Variations come closer to theft than the other forms do because a theft implies an illicit transfer of ownership. More than the other prompted poems, revisions and variations try to possess the power of the stolen line. A variation places more pressure on the reader to investigate the original text because of the attention to the change.

The most well-known variation poem in my set is Donald Justice’s “Variations on a Text by Vallejo.” I will examine the entirety of Justice’s poem and Vallejo’s original in chapter 3.

The earliest identifiable poems in this set were variations—Browning’s “Variation on Lines of Landor” being the first, followed, more than one hundred years later, by Merwin’s “Variation on a Line by Emerson” in his book *A Mask for Janus*. The next poet to take up the mantle was Donald Justice with “Sestina on Six Words by Weldon Kees.” Merwin’s poem was also a sestina, though Justice’s borrows each of the six ending words. Justice’s poem was a precedent for two later poems in the set—William Virgil Davis’ “Poem with Ending Words Borrowed from Anne Sexton,” and Bill Vartnaw’s daring reversal: “Poem Beginning with a Line from Robert Duncan as its Spine.”

The Vartnaw poem reads simply like an acrostic, and visually separates Duncan’s line from his own text. The result appears as follows:

POEM BEGINNING WITH A LINE FROM ROBERT DUNCAN AS ITS SPINE (DALI)	
<i>apart</i>	from the personal
<i>from</i>	the elephant within us
<i>any</i>	mind only interprets landscape as
<i>commitment</i>	to preservation—
<i>to</i>	the levitating citadel of breath
<i>some</i>	other miraculous power reigns
<i>scale*</i>	of constant creation:
	of bloody sunrise
	from the dark

Figure 3. Poem Beginning with a Line from Robert Duncan as its Spine.

The poem incorporates Duncan's line well, and it is readable without sounding derived. It helps that the borrowed line is more prosaic than poetic. A more poetic line would distract from Vartnaw's text. As it is, Vartnaw saves the interesting words for himself—"the elephant within us" and the "levitating citadel of breath" being the most striking lines. When looking only at Vartnaw's poem, however, the foreign line does not seem to cohere thematically with the text. There is a strong visual divide as well as ambiguity in meaning. This is partly because Duncan's line is, in fact, a phrase, and the phrase begs to be read in its context. Vartnaw goes to some pains to give the source with an asterisk appended revealing the line is "from 'Dantes Etudes.'" Below is the stanza in which we find the quoted line:

Everything speaks to me! In faith
my sight is sound. I draw from out
the resounding mountain side
the gist of majesty. It is at once
a presentation out of space
awakening a spiritual enormity, and still,
the sounding of a tone
apart from any commitment to some scale. (1997: 140)

When Vartnaw's poem is read in the fuller context of Duncan's line, we can read a stronger thematic connection between the texts. Though Vartnaw's poem takes on a darker tone, both poems expound upon the internal effects of nature. The lines "presentation out of space" and "awakening a spiritual enormity" seem to hold their echo in "constant creation" and "the elephant within us." Duncan uses the word "majesty" and Vartnaw uses "reigns" to cultivate a tone of awe and inspiration. In this light, Duncan's line in Vartnaw's text acts as a placeholder

for the rest of Duncan's poem, drawing in the thematic connection between the texts and hinting at the inspiration behind Vartnaw's urge to quote and incorporate Duncan. The major act of Vartnaw's poem is to resurrect Duncan's from its obscurity, a movement in line with the prompted promotions. The pains Vartnaw takes to help the reader locate Duncan's text with the title and the asterisk mitigates the threat of revision to (5) Duncan's PF. This also helps mitigate the FTA to (3) the reader's NF.

William Virgil Davis' poem ends his lines, rather than beginning them, with the ending words of Anne Sexton's poem "The Truth the Dead Know." The effect is similar to Justice's "Sestina on Six Words by Weldon Kees" in that it borrows the word at the end of each line along with the form of the poem. Because Davis borrows from every line of Sexton's poem, each line draws into conversation between the texts. The importance of the final word in a line ensures that the thematic material in both poems will be linked. It also poses a challenge for the prompted poem in which Sexton will literally have the last word. Her ending words, too, are strong and possessed with a certain originality that challenges Davis' creativity. The words "hearse," "iron gate," and especially the final "knucklebone," seem so tied to Sexton's text that it is difficult to picture anyone else usurping them. Of course, for a reader discovering Davis' poem without Sexton's, there is a serious threat to Sexton's PF since there is no linear text to make a search of. The reader would have to have a memory of the Sexton poem in order to find it or be willing to open an anthology and read each poem of hers. The threat to the reader's NF is very strong since, without knowledge of Sexton's work, he may have to scan many poems to find it. Below, the two poems are included for comparison. Davis makes a valiant attempt to steal Sexton's lines. To mitigate the threat to himself from taking from each line, Davis turns the phrases, pausing where Sexton has an enjambment or enjambling lines where Sexton has a pause or full stop. This

can be observed in lines 2, 3, 6, 10, and 12. He also changes the verb “refuse” in the penultimate line to a noun. However, in a few phrases, Davis cannot resist mimicking Sexton’s rhythm. Notably, he follows Sexton’s pattern in line 1 and at the close of stanzas 1 and 2, which end with a short sentence and a full stop. Line 11, the penultimate line in the third stanza, also echoes the rhythm of Sexton’s line by having the same pause and beats. Davis avoids mimicking the turn “My darling” in Sexton’s third stanza, and unfortunately this is where Sexton outpaces Davis. Davis is able to make Sexton’s words feed naturally into his lines, but he is unable to steal the emotive sense of Sexton’s third and fourth stanzas. Davis’ animated sea and stones do not compare well with Sexton’s human touch, and the verb “remember” in line 12 withers next to “kill” in Sexton’s line. When seen alone, Davis’ poem is intriguing and daring for its form, but when placed next to Sexton’s, it suffers thematically. Because Davis borrows so much of Sexton’s form, the poem seems more of an imitation than an independent piece. Of the two, Sexton lays a stronger claim to the language. Her version also contains an epigraph dedicating the poem to her deceased parents, prompting the strong confessional tone. Davis’ poem retains the confessional tone, but it lacks much of the verve of Sexton’s words, especially in the second half of the poem.

The Truth the Dead Know

*For my mother, born March 1902, died March 1959
and my father, born February 1900, died June 1959*

Gone, I say and walk from church,
refusing the stiff procession to the grave,
letting the dead ride alone in the hearse.
It is June. I am tired of being brave.

We drive to the Cape. I cultivate
myself where the sun gutters from the sky,
where the sea swings in like an iron gate
and we touch. In another country people die.

My darling, the wind falls in like stones
from the whitehearted water and when we touch
we enter touch entirely. No one's alone.
Men kill for this, or for as much.

And what of the dead? They lie without shoes
in their stone boats. They are more like stone
than the sea would be if it stopped. They refuse
to be blessed, throat, eye and knucklebone.

Figure 4. The Truth the Dead Know.

Poem with Ending Words
Borrowed from Anne Sexton

When I walked away from the church,
I did it deliberately. From here to the grave
I will not turn back, nor take a hearse
to my own funeral. I'm not being brave.

I walked out alone, deciding to cultivate
my own thoughts under my own gray sky.
Behind me, I can hear the old iron gate
close and clamp shut. One way to die.

The sea never tires of telling the stones
its old story. It speaks by touch,
then turns away again, goes off alone.
When we think back we remember how much

we might have missed. I take my shoes
off and wade into the water. The stones
beneath my feet remind me of the refuse
we fail to see. Bless us dice and knucklebone.

Figure 5. Poem with Ending Words Borrowed from Anne Sexton.

Despite the limitations of taking on Sexton's form and theme, Davis shows a high respect for the art of the prompted poem. In total, I have collected five poems by Davis—all variations on lines from other poems. In "Poem Ending with a Variation on a Line by Charles Wright," Davis revises Wright's line in "Portrait of the Artist with Li Po" from "The distance between the dead and the living / is more than a heartbeat or a breath" to "The distance between the living and the dead / is no more than one heartbeat or one breath." The revision is a fundamental reversal of the original line. The more obvious reversal is the change of "more" to "no more" and "a" to "one," but the reverse that is easy to miss is the switch of "the dead and the living" to "the

living and the dead.” Despite the conjunction “and” which gives an illusion of parallel equality between the items it separates, the exchange of the items is a subtle change in perspective. Wright’s poem approaches from the side of the dead, and Davis’ from the side of the living. The reverse of the line itself illustrates the theme of irretrievability with a paradox. Davis’ line uses the variation on Wright’s line as an echo that furthers the hopeless paradox of his own theme. As for a fuller comparison between the poems, this time Davis succeeds in bringing enough originality for his poem to stand alone. Davis’ lines and images are strong, and when set next to Wright’s, the poems do not truly meet until the final lines, laying down two halves of the same truth. I have included the text of Davis’ poem below, and [Wright’s poem](#) is in Appendix C.

Poem Ending with a Variation on a Line by Charles Wright

Winter, and sleeves of grey bone hang limp in
the wind. The tortured sun has cut its own throat.
This late in this late century nothing is new

or news. We nod off in the early afternoons
and wake, unrested, to icy feet and fevers.
Under their snowy hill, out of the wind at last,

my parents continue to repeat their prayers
in the same ways that we, with our raspy throats,
try to comfort one another. How many days

have disappeared into dark tunnels? How many
times will we come back to empty cupboards
and drained drinks, to landscape like laundry

frozen on a line? In a bare corner of an empty
room an old spider has spun an awkward web.

The distance between the living and the dead

is no more than one heartbeat or one breath.

Figure 6. Poem Ending with a Variation on a Line by Charles Wright.

Another interesting discovery one can make when reading Wright's original poem is that Wright's is also intertextual, borrowing a line from a notebook of Li Po. However, because Wright's poem does not explicitly say in the title that it borrows text, I have omitted it from my data of prompted poems. However, borrowing from another poet who borrows may be considered a strategy of mitigating the threat to (4) one's own NF. If the original poem also suffers from the threat of unoriginality, the threat is somewhat lessened in the second borrowing.

What is apparent in prompted poems which revise their borrowed lines is that the attitude which the new poem brings for the predecessor is not one of hostility but often one of admiration (excepting satires), though if enough of the poem is borrowed (as between the Davis and Sexton poems), this produces a strong FTA to (4) the writer's PF and NF. The attitude prompted poems bring is overwhelmingly positive or respectful if the inherent threats to the faces of the participants are sufficiently mitigated, and if the face-threatening acts are not justified or mitigated, the prompted poem will typically suffer the greatest loss.

In the next chapter, I will analyze prompted poems which quote other prompted poems, further complicating the voices through three layers of reading.

CHAPTER 3

TRIPLE READING

*But the strong dead return, in poems as in our lives, and they do not come back without
darkening...*

—a curtailed line of Harold Bloom (1973: 139)

Introduction

The urge to borrow is a strong one, and one way, perhaps, of justifying a borrowing is to take from one who has already taken. We can see the urge to borrow first in the growing number of published apprompted poems. Secondly, we can compare the similar tendencies of these poems. Finally, there are instances of taking a line from a poet known for taking a line from someone else. W. S. Merwin, Robert Duncan, and Donald Justice are poets who have some of the earliest and most well-known apprompted poems in the set, and each of these poets has had lines borrowed into other poems in the form. Additionally, poets in this form have often borrowed from the same source as other poems in the group. There are several poems which borrow or revise lines of Wallace Stevens (These poems are likely more numerous because of the encouragement from *The Wallace Stevens Journal*), two poets satirize lines from George W. Bush, and César Vallejo is a referent for more than one poem. It is possible that every apprompted poem was inspired primarily by the source text, but because of similar borrowings, it seems probable that several poets are writing to partake in the form of apprompted poems.

In a few instances, apprompted poems are based specifically on other apprompted poems, creating a sort of triple reading. Instead of the typical two readings, one real-time and one past, a third reading might be added. An example from earlier in this paper is that of John Tranter's "[Poem Beginning with a Line from Kenneth Koch](#)" which is followed by "Another Poem

Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch.” In this case, the final poem could be seen as a triple reading off of its two predecessors. This chapter will analyze two other triple appromptings.

Vallejo vs. Justice vs. Phillips

The best example of a triple reading in this set is Patrick Phillip’s reading and quoting of Donald Justice who was reading and quoting César Vallejo. Readers are more likely to have come in contact with Justice’s much-anthologized poem called “Variations on a Text by Vallejo” than they are to have read Phillip’s or Vallejo’s poem first. For the sake of following the most likely scenario, we will begin by looking at Justice’s poem as one might have seen it in a magazine or anthology. (This reasoning does, of course, hint that the order one reads the poems is important, and it is. Readers are likely to have more patience with the first poem read than with the others because of the newness and originality a first reading can give. This is why it is wiser not to publish the original beside the apprompted version despite the ease it would give to readers to have both texts.) Here is Justice’s poem:

Variations on a Text by Vallejo
Me moriré en Paris con aguacero . . .

I will die in Miami in the sun,
On a day when the sun is very bright,
A day like the days I remember, a day like other days,
A day that nobody knows or remembers yet,
And the sun will be bright then on the dark glasses of strangers
And in the eyes of a few friends from my childhood
And of the surviving cousins by the graveside,
While the diggers, standing apart, in the still shade of the palms,
Rest on their shovels, and smoke,
Speaking in Spanish softly, out of respect.

I think it will be on a Sunday like today,
Except that the sun will be out, the rain will have stopped,
And the wind that today made all the little shrubs kneel down;
And I think it will be a Sunday because today,
When I took out this paper and began to write,
Never before had anything looked so blank,

My life, these words, the paper, the gray Sunday;
And my dog, quivering under a table because of the storm,
Looked up at me, not understanding,
And my son read on without speaking, and my wife slept.

Donald Justice is dead. One Sunday the sun came out,
It shone on the bay, it shone on the white buildings,
The cars moved down the street slowly as always, so many,
Some with their headlights on in spite of the sun,
And after a while the diggers with their shovels
Walked back to the graveside through the sunlight,
And one of them put his blade into the earth
To lift a few clods of dirt, the black marl of Miami,
And scattered the dirt, and spat,
Turning away abruptly, out of respect

Justice's poem calls itself "Variations on a Text," so it is not simply the first line that is quoted, though we know that the first line is because he gives us an epigraph of the Spanish "Me moriré en Paris con aguacero ..." which translates to "I will die in Paris in a downpour." In Justice's version, the change he makes is a change to the speaker. He takes on the "I" himself, later saying "Donald Justice is dead." If the reader is familiar with some of Vallejo's poetry, she might note that César Vallejo, at times, refers to himself in the third person in poems. This bit of knowledge can get a reader further into Justice's poem, but the extent of the revision cannot be clear until Vallejo's poem is examined. One might be surprised (as I was) by how much Justice actually borrows. The poems are listed in the following pages with highlighting to show the textual correspondences. Justice's poem reworks Vallejo's text, borrowing the key mysterious elements of Vallejo's poem.

VARIATIONS ON A TEXT BY VALELJO

Me moriré en París con aguacero...

I will die in Miami in the sun,
On a day when the sun is very bright,
A day like the days I remember, a day like other days,
A day that nobody knows or remembers yet,
And the sun will be bright then on the dark glasses of strangers
And in the eyes of a few friends from my childhood
And of the surviving cousins by the graveside,
While the diggers, standing apart, in the still shad of the palms,
Rest on their shovels, and smoke,
Speaking in Spanish softly, out of respect.

I think it will be on a Sunday like today,
Except that the sun will be out, the rain will have stopped,
And the wind that today made all the little shrubs kneel down;
And I think it will be a Sunday because today,
When I took out this paper and began to write,
Never before had anything looked so blank,
My life, these words, the paper, the gray Sunday;
And my dog, quivering under a table because of the storm,
Looked up at me, not understanding,
And my son read on without speaking, and my wife slept.

Donald Justice is dead. One Sunday the sun came out,
It shone on the bay, it shone on the white buildings,
The cars moved down the street slowly as always, so many,
Some with their headlights on in spite of the sun,
And after a while the diggers with their shovels
Walked back to the graveside through the sunlight,
And one of them put his blade into the earth
To lift a few clods of dirt, the black marl of Miami,
And scattered the dirt, and spat,
Turning away abruptly, out of respect.

Figure 7. Variations on a Text by Vallejo.

BLACK STONE LYING ON A **WHITE** STONE

I will die in Paris, on a rainy day,
on some day I can already remember.

I will die in Paris—and I don't step aside—
perhaps on a Thursday, as today is Thursday, in autumn.

It will be a Thursday, because today, Thursday, setting down
these lines, I have put my upper arm bones on
wrong, and never so much as today have I found myself
with all the road ahead of me, alone.

César Vallejo is dead. Everyone beat him,
although he never does anything to them;
they beat him hard with a stick and hard also

with a rope. These are the witnesses:
the Thursdays, and the bones of my arms,
the solitude, and the rain, and the roads...

(Trans. Robert Bly)

Figure 8. Black Stone Lying on a White Stone.

PIEDRA **NEGRA** SOBRE UNA PIEDRA **BLANCA**

Me moriré en París con aguacero,
un día del cual tengo ya el recuerdo.
Me moriré en París —y no me corro—
tal vez un jueves, como es hoy, de otoño.

Jueves será, porque hoy, jueves, que proso
estos versos, los húmeros me he puesto
a la mala y, jamás como hoy, me he vuelto,
con todo mi camino, a verme solo.

César Vallejo ha muerto, le pegaban
todos sin que él les haga nada;
le daban duro con un palo y duro

también con una soga; son testigos
los días jueves y los huesos húmeros,
la soledad, la lluvia, los caminos...

Figure 9. Piedra Negra Sobre una Piedra Blanca.

In fact, Justice borrows four key elements in the same order they are presented in Vallejo's "Black Stone Lying on a White Stone." First, he borrows the opening prediction: "I will die in Miami in the sun," but he adapts the quote to suit his own location and weather. Second, he borrows: "...it will be a Sunday like today because...." In Vallejo's the day is Thursday, but Justice adapts it to, presumably, the weekday of his own writing. Next, there is a reference to writing which is also in Vallejo's, and finally, the declaration: "Donald Justice is dead."

Justice's poem is indeed a variation on Vallejo's text. What he keeps is the emotional movement of the poem minus the details about being beaten and mocked. Justice then adds much of his own material, details about his family, surroundings, and the gravediggers at his grave. He weaves the borrowed lines into his own text smoothly so that only a reader who rereads the Vallejo poem can find the correspondences. Vallejo's poem follows the pattern and impulse of the pastiche, but because he borrows so much and so well, Justice's poem may threaten the reputation of Vallejo's. Borrowing so much, in this case, severely threatens the NF autonomy of the Vallejo poem. The fact that it undergoes translation is also a threat to the original in that Justice more easily gets away with theft.

What is interesting about the relationship between the poems is how reading Justice's changes the reading of Vallejo's. Justice is showing us his reading of Vallejo, and his personal response. Indeed, Justice's poem makes the original richer by prompting a deep textual and thematic conversation. This mitigates some of the threat to (2) Vallejo's text's PF. Justice is stealing Vallejo's poem, but Vallejo's original must still be part of the conversation as it forever haunts Justice's poem.

But the conversation does not end here. Years later, Patrick Phillips wrote “Variation on a Text by Donald Justice” and triggered a third reading. By naming Donald Justice as the referent, Phillips’s title is doing a few things. In the first place, it is attempting to mitigate the enormous threat to Justice’s PF which it performs by essentially rewriting his poem. On the other hand, by edging out Vallejo, Phillips again threatens Vallejo’s NF. Phillips’ poem serves as proof that Justice’s poem has subsumed Vallejo’s in the English-language poetry community. Here is Phillip’s poem:

Variation on a Text by Donald Justice	
<p>I will die in Brooklyn, in January, as snowflakes swarm the streetlamps and whiten the cornices of the sleeping brownstones.</p> <p>It will be a Sunday like today because, just now, when I looked up, it seemed that no one had ever remembered or imagined a thing so beautiful and lonely as the pale blue city.</p> <p>No one will stare up at a light in the window where I write this, as taxis drag their chains over the pavement, as hulking garbage trucks sling salt into the gutters.</p>	<p>Patrick Phillips is dead. In January, in Brooklyn, crowds of people stood on subway platforms watching snowflakes fall through the earth. Yellow traffic lights blinked on and off,</p> <p>and only the old Jamaican pushing a grocery cart piled high with empty cans stopped long enough to raise his paper bag,</p> <p>then took a swig, out of respect, as a Cadillac turned slowly in the slush, and slowly made its way down Fulton.</p>

Figure 10. Variation on a Text by Donald Justice.

What is apparent, after reading Phillips’ poem, is that Phillip read Vallejo’s poem. Not only does he follow Justice’s formula of four major borrowings in the same order, but he also borrows the word “lonely” from Vallejo’s “la solidad.” He uses Vallejo’s certainty in “It will be

a Sunday” instead of Justice’s “I think it will be on a Sunday.” What Phillip borrows from Justice is a scene with cars and the phrase “out of respect.” Phillip has an “old Jamaican” in place of Justice’s Spanish-speaking grave-diggers. The amount of overlapping material in the texts can be visualized more easily in the diagram below.

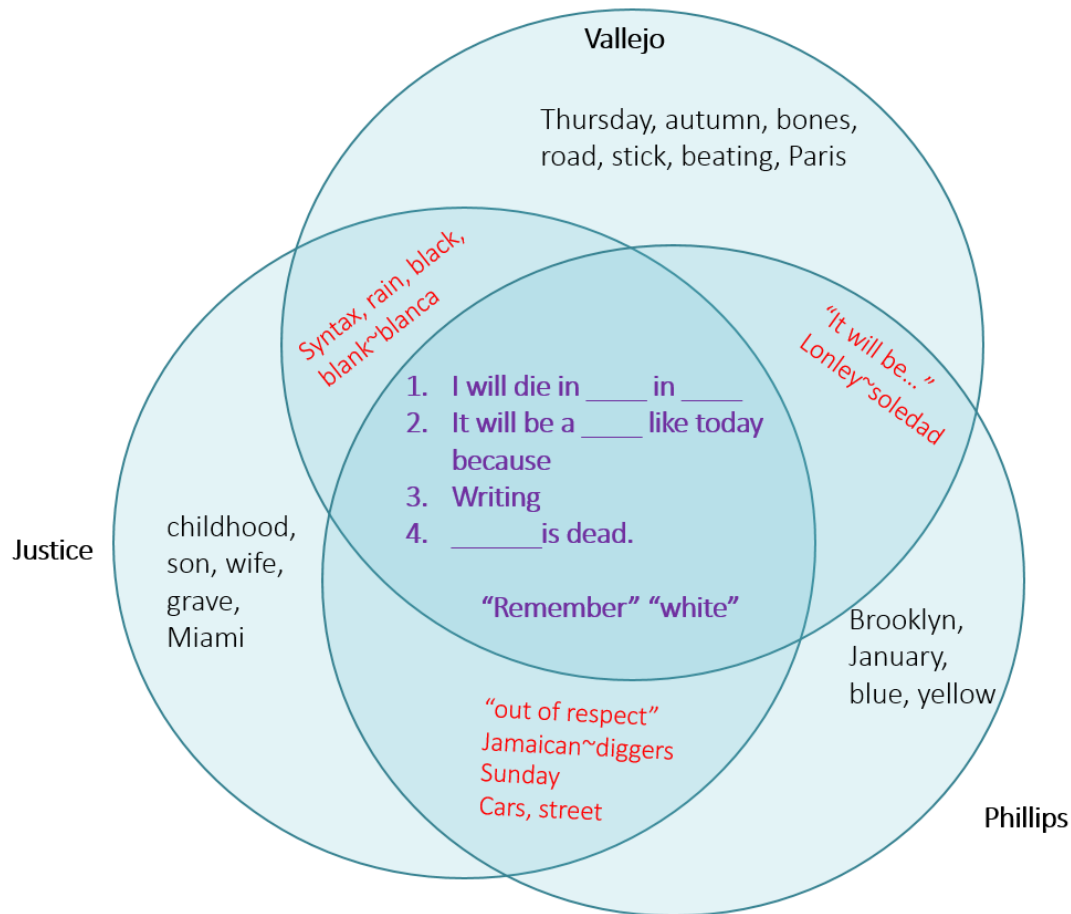


Figure 11. Vallejo vs. Justice vs. Phillips.

In the end, Phillips’ poem performs the greatest threat to its own PF by doubly borrowing from Justice and Vallejo. Unlike Justice, Phillips adds very little thematic material of his own, and the poem appears merely to fill out the formula set by Justice. Phillips is also clumsier with his poem, especially in the colors he includes—blue and yellow. He has the word “whiten” in the first stanza, a nod to Vallejo’s poem, but the absence of the color black as its pair and the

inclusion of other colors lessens the significance of the reference. Unlike Justice, Phillips was unable to make the poem his own.

Lima vs. Jarnot vs. Marchetto

The other obvious triple reading in this set is between Lisa Jarnot's "Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima" and Kate Marchetto's "Poem beginning with a line by Lisa Jarnot from a poem she began with a line by Frank Lima." The supposed Lima line (I say "supposed" because I failed, in spite of much effort, to locate the line from Lima. I later contacted Lisa Jarnot who told me she had heard the line at a reading Lima gave) is "And how terrific it is to write a radio poem." The fact that Lima's poem is inaccessible is, of course, troubling, for in order to know what Jarnot is doing to the line one needs to know the line's original context. In borrowing such an obscure line, Jarnot is performing FTAs to Lima's NF, her own PF, and the reader's NF. Ultimately, one is forced to read the poem as either a promotional or a pastiche. If it were a pastiche, that would mean she is mimicking Lima's form. The fact that Kate Marchetto makes a pastiche of Jarnot's form might lead someone to make that assumption about the action of Jarnot's poem. The two poems and their correspondences can be seen in figures 12 and 13.

Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima

And how terrific it is to write a radio poem
and how terrific it is to stand on the roof and
watch the stars go by and how terrific it is to be
mised inside a hallway, and how terrific it is
to be the hallway as it stands inside the house,
and how terrific it is, shaped like a telephone,
to be filled with scotch and stand out on the street,
and how terrific it is to see the stars inside the radios
and cows, and how terrific the cows are, crossing
at night, in their unjaundiced way and moving
through the moonlight, and how terrific the night is,
purveyor of the bells and distant planets, and how
terrific it is to write this poem as I sleep, to sleep
in distant planets in my mind and cross at night the
cows in hallways riding stars to radios at night, and
how terrific night you are, across the bridges, into
tunnels, into bars, and how terrific it is that you are
this too, the fields of planetary pull, terrific, living
on the Hudson, inside the months of spring, an
underwater crossing for the cows in dreams, terrific,
like the radios, the songs, the poem and the stars.

Figure 12. Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima.

Beginning with a line by Lisa Jarnot from a poem she began with a line by Frank Lima

And how terrific it is to see the stars inside the radios,
how terrible, to read their dials and find pencils,
pens, markers; how terrific it is to write
with the radios' pencils, unsharpened and blended
to make this night; how terrific it is to use the radios' pencils
to draw clouds in the sky, as if they appeared by
the breath of a sheep in a field, the breath of God; how terrific

the field peppered with sheep and sand dunes, the
shadows of the stars etched into their surfaces—
and how terrific it is to see the stars inside the sand.
How terrific the sand, sculpted from the scalloped foam
that edges the sea; and how terrific it is to eat sea scallops
in Boston in May, their jaws pried open—how terrific
their tongues, how terrible their silence—how terrific it
is to eat scallops in silence in Boston in May.

And how terrific it is to sculpt the sand on which the stars are etched,
how terrific the toes that undertake this task, how terrible
their purpose in balancing a step. How terrific it is to step
in sand and step again, reading the poems written
with each of the radios' pencils; how terrible the importance
to these poems of the radio, the sheep, the sand, the scallops, the stars.

Figure 13. Sand Dance.

Interestingly enough, though the Frank Lima poem is absent, his attributed line dominates both Jarnot's and Marchetto's poems, the latter two consumed with variations on the line. Jarnot and Marchetto's poems do little more than ruminate on the rhythms and eccentricities of the line from Lima. This somewhat mitigates the threat to the Lima line, ensuring that his line retains the focus and the credit. Unfortunately, however, because little material is built up in a substantial thematic way in the poems, they appear to be merely fanciful exercises subordinated to Lima's line. Below is a diagram depicting the possible textual relationship of the three poems.

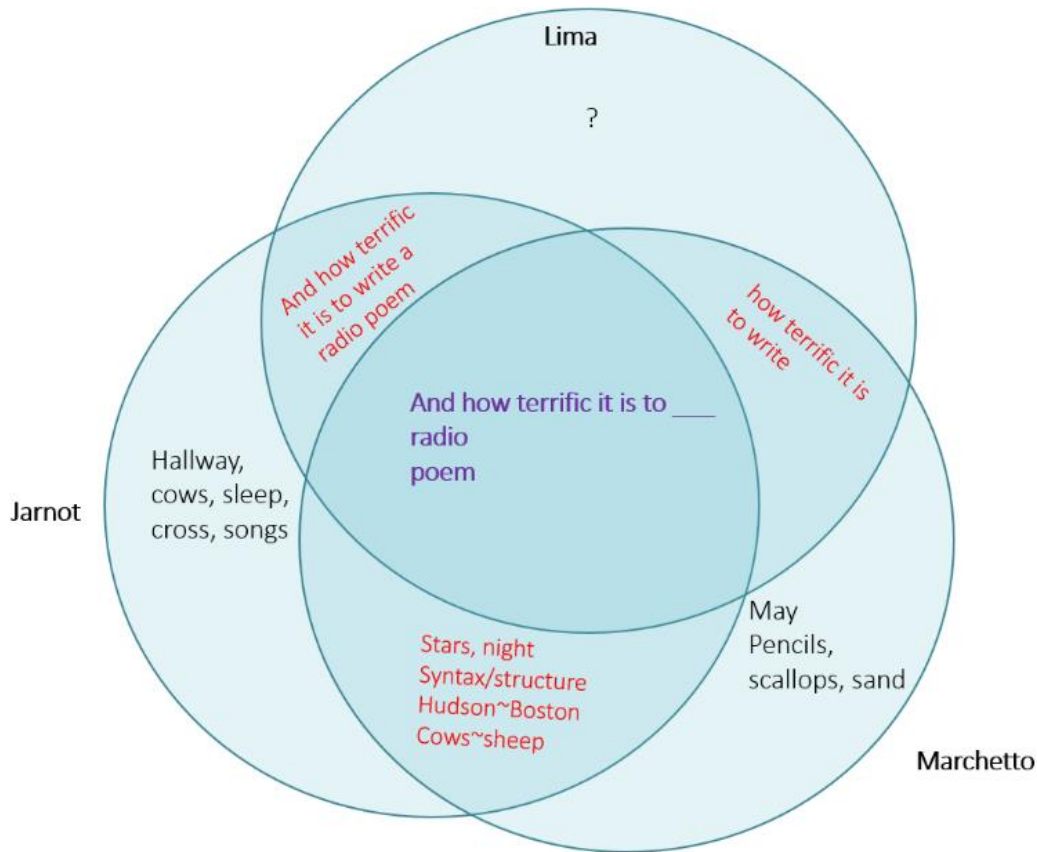


Figure 14. Lima vs. Jarnot vs. Marchetto.

Translations

Though the topic goes somewhat beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to mention that the act of translation may be taken as an individual poetic interpretation, and if a writer quotes a particular translation in an prompted poem, the connection can be considered a triple reading (In the case of Patrick Phillip’s poem, perhaps a quadruple reading). It is at times, however, difficult to know whether a writer is working from her own translation or not. It is likely that Tom Hansen’s “Poem Beginning with Ten Words by Francis Ponge” is working from the Robert Bly translation. George Seferis’ poem “Upon a Line of Foreign Verse” is a poem in Greek, translated by A. E. Stallings, but the poem is prompted from a line in a French poem.

The problem of the interpretations of translations will forever plague poetry critics. In a sense, despite the respect and good-will that a translation seemingly bestows upon its original, a

translation performs a serious FTA to (2) the original text's native identity and NF, but on the other hand, translations can lead a reader to the original and eventually to the almighty question of meaning.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSIONS

I proceed therefore to make approaches near the abyss.

-Harold Bloom (1982: 18)

Overview

This chapter is the close of my arguments regarding the speech event of apprompted poems and the actions that are performed within them. Politeness theory provides a useful tool with which to analyze the various face-threatening acts of apprompted poems—seeing the poems, their readers, antecedents, and authors as participants in simultaneous conversations. It is clear from the popularity of the form, and from the very intertextuality of the poems' titles, that apprompted poems deserve attention as a poetic form and specific speech event. The fact that the writers of apprompted poems are consciously adding their attempts to the form, even borrowing from poems within the form, shows that the form produces irresistible conversations, and that these conversations are part of their complicated artistry. The popularity of the form and its beginnings in the work of well-known poets assures us that it is not because they are easy that apprompted poems keep being written and published. It is because they are interesting. They are complex in the lies they tell us and the quick assumptions they ask readers to make on their behalf. The extra work necessary to read them is part of their artistry, and they even have the power to influence the past through misreading.

Revisiting Miller

I return to the question of whether or not apprompted poems are parasitic in nature. The truth is that the metaphor is apt in some ways. By using a well-known and respected referent in the title, apprompted poems can be seen as seeking legitimation, or, in terms of the metaphor,

they seek to feed off of the attention garnered by promising a version of a line from a well-known poet. Additionally, by wedding themselves to the referent in the title and asking a reader to locate the original text, apprompted poems ensure that they will not survive without the other text.

However, the parasite metaphor dissolves past this point. Simply because a text is the inspiration for an apprompted poem does not mean that it alone sustains the progeny. Indeed, there is always the potential that the apprompted poem will improve the theme or context of the quoted line. In such cases, it is perhaps easier to borrow from a contemporary poet—boosting the original’s PF and readership through the link. In fact, the original may, in turn, feed off of its apprompted counterpart.

Revisiting Eliot

I now return to Eliot’s intuitions about how mature and immature poets borrow. When Eliot claims that “immature poets imitate” and “mature poets steal,” he argues that the burden of creation is on the borrowing poet to bring new material for a reader. On a fundamental level, Eliot’s logic is sound. Since in apprompted poems the reader is directed to the source, the writer must be prepared for a comparison. This means that the writer must feel her work is worthy to be held up to the original when she writes an apprompted poem. If the apprompted poem suffers next to the original, it has “defaced” what it has taken.

In addition to separating the chaff of the immature poets from the wheat of the mature poets, Eliot makes a suggestion for “good poets” who borrow. He says that good poets take from “authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.” The reason that a poet would seek distance from what she is borrowing seems completely logical since a language or time barrier better insures her poem will be read first and attain a form of the firstborn advantage

in a reader's mind. However, this tactic is double-edged. In an apprompted poem, for a reader to not recognize a title's referent is a threat to the PF of the reader. Apprompted poems benefit in readership by using well-known, recognizable referents, and when the referent is well-known, the apprompted poem is in danger of falling short of the original. What Eliot overlooks and what many writers of apprompted poems have found is that there are benefits to borrowing from someone near in time. When a poet borrows from a contemporary in the reading community, the association can benefit them both and generate curiosity in the rest of the community.

Last Remarks

Though most of the acts of apprompted poems (promotion, pastiche, ecclesiastic) are positive in their stance toward the original material, they still perform certain face-threatening acts to be mitigated in their text. Like giving a compliment or saying thanks, apprompted poems, by their nature, must involve face-work. Poems, and especially apprompted poems ought to be seen as an interactive form of communication, a speech event. Apprompted poems, more than other forms of poetry seek to engage directly in conversation with multiple participants, and the ensuing threats they issue provide a fertile ground for linguistic analysis.

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APPENDIX A
APPROMPTED POEM TITLES

Variation on Lines of Landor	1861
Variation on a Line by Emerson	1952
Sestina on Six Words by Weldon Kees	1957
A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar	1960
Variations on a Text by Vallejo	1973
Variation on a Line by Stevens	1975
(after a phrase by Laurie Duggan)	1977
(beginning with a line by David Malouf)	
Poem Beginning with a Line of Wittgenstein	1979
variation on a Line from Merwin	1988
Variation on a line by Horst Bienek	1989
After a Phrase Abandoned by Wallace Stevens	1993
Poem Ending with a Line from Dante	
Poem Beginning with a Line by Pound	
Poem Beginning with Ten Words by Francis Ponge	1994
Beginning & Ending with Lines from Christina Rossetti	1995
Terminal Oriente: Beginning with a Line by Cesar Vallejo	1998
Poem Beginning with a Line by Roberto Juarroz	
A Poem Beginning With A Line By Seal Scholars	1999
Beginning with a Line from Michelangelo	2000
After a Line Abandoned by Chris Wallace-Crabbe	
Poem Beginning with a Line of J. M. Synge	
Poem Ending with a Variation on a Line by Charles Wright	2001
Poem Ending with a Line by Su Tung-Po	
Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima	
Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery	2002
A Poem Beginning with a Line from Pound to Joyce 7/7/18	
Poem Beginning with a Line from Frost	
A Poem with Lines from Elytis' Eros, Eros, Eros	2003
Poem Beginning with a Line from David Shapiro	
Poem Beginning With a Line by George W. Bush	2004
Poem Beginning with a Line by Purina, Ending with a Line by Balanchine	
Beginning with a Line from NPR	2005
Poem Beginning with a line by Stanley Moss	
Poem Beginning with a Line of Prose	

Poem Ending with a Line by George W. Bush	2006
Poem Ending With a Line by Rumi	
Meditation Ending With a Line from Celan	
Poem Beginning With a Line Overheard In the Gym	
Sonnet Beginning with a Line from Ted Berrigan	
Poem with a phrase out of Dickens	
Sonnet beginning with a line by Sir John Davies	
Beginning with a Line from John Berryman	
Poem Ending With Three Lines From 'Home on the Range'	
Sestina with Two Lines by Charles Tomlinson	
Poem Beginning with a Line from Tranströmer	2007
With a Line from Millay	
Poem Ending with a Line by Rilke	
Sonnet Ending on a Line by Stevens	
Poem With Lines from Rilke's Elegies	
Sonnet beginning with a line and a half abandoned by Dante Gabriel Rossetti	
Poem Beginning with a Line from a Movie	2008
Ending with a Line from "Sir Patrick Spens"	
Long Lines , Beginning with a Line Spoken in a Dream	
Beginning with Two Lines by Stesichorus	
Beginning with Two Lines from Rexroth	
Poem Beginning With a Line by Dana Ward	
Poem Ending with a Line from the Pharaohs	2009
Sonnet Ending with a Line by Miles	
Almost Ending with a Line from Wang Wei	
Beginning with a Last Line by James Wright	
Poem Beginning and Ending with a Variation of a Line by Geoffrey Hill	
Poem Beginning with a Line Spoken , I Am Told, in My Sleep	
Poem Ending with a Line by Curtis Mayfield	
Prairie Poem with Lines from Emily Dickinson	
Poem that wanted to begin with a line by Kafka	
Beginning with a Variation on a Line by Ko Un	
	After a Line by George Hitchcock
On a Line by W.H. Auden	
Poem Beginning with a Line of Andrew Crozier	2010

After a Line by Ted Berrigan

poem beginning with a line by ts eliot who was alluding to king lear I am pretty sure

Variations on a Text by Donald Justice

Beginning with a Line Abandoned in a Notebook of Wallace Stevens'

Poem Starting with a Line from Norman Dubie

Variation on Lines from Oppen

Poem Beginning with a Line by Milosz

2011

Poem With Variation On A Line From Saturday Night Fever

Poem Beginning with a Line from Linda Lee Harper & Ending with a Line from Robert Creeley

Poem Beginning with a Line from C. K. Williams

Poem Beginning with a Line from Jack Gilbert

Poem with Ending Words Borrowed from Anne Sexton

poem beginning with a line from Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues"

Poem Beginning with a Line by My Daughter, Abigail

Poem Beginning with a Line by Ikkyu

2012

Poem Beginning with a Line from a Yoko Ono Installation

After a Line of Neruda

Beginning with Lines from Zbigniew Herbert

Poem Beginning with a Line from Grammar Gurton's Needle

Montage Ending With a Line from Tu Fu

Poem Beginning and Ending with a Line by Adonis

Poem Beginning With a Line by Bunting

Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch

Another Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch

Poem Beginning with a Line by Philip Lamantia

Beginning with a line by Lisa Jarnot from a poem she began with a line by Frank Lima

Poem Beginning With a Line by Lionel Messi

Poem Beginning with a Line from Eugenio Montale

2013

Variation on a Line by Stevens

Poem with Lines from Pierre Reverdy

Poem Beginning with a Line by Traherne

Poem Beginning with a Line by Christopher Smart

A Car Poem Beginning with a Line from Adam Clay

Poem Ending with a Sentence by Heath Ledger

sonnenizio based on a first line by Molly Peacock

Poem Beginning with a Line from Robert Duncan as its Spine (Dali)

Poem Beginning with a line by Charles Simic

2014

Variation on a Line by Wallace Stevens

Poem Beginning with a Line Stolen from Richard Siken

APPENDIX B
SPEECH EVENT CATEGORIES

Satire

(After a phrase by Laurie Duggan)

Poem Beginning with a Line of Wittgenstein

A Poem Beginning with a Line by Seal Scholars

After a Line Abandoned by Chris Wallace-Crabbe

Poem Beginning with a Line by George W. Bush

Poem Ending with a Line by George W. Bush

Poem Beginning with a Line Overheard in the Gym

Beginning with a Line from John Berryman

Poem Ending with Three Lines from 'Home on the Range'

With a Line from Millay

poem beginning with a line by ts eliot who was alluding to king lear I am pretty sure

Poem Beginning with a Line from a Yoko Ono Installation

Poem Beginning with a Line by Christopher Smart

Pastiche

Terminal Oriente: Beginning with a Line by Cesar Vallejo

Sonnet Beginning with a Line by Sir John Davies

Sonnet Ending on a Line by Stevens

Beginning with Two Lines by Stesichorus

Poem Beginning with a Line from Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues"

Poem Beginning with a Line by my Daughter, Abigail

Poem Beginning with a Line from Gammer Gurton's Needle

Poem Beginning with a Line by Bunting

Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch

Another Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch

Beginning with a line by Lisa Jarnot from a poem she began with a line by Frank Lima

Promotion

(beginning with a line by David Malouf)

Poem Beginning with Ten Words by Francis Ponge

Beginning and Ending with Lines from Christina Rossetti

Beginning with a Line from Michelangelo

Poem Beginning with a Line of J.M. Synge

Poem Beginning with a Line by Frank Lima

Nuances of a Line by Stevens

Poem Beginning with a Line from David Shapiro

Poem Beginning with a Line of Prose

On a Line by John Crowe Ransom
Poem with a Phrase out of Dickens
Beginning with Two Lines from Rexroth
Prairie Poem with Lines from Emily Dickinson
Poem Beginning and Ending with a Line by Adonis
Poem Beginning with a Line by Lionel Messi
Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery
After a phrase Abandoned by Wallace Stevens
Beginning with a Line from NPR
Poem Beginning with a Line by Stanley Moss
Sonnet Beginning with a Line from Ted Berrigan
Poem Beginning with a Line from Tranströmer
Sonnet Beginning with a Line and a Half Abandoned by Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Beginning with a Last Line by James Wright
Poem Beginning with a Line Abandoned in a Notebook of Wallace Stevens
Poem Beginning with a Line from Jack Gilbert
Poem Beginning with a Line from Eugenio Montale

Ecclesiastic

A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar
Poem Ending with a Line from Dante
Poem Beginning with a Line by Roberto Juarroz
Poem Ending with a Line by Su Tung-Po
A Poem Beginning with a Line from Pound to Joyce 7/7/18
Poem Beginning with a Line from Frost
Invoking a Line by Wallace Stevens
Poem Ending with a Line by Rumi
Meditation Ending with a Line from Celan
Poem Ending with a Line by Rilke
Poem with Lines from Rilke's Elegies
Poem Beginning with a Line from a Movie
Ending with a Line from "Sir Patrick Spens"
Poem Ending with a Line from the Pharaohs
Sonnet Ending with a Line by Miles
Almost Ending with a Line from Wang Wei
Poem that Wanted to Begin with a Line by Kafka
On a Line by W.H. Auden
After a Line by Ted Berrigan
Poem Beginning with a Line by Ikkyu
Montage Ending with a Line from Tu Fu
Poem Beginning with a Line by Philip Lamantia

Poem Beginning with a Line by Traherne
A Car Poem Beginning with a Line from Adam Clay
Poem Ending with a Sentence by Heath Ledger

Revision

Variations on Lines of Landor
Variation on a Line by Emerson
Sestina on Six Words by Weldon Kees
Variations on a Text by Vallejo
Poem Beginning with a Line by Cavafy
Variation on a Line from Merwin
Variation on a Line by Horst Bienek
Poem Beginning with a Line by Pound
Poem Ending with a Variation on a Line by Charles Wright
Poem Beginning with a Line by Purina, Ending with a Line by Balanchine
Upon a Line of Foreign Verse
Sestina on Two Lines by Charles Tomlinson
Beginning with a Variation on a Line by Ko Un
Variations on a Text by Donald Justice
Poem with a Variation on a Line from Saturday Night Fever
Poem Beginning with a line from Linda Lee Harper and Ending with a Line from Robert Creeley
Poem Beginning with a Line from C.K. Williams
Poem with Ending Words Borrowed from Anne Sexton
After a Line of Neruda
Variation on a Line by Stevens
Poem Beginning with a Line from Robert Duncan as its Spine
Variation on a Line by Stevens
Poem Beginning with a Line Stolen from Richard Siken
Variation on a Line by Stevens

APPENDIX C
APPROMPTED POEM TEXTS FOR REFERENCE

Poem Ending with a Line by George W. Bush

The screening of the film on genocide,
Designed to build momentum for the final
Lecture at the festival of human rights,
Was marred by the projectionist's refusal
To dim the lights in the auditorium.
We looked around, confused, until someone quoted
The president: *There's no cave deep enough
For America, or dark enough to hide.*

Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch

This Connecticut landscape would have pleased Vermeer:
The pearly light that photographs the town,
The autumn blessing and the bitter cheer
of winter close behind, with frosty crown.
The weekender lies abandoned for the week,
the den and sunroom vacant. On a couch,
the New Yorker open at a page that speaks
of Aquascutum, Harris Tweed and scotch.

O Aquascutum, shield me from the blast,
And Harris Tweed, protect me from the cold.
As for scotch, let's leave it till the last
To warm my aching bones as I grow old.
Vermeer, to please his mistress, heard her sighs,
And painted pretty landscapes full of lies.

Another Poem Beginning with a Line by Kenneth Koch

This Connecticut landscape would have pleased Vermeer —
The trash, the pickup truck, the cans of beer —
If only Vermeer hadn't been such a shit.
Oh well, it's hard for an artist to paint a hit —
To make the cut, to climb the greasy grade,
To make a real impression on the trade —
It's really hard, when you're totally pissed.
It isn't easy, when you've slit your wrist.

So fuck Connecticut and fuck Vermeer —
Who is this Dutchman with his can of cheer?
I'd rather look at Guston, or some Pollocks —
Who cares if the theory's mostly bollocks?

The landscape is really just a frame
For something that just sat there all the same.

VOY A HABLAR DE LA ESPERANZA

Yo no sufro este dolor como César Vallejo. Yo no me duelo ahora como artista, como hombre ni como simple ser vivo siquiera. Yo no sufro este dolor como católico, como mahometano ni como ateo. Hoy sufro solamente. Si no me llamase César Vallejo, también sufriría este mismo dolor. Si no fuese artista, también lo sufriría. Si no fuese católico, ateo ni mahometano, también lo sufriría. Hoy sufro desde más abajo. Hoy sufro solamente.

Me duelo ahora sin explicaciones. Mi dolor es tan hondo, que no tuvo ya causa ni carece de causa. ¿Qué sería su causa? ¿Dónde está aquello tan importante, que dejase de ser su causa? Nada es su causa; nada ha podido dejar de ser su causa. ¿A qué ha nacido este dolor, por sí mismo? Mi dolor es del viento del norte y del viento del sur, como esos huevos neutros que algunas aves raras ponen del viento. Si hubiera muerto mi novia, mi dolor sería igual. Si me hubieran cortado el cuello de raíz, mi dolor sería igual. Si la vida fuese, en fin, de otro modo, mi dolor sería igual. Hoy sufro desde más arriba. Hoy sufro solamente.

Miro el dolor del hambriento y veo que su hambre anda tan lejos de mi sufrimiento, que de quedarme ayuno hasta morir, saldría siempre de mi tumba una brizna de yerba al menos. ¡Lo mismo el enamorado! ¡Qué sangre la suya más engendrada, para la mía sin fuente ni consumo!

I AM GOING TO TALK ABOUT HOPE

I do not feel this suffering as César Vallejo. I am not suffering now as a creative person, or as a man, nor even as a simple living being. I don't feel this pain as a Catholic, or as a Mohammedan, or as an atheist. Today I am simply in pain. If my name weren't César Vallejo, I'd still feel it. If I weren't an artist, I'd still feel it. If I weren't a man, or even a living being, I'd still feel it. If I weren't a Catholic, or an atheist, or a Mohammedan, I'd still feel it. Today I am in pain from further down. Today I am simply in pain.

The pain I have has no explanations. My pain is so deep that it never had a cause, and has no need of a cause. What could its cause have been? Where is that thing so important that it stopped being its cause? Its cause is nothing, and nothing could have stopped being its cause. Why has this pain been born all on its own? My pain comes from the north wind and from the south wind, like those hermaphrodite eggs that some rare birds lay conceived of the wind. If my bride were dead, my suffering would still be the same. If they had slashed my throat all the way through, my suffering would still be the same. If life, in other words, were different, my suffering would still be the same. Today I'm in pain from higher up. Today I am simply in pain.

I look at the hungry man's pain, and I see that his hunger walks somewhere so far from my pain that if I fasted until death, one blade of grass at least would always sprout from my grave. And the same with the lover! His blood is too fertile for mine, which has no source and no one to drink it.

POEM BEGINNING WITH A LINE BY LIONEL MESSI

It's true I still have a thorn inside me,
a little personal weather.
Pace blossoms when I am running.
Districts unfold cement picnics
and spells for athletics
between the arable suburbs.

My calories propagate them
like strange, tiny stars.
I close my eyes.
I cry "Oh cryptic murmurs
listing within my Doppler!"
I slow down, find a great hotel
for my wind to get wasted in.
I go poolside
and ash there a while.
My friend, when it comes to the sweaters,
you are not the wool:
you are the insane gigantic bear design.
I will think of you if I ever see a bear.
I mean, whenever.

Poem Beginning with a Line by John Ashbery

Jealousy. Whispered weather reports.
The lure of the land so strong it prompts
gossip: we chatter like small birds
at the edge of the ocean gray, foaming.

Now sand under sand hides
the buried world, the one in which our fathers failed,
the palm frond a dangerous truth
they once believed, and touched. Bloodied their hands.

They once believed. And, touched, bloodied their hands;
the palm frond, a dangerous truth;
the buried world, the one in which our fathers failed.
Now sand under sand hides

at the edge of the ocean: gray, foaming
gossip. We chatter like small birds,
the lure of the land so strong it prompts
jealousy. Whispered weather reports.

Errors

Jealousy. Whispered weather reports.
In the street we found boxes
Littered with snow, to burn at home.
What flower tolling on the waters
You stupefied me. We waxed,

Carnivores, late and alight
In the beaded winter. All was ominous, luminous.
Beyond the bed's veils the white walls danced
Some violent compunction. Promises,
We thought then of your dry portals,
Bright cornices of eavesdropping palaces,
You were painfully stitched to hours
The moon now tears up, scoffing at the unrinsed portions.
And loves adopted realm. Flees to water,
The coach dissolving in mists.

A wish

Refines the lines around the mouth
At these ten-year intervals. It fumed
Clear air of wars. It desired
Excess of core in all things. From all things sucked
A glossy denial. But look, pale day:
We fly hence. To return if sketched
In the prophet's silence. Who doubts it is true?

Portrait of the Artist *with Li Po*

The "high heavenly priest of the White Lake" is now
A small mound in an endless plain of grass,
His pendants clicking and pearls shading his eyes.
He never said anything about the life after death,
Whose body is clothed in a blue rust and the smoke of dew.

He liked flowers and water most.
Everyone knows the true story of how he would write his verses and
float them,
Like paper boats, downstream
just to watch them drift away.
Death never entered his poems, but rowed, with its hair down, far out
on the lake,
Laughing and looking up at the sky.

Over a thousand years later, I write out one of his lines in a notebook,
The peach blossom follows the moving water,
And watch the October darkness gather against the hills.
All night long the river of heaven will move westward while no one
notices.
The distance between the dead and the living
is more than a heartbeat and a breath.

Poem that wanted to begin with a line by Kafka
By Chris Price

If David Beach is right, and
a poem is an opening line
plus work, then how to work
up *this* opening line when it has
already done the hard slog for you,
like the husband working on his
martyrdom who presents you
with dinner in a spotless house,
and on top of that flowers,
this last—a semaphore that says,
with L'Oréal, *you're worth it*—
only adding to the burden of debt
and cancelling anything you might bring
to the table before it's been set down?
And so you fall towards the bottom
line instead—to find he has arrived
before you, and had the last word.
A cage went in search of a bird.

APPENDIX D
APPROMPTED POEM BIBLIOGRAPHY

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