REALIZING THE UTOPIAN LONGING OF EXPERIMENTAL POETRY

by Justin Katko
REEL EYE SING
THO YOU DOH PEON
LAWN INC O V.EXPER(T?)
I MEANT ALL POET RE:
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ABSTRACT

Capitalist social structure obstructs the potentials of radical subjectivities by over-determining life as a hierarchy of discrete labors. Structural analyses of grammatical syntax reveal the reproduction of capitalist social structure within linguistic structure. Consider how the struggle of articulation is the struggle to make language work.* Assuming an analog mesh between social and docu-textual structures, certain experimental poetries can be read as fractal imaginations of anarcho-Marxist utopianism in their fierce disruption of linguistic convention. An experimental poetry of radical political efficacy must be instantiated by and within micro-social structures negotiated by practically critical attentions to the material conditions of the social web that upholds the writing, starting with writing’s primary dispersion into the social—publishing. There are recent historical moments where such demands were being put into practice. This is a critical supplement to the first issue of Plantarchy, a hand-bound journal of contemporary experimental poetry by American, British, and Canadian practitioners.

* Language work you.
...as an object of hatred, as the personification of Capital, as the font of the Spectacle.

Ben Watson
“The SI Bootsale: The Betrayal of Lettriste Poetics & Proletarian Politics by the Popsicle Academy”

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The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to statements uttered.

Michel de Certeau
*The Practice of Everyday Life*
Hyper-abject comedy-knees chip thru th back a yr head. In terms of relevancy-as-implying clearly visible script. Author’s black-outs’re surely irrelevant if it’s the Author’s Intention we’re after. After all. And for a discussion of what William R. Howe calls “implied relevancy”, TURN TO THE THIRD AND FINAL CHAPTER NOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
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Plantarchy
INTRODUCTION

Realizing the Utopian Longing of Experimental Poetry is to be read as a critical supplement to the first issue of Plantarchy, a journal of poetry and poetics with work by American, British, and Canadian practitioners, published in a hand-sewn edition of 300. It has been financially supported by various departments at Miami University. Copies may be requested by visiting the website or writing to the address in the inside front cover of this edition. However, its attachment at the end of this document means that it has been removed from its original published version as a bound volume unto itself, normalized to meet the needs of the digital medium. I have used scans of the front and back covers of an assembled copy as a way to frame the digitized version within what Jerome McGann calls its “initial production” in Social Values and Poetic Acts (1988).¹

What is the site of Plantarchy’s initial production? When the finished InDesign file was exported to PDF? When the PDF was printed in my living room? When the pages were collated by a group of my friends at a work-party? When they were bound and taped in my kitchen? When they were trimmed by a guillotine in the garage-based print-shop of local poetry publishers Slack Buddha Press?

A lot of what this text deals with is particular avant-garde movements and the ways in which they can be situated on a theory<—>practice continuum that discourse shifts tectonically beneath them. This discourse itself is a theoretical practice employed as a means of searching for ideal modes of practice. A praxis: the meshing of theory and practice into a unified field of action. The text’s major aim is to account for the radical politics bound up in samizdat editions of experimental poetry, the implicit aesthetics of their materialist politics and the politics of their materialist aesthetics. The field of concern is poetry on the printed page, and the politics are dogmatically Marxist, if only because such a readily available theoretical means cuts to the quick as a complete language of critique, efficacious as an engine for keeping a material practice on the go.

What’s at stake here is reading politics into cultural productions. And it’s generally not the subject of these productions that is under consideration, but rather their object—their status as historical artifacts and the contemporary subjectivities engendered by engagements with the particularities of their object-status. Commodity status. Anti-commodity status. Politico-economic valuation. A psychogeography of the book-as-environment. The objects of everyday social existence, the objects of aesthetic linguistic production, the objects of poetry publications: the conflation of these terms and the swarm-systems of which their social dispersions are part and parcel. Central to this conflation is a term used in the third and final chapter—fractal imagination—to describe how utopian images of universal patterns are read into conditionally local fields of material organization.
Using the formal means of one medium to project a complex system of desires onto a disparate and discrete field. This text performs a dialectical (projective) leap between chapters one and two, and this leap is to be motored by Michel de Certeau’s metaphor quoted previously as the second of the text’s epigraphs. The first epigraph alludes to this metaphor as well—i.e. the Spectacle’s “font”—but is chosen to perform a more polemic function.

Chapter one lays down foundational political concerns. These concerns are largely informed by the critical writing of the Situationists, whose work is established on a Marxist belief structure with all the requisite circular logics and prophecies of future harmony. Situationist theory is fractal, such that a fragment contains the total cosmology, while a sequence of fragments amplifies the total saturation of each fragment in the others. The Situationist posture is not negative even if their aesthetics are, but rather constructive, offering historical visions and histories of temporary enactments of an alternative to capitalist democracy via a collaboratively-negotiated anarcho-Marxism. While this writing is partisan in its employment of Situationist ideology, the SI’s theorizing of the total reorganization of social life as a function of collective spontaneous creativity is a thesis deserving contemporary application, if only because of its complete and utter irreverence for (or irrelevance to) discretion of any kind.² It is important to give this critique its own chapter because of the extent to which it underwrites the poli-aesthetics of the practitioners whom I discuss in chapters two and three.

Chapter two shows how the Situationist critique of Western capitalist societies has been furthered by a number of American poets—roughly aligned under the banner of Language poetry—who’ve employed language both as object and subject of their social critique. Linguistic structure as fractal laboratory for the Revolution; linguistic structure as actual platform of Revolution’s ignition. The reason for emphasizing Language poetics as a discrete school of thought is the quantity of critical writing they’ve produced. Consonant contemporaneous critiques have been leveled by poets in Canada and the United Kingdom—a select portion of the latter being the subject of chapter three—but Language is a necessary theoretical landmark as it were, in much the same way that the sheer quantity of Situationist prose makes the SI an unavoidable (though admittedly totalizing, as with Language) point of entry. And to give a negative context to the ideological work of the Language poets, I’ve conducted a basic overview of the conventional knowledge of linguistic structure as distributed by grade-school and college-level grammar textbooks.

Chapter three multiplies the social critique by the linguistic critique towards making vague claims as to how a radically efficacious writing practice might be dispersed into the social body via publication. One way would be the slow infiltration of state-funded cultural institutions. While such infiltration was for the Language Poets an eventually clean and academic success, a range of London-
based poets associated with an ideological battle for the grounds and resources of England’s National Poetry Centre serve as an historical example of how an anarcho-Marxist micro-community engages in “organizing a space”³ constellated by intimate relations of free power between humans and machines employed for cultural productions. The call for principally unprincipled subjectivities as grounding the construction of poetic and social structures will serve as a resounding beep that ties up the loose ends by clanging shut the mechanical door.

I must lastly make brief mention of Dreamtime Village,⁴ an artist-run anarchist community where I spent the summer of 2005 as a media/book-making intern, working specifically on projects for the small experimental poetry press Xexoxial Editions, as edited by mIEKAL aND. Dreamtime is located in Wisconsin, two hours west of Madison, in the upper driftless bio-region, a hilly unglaciated farm-land whose rural composition is Amish communities, dairy farms, an organic farming network, and a small community of anarchists occupying the majority of the buildings in the mostly-abandoned farming town of West Lima—the post office and the schoolhouse to name a few. The space behind the schoolhouse is an intricate vast permaculture garden and found-sculpture park. The Village is itself a kind of dream, a jungle of the cultural traces of a short but intense private history of free constructive community play. Every wall hand-painted, the past hanging spoken and unspoken in the air. Dreamtime is the 90s sequel to the Madison-based Church of Anarchy, which in the 80s was an experiment in urban gardening, publishing, and sidewalk performance art. It was at Dreamtime that I made many of the contacts that comprise the contributors to Plantarchy, not to mention my first prolonged experience in book-making and getting a poetry press up and running. My experiences there will be the subject of future writing.

Gardens in the morning, collecting water in jugs from a pipe coming out of the bottom of a hill, type-setting and designing Peter Lamborn Wilson’s Gothick Institutions (Xexoxial Editions, 2005), making my work and sending it out to magazines, shooting video, building web-sites, trapping raccoons, having parties, making plans, playing music, going to Wal-Mart, taking kids to school and entertaining visitors, this was all field experience in an attempt at a hyper-rural Situationism, jacked into the experimental publishing network day-and-night through the mail and the internet. Dreamtime Village is given fuller mention in Peter Lamborn Wilson and Bill Weinberg’s Avant Gardening (Autonomedia; 1999). It remains a unique niche in the historical constellation of radical occupations of space.
When civil society is in a state of unimpeded activity, it is engaged in expanding internally in population and industry. The amassing of wealth is intensified by generalizing (a) the linkage of men by their needs, and (b) the methods of preparing and distributing the means to satisfy these needs, because it is from this double process of generalization that the largest profits are derived. That is one side of the picture. The other is the subdivision and restriction of particular jobs. This results in the dependence and distress of the class tied to the work of that sort, and these again entail inability to feel and enjoy the broader freedoms and especially the intellectual benefits of society.¹

Legal relations as well as forms of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life...the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy...The mode of material production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.²

Comfort will never be comfortable enough for those who seek what is not on the market, what in fact the market specifically eliminates.³

Capitalism is the problem. Or rather, Capitalism produces the problems only to consume them, in the end as in the beginning: more shit produced, same shit consumed. The Ouroboros lies gorged on the digestion of itself. But progressing or regressing? Regardless, capital breeds pseudo-citizens asleep at the unbreakable windows on their dreams. But we need a more poetic image: being as if and indeed watching television. So here’s taking the piss out of that ‘90s anti-drug commercial, blood-doping it, and injecting it back into the vein closest to the heart: this is your self on television.

The LIE of Lying Around divided by Victory’s V = LIVE. Which doesn’t describe a State (as in a life) but a directive, something to be done. Vladimir Lenin,
1902. Well, what is not to be done? The complete de-fusing of capital’s mechanisms (necessarily anti-social) by way of the construction of other means of life—lives beyond the anemic quality of scope engendered by the curve and rattle of the coil—impels radical experiments, be they undertaken in theory or in practice. Towards amplifying the everyday construction and consciousness of quality to a degree of saturation that capital is incapable of retaining—or in the words of the Parisian Guy Debord, “beyond the capacity of the old social organization”—what’s necessitated is a tactics of critical mapping, a subjective read on the object, a structural abstract of capitalism.

My analysis is divided into three sections—division of labor, hierarchy, alienation—in order to gloss this monolith and some of the ways it’s been critiqued by over two centuries of radical theorists. Following is a fifth section on the Situationist project, framed as a theory of practice (via its practice in theory) for inflicting immediate and temporary changes in political economies that happen to be over-determined by capitalist exchange.

DIVISION OF LABOR DIVIDES AND CONQUERS LABORERS

Adam Smith articulates the positivist logic of capitalism in Wealth of Nations (1776), explaining that a laboring order of full-time specialists is necessary for the accrual of national wealth in a post-mercantilist democracy. This implies a traffic of innumerable modes of commerce beneath the flag of the modern State as thing within which people are marked off into discrete utilitarian functions following utilitarian space/time flows. Hegel, whom Marx inverted, is markedly enlightened in mourning the modern State’s evolution beyond the “direct democracy of the classical polis.” For a formation this large to operate organically, its subjects must sublimate into little bits of organs, separated subjectivities united by their objectification, linked not by their qualitative needs but by their survival needs as replaceable quantities of man-power. Cogs in the political time-bomb. Pre-echoes of the immediate. Ghosts of the past in the present. George Romero’s mall zombies in Dawn of the Dead (1978). “Roles are bloodsuckers of the will to live.” Synthetic parasites.

Marx argued that discrete labor constructs “material relations between persons and social relations between things.” This alienation is consonant with fragmentation: singularities of cultural Life blown asunder. Modernity and all its beginnings. Vaneigem in The Revolution of Everyday Life (1967) articulates the communalist ideal of the “qualitative totality” and “the construction of the whole
man” in opposition to labor’s specialization. In the tradition of Hegel, Marx, Dada, Trotsky, the post-bourgeois revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in strict opposition with Smith’s golden logic, Vaneigem writes, “we have nothing in common but the illusion of being together.” The illusion is the image shining deep into the eyes of the subject rendered spectator of their own representation, the reality of the content captivating the subject into more and more acute degrees of a spectator’s passion. Team colors.

Echoing theses put forward by anthropologist Robert Redfield in “The Folk Society” (1947) German political theorist Carl Schmitt takes a purist position against specialization when he claims: “Only an actually assembled people is a people and only an actually assembled people can do what distinctively belongs to the actions of this people.” In Schmitt’s terms, people separated by their full-time specialist employment, who go home to their families in the evening and wake up to go to work in the morning etc ad infinitum, are not a people; furthermore, they are not a people of willed action in that the sum of their actions—labor or leisure—is totalized by the language of the commodity. In his reasoned argument for specialization, Smith reflected on “the saving of the time which is commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another.” The language of the commodity is quantification and specialized labor streamlines time into a shrink-wrapped tic(k) to be plucked off the shelf, fuel for the fires of all-consuming capital.

Schmitt’s theory of direct democracy poses radical problems, considering that political assembly is fenced off as the discrete labor-set of a particular commodity: the cash-cow or “public servant”: politician. There’s a disturbing metaphysics in the implication that if the politicians’ assembly constructs them as a (if not the) distinct people—Platonic ideals of mass political will—then all other laborers are by default not a people. Public policy as articulated by politicians implies that their decisions are written into the fabric of social reality—the ever lagging Letter of the Law—determining objective consequences on political economy. Democratic voting is thus revealed as the illusion of assembly, illusions being images and the voting process mediated by communicative mechanisms. Safety lies in the absence of presence: doubled absence: imagined imaginations: remembering that you might have been sleep-walking. Again.

Images of ourselves separate us from each other. Watching the Senate on C-Span. Call your local Congressman: two receivers constitute the gap between messenger and receiver. Roles (serious jobs) are the anti-matter (invisible) that hold the whole façade together as it crumbles. Play your part. Apart. Guy Debord writes of “compartmentalized utilitarian disciplines [as] avert[ing] concerted overall critique...” Example: politicians can’t pursue the advancement of society beyond specialized labor unless they are willing to forgo their own roles as salaried politician. Fired? Retired? Or how about wouldn’t be there in the first place. “The
subdivision and restriction of particular jobs.” Fortunately, poets are able to make such radical critiques with impunity, since the best of them rarely get paid for their work. Ben Watson and Esther Leslie critique specialization via the ways in which artistic production is implicated in the lie of capitalist democracy: “That art exists—or culture more broadly—as a specialised activity practiced by the few means that it becomes an alibi for the majority’s non-cultural life. In this sense, art justifies exploitation and oppression.”

The everyday reproduction of the division of labor turns divisible roles—artist, politician, welder, professor—into commodities (each with varying degrees of value), making specialized role-players both generally necessary and particularly disposable. The private accumulation of capital wards off fears of obsolescence, just as “the end of separation means the end of the bourgeoisie.” When Vaneigem writes that “collectively it is quite possible to abolish roles,” he is underscoring a self-evidence: the collective and direct articulation of local social reality—immediate acts of public policy—implies the disintegration of separable commodities as well as their corollary, the inseparable commodity structure. Vaneigem’s “qualitative totality” describes the organization of societal flows according to qualitative or subjective excesses rather than those that are quantitative or objectifying. And yes it’s binary, but only because it’s dialectical.

Hakim Bey (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson) reiterates Vaneigem’s directives in *The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (1985), writing “we need no power to intercede for us,” to encourage the rise of unspecialized organizations of free and absolute power over the self, where in addition to actual labor, the concepts of labor and politics themselves are not separated. “Criticism becomes direct action in an anarchist context.” Specialized labor relegates discrete actions to discrete individuals, actions taken not in the spirit of passionate community engagement but out of financial desire. In or out. The collective refusal to fragment social life into polite discretions—in other words, a general strike—would focus democracy’s scope beyond such clumsy mediations as “the world,” “the continent,” “the State,” “the state,” to lock in instead on the local, the only degree of Newtonian magnitude whose presence can always be proven without aid of technical mediation. In *Patterns of Anarchy* (1966), Krimerman and Perry summarize nineteenth century French philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s call for radical socio-economic reforms in *Solution du Problème Social* (1847): “a revolutionary movement that withdraws support from government and attaches it to citizen-controlled activities (thus dissolving the state).” From representation to presentation. Presence here and now. Democracy as a gift to be taken.

With the refusal of specialization, the local would undergo a qualitative amplification in the scopic eye of free power, potentially rendering obsolete any policy articulated by centralized specialists. “The free construction of the entire space-time of individual life.” A comprehensive unification of all roles—meshing
the directing of a politico-economic traffic with only those people constituting said traffic—is consonant with a direct democracy negotiated 1:1 on the plane of “total self management.”

This implies fluid modes of collective labor produced not by poli-financial obligations but rather by conscious socio-cultural desires.

HIERARCHY

*Skill in playing and handling roles determines rank in the spectacular hierarchy... The role is a consumption of power. It locates one in the representational hierarchy, and hence in the spectacle: at the top, at the bottom, in the middle—but never outside the hierarchy, whether this side of it or beyond it.*

The specialization of labor necessitates a hierarchical distribution of power. Fractured into discretions, the national economy emerges as a crystalline formation, reproducing at its greatest manifestation the fractal order of its least. The individual being the most compact of the social organs, capitalist democracy is imagined as the body politic—organized from head to toe. And to efficiently maintain the *uphold* of this scaffolding, the demand for particular jobs played against the supply of human resources reduces social being to a mere calculation, digitized as fingers building micro-chips in India. The introduction of a visual metaphor should help to further this position.

A hierarchy is structured by two basic axes: X and Y, horizontal and vertical. Y is dependant upon X, the relationship being a function of gravitational pull. X is “independent” because Y bears down upon it, such that sudden disturbances in the horizon’s planar integrity are capable of disrupting the vertical’s perpendicular. The working class is not situated on the 0° of the X-axis, but rather sub-zero, negating any possibility of “free” independence. There is a price to freedom. Social contract. The labor of the horizontal takes on variable degrees of legality depending on the Y-value at which it is honed, as the task of labor is nothing less than the transformation of raw material, be it coal or capitalist. More people near the bottom doing what their role prescribes means more stability for the minority doing what their role prescribes near the top. Or at least that’s the logic of hierarchy, complete with its shadow, anti-logic. The Master-Slave Dialectic in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). 9/11.

At the bottom? Invisible information. Material of no matter. The working poor. Ideological power flows down crystallized vertical channels while capitalized Power flows up, and as such the geometric model can be posed dialectically against...
a democratic formula for power’s liquidation (or fluid dispersal across a horizontal plane).

A social model that lacks the perpetual undoing of absolute negotiation by its lowest common denominator is in contrast to Josiah Warren’s mid-nineteenth century description of the *intimate* construction of political economies among small groups of persons engaged in “practical movements” (or intentional communities):

The first step to be taken by any number of persons in these practical movements appears to be, that each individual...should consider his or her present wants, and what he can give in exchange, with a view to have them recorded in a book kept for that purpose...Everyone wishing to take some part in practical operations, now has before him in this report of wants, the business to be done.33

This is a rural corollary to Proudhon’s theory (written just two years after Warren’s) that mutuality is central to a just urban society: “the exemplary form of which is direct, contractual exchange of service for service, product for product, labor for labor...which [does] not require overseeing or enforcement by administrators and politicians.”34

While Louis Althusser quips in “Contradiction and Overdetermination” that Proudhon was a “prisoner of bourgeois economics,”35 there is worth in salvaging the spatial metaphysics of Proudhon’s post-Revolution “solutions,” where instantiations of horizontal exchanges are framed as pacifistic uprisings of withdrawal, disintegrating the organization of power as amassed in the unblinking bureaucratic eye. It seems that Althusser, late member of the French Communist Party, hides a kernel of an idealized violent proletariat in the mystical shell of his theorizing, a “theoretical practice” in the sense of all theory and no practice. For Althusser, withdrawal from hierarchy is a petty re-fusing of the mechanism. What is interesting about Proudhon is imagining withdrawal as the saboteur’s dodge into the shadows, disappearance in the blink of the bureaucratic eye.36

Perhaps the collaborative work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari can be helpful in finding common ground between the Warren-Proudhon model and Althusser’s critique over a century later. Their projection of a *rhizomatic* schema (as opposed to one which is *arboreal*) onto histories of decentralized organizations of radical power implies a subversive engagement with capital’s hierarchical flows, though not by the strict horizontal of Proudhon’s reciprocity of exchange or the clean legers of Warren’s balanced public records. Rather, a constructive spontaneity of indiscrete cutting that produces networks of “semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously.”37 While rhizomes don’t drop roots (signifiers of vertical power), they do move up and down the faces
of pre-established vertical structures, redefining gravity by the integrity of their *silent* grip and thus upsetting the axioms of hierarchical structure, claiming their radical potential by a clandestine tapping of the structure’s vertical and horizontal streams, what Deleuze and Guattari call “territorialization.” Organic parasitism. The presence of the rhizome is the momentous taking and 1:1 distribution of power as *desired* by those occupying rhizomatic functions. Deleuze and Guattari’s is a theory not *necessarily* communicated as a directive for constructive anarchist actions, but as an articulation of the workings of social reality as that reality exists within the *spectacular* presence of hierarchy.

What is difficult about focusing a total critique of civil society on hierarchy is the mundane absence of signs of hierarchy in everyday life, hierarchy’s presence only peering out from the banality of its poeticized images. However, signs = images; the tautology of *focus* is thus at the heart of why capitalist democracy is such a convincing lie. What we wish to see as lived reality—signs of life—we see only as mediated reality—images of life—both of which are in fact the same thing. “This trap we’re in is spectacular.”

The immediacy of mediation. Our role as spectators of power is the real issue at stake, and hierarchy helps to reproduce the spectator as a divisible role (though popular) insofar as it is assumed that the power to make change is present only at the top of the heap. As power moves towards the top it approaches the singularity of the individual, while it approaches the solidarity of individuals as it moves towards the bottom. The mundane role that the administrator, the politician or the policeman must play as agents of non-reciprocal *oversight* has a shadow resonance in those workers’ more fundamental roles as guardians of their own hierarchical positions—divine breeders of the social order playing out around them—and thus the very integrity of hierarchy itself. Althusser called these guardians “the high priests of the ruling ideology,” arguing in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” that citizens are saturated in a trickle-down acculturation to the “know-how” of the division of labor they will engage, this know-how being: “the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour...[such that future capitalists will learn] to ‘handle’ the workers correctly, i.e. actually...to ‘order them about’ properly.”

Note that orders pass from one to many. From childhood, citizens of all rank in the capitalist hierarchy are channeled through “ISAs” (cultural institutions) that naturalize social constructions by way of mediations: seamless articulations of reality as it is imagined by the super-structural formations of the productive means harnessed by an industrialized capitalist democracy. As a result, the spectacular becomes mundane and hierarchy works because it reproduces an image of itself. The mirror gaze.

In *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes’ notion of cultural myth and its naturalization exposes the semiotic means by which various modes of ISA harness the duplicitous invisibility of the spectacle to cast down the arbitrary formation
of social architectures into the mundane. From his preface:

The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of the ‘naturalness’ with which newspapers, art, and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. $^43$

“History” refers to the evolutionary development of socio-cultural techniques as ever-culminating in the contemporary and its arbitrary means for mediating social organization. Rendering mediation consonant with conditioning in his desire for radical communities isolated from hierarchical over-coding, Vaneigem writes: “The task of a coherent revolutionary group...is to establish protected areas where the intensity of conditioning tends towards zero.” $^{44}$ We might think of this “zero” as the zero-value of the Y-axis, Vaneigem’s “protected areas” being roofed economies power-blipping in 1:1 intimacies along an X-axis of infinite dimensions, where even the family trees are plowed over in the areas’ “establish[ment].”

ALIENATION

The size of the modern states make it quite impossible to realize the ideal of giving every free individual a share in debating and deciding political affairs of universal concern. $^{45}$

What does it matter, after all, if Order is a little brutal or a little blind, when it allows us to live cheaply? $^{46}$

Deleuze and Guattari use the term “controlled ‘situations of abandonment’” to describe the production and reproduction of alienation in capitalist economies. $^{47}$ Proceeding from the dictum that workers are alienated from their labor because they produce commodities for an economy of which they have little if any say in the construction, $^{48}$ it follows that a role’s specialization in the production of a particular commodity transforms work itself into a commodity, its value splayed at the law of supply and demand. No different in its essence as utility than a box of croutons or a shoe-horn. “We have nothing in common but the illusion of being together.” $^{49}$ A commodified role-player’s discrete functioning within a hierarchy of like discretions (jobs) might be thought of as a controlled situation of abandonment, insofar as functions inserted into the hierarchy are hemmed into form by a “rigid vacuity,” $^{50}$ or the space separating one discrete labor from the others, allowing the
smooth functioning of so many cogs. This space can be thought of in a printer’s terminology as the bleed. The production line and the checkout line allow for only so much margin of error. Time and motion studies.

But when playing by the rules of a capitalist democracy, alienation is comprehensive, not just on the job or at the mall. Specialization and hierarchy demand that politics be left to the politicians, yet the political is the platform from which legislation charges reality with the tough influence of legality. Being in such a world demands a resignation to imagination, an acquiescence to the anemia of representation. And it turns out that the mechanisms alienating citizens from the negotiations of the State are the very commodities that they receive as holiday gifts and birthday presents from their loved ones: televisions, computers, books, telephones, CDs, newspapers, magazines, license plates, DVDs and tombstones. In short, our means labor and our means are antipodal mirrors, having tied each other up with the subject locked between. “Since man is the product of the situations he goes through, it is essential to create human situations. Since the individual is defined by his situations, he wants the power to create situations worthy of his desires.”

Capitalist democracy places phenomenological subjects within non-intimate politico-economic milieus. Intimacy is a function of the distribution of social power, and as such the total consumption of a milieu that contains significant elements produced (or transformed) by the consumer’s labor is a non-alienating situation. Homemade. When Hakim Bey writes, “Art project: the construction of a ‘map’ bearing a 1:1 ratio to the ‘territory’ explored,” he implies the intimate material transformation of one spacio-temporal milieu into another. The overcoming of particular alienations is possible through material engagements with the space-times in which we find ourselves; or to put it in Vaneigem’s quasi-militant terms, “the sabotage of the mechanisms of economic and cultural consumption.” Sabotage doesn’t necessarily imply violence, and I hope there is a pacifism assumed in any extracts that I cite; however, it is important to read into Vaneigem’s words the legalitarian violence of capitalist democracy. What agents of intimacy might consider the communication of a critical message to the citizens of their local community, agents of the State (or, agents of Status) might consider to be an act of vandalism—regardless of content. Or what agents of intimacy might consider the re-directing of White House tourist traffic for a game of hide-and-go-seek towards a friendly chance meeting with the President, agents of the State might consider sedition—regardless of intent. And that’s alienation for you, sterilized and boring as always.

Just as there’s a price to the consumption of freedom, there’s prescribed means of producing (read: consuming) it.
the private life of the family cell: locus of true love, deep presence, abundance, blood. But the Situationists offer hope beyond the retreat to the nuclear family. Vaneigem argues that artistic creation is itself revolutionary because it constructs the aura of quality rather than the efficiency of quantity. And so when a bloc of laborers chooses to use its machines for the production of pleasure rather than the production of commodities, alienation will necessarily be abolished: “The laboratory of individual creativity transmutes the basest metals of daily life into gold through a revolutionary alchemy.”

THE SITUATIONISTS

a collective project explicitly concerned with all aspects of lived experience.

The absolutely free will, at the stage when its concept is abstract, has the determinate character of immediacy.

A handful of experimental European and North African artists formed a unified movement in 1957, the Situationist International, their goal being the total reorganization of society, a society they charged as infected by spectacle.

Over the next decade the SI developed an increasingly incisive and coherent critique of modern society and its bureaucratic pseudo-opposition, and its new methods of agitation were influential in leading up to the May 1968 revolt in France.

I have used the term anarcho-Marxist in the footnote above to describe the Situationists, so I will now investigate the historical relationship between anarchist and Marxist agendas. In “The SI Bootsale,” Ben Watson draws a clear line between the sloppy aims of English anarchism and the critical Marxism of the Situationists, focusing on Debord as the SI ringleader, who was:

devoid of the imprecision of English anarchists with Situationist pretensions, those who confuse Debord’s attacks on the Communist Party with attacks on Lenin, and end up with confusionist stunts that have more in common with Monty Python and the late Viv Stanshall—aristocratic japes—than the SI.

John Henry Mackay claimed in his fictional work on London anarchism—The
Anarchists: A Picture of Civilization at the Close of the Nineteenth Century (1891)—that a communist-anarchism was “a contradiction in terms.” This is sensible, considering that the Situationists specifically critiqued the French Communist Party as a Stalinist institution implicated in the reproduction of the dominant social order by their control of the trade unions. Communism as it has been historically practiced (and distinct from the uprisings of the Paris Commune throughout the nineteenth century) is an incomplete reading of Marx applied dogmatically to State affairs by ideologues in control of a cadre of passive militants, resulting in a most anti-Marxist State Capitalism. George Woodock can be read as an English predecessor to the Situationists. In “Railroads and Society” (1943) he argues that “Syndicalism is the industrial manifestation of anarchism,” with the implication that “workers in each industry” would control the means of production at the service of the rest of society. Here, Marx’s “dictatorship of the proletariat” comes alive in a mantra that might be grafted onto the Situationist corpus: the autonomy of the workers’ councils. Vaneigem writes of the function of workers councils:

We can see both Marxism and anarchism at work in the intimate negotiation of a worker-controlled political-economy according to principles of anti-hierarchy, anti-specialization and their corollary, anti-alienation. Prior to Woodock, J.A. Estey argued in Revolutionary Syndicalism (1913) that syndicalism is not anarchism, aligning anarchism with individualism and syndicalism with socialism. This is a particularly libertarian read on anarchism, and insofar as libertarianism signals an extremist resignation to Social Darwinism, it is the opposite of anarchism. Estey’s quip that “the anti-social nature of Anarchism seems to Syndicalists a subtle form of decadence” ignores anarchism’s function as an alternative to the anti-sociality of capitalist democracy. Anarchism is in fact a negation of the anti-social—as expressed for instance by the plans for anarchist community associations by Josiah Warren, above—especially if we hark back to Vaneigem’s dictum that “we have nothing in common but the illusion of being together.” The Situationists’ theses of collective creativity are a re-tasking of what is conventionally thought of as anarchism (as well as Marxism), by exclaiming that being together is precisely what capitalist democracy deprives of its constituents. As the largest constituency is necessarily the proletariat, the anarchism of the Situationists is channeled into
practice through Marx, the historico-materialist frame. Ironically, when asked in a questionnaire if they were Marxists, the Situationists responded: “Just as much as Marx when he said, ‘I am not a Marxist.’”

Let us now move past examining the Situationists’ political influences to examining their theory of permanent uprising. In “How Do Enslaved People Make Revolutions?” the Dutch Katarzyna Paprzycka and Marcin Paprzycki cite a study by Leszek Nowak which backs a Marxist argument with statistical evidence: “there exists a dependence between the level of civil alienation and the reaction of the society as a whole,” producing an oscillating time-line of enslavement and rebellion as a function of the degree of said society’s alienation. This is problematic insofar as it projects a macro-social narrativity onto what in reality are micro-social flows of particular modes of power producing overlapping degrees of alienation and anti-alienating mobilizations. However, Nowak’s findings do ring of Vaneigem’s post-’68 prophecy that alienation will erupt in proletarian revolution as a literal “rising flood of individual pleasures.” Considering theses put forward in Barthes’ The Pleasure of the Text (1973) and insofar as the Situationists’ definition of poetry is “immediate communication within reality and...real alteration of this reality,” we can see that the Situationists have radically re-tasked dominant notions of pleasure and poetry towards a revolutionary efficacy. At stake with the pleasure principle is not a free-wheeling hedonism, but rather an “insurrectionary joy,” a “valuative consciousness” produced by “the intensity of unmediated perception & experience” as blissed off “the suchness of things when unchained from the Law” and overcome by “the energy-rush of danger & adventure, the private epiphany of overcoming all interior police.”

Understanding the free negotiation of local political economy to be consonant with “lived poetry”—“to the extent that it reinforces spontaneity’s hold on reality” and “engenders new realities”—Watson and Leslie’s above-cited call for the reorganization of “cultural life’s” qualitative distribution and the nineteenth century poet Le Comte de Lautréamont’s directive in Poems—“Poetry must be made by everyone. Not by one.”—we see Vaneigem’s call for “the appropriation of the machines by collective creativity” takes on an epic utility such that “Potentially, everyone is now some kind of artist.” Peter Lamborn Wilson (aka Hakim Bey) ignores the issue of class struggle in arguing that an anarchism of revolutionary efficacy enacts the Situationists’ lived poetry by way of micro-social organizations growing as much of their own food as possible, whether in urban or rural milieus. This is in keeping with Debord’s pre-Situationist articulations of psychogeography, the practice of radical cartography, which “could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment.”

The passion behind these manifestos has much to do with the writers’ perception of their values as existing in historical legacies of Dionysian festivity and transcendent fluidity. John Moore writes in “Towards a Cultural Ecology of
Anarchy” that Zen “manifests itself in spontaneous acts...[and that] regaining the experience of life’s instantaneousness constitutes its essence,” making Zen akin to “lived poetry” in many ways. But the sub-text here is more than Zen or Tao, however radical those practices may be. Implied is a comprehensive re-negotiation of the material means by which civil society is conducted. The implications of this are all-encompassing and hardly imaginable, as one of the many products might very well be a transformation of the structure of consciousness itself.
Poetry is not recognition patterns within a spectator-consumer society, but, rather, language which activates imagination and surprises the reader into new abilities.¹

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

We speak when we are awake and we speak in our dreams. We are always speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, and even when we are not particularly listening or speaking but are attending to some work or taking a rest...only speech enables man to be the living being he is as man...We encounter language everywhere. Hence it cannot surprise us that as soon as man looks thoughtfully about himself at what he is, he quickly hits upon language too...²

To be a reader is to be the willing receptor of transformative agencies destined to either alter or confirm one’s position in a social circuitry.³

Social security. At the outset, it’s useful to consider grammar at its most general: a set of rules delineating the parameters of a system and the structural dynamics of the set of particular functions that operate therein. To articulate a grammar is to derive an abstract theory of a generative system from data generated by that system.⁴ The articulation of a grammar both conducts an operation of closure via anticipating the limits of a system’s potential, while offering a positivist rationale to those functions that have been demarcated as grammatical. Freedom and its price.

But let us think of grammar particularly in terms of language, and ask why a structuralist inquiry into grammar should be a corollary to a like inquiry into capitalism. To be more pointed, what is it about language as a social phenomenon and a field of formal conventions that make the economy of its grammar any kind of pertinent site of anti-capitalist utopian resistance? Further, just what is at stake in experimental poetry’s negotiation of grammar? To approach these questions, it is perhaps important to look not at what is said in any particular poem but rather to examine theoretical inquiries into the means by which language produces, reproduces, and facilitates the social exchange of linguistic meaning, insofar as these means govern the extent to which poems are capable of performing what it is they are saying. The first two sections that follow explore dialectical tendencies
in theorizations of grammar, while the final section discusses texts whose aesthetic experimentation I will justify as charging the magnetism between writing and radical political efficacy. But first I will offer a general pragmatic overview of language towards offering some answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this paragraph.5

Social life is saturated in language.6 There is likely no essential pattern to finding ourselves awake and without articulation or to finding ourselves without what feels like an instinctual reliance on the speech patterns that give social consensus to meaning’s reproduction. In his unpublished lecture “Mainstream and Margins in Contemporary British Poetry” (2005), Keston Sutherland writes of language’s idiosyncratic status among the various media systems; whereas language is both a specialist artistic medium and a human competency whose use value7 is dispersed among all social occasions, the popular uses of other mediums (e.g. paint) are just as specialized and truly occasional as their artistic use values. Sutherland writes:

Language is everyone’s competence and everyone’s possession . . . We use words to conduct our daily lives, to do our shopping, to make our flirtations, to announce our responses of outrage or indifference to the news, and above all to do our jobs, that strange form of doing. Uniquely among the various media of self-expression, words are what we have to use for what is ours in the most daily way. Language is the only medium of expression used in art that we are compelled to use and to control and to suppress and to modify in our workplaces. We all possess it like no other medium, by a necessity that is daily renewed in inescapable relation to our economic necessities. The experience of being compelled to use language in a controlled, perfunctory manner in the workplace may make us feel more intensely that we have an inalienable right to misuse it outside of the workplace, and by transforming our use of language in our free time to enact a kind of virtual rebellion against our employers and the necessity of work in general. This is a kind of possession that no-one experiences in quite the same way with regard to paint: we can be speechless but we cannot with an identical implication be paintless.8

A critical note that deserves full-text status is a nod towards the ongoing histories of performance and writing that situate the body itself as a communicative media—Stelarc, Carolee Schneeman, Michel de Certeau, etc—specific instantiations of which could surely lounge beneath what Sutherland terms “distortions” of a contractual Lacanian mirror, i.e. negative interventions into the work/leisure two-lane that constitutes the general anemia of everyday living. The body too is “everyone’s competence and everyone’s possession”; what de Certeau calls “pedestrian street acts” in The Practice of Everyday Life are just as likely to reproduce stated Orders
(and States of order) as speech itself. For just what radical desires does the average experimental poet encode into the collective image of public behavior when they purchase their groceries or pump gas into their cars? The politico-economic avenues through which we choose to direct our bodies—"the forms used in a system and the ways of using this system (i.e., rules)"—are perhaps more capable of "complicity with an unjust structure of social management" than language, especially when even the most formally anti-capitalist lyric is composed in "the parallel life which absorbs the reader leaving his/her body depoliticized." In this sense, notions of live- and performance-writing—as developed by a range of practitioners among whom Caroline Bergvall and cris cheek stand out as forerunners—seem to offer the most resonant possibilities for a radical writing praxis, though such a discussion is beyond this paper’s horizons.

So let’s assume, towards an inquiry into the grammatical structure of English, that language speaks louder the body, the notion of language as a tool of the human everyday being a necessary distinction for the theories I examine in the following two sections. Any radical engagement with grammar—i.e. the means of linguistic meaning-production—has the potential to inflect any and all means of social reproduction, in that language can be projected onto (or accumulated in) any and all social occasions. Because language is unavoidably the most pointedly articulate of the communicative media, its use exists in an intimate relationship with everyday life as both a tool for representing reality and a particular function within reality itself.

But there is a verso to this mundane economy of use: language as it is uttered in the Stated sacred sites of politico-legal power – i.e. blueprint / Platonic model / William S. Burroughs-esque “pre-recording” / genetic source-code / etc of the real (or social). Power is a performative force that alters material conditions, a raster transmuting particular states into non-logical (or non-essential) post-states. In terms of human agency, teleologies of intention are often grafted onto the effects of power on particular material states over time. Fated fx. But as for the potential performativity of language, a basic consideration of the pre-literate sorcerer-function (i.e. post-literate world banker) might be useful in articulating the distance between everyday use and the letter of the Law.

Tracing sorcerer back to its Latin sortiarius gives us “one who tells the lot of the others.” As clairvoyance occupies the visionary function of passive seeing, the sorcerer’s seeing can be thought of as a generative imagining, a performative making-real of that which is uttered. We can also find a like cult of performativity in the Bible—“And the Word [read: orality] became flesh [read: literacy] and dwelt among us”—wherein language is imagined as being armed or imbued (by divinity in the case of God and by will in the case of the sorcerer) with the power of spell. The mundane materiality of language is transmuted into a materializing spelling out of directed energy, language rising above the social necessity of articulation.
in its reification of idea (or intention) as catalytic reality-agent. But if I am indeed to draw a parallel between the language of the sorcerer and that of the global capitalist, an historical scheme must under-write such reasoning.

In “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin writes:

And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them... According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror...There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible.\textsuperscript{18}

Today’s corporate institutions and the governments lobbied to do their bidding are the inheritors of the sorcerer’s divining tongue (even if it’s myth was only ever \textit{made belief}) in a very real way (i.e. politico-economic), the language of power being a “cultural treasure” imbued with the democratic token of social contract. The historical shift from Walter Ong’s notion of “primary orality” to literacy—as articulated in \textit{Orality and Literacy} (1982)—resituates the performative utterance onto the blank skin of writing: the intimate resonance of the spelling voice shape-shifting into the clatter of the digital age’s overworked keyboard—the Constitution encoded into an html document—the letter of the Law. Michel de Certeau’s notion of “the Scriptural Economy” locates the history of writing in a capitalist strategy of accumulation, writing being an architectural centralization of reality (conceived of as a dispersion of intimate particulars) into historically accessible knowledge. The written word’s most exhaustively critical (i.e. performative) function being the prescriptive articulation of social order as drafted in the board-rooms, executive offices, and elite golf courses of the global economy, the poet’s language is by convention a mere sideshow—ornament. In his preface to \textit{The Politics of Poetic Form} (1990), Charles Bernstein writes: “The relation of poetry to public policy is usually assumed to be tenuous, at most secondary.”\textsuperscript{19} As I will detail in the third section of this chapter, what is stake in a so-called L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetics is a Messianic distance from conventional grammar; grammar in this case conceived of as both a reproduction of (and a thing whose use value is in part that of reproducing) a society structured from the top down by the smooth circulation of commodities\textsuperscript{20} wherein “the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery.”\textsuperscript{21}

In “Theses on Need” (1942), Theodor Adorno writes:
When classless society promises the end of art through sublation of the tension between what is real and what is possible, it also promises at the same time the beginning of art, i.e. the useless, experience of which tends toward reconciliation with nature because it is no longer in the service of usefulness of the exploiters.\textsuperscript{22}

In this light, the charge of the radically anti-capitalist poet might be thought of as the construction of “documents of civilization” whose performative modes are “dissociate[d]...as far as possible” from the powerful (or utilitarian) cultural habits of linguistic transmission (including as well those imagined to perform something of a populist efficacy—cf. Theodor Adorno’s \textit{Jargon of Authenticity}). What Benjamin distrusts as the “manner” of transmission necessarily encompasses grammar as a culturally treasured means utilized for the linguistic exchange of (potentially) culturally treasured meanings. To imagine a textual practice of radical uselessness might indeed prove a useful exercise in considering just what it means to construct an anti-capitalist poetry that approaches practical critique.

As the structures of politico-economic power obstruct poetry from its fair time-share in the reality studios of the Ideal Republic, poetry turns to willed uselessness as a function of what Bruce Boone calls a reciprocal “fascination” between writing and power. Fascination is a compelling notion in light of the question: why might language itself be the object or site of an anti-capitalist resistance? Boone’s “fascination” is the description of a sociological impetus whose function is that of \textit{adhesive}, implicating linguistic utility in a political critique by way of a gluey performance of synthetic osmosis. Boone writes:

\begin{quote}
...literature has more and more radically narrowed its rights to the public participation in the ongoing construction of society by itself—inseparable from power. A profound disjunction...Yet both [power and literature] continue to influence each other, fascinate each other, and their uneasy attractiveness seems to register the uneven development of revolution itself.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

If I’ve yet to give adequate support to the claim that language is indeed a pertinent site of political resistance, I’ll the claim fall back on the sociological fact that a few particular communities of poets and scholars have built their lives’ work on Boone’s “uneasy attractiveness.” Now I will gloss the grammatical structure of conventional English as a brief corollary to the vagrant “mapping” conducted in the previous chapter, and to build a structure whose historical destruction will be articulated in the section following.
COVNETION

How better to appear insane than to read words without understanding the system that holds them together? The words become a swarm of objects flying at you every which way....We never read, write, speak, or hear words that explode before us like lava from a volcano.

In point of fact we are going to claim that the words in [a] sentence are grouped into units (called constituents) and...these constituents are grouped into larger constituents, and so on until you get a sentence.

Pointed facts: sentences can be broken into phrases can be broken into words can be broken into syllables can be broken into letters can be broken into traces (or marks) of the minute bodily gestures that when repeated in habituated sequences (re-marks), construct smooth avenues through which linguistic meaning can course from speaker to receiver like an 18-wheeler trucking cross-country, goods safely in tow. Of course, the threshold at which the fruits of linguistic production leap from inedible to good(s) is a fluid and historical one—“there is no fixed / threshold at which noise becomes phonically / significant; the further back this threshold is / pushed, the greater the resonance at the cutting / edge.”—and so the first step in a consideration of conventional grammatical structure is the acknowledgement that language is a material phenomenon produced by functional mechanisms capable of (perhaps) infinitely more various products than mere conventionally grammatical speech.

We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life.

Which is to say that the following discussion of conventional grammatical structure is conducted in a way that is by no means impartial. Rather, it is a tactical, polemic representation of the iceberg’s tip of a particular field of linguistics scholarship. So where my arguments might seem reductive and surely not as informed as they could be, let the seduction of a comprehensive Dogma be my apology.

Logos—“the communicative skills of man”—techne—language functions bio-technologically as usefully generative of a thing called sense, which itself has the function of adhesive: keeping the wheels of the social machinery locked-in to the well-worn tracks of convention’s bottom-line. Got my feet on the ground. But it also has the function of lubricant: as Benjamin was quoted in an above footnote, “[o]pinions [i.e. language in general] are to the vast apparatus of social existence
what oil is to machines. Sense (is the) means (of) the reproduction of a level playing field, the social contract being neither up in the air nor a toss-up. Rather it is written down; and once written, downed.

Consensus.
Sensibility.
Sense ability.
Sense abilities.
Sense is able to.
Sense is able, too.
Senses able: two.
That is, a pragmatics of pragmatism: “Urging a realistic view of language in matters of inte[r]n[a]tional agency.”

In Doing Grammar (2002), Max Morenberg writes:

“Grammar is like a machine that fabricates sentences according to a set of discernible principles...we don’t throw words into sentences at random; we order them according to a GRAMMATICAL system. We build constituents and relate them to one another within hierarchical frameworks. Grammar [makes] sense.”

Synthetic constituencies sedimented by hierarchical gravity...

To examine sense’s means of production through a particular lens, I will look at a single aspect of English grammar. Most every grammar textbook used in English composition courses “concentrates on the sentence as the primary unit of expression,” and “[t]here is evidence to support the idea that a system of syntactic operations is the foundation stone of natural languages;” so, I will isolate syntax as the order of linguistic magnitude most telling of the ways that constituency and hierarchy structure grammatical communication. As well, the professional jargon developed by the syntax scholars readily lends itself to politico-economic metaphors. It is in syntax that interrelations between objects and states can be represented, where discrete semantic units (are given) order(s) to erect plateaus of consensual(ly) meaning(ful relations), beneath which complex “internal” patterns of structural labor grind away, the economic systems becoming evident only when bits of language data are stripped of their particularity, and (mass) organ-ized as corpora. I will reiterate here that rules of syntax determine the order in which words and phrases follow one another, determining just which words come into contact with one another along a space/time axis of social utterance, prescriptions of what tool is to be used when and where.

At the outset, it is useful to think of syntactical structure in terms of Newtonian orders of magnitude: planet / sentence, continents / phrases, nations / words, and so on beyond the scope of syntax. The closer to Earth, the more
unique the environmental data. But zooming out, the particulars melt away into larger functional mechanisms, abstracted. While a systematic ecology saturates the organism across the spectrum of magnitudes, empirical analysis necessitates the determination of limits, and in the case of syntax, our charmed poles are the word and the sentence.

See Diagram 3 for two “phrase structure diagrams” that illustrate structural function in sentences. These architectures show us that above any rational sentence can be stacked a visual coding that describes the functional relations structuring the basal labors of individual words. With these models, we can understand constituency as being the grouping of words into functional units, function being determined by the demands of structural design in the service of sensible language. Each word has a utilitarian function in the structural unit and each constituent has a utility in the sentence.

At the bottom of the architecture is the particular sentence data; above it is the grammatical description of the words’ utility as cogs in the sense-machine and the phrasal organ(ization)s within which they are grouped. “Dominance” is the term used to describe the hierarchical imposition of syntactic order. In the textbook *Syntax: A Generative Introduction* (2002), Andrew Carnie writes: “Node A dominates node B if and only if A is higher up in the tree than B and if you can trace a branch from A to B going only downwards.” A constituent is “a set of nodes exhaustively dominated by a single node;” a node is a level of coding at “the end of a branch” whereas a branch is “a line connecting two parts of a tree.”

“Phrase structure rules” delineate the order in which constituents must be sequenced for a minimal economy of sense—S (sentence) must contain NP (noun phrase) and VP (verb phrase) in that order. Thus S dominates the material relationship between NP and VP as well as the phrase structure rules determining the dominance of NP and VP as general blueprints for constructions: organisms whose lives depend on particularly basic material conditions. Food, shelter, love. Noun phrase, verb phrase. The phrase structure diagram in Diagram 4 illustrates a more detailed coding of the sentence data than the previous diagram. The diagram in Diagram 5 goes into even more detail, and two others in Diagrams 6a & 6b are abstracted to a level of code beyond that which I am prepared to discuss.

[virtual meanings tucked away into actual discrete holdings]
[literally, hard to get to]
[“surrounded by towering trees of unfamiliar detail”]
[these bureaus are labyrinthine]
[brr]
[bureaucracy]

And the “described” red tape grows in complexity as the jargon ungrounds into autotelic skyrocket, the spectators all a-gawk from the ground up, uninitiated and under (the) initiated. For my purposes, it is enough to merely present terms and
models as metalinguistic surfaces—the traces of analyses understood as intoning a variegated ambience of potentials—through which we can imagine social corollaries in regards to subjectivity, social conditioning, psychogeography, etc, & etc. What’s most critical are the basic rules—the framework as it were—beyond the scope of which there is no ordered linguistic economy—and within which, dialectics spin theories into babels of complexity.

Where we’re at: a system of discrete phrasal units in material relationships with the units before and after them, in abstracted power relationships with the grammar-code mapping them from above. “These rules are thought to generate the sentences of a language, hence the name *generative* grammar.” The model is generated from particular utterances, yet the model is used to generate particular utterances that weren’t originally part of the language data given. It is this reflexivity that gives grammatically strict language the hollow aura of inevitability—an anemic tautological virus in its mirrored reproducing. A disregard of the potentials of the everyday construction of linguistic spontaneous structures is the pipeline spitting both ways along the channels branching linguistic material and its coded abstraction. What’s most interesting is the ethos in the will to mimetic social reproduction, being in dialectical opposition to that of an immediatist revolutionary consciousness.

And so the basic sentence requires only two constituents: NP and VP. This is why we find three sentences with completely different words being coded as if they were the same sentence—for the purposes of grammar, they are practically the same. But actually, in theory. Not in practice. The words in the diagrams’ sentences might have various radical, even revolutionary potentialities—as would an array of tools in a workshop—but their use-values are restricted to discretely specialized utilities, pulled taut and punctual in the service of grammar in the service of sense. In effect, the particular materialities of the given sentences are overwhelmed by the homogenizing logic of the grammar-slime-mold stacked dripping above them. The material is relegated to the backseat, not because everyday language is imbued with a mundane inevitability of contingency, but because the good that it produces—conventional sense—is fetishized, effectively obscuring the historical-material conditions within which grammars’ toils for sense occur. Now taking after Bakhtin in his claim that “language [is] conceived as ideologically saturated,” let us look at the articulation of grammatical structure as the distribution of ideology via State Apparatuses, educational institutions in particular.

I want to first acknowledge that, not having access to the grammar textbooks I’ve cited would mean ignorance of a significant field of critical knowledge, even if it happens to be a knowledge of whose production my critique is perhaps reductively utopian. Indeed, there is much that I find necessary about these texts. But I suppose it is the frame of this knowledge’s “transmission” that I distrust. Knowledge of grammar is relegated by the textbooks to a dialectic of description.
and prescription, reifying the terms as polar limits of engagement: practical frames imposed in theory. The prefaces and introductions to countless grammar textbooks are marked with defensive maneuvers like those copied below, being what seems to be a trend in paratextual convention that I want to read as a token nod toward the liberatory discourses of user-based agencies that have been central to the various post-structuralisms and -modernisms. The token is for a *free lunch* as it were.\(^{54}\) Skeleton hands gripping text:

For this reason, we focus on **descriptive rules**. This doesn’t mean that prescriptive rules aren’t important (in fact, in the exercises section of this chapter you are asked to critically examine the question of descriptive vs. prescriptive rules), but for our purposes descriptive rules are more important.\(^{55}\)

The referenced question reads as follows:

In the text above, we argued that descriptive rules are the primary focus of syntactic theory. This doesn’t mean that prescriptive rules don’t have their uses. What are these uses? Why do we maintain prescriptive rules in our society?\(^{56}\)

But why do we maintain *descriptive* rules in our society? More token agency:

It’s important to remember what our purpose is and what it is not. We’re not concerned with language propriety, with prescribing ways of speaking and writing as correct or incorrect. We are primarily concerned with understanding how sentences are structured.\(^{57}\)

And a caveat:

Since most of us use the informal language of speech and are familiar with its usages, the emphasis here is on the formal level and its applications to writing and to certain speech situations. As a result, certain prescriptions about usage are made—prescriptions that are applicable to this level. At the same time, it is pointed out that certain variations are appropriate at the informal level.\(^{58}\)

In this vein, it’s interesting to note the dated cultural politics of Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* (1959), and in particular, the apologetic din of White’s introductory applause for the formal demands that the text places on students of writing, White emphasizing Strunk’s “bold” rhetorical means of communicating such demands. What’s interesting is that it is still a required text for numerous
university courses, often pared with a structural grammar textbook. The dialectic of description and prescription means that description prescribes and prescription describes. The sociological fact simply is, and its articulation will always be a re-articulation. White from his introduction:

Mr. Strunk was a positive man. His book contains rules of grammar phrased as direct orders...It concentrates on fundamentals: the rules of usage and principles of composition most commonly violated. The reader will soon discover that these rules and principles are in the form of sharp commands.

And now, Charles Bernstein and Susan Bee Laufer from “Style,” in reply to Strunk and White’s patronizing candor and as a bridge into the next section:

A sentence says you know what I mean, dear do I well I guess I do. Grammar does not mean that they are to limit themselves. More and more grammar is not a thing. Grammar does not make me hesitate about prepositions. I am a grammarian I do not hesitate I rearrange prepositions.

\[ L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E \]

*Decisions about forms are political as well as personal acts.*

A mostly American cadre of avant-garde poets umbrella’d together as the Language School—and in dialogue/exchange with a range of contemporaneous British practitioners—launched a fierce anarcho-Marxist critique, via a samizdat-grounded poetics of (socio-textual) criticism, on commodified modes of textual production propped up by “official verse culture” in the 70s and 80s, an (indifferent-possibly-overlapping-instances) utopian and/or Messianic critique to which the polemic in the previous section is in debt.

But why does the critique implied by anarcho-Marxism take aim at grammar? This was explored briefly in the first section of this chapter, but let us consider the question in terms set by the Situationists some two decades prior to the Language School’s emergence.

First of all, we think the world must be changed. We want the most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such a change is possible through appropriate actions.

Our specific concern is the use of certain means of action and the discovery of new ones, means which are more easily recognizable in the domain of culture and customs, but which must be applied in interrelation with all revolutionary changes.

A society’s “culture” both reflects and prefigures its possible ways of organizing life.64

The interesting terms here are “appropriate actions,” “new ones” (regarding actions), and the dialectic referenced in “reflects and prefigures.” For poets with Bahktin, Benjamin, Wittgenstein, Barthes, the Situationists, de Certeau, and et al as their canon, poetry becomes a laboratory for imagining the radical diversion of crystallized streams of social organization into what Deleuze and Guattari call “war-machines”65—just as one might imagine the reorganization of words in a sentence to concoct previously non-existent structures of meaning. Because, “as the poets repeatedly tell us, the distinction between theory and poetry is an arbitrary one anyway.”66 But moving further along the continuum, “Theory is never more than an extension of practice.”67 In this way, the particular semantic residues and materialities of the language produced in such a laboratory would have the active social function of what Keston Sutherland terms the “anti-mirror”: an attempt at refusing to culturally reflect society’s “ways of organizing life” by actively projecting an alien(ating) image at those organizational modes—literally, conducting social choreographies and conducting experiments; cf Benjamin’s “rubbing history against the grain”) in approach of a functional(ly Proto-Post-Neo-Platonic?) “prefigure.”

According to the above de-conflation of imaginative theorizing and socio-linguistic behavior, I will divide the Language critique into two basic categories — metaphorical and literal—according to means by which the work’s critique engages an ontology distance between im/materiality and materiality—t/here and here. However, to identify two discrete tendencies within the Language school’s general critique would be to project polar limits onto the range of criticisms leveled by the movement’s key texts. Let my duality serve as a heuristic mechanism for parsing the recto and verso of the “totalizing, perspectival approach”68 that Language poetics and its authors have put forward. Though in the following chapter I will critique the Language school by employing a fundamental understanding of literary practices as practically/pragmatically anemic (if theoretically/imaginatively rich),
this chapter attempts to rearticulate their work as exemplary of what N. Katherine Hayles calls “literal metaphors.”

I have found it most useful to represent the Language School by a pastiche of their work in poetics. Charles Bernstein, from “Artifice of Absorption”: “The obvious problem is that the poem said any / other way is not the poem.” Notice the line breaks, reciting theory, quoting poetry. Copied below are some fragments broken by editorial interjections.

– METAPHORICAL CRITIQUE –

“‘Phonemes of the Word fragment! You have nothing to lose but your referents!’ And so the plagiaristic “literary communism” of Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman’s “Methods of Detournement” is updated by the parallel McCaffery builds between the discrete laborers under capitalism and the discrete laborers under the sentence. Means of production. Bruce Andrews, from “Poetry as Explanation, Poetry as Praxis”:

A notion of an allegory of method would offer a way to think about radical poetry’s work...

I have tended to think about this social machinery being confronted more as a methodological issue, more as something where challenge is prefigurative or parallels what other kinds of larger challenges would look like or could look like in society.

A practice of agency in regards to the means of linguistic production indeed functions as an engine for the generation of new meanings capable of articulating unconducive social desires, but also (and perhaps more importantly) as metaphor for a popular appropriation of the means of production, society at large realizing its fundamental ownership of the means of its own facilitation, social reproduction. Steve McCaffery’s critique is particularly Situationist in its emphasis on unleashing libidinal flows from the alienating repression of grammatical form when he writes in “From the Notebooks”:

Grammar is invested precisely because of the expected profit rate viz. a clarity through sequence carried into meaning. A grammatical critique can be mobilized by presenting language as opaque and resistant to reinvestment. A language centered writing, for instance, and zero-semantic sound poetry, diminishes the profit rate and lowers investment drives just as a productive need is increased. Meaning in these cases is no longer a surplus value, but that which is to be produced without reinvestment.
This need to produce (brought on by instituting an opacity in language) becomes the need to activate a relation of human energies.

And McCaffery from “Text-Sound, Energy and Performance”:

Language, through its nature as representation, its functioning by means of arbitrary, articulated signs, by means of rules, conditions and prohibitions, becomes a huge mechanism for repressing libidinal flows.

Charles Bernstein echoes this analysis with a look at the temporality of referential syntax in “Semblance”:

Sentences that follow standard grammatical patterns allow the accumulating references to enthrall the reader by diminishing diversions from a constructed representation.

The key phrase here is “diminishing diversions,” akin to McCaffery’s “repressing libidinal flows,” akin to the Situationists’ critique of alienation as denying the spontaneous pleasure of the diversion (detournement). And diversion is precisely what is at stake in radical political efficacy: the diversion and dispersal of powerful tools to people on the ground. Barrett Watten’s “XY” from DECAY:

X accepts addresses from Y tape. X plays on Y phone. X to adjust Y lamp. X feeling posture points To Y shaded head. As X if Y. X more to determine the radial Y. X spins Y. Least X to Y finale. And X chords strained line on racks of Y-ness. X doubles in line, format of Y procedure. Out of X, for Y. Points to X less around Y. One X stretches Y to here. An X crossed with Y breaks. Into X. Since Y. No but X. So that Y.

Charles Bernstein, from “Semblance”:

Not ‘death’ of the referent—rather a recharged use of the multivalent referential vectors that any word has, how words in combination tone and modify the associations made for each of them, how ‘reference’ then is not a one-to-one relation to an ‘object’ but a perceptual dimension that
closes in to pinpoint, nail down (“this” word), sputters omnitropically (the in in of which of who where what wells), refuses the build up of an image track/projection while, pointillistically, fixing a reference at each turn (fills vats ago lodges spire), or, that much rarer case...of “zaum” (so called “transrational”, pervasively neologic) – “ig ok aber-flappi” – in which reference, deprived of its automatic reflex reaction of word/stimulus image/response roams over the range of associations suggested by the word, word shooting off referential vectors like the energy field in a Kirillian photograph.79

Barrett Watten’s “INSIST”80 from DECAY:

I see walls straight into the ground.
This sentence occurs in other places.
Maybe his last toy fading into air
poses a colorless question. Clouds melt
on contact with sound. All strings
pulling together. Logic before thought.
A bag placed over the body waits for
the soul. I make demands. The gravest
mistake in his personal life was his
attachment to the ground. Bright
colored discs hardening into grids.
All is animated. This sentence we can
Assume. One divides into many others.

And to bridge into the next section, Charles Bernstein from “The Dollar Value of Poetry”: “language control = thought control = reality control.”81

– LITERAL CRITIQUE –

Eric Mottram, from ““Declaring a Behaviour”: The Poetry Performance”:

a change in poetics is generated by and generates new experiential definitions of what a poem is, inseperable from intellectual and emotional changes in the society of which it is a major function.82

Lyn Hejinian, from “The Rejection of Closure”:

Language discovers what one might know. Therefore, the limits of language are the limits of what we might know...Anything with limits can be imagined (correctly or incorrectly) as an object, by analogy with
other objects—ball and rivers.\textsuperscript{83}

The poem’s function under socio-cultural-specific conditions. Ron Silliman, from “Disappearance of the Word / Appearance of the World”:

some fairly specific statements concerning the object of inquiry can be made: (1) the stage of historical development determines the natural laws (or, if you prefer the terminology, the underlying structures) of poetry; (2) the stage of historical development determines the natural laws of language; (3) the primary impact on language, and language arts, of the rise of capitalism has been in the area of reference and is directly related to the phenomena known as the commodity fetish.\textsuperscript{84}

Bruce Andrews, from “Text and Context”:

Referentiality is diminished by organizing the language around other features or axes, around features which make present to us words’ lack of transparency, their practicality, their refusal to be motivated along schematic lines by frames exterior to themselves.\textsuperscript{85}

Charles Bernstein, from “The Dollar Value of Poetry”:

Experience dutifully translated into these ‘most accessible’ codes loses its aura and is reduced to the digestible contents which these rules alone can generate. There is nothing difficult in the products of such activity because there is no distance to be traveled, no gap to be aware of and to bridge from reader to text: what purports to be an experience is transformed into the blank stare of the commodity—there only to mirror our projections with an unseemly rapidity possible only because no experience of ‘other’ is in it...\textsuperscript{86}


For here the attempt is not to articulate the curve of a particular experience but to create a formal linguistic construct that itself shapes our perception of the world around us.\textsuperscript{87}

Steve McCaffery, from “Text-Sound, Energy and Performance”:

Language, through its nature as representation, its functioning by means of arbitrary, articulate signs, by means of rules, conditions, and
prohibitions, becomes a huge mechanism for suppressing libidinal flow. To investigate sound in isolation from the sign-function, and to practice out the actuality and non-representation of the phonematic marks an important stage in establishing the agencies for a general libidinal de-repression.  

Bruce Andrews, from “Text and Context”:

Language is the center, the primary material, the sacred corpus, the erotic sense of its own shared reality. Not a separate but a distinguishing reality. Yet where is the energy invested?

And not only where it is invested, but where/when/why/how is it invested? Andrews again, from “Poetry as Explanation, Poetry as Praxis”: “Writing’s (social) method is its politics, its explanation, since ‘the future’ is implicated one way or another by how reading reconvenes conventions.” Moving back now along the theory-practice continuum, away from the Language school’s utopianism as quoted above —“Theory is never more than an extension of practice”—to a pragmatic distancing (by way of inevitability) of poetic form conceived of as formative practice, I will read “(social) method” not only as poetic interventions into grammatical linguistic forms, but also as poetry’s dispersal into social networks via publication: out of the printer (or linked from a server) and into the world at large, a community of readers in complex material relationships to the means by which the poetic forms under discussion are presented to them. In terms of print culture (the subject of the following and concluding paragraph), what marks the poetry’s relation to a politics of praxis, even more so than the innovative techniques of the poetry itself, is the book’s history as an object and the means of production employed in its construction.
It is the poet side of you that dreams of being published, that sees a book with your title, your name on the jacket... How to make those dreams reality? Dreams don’t come true overnight, and, to be practical, they don’t happen without a lot of work.¹

Objects are constructed with labor, and labor employs tools (machines). Machines are constructed with labor, and they often employ humans. Objects are products of politico-economic relationships between humans and machines, often but not always taking the form of commodities; complex equations. Negotiating the various avenues of object-production—bound by such polar end-stops as shelf-life commodity markets and esoteric gift economies—involves fundamentally political choices about one’s implication in the production/consumption economy. Of course, one must consume raw goods in transforming them into “cooked” goods as it were, and this implication can be thought of as a notation of one’s ecological footprint, a deep economics that underpins all pro-sumption choices regardless of their surface relationship to “nature.”²

So when a poetry manuscript is written by an author, sent off to an editor who then sends off the copy to a commercial printer—e.g. “F.H. Brown Ltd. / Litho Division, / Helena St. Works, Burley”³—who then sends it back to the editor to be properly distributed to the book-sellers, cultural production is jacked into a syntax of specialized alienations, swept up in a stream of labor relations set in anarchic contiguities by the fluid aim of capital. And while environmental impact is questionable as always, we can be rest-assured that most commercial printers have particularly unhealthy relationships to global warming.

An experimental poetry published as the trace of a radical re-laboring of language moves closer towards a comprehensive praxis as the materiality of its book-ness and the “long biography”⁴ of its production/dispersal become more evidently intimate and localized. = hand-made in your living room or some intimate equivalent. Jerome McGann, from Social Values and Poetic Acts (1988):

Formal and immanent approaches to the poetic tend to conceive the discourse system as a verbal or grammatological one. Hence a sharp distinction is commonly made between ‘the text’, on the one hand, and the ‘document’ on the other. The distinction means to bracket out of consideration those bibliographical and textual-critical materials with
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which poetic discourse is always and necessarily involved. Such matters are taken to be accidental rather than substantive to the nature of the poetic. Consequently, bibliography and textual criticism are conceived as either preliminary or tangential to criticism and interpretation.

This critical neglect of documentary aspects of poetical discourse—this failure to incorporate documentary studies into modern hermeneutics — has obscured that horizon of the poetics where the work’s ideological dimensions are clearest. The options that writers choose in the area of initial production, as well as in printing, publishing and distribution—the options that are open to them in these matters— locate what one might call the ‘performative’ aspect of the poetic: what poems are doing in saying what they say.³

The object’s movement through climates of construction and distribution inscribe conditional marks on the book object, these marks contributing to an ever-developing and always-complete system of co-laboring object-functions at play in auralic fields of difference. But these marks can only be read backwards, through history: examining the cut-marks on the edge of a book cannot tell us the exact type of guillotine used for the trim, but a body of work trimmed on that guillotine will expose a constellation of labored relations—intertextuality of the material/medial enterprise—that lead by their dispersive branching into further networks and corpora. What Charles Bernstein calls a “technical cataloguing”⁶ in reference to close readings of formal technique in poems might be re-directed to reading the saturation of the poem in its object-status as an historical trace of its politico-economic methodologies.⁷ See Diagram 8, a panel from Bob Cobbing’s Destruction in Art (1986), for a mode of practice I will call performance-methodology-as-textuo-document.⁸ That is, motivated waste of the scriptural economy’s techne. Radical.

In order to contextualize the decisions I’ve made in editing and publishing the first issue of Plantarchy, I will briefly describe opposing models for publishing and “getting published” in terms of a heuristic dialectic: market orientation and community orientation. While my study of the market orientation is a theoretical engagement with how-to guides and insiders’ manuals, my study of the community orientation is informed both by theory and practical community engagement. This latter category includes my experience as a book-making intern for Xexoxial Editions—a product of this experience being the network of practitioners into which I tapped to find contributors for Plantarchy, as previously mentioned—and an ongoing body of primary research that I am conducting on London-based micro-press publications associated with what Eric Mottram calls the “British Poetry Revival” of 1960-1975.⁹ This is a project that, by nature of its historical specificity, necessitates further (and more specialized) archival research, of which the present document serves only as an introduction. For now, further study awaits
the publication of an exciting book that documents a particular nexus of activities falling at (and actually beyond the so-called) end of the British Poetry Revival, the spirit of which has been the impetus for much of the political desires expressed in the previous chapters. For now, I will quote from selected portions of Peter Barry’s *Poetry Wars: British Poetry of the 1970s and the Battle of Earls Court* (2006) to give a quick sense of historical precedent:

An odd thing happened in British poetry in the 1970s, but the full story has never been told. A small group of ‘radical’ or ‘experimental’ poets took over the Poetry Society, one of the most conservative of British cultural institutions, and for a period of six years, from 1971 to 1977, its journal, *Poetry Review*, was the most startling poetry magazine in the country. Some revered it, others reviled it, but nobody in the 70s who was seriously interested in poetry could ignore it. Then, in the summer of 1977, it was over, almost as suddenly as it had begun...the conflict at the Poetry Society was a key moment in the history of contemporary British Poetry, polarizing the rift between the ‘neo–modernists’, who sought to continue the 1960s revival of the early twentieth–century’s ‘modernist revolution’, and the neo–conservatives, who sought to further the ‘anti–modernist counter–revolution’ of the 1950s...So the present book is, among other things, a case study of the inevitable frictions and tactical struggles between an avant–garde and a ‘mainstream’.

...In terms of what happened on a daily basis at the Poetry Society’s headquarters at 21 Earls Court Square, the key figure was Bob Cobbing, a poet who was at the centre of the international movement in ‘sound texts’ and ‘visual poetries’ (also known as Concrete Poetry), and a major figure generally in the London ‘counter–culture’ of the 1960s and 70s as a performer and small–press publisher. He was the driving force behind the most radical aspects of the Poetry Society in these years, such as the Society’s basement print-shop, and its involvement in the quasi-trade–unionisation of the poetry scene. He had been among the first of the radicals to be elected to the Poetry Society’s governing Council, in the late 1960s, and he was at the centre of most of the key developments, such as the link–up with his organisations *Writers Forum*, *Poets Conference* (no apostrophes in either), and the *ALP* (*The Association of Little Presses*), which together brought a form of 1960s left–wing collectivism to the highly individualistic business of writing and publishing poetry.10

And cris cheek, print-shop manager at the National Poetry Centre, writes:

A struggle for control of the most prominent organization for poetry in England took place, involving a struggle between the ideals of an artist-led organization, largely dependent upon voluntary labour, and the
rising ideals of “professionalism” in the arts which foreshadowed that managerial trauma which Thatcherism came to personify.¹¹

Now, a selection of notes taken while conducting biblio-material analyses of the complete run of *Poetry Review* at SUNY-Buffalo’s poetry archive:

From *Vol 65 Nos 2/3 1975* to *Vol 65 No 4 1975* there is a notable difference in the structure of the journal as a book object. Though edited by Eric Mottram since *Vol 62 No 3 Autumn 1971* and thus publishing a wider range of experimental aesthetics than ever before, *Vol 65 No 4 1975* sees a critical change in the peritext: issues of *Poetry Review* from this issue through *Vol 67 Nos 1/2 1977* were printed at “the National Poetry Centre in the Printshop of the Poetry Society / London Consortium of Small Presses”, rather than the commercial (read: professional) printer of the last issue prior to its DIY publication, “Printed by F.H. Brown Ltd. / Litho Division, / Helena St. Works, Burley”. On the other hand, the National Poetry Centre was a comprehensive approach to poetry as the nexus for a web of social relationships and a temporality of fluid labor-identities rather than a cog in a commodity structure.¹²

Scanning the spines from *Vol LVII No 1 Spring 1967* to *Vol 67 Nos 1&2 1977*—the two issues registering the DIY shift in the review’s material production, *Vol 65 No 4 1975* and the subsequent *Vol 66 No 1 1975*, have spines where the title runs off the allotted space, taped or glued bits of paper with the spine information typed upon them stuck on the master and copied, the crudeness of this aesthetic (or simply, rush) evened out in further issues. Also note shift from A4 (?) to large format (A5?). *Vol 65 No 4 1975* also marks the shift from a mat finish on the cover to a rough cover stock.

Top left corner of the back cover of *Vol 66 No 1 1975*—black thumb-print inked from the offset machine. Was this mark encoded onto the plate and reproduced in all of the editions? It’s not close enough to the edge that it would have been cut off had the spine been aligned, a centimeter to the left. The aura of that print on this copy, no matter how many copies were made. The cut marks on the book blocks, the patterns of the cut over the four large format issues indicative of a common machine, a situated labor, the aesthetics of this informatic noise.

*Poetry Review* was printed out of the National Poetry Centre’s basement for only five numbers before the literature branch of the Arts Council cracked down on the “radicals,” spurring them to quit the Poetry Society en masse. In *Poetry Review*’s first issue after the gradual abandonment of the print-shop, an issue printed commercially but oddly lacking epitextual acknowledgement of the issue’s designer or printer—a willed ignorance of material production and implication in
structures of Capital—an editorial note reads:

The change in the magazine’s format has been necessitated by practical economics. The Poetry Society hopes that this will not greatly inconvenience regular readers of the Review. ¹³

As ciphers of an everyday phenomenology of anti-capitalist employments of State-funded printing machines, books of experimental poetry made in print-runs of 100 or 200 at the National Poetry Centre—when totalized by what McGann terms “document” rather than simply “text”—trace the radical buzz of a micro-“social circuitry.”¹⁴ The projection of this trace as an illuminated utopian blueprint onto the circuitry of society at large is what I will call the work of a fractal imagination.

Plantarchy was conceived of and realized in the spirit of such histories as the National Poetry Centre and the anarcho-pastoral of Xexoxial Editions: two contemporaneous struggles—unequal parts pragmatic and utopian—for spontaneous modes of social re-organization as principled by intimate collectives of cultural production.¹⁵ Meanwhile, countless reference-books on publishing market themselves as Guides to various writers’ Markets, arguing for the necessity of literary Agents (read: Agency) to mediate between author and publisher. There’s a blatant socio-metaphysics to these dominant conceptions of writing and reading, a passive appeal to an anemic vision of democracy that articulates (and thus reproduces) individuals as monads in discrete isolation from power: the poet needs an insider’s guide because the poet is not the agent. Division of labor, division of life.

The radical poli-aesthetics set spinning at the National Poetry Centre were an explicit subversion of any notion of agency that isolates agency from individual (and/or spontaneously collected) subjectivities;¹⁶ community-organized publishing collectives saturate the mechanical space of object-production with a fundamental agency. Networked free power. cris cheek, from “Sky Tails: An Encryption of Dispersal”:

Through Bob Cobbing’s initiation, the Consortium of London Presses fostered an artist-led d.i.y. ethic, to make poetry available through available means. The print shop was open in the sense that anybody who wanted to try their hand at printing a book of poems or stories could do so. Poets turned up with manuscripts and left with editions of books, often pamphlets but sometimes sizeable volumes. There were people on hand to help, all of them poets.¹⁷

The market orientation conceives of agency as a result of money and money as a result of agency, making agency tautologically consonant with the dollar and all the conventions that smooth out its avenues of circulation. Ouroboros’.¹⁸
The community orientation conceives of agency as an inherent presence akin to notions of spirit and energy. In “Punk as Poetry: cris cheek and his offset press collaborations” William R. Howe describes how:

> [the] blatant, raw and unpolished feel [of cheek’s London-based hand-made poetry editions in the 1970s and early 80s] reflected punk’s deep suspicion of the glossy, slick media and bourgeois façades of normalcy and implied relevancy.¹⁹

It is “implied relevancy”—as communicated via the jargons of paratextual convention—that a radical writing/publishing praxis avoids at all costs. See Diagram 9 for a page from 405-12-3415’s REGISTER FOR MORE (2006) which was composed under the guise of my social security number as a critico-practical response to knowledge of the territorialization of the National Poetry Centre. While Plantarchy was printed and bound in my living room using machines that were either purchased with grant money or built with the help of William R. Howe, the journal cannot be considered terribly radical if one notes the nods to power that are made on the acknowledgements page and elsewhere, include the ISSN, the Copyright logo, a price, and even the relatively high production values that under-wrote the hours of sew-binding and taping. However, the work represents a diverse range of practitioners who were all contacted directly for their work, and so the “Contributors” page is the document of a certain kind of mediated intimacy. This is in point opposition to notions of publishing that situate desire in a cult of democratic appeal. If my work isn’t bad enough, the jury’ll rule in my favor.

Melanie Rigney’s brief report in Poet’s Market 2003, “A Look at Alternatives in Publishing,”²¹ is a libertarian “alternative” to the ordered bourgeois labor demanded by the book within which it is framed in the jargon of “difference.” It’s pragmatic insofar as its being a kind of realization of subjective imaginations via the channeling of passive and abstracted labor—money. Tom and Marilyn Ross assume “self-publishing” (also called “vanity publishing” and akin to Rigney’s libertarian alternatives) to be pursued for the achieving of market-oriented desires: “Not everyone self-publishes for the same reason. Most, however, choose this alternative for financial gain.”²² These “alternatives” to “publishing” are far from the radical labor of a critical pragmatism, an unspecialized anarcho-Marxism. Radically metonymic labor: poets controlling the means of their poetry’s production in all the many forms of labor that this production takes.

The market orientation imagines the realization of desires to be far-off rewards withheld as both quantity and quality in exchange for a temporalized quantity of specialized labor. The community orientation imagines the realization of dreams to be the material reorganization of everyday reality according to immediate desires, e.g. book-making and correspondence as two points on a
NOTES
INTRODUCTION

1. But what’s interesting is that Plantarchy, like most books these days, began as an InDesign file. Texts were both copied into the document from text files and keyed in by hand from hard copy. The blur between analog and digital means is effectively a blur of their a/effects as ontological structures of transfer. This is rich grounds for a discussion in terms of McGann’s “initial production,” and such a discussion took place as a chaired event at post moot, “a convocation of unorthodox cultural and poetic practices” that took place at Miami University from April 14-16th, 2006 as organized by William R. Howe, cris cheek, and myself. (McGann; 74-75)

2. In public, discrete things act with discretion.

3. Deleuze and Guattari; 311


CHAPTER ONE

1. Hegel 1821; 243

2. Karl Marx. “Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” (1859). (Leitch; 774)


4. On this split, which is a popular site of criticism against radical political agendas, the Belgian Raoul Vaneigem proposes a strict redefinition of knowledge in order to deal with the old mind/body dualism for which the theory/practice rift is a foil: “Knowledge is inseparable from the use that is made of it” (“Some Theoretical Questions to be Treated without Academic Debate or Speculation” in Internationale Situationisste #10, March 1966: Knabb; 168)

5. “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography” in Les Lèvres Nues #6, September 1955 (Knabb; 6)
6. It should be noted that my frequent citing of Hegel and Ken Knabb’s Situationist International Anthology is a product of Marxist ideology—Hegel preceding Marx, the Situationists proceeding after a century of Marxian theorizing and the communist shadow having grown long in the evening, haunting not only Europe but the Americas, the Maghreb, and parts of Asia. The few citations of Marx himself will serve as sign-posts, leaving the profit of his work to be articulated by the Situationists, who digested his theoretical legacy and projected it with lucidity onto the politico-economic milieu in which they found themselves as conflicted artists.

7. Smith’s theory is only applicable to industrialized nations, as the will to nationalize resources in many of the post-colonial States during the 1960s and ‘70s was argued by the Algerian Mustafa Khayati to be no more than “a realized neomercantilism” in “Contributions Towards Rectifying Public Opinion Concerning Revolution in the Underdeveloped Countries” (*Internationale Situationisste #11*, October 1967: Knabb; 221). With the continued absence of heavy industry, it can hardly be said that the political economies of these nations have changed significantly since Khayati’s writing. Surely the US occupation and “democratizing” of Iraq is a significant alteration to the country’s politico-economic structures, and the future of that struggle will surely be telling. But Smith’s theory limits this study’s sights to the industrialized nations, and in particular the United States. Ben Watson writes: “As the saviour of postwar capitalism in Europe, the United States is the inevitable antagonist...It figures in the pages of...[the] *Internationale Situationisste* as an object of hatred, as the personification of Capital, as the font of the Spectacle. We can observe the same point of view developing in the analyses of the Frankfurt School” (Watson 1996; online). The font of the Spectacle...this will be a pivotal qualification as English grammar becomes a site of political critique in the following chapter.

8. See note 2.

9. Avineri; 52

10. Vaneigem 1967; 131

11. “The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret” (Marx 1867; online)

12. “Qualitative totality” rings of how University of Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield (1947) theorized the political economies of the pre-urban as organized in “folk societies”—autonomous, homogenous, pre-literate, communalist micro-
societies of everyday sacred ritual—a poetic thesis with a rather Gothic distaste of the urban city as influenced by Louis Wirth’s study of urban ecology in Chicago, relevant to the Situationists with their “psychogeography” and “unitary urbanism.”

13. Vaneigem 1967; 39

14. Quoted by Ulrich K. Preuß in “Political Order and Democracy: Carl Schmitt and His Influence” (Nowak et al.; 23).

15. Smith; online

16. Considering the notion of public/private space, the notion of politicians as public servants is exposed as one of the many contradictions of capitalist democracy. Consider the wage-slaves and the working poor who labor behind closed doors, during night-shifts, after-hours, in factories of which the average consumer hardly receives images in the media. If only they weren’t invisible, these workers would deserve the label “public servant” more than any bureaucratic role-player. But class is a private affair in the United States.

17. “and the Word was God...and the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:1)


19. Hegel 1821; 243

20. In *Defence of Poetry* (1821), Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote that poets are “the unacknowledged legislators of the world.” Now this quote from Debord, on “the passivity relation” as a product of division: “reduced to the role of spectators of those among them who are the most qualified in politics conceived as a specialization” (“Instructions for Taking Up Arms” in *Internationale Situationisste #6*, August 1961; Knabb, 63). Charles Bernstein points out in his preface to *The Politics of Poetic Form* (1990) that the American poet George Oppen revised Shelley’s dictum to: “poets are the legislators of the unacknowledged world” (Bernstein; vii).

21. Watson and Leslie; online

22. Vaneigem 1967; 119, 149
23. Bey 1985; 37, 42

24. “Dissolving the State in the Economic Organism” (Krimerman and Perry; 325)

25. “Instructions for Taking Up Arms” in Internationale Situationistes #6, August 1961 (Knabb; 65)


27. Safety

28. Risk

29. Vaneigem 1967; 131-132

30. Power: the degree to which an organization can “[change] the structure of reality by the manipulation of living symbols” (“Communique #6” of the Association for Ontological Anarchy: Bey 1985; 39)

31. Prema Murthy’s web-art installation “Mythic Hybrid” in the e-journal Drunken Boat 7 explores “the shifting boundaries of space, culture and modes of embodiment” as they relate to women laborers in Indian microelectronics factories.

32. See Diagram 1: “Pyramid of Capitalist System,” circa 1911 agitprop for Industrial Worker. This message is still being reproduced in contemporary samizdat poetry journals such as the Detroit-based STRUGGLE, “a Magazine of Proletarian Revolutionary Literature” edited by Tim Hall. Ironically, I found STRUGGLE in Poet’s Market 2003.


34. “Dissolving the State in the Economic Organism” (Krimerman and Perry; 324)

35. Althusser 1965; 90

36. “Absolutely nothing but a futile martyrdom could possibly result now from a
head-on collision with the terminal State...Its guns are all pointed at us, while our meager weaponry finds nothing to aim at but a hysteresis, a rigid vacuity...in most cases the best and most radical tactic will be to refuse to engage in spectacular violence, to withdraw from the area of simulation, to disappear” (Bey 1985; 98, 100)

37. Deleuze and Guattari; 23


40. Althusser’s “know-how” resonates as a product of Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus.”

41. Althusser 1971; 132

42. “Arbitrary” is a legacy of the Swiss father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, whose Course in General Linguistics (1915) is a product of synchronic linguistic enquiry as informed by histories of diachronic enquiry. If language can be imagined as changing through time along an X-axis, synchronic analysis comes down along the Y-axis to describe the structural properties of a particular linguistic moment, putting the reality of evolution on hold for theoretical purposes. This leads into the structuralism of Roman Jakobson and his metaphoric & metonymic axes, the influence of such being evident in the above discussion of hierarchy as a function of two axes.

43. Barthes; 11. It is important to note here the Marxian undertones of Barthes’ frustration. Marx wrote in “The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret”: “The Forms which stamp products as commodities...already possess the fixed quality of natural forms of social life before man seeks to give an account, not of their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable, but of their content and meaning.” (Marx 1867; online)

44. Vaneigem 1967; 199

45. Hegel 1999; 160
46. Barthes; 42

47. “May ‘68 Did Not Take Place” (Kraus and Lotringer; 211). It should be noted that they are specifically referring to the psychological affect of social institutions such as nursing homes, schools for marginal students, and prisons. The term’s scope is more limited than the significance I give it, but it’s useful as a parallel to what Hakim Bey identifies as the “rigid vacuity” within which one is saturated in attempts at confrontations with capitalism (Bey 1985; 98)

48. “the fundamental contradictions...between the system and human desires. The social force that has an interest in—and is alone capable of—resolving these contradictions is all the workers who are powerless over their own lives, unable to control the fantastic accumulation of material possibilities that they produce.” (“Untitled Programmatic Statements” by the Italian Section of the S.I., 1965 & 1969: Knabb; 338

49. Vaneigem 1967; 39

50. Bey 1985; 98

51. “Questionnaire” in Internationale Situationisste #6, August 1964 (Knabb; 138)

52. The perception of significance being a function of culturally specific value judgments, let it not be assumed that I imply any one definition of significance. For a corpus of multi-media arts projects addressing this issue explicitly, cf. TNWK (things not work keeping), a long-term collaboration between Kirsten Lavers and cris cheek. Online at: http://www.thingsnotworthkeeping.com

53. Bey 1985; 81

54. Vaneigem 1967; 199

55. “Boredom is counterrevolutionary. In every way.” (“The Bad Days Will End” in Internationale Situationisste #7, April 1962: Knabb; 86)

56. “Everyone seeks spontaneously to extend such brief moments of real life” (Vaneigem 1967; 134)

57. Vaneigem 1967; 193
59. “Instructions for Taking Up Arms” in *Internationale Situationisste #6*, August 1961 (Knabb; 64)

60. Hegel 1821; 37

61. “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.” (Debord; 12)

62. Knabb; ix

63. Watson 1996; online

64. “An Individualist Attack: Communists Cannot Be Anarchists” (Krimerman and Perry; 16)

65. “Please leave the Communist Party as clean on leaving / it as you would like to find it on entering.” (May ‘68 graffiti reproduced at the Bureau of Publics Secrets website: www.bopsecrets.org/CF/graffiti.htm)

66. “Syndicalism, the Industrial Expression of Anarchism” (Krimerman and Perry; 38)

67. “Of the tendencies...of the workers movement in Europe, only the most radical current is worth preserving: that centered on the program of workers councils.” ("Instructions for Taking Up Arms” in *Internationale Situationisste #6*, August 1961: Knabb; 63)


69. “Syndicalism Not a Form of Anarchism” (Krimerman and Perry; 45)

70. Vaneigem 1967; 39

71. “Questionnaire” in *Internationale Situationisste #9*, August 1964 (Knabb; 141)

72. Or in Deleuze and Guattari’s Heraclitean terminology, “becoming.”

73. Nowak and Paprzycki; 252

75. “All the King’s Men” in Internationale Situationisste #8, January 1963 (Knabb; 115)

76. Bey 1985; 37, 68, 81, 31, 88

77. Vaneigem 1967; 191

78. Lautréamont; 279


81. “Avant Gardening” (Wilson and Weinberg; 1999)

82. “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography” in Les Lèvres Nues #6, September 1955 (Knabb; 5).

83. Moore; 38

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**CHAPTER TWO**


3. Jed Rasula. “Statement on Reading in Writing” (Bernstein and Andrews; 53)

4. Roland Barthes coins the term “metalanguage” to refer to “a second language, in which one speaks about the first.” (Barthes; 115)

5. In the linguistics jargon, pragmatics refers to the descriptive study of language as actively used in particular social contexts, emphasizing relations between
speakers.

6. “IF EVERY WORD SPOKEN IN NEW YORK CITY DAILY / WERE SOMEHOW TO MATERIALIZE AS A SNOWFLAKE, / EACH DAY THERE WOULD BE A BLIZZARD.” (Goldsmith; 489)

7. “The utility of a thing makes it a use value...Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use value, something useful...When treating of use value, we always assume to be dealing with definite quantities, such as dozens of watches, yards of linen, or tons of iron...Use values become a reality only by use or consumption: they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth. In the form of society we are about to consider, they are, in addition, the material depositories of exchange value.” (Marx 1867; online)

8. Sutherland 2005; no pagination

9. “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to statements uttered.” (de Certeau; 97)

10. de Certeau; 98

11. cris cheek, Kirby Malone, Marshall Reese. “TV TRIO present CAREER WRIST” (Bernstein and Andrews; 146)

12. Walter Benjamin writes in “One-Way Street”: “Significant literary effectiveness can come into being only in a strict alternation between action and writing; it must nurture the inconspicuous forms that fit its influence in active communities better than does the pretentious, universal gesture of the book—in leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards. Opinions are to the vast apparatus of social existence what oil is to machines” (Benjamin 1996; 444).

13. Andrew Carnie writes in Syntax: A Generative Introduction: “This matching of situations with expressions is a kind of mathematical relation (or function) that maps sentences onto particular situations.” (Carnie; 14)

14. J.H. Prynne writes in “A Letter to Steve McCaffery”: “But in the political question of reference to a world in which social action is represented linguistically and its consequences marked out by economic function and personal access to social goods (justice, freedom, brown bread), the ludic syntax of a language system
is mapped on to determinations and coercions which by invasion cast their weights and shadows parasitically into the playing-fields.” (Dorward 2000; 41)

15. In “Magick Squares and Future Beats: The Magical Processes and Methods of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin,” Genesis Breyer P-Orridge writes that “alchemists always used the most modern equipment and mathematics, the most precise science of their day” (Metzger; 113)

16. In “Pattern Poems,” Dick Higgins writes: “The process of forming words... a very sacred one indeed, part of the divine game of realizing things out of their underlying numbers or letters...” (Bernstein and Andrews; 87)

17. John 1:14

18. Benjamin 1955; 256


20. J.H. Prynne writes in “A Letter to Steve McCaffery”: “...in human languages my guess is that all evolved societies have built evolved dialectics representing the space of their internal and external contradictions” (Dorward 2000; 44)

21. Adorno 1991; online

22. Trans. Ketson Sutherland. (Sutherland 2006; 44)

23. Bruce Boone. “Writing, Power and Activity” (Bernstein and Andrews; 142)

24. Morenberg; 33

25. Carnie; 27

26. “Artifice of Absorption” (Bernstein 1992; 12)

27. See Diagrams 2a and 2b for structural diagrams of “the human speech mechanism,” a model from which we can draw parallels to the material functionalities of writing apparatuses, machines numerous enough for me to avoid the issue of typology in general. (Herndon; 81, 78)

29. Herndon; v

30. In “Rejection of Closure” (1985), Lyn Hejinian writes: “As Francis Ponge puts it, ‘Man is a curious body whose center of gravity is not in himself.’ Instead it seems to be located in language, by virtue of which we negotiate our mentalities and the world” (Hoover; 654)

31. Benjamin 1996; 444

32. Jow Lindsay. “Wind Section” (katKO; 6, brackets mine)

33. Morenberg; vii

34. *Patterns and Purpose* is appropriately a part of the “Effective English Series” as edited by James A. Epperson (Opdahl; vii)

35. Note the metaphoric reference to the base—“foundation stone” (Herndon; 122)

36. In light of discussions around hierarchy and divisions of labor in the previous chapter, consider the socio-political implications of hierarchy and constituency being used to describe structural features of language.

37. Carnie; 27

38. Note the metaphor of the political body—corpus—which when ordered in the social, becomes the body politic—corpora—or bodies politicized by social theory. (Carnie; 10)

39. Herndon; 173

40. This should be paralleled with my comments on the division of labor in the previous chapter.

41. There is perhaps a distinct ontological foundation to the spatial reference in this metaphor.

42. Carnie; 80

43. Carnie; 93
44. Morenberg; 144

45. Carnie’s prose accompanying these trees—reproduced in the Diagrams section along with the trees as they appear together in the textbook—is particularly interesting. It’s fascinating language, whether read beneath or outside of the light of its implications—spell-binding. (Carnie; 299, 303)

46. Herndon; vi

47. A chest made of stacked drawers. See Appendix 7.

48. Also: “These procedures are part of our minds.” Questions: What else is part of our minds? What is minding our parts? The parts of our mind? The mine of our parts? Answers: All mined. Mind all mine. (Carnie; 5)

49. Think of model and utterance in terms of de Saussure’s “langue” and “parole.”

50. See discussion in the previous chapter of Saussure and Jakobson, and the distinction between diachronic and synchronic linguistics, the distinction between the metonymic and metaphoric axes.

51. Polemic.

52. One example: “Grammarians analyze sentences in order to understand how language works in social or psychological or literary contexts. Thus, when we get through analyzing sentences, we’ll look at how sentences function in literature and in our own writing so that we can become more thoughtful writers and readers, more knowledgeable teachers of writing and reading, or more discerning editors. Doing grammar in the way suggested in this book should make you a more perceptive observer of language.” (Morenberg; 3)

53. J.H. Prynne in “A Letter to Steve McCaffery”: “I do not believe that ‘freedom’ from this aspect of the social order is more than illusory...No free signifiers: no unvalorised process: no free lunch!” (Dorward 2000; 41)

54. Carnie; 7

55. Carnie; 24
56. Morenberg; 3

57. Opdahl; viii

58. Strunk and White; xiv

59. “Sources include Follett’s *Modern American Usage*, Kittridge’s *Advanced English Grammar*, Stein’s *How to Write*, Modern Language Association’s *In-House Style Sheet*, Hagar’s *The English of Business*, Marin and Ohmann’s *Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition*, Raleigh’s *Style*, and Eichler’s *Book of Etiquette*.” ( Bernstein and Andrews; 182)

60. Eric Mottram. “‘Declaring a Behaviour’: The Poetry Performance” (cheek 1977; no pagination)

61. With some parts Canadian and in rich dialogue with British contemporaries, a few of whom are discussed in Chapter 3.

62. “The official cultural apparatus, as it applies to American poetry—what I’ve called ‘official verse culture’—is most clearly revealed in the publishing and reviewing practices of the New York Times, and a number of old-line literary quarterlies; by the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Awards, and the Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellowships; by such presenting organizations as...” etc. (Bernstein 1992; 93)

63. Knabb; 17

64. Deleuze and Guattari; 351

65. Perloff 1985; 218


67. Sutherland 2005; no pagination


69. Hayles discusses the dynamic feedback cycles between metaphor and means:
“what we make and what we (think we) are co-evolve together.” This is a rich approach if poetry is considered heuristically as a material, constructivist practice—the “primary assumption that code is ontological.” (Hayles; online)

70. Bernstein 1992; 16

71. Steve McCaffery. “The Death of the Subject: The Implications of Counter-Communication in Recent Language-Centered Writing” (Bernstein and Andrews; 1980)

72. Knabb; 11

73. For an openly plagiaristic school of cultural and poetic practice contemporaneous with the Language school, see Stephen Perkins’ essay on Neoism in *Plantarchy*: “Neoist Interruptus and the Collapse of Originality” (katKO; 56)

74. Bruce Andrews. “Poetry as Explanation, Poetry as Praxis” (Bernstein 1990; 32, 39)

75. Bernstein and Andrews; 160

76. McCaffery and Nichol; 72

77. Bernstein and Andrews; 116

78. Watten; no pagination

79. Bernstein and Andrews; 115

80. Watten; no pagination

81. Bernstein and Andrews; 140

82. cheek 1977; no pagination

83. Hoover; 653

84. Bernstein and Andrews; 122

85. Bernstein and Andrews; 35
86. Bernstein and Andrews; 140

87. Perloff 1985; 230

88. McCaffery and Nichol; 72

89. Bernstein and Andrews; 31

90. Bernstein 1992; 31

CHAPTER THREE

1. Baumann and Johnson; 100

2. Cf. Wilson and Weinberg 1999

3. Poetry Review Vol 65 No 3

4. Peter Middleton, from Distant Reading: “only by adding this diachronic analysis of the commodity can we understand the full implications of the changing status of an object that may at different times become a different sort of commodity or cease to be one altogether, for theories of the commodity, consumption, markets, and gift economies.” (Middleton; 4)

5. McGann; 74-75

6. Bernstein 1992; 10

7. cris cheek, from “Sky Tails: An Encryption of Dispersal”: “See Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press, 1997). Paratexts are those conventions within literature and printing that act as thresholds, that meditate between a writer’s text and a reader and/or receiver of that text. Furthermore, there are conventions within a book (the epitext) and conventions outside the book (the peritext) that combine through such patterns.” (Dorward 2003; 185)

8. Cobbing; no pagination

10. Barry; online

11. cris cheek. “Sky Tails: An Encryption of Dispersal” (Dorward 2003; 185)

12. What do I mean by “a temporality of fluid labor-identities”? In 
*L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Supplement 2*, ten of twelve pages are devoted to a 
listing of small experimental UK poetry magazines, compiled by cris cheek. No 
ote note is made of who should or shouldn’t submit, because the publication itself is 
intended for a specific and marginal community of readers rather than the mass 
market targeted by a publication such as *Poet’s Market*. The market orientation 
assumes a specialization of labor while the community orientation assumes a 
comprehensive and hybrid fluidity of practice as both invention and community 
investment. Note that the editors in cheek’s listing are also practitioners, nearly all 
being contributors to one or more of the forty-one magazines in total. (Bernstein 
and Andrews; online)


14. Jed Rasula. “Statement on Reading in Writing” (Bernstein and Andrews; 53)

15. “The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image 
which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again... 
For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own 
concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.” (Benjamin 1955; 255)

16. cris cheek ran the print-shop at the National Poetry Centre during the final 
years documented in Peter Barry’s Poetry Wars.

17. Dorward 2003; 185

18. See Diagram 9

19. Howe; 16

20. 405-12-3415; no pagination

21. Breen; 17-19

22. Howry; 243
DIAGRAMS

DIAGRAM 1
The arch of the tongue is shown here in position to produce the mid-central vowel, which is often called the schwa and is assigned the symbol /ə/.

**ARTICULATORS AND POINTS OF ARTICULATION**

*Articulators:*
- Nasal Cavity
- Teeth (dental)
- Alveolar ridge
- Palate
- Velem
- Glottis
- Lips (labia)
- Tongue parts:
  - Tip (apex)
  - Front
  - Dorsum
- Vocal cords

*Points of Articulation:
Diagram 3

The Base: Phrase Structure Rules / 173

Phrase marker:

```
S
  | NP
  |  
  | D
  | N
  | + Common
  | + Count
  | N_{st} -es
```

Illustrative sentences:
The An A
clock orange girl
ticks. is round. took our order.

Note: Past tense verb forms are not affected by the first person singular affix.

---2---

Choices from phrase structure rules:
1. S → NP VP Av-t
2. NP → D N
3. N → [+ Common]
4. [+ Common] → [- Count]
5. Does not apply.
6. Does not apply.
7. D → Dem

---3---

Choices from phrase structure rules:
1. S → NP VP
2. NP → N
3. N → [+ Common]
4. [+ Common] → [+ Count]
5. [+ Count] → N_{pl} \emptyset
6. Does not apply.
7. Does not apply.
In (14a) the circled NP c-commands the NP dominating herself, but in (14b) it does not. It appears that the crucial relationship between an anaphor and its antecedent involves c-command. So in describing the relationship between an anaphor and an antecedent we need a more specific notion than simple coindexation. This is binding:

15) Binds
   A binds B if and only if
   A c-commands B and
   A and B are coindexed.

Binding is a kind of coindexation. It is coindexation that happens when one of the two NPs c-commands the other. Notice that coindexation alone does not constitute binding. Binding requires both coindexation and c-command.

Now we can make the following generalization, which explains the ungrammaticality of sentences (16a)(=7) and (16b)(=12c).

16) a) (=7) *Herself bopped Heidi on the head with a zucchini.
    b) (=12c) *[Heidi,’s mother] bopped herself, on the head with a zucchini.

In neither of these sentences is the anaphor bound. In other words, it is not c-commanded by the NP it is coindexed with. This generalization is called Binding Principle A. Principle A determines the distribution of anaphors:
The arbitrators examined the problems that had caused the strike.
This move is illegitimate. It violates the Subjacency Condition by crossing two bounding nodes: the NP and the highest TP. This is the result we want, since the sentence is ill-formed. The Subjacency Condition correctly predicts that this sentence will be bad. Notice that we can’t use the escape hatch we used with the grammatical sentence (51). There is no specifier of CP between the highest TP and the NP, so there is no stopping off place. For the sake of completeness, here is the tree for the comparable sentence without an NP island (*What did Bill claim that he read in the syntax book*):
Movement of this second wh-phrase causes the violation. It can’t stop off in the lower CP, because this position is already occupied by the other wh-phrase. Who is thus forced to cross two bounding nodes, resulting in a Subjacency violation. You might think that we could rescue this tree by simply ordering the movements differently, by moving the who-phrase first (thus allowing it to stop in the lower CP specifier), then moving the what-phrase. Due to the existence of traces, however, this is also ruled out. Using the same D-structure as before, let’s move the who-phrase first, in two steps so that it doesn’t violate Subjacency:
405-12-3415
from REGISTER FOR MORE
DIAGRAM 10
RETROACTIVE
INTRATEXT

REFERENCE: MUTUALITY

RUINS RUINS

......INKGSMAK-EINKGS.............

COMPLEX!


Ouroboros Images:

INKGSMAKEINKGS
http://www.infonoise.net/Description/ouroboros.jpg

COMPLEX!
www.wianckoproductions.com/osq/ouroboros.jpg

REFERENCE: MUTUALITY

RUINS RUINS
http://www.um.u-tokyo.ac.jp/museum/ouroboros/01_01/images/what.jpeg


http://www.bibliomania.com/2/1/65/112/frameset.html


Sutherland, Keston. “Mainstream and Margins in Contemporary British

Sutherland, Keston, ed. *Quid 16*. (Brighton: Barque Press, 2006).


OTHER TITLES FROM CRITICAL DOCUMENTS

BEAR$BAREBEAR$
  Coupons≠Coupons

HOLIDAY IN TIKRIT
  Keith Tuma & jUSTin!katKO

REGISTER FOR MORE
  405-12-3415

TWO FILM-TEXTS (dvd)
  Keith Tuma & jUSTin!katKO

SHE’S NOT A MANAGER WHO HOVERS IN
  405-12-3415

PLANTARCHY 1
  Tom Raworth, Jow Lindsay, Lisa Jarnot, William R. Howe, Rodrigo Toscano, mIEKAL aND, Stephen Perkins, Camille Martin, Chris Stroffolino, 405-12-3415, Christophe Casamassima, Sheila E. Murphy, Kevin R. Hollo, John M. Bennett & Jim Leftwich, Ritchie A. Katko, Jefferson Hansen, Maria Damon, Matthew Klane, Geof Huth, Andrew Topel, & Alan Sondheim. jUSTin!katKO, ed.

PLANTARCHY 2: Performance & Performativity
  Stuart Calton, cris cheek, Daisy Levy, Piers Hugill, Keith Tuma, Michael Slosek, Camille PB, Michael Basinski, Brenda Iijima, Ric Royer, rob mclennan, Performance Thanatology Research Society, Lanny Quarles, & many others. COMING SOON!