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*a n i n t e r n a t i o n a l
a n t h o l o g y o f v i s u a l
a n d l a n g u a g e
p o e t r i e s*

No. 6

Contributors were asked
to consider the notion(s)
disassembling/dismantling
in relation to work developed
or selected for this issue.

Editor & Publisher: John Byrum

Address all correspondence to:

GENERATOR PRESS
8139 Midland Road
Mentor, OH 44060

ISSN 0896-7431

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George Hartley

SILENCE FROM BABEL: ON NICK PIOMBINO

[KEY: Boldface=Boundary of Blur; Italic=Poems; Plain text=commentary]

An account of psychoanalysis without constant reference to genitals. An application of Freud to the artistic process without a discussion of unconscious wish fulfillment or Oedipus. An analysis of psychic economy without the whole traditional metaphorical baggage of sex with mom and castration anxiety. Kristeva without Husserlian cant. Writing silences a babel of voices each of which calls attention to its own point of origin. An enabling exploration of language and the construction of consciousness. *An angel speaks silently into the still origins of its own signification.* A politics of universal inclusion. Not Surrealism but transrealism.

BABEL We lead partial lives, passing through the world senselessly (literally), numb, blind, willfully abandoning our full capacities. But it need not be so. "God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us." At the root of all comprehension exists an indeterminate number of possible meanings which are coming into consciousness. All understanding or visual or aural recognition contains within it an underlying chaotically disordered core in flux, moving as a system of connected points toward an entropic state of inertia, a stable pattern. We function similarly to a tape recorder, Piombino might say, absorbing in our preconscious verbal state a large number of discrete impressions, but in the transcription stage, the writing down of these impressions, we sift and choose according to a hierarchy of priority. In the meantime, all the other possible manifestations remain merely potential and excluded. What Nick wants is a dilation of attention, an expansion of perception to take into account these traditionally remaindered elements of meaning. There is an element in the mind which reshuffles the signals it experiences, reads them in different orders. This element is the associative combinatorial, which consists of an oscillation between the acoustic (verbal) image, the visual (representational) image, the gestural (muscular) imagery, olfactory as well as gustatory imagery. The associative combinatorial, suspended in the oscillation among these sensory elements, necessitates a synchronous fusion of elements of actuality in creating language.

Gradual alteration of contact translations, progressive matrices arranged according to stellar foundations, signals drift in particular contexts without preordained terminal instructions.

Why, then, don't we normally admit this fusion in its fullness in our writing? Apparently, our sensing apparatus which registers the presence of new information is of much finer responsiveness than our ability to express it verbally in a literal way. We want to manage this material, but the linear tracks which language seems to have imposed upon us do not provide the necessary multi-tracked access to the chorus of multiple and at times conflicting scripts whose traces lie unheard. So we unconsciously repress and deny the voices or scripts or

JACQUES DERRIDA: A tracks which do not fit into the narrative of our conscious lives. The result is a monomaniacal adherence to the singular reality we have thus constructed (or which was constructed for us, as Louis Althusser might rather say). Representations and denial, . . . two central psychological "defenses," function by means of diverting attention. . . . The defenses include, as part of their function, a compensation which consists of substituting actions for comprehension. Thus attention is further diverted by the transformed outcome, although relief is temporarily offered by substitutions and displacements. Piombino refers to the pre-conscious verbal imaging of the associative combinatorial as ACTUALITY and contrasts this to the more limited conscious verbal imaging

as REALITY. Actuality is the totality of all experience actual and projectable (theoretical). But this term EXPERIENCE has to be accounted for: When Piombino speaks of writing as a translation of experience he appears to imply that experience precedes language, a suspect pronouncement in these days after structuralism. Our actual experience consists in great part of what we pay attention to. Experience, then, is a mode of attention to the functioning of the associative matrix. All experience is conditioned by expectation. The meaning of an interval of experience is defined throughout by the implied or covert meaning of its end. Experience seems to refer to the moment of inscription, which ordinarily is quite limited as we repress the mass of information that potentially could be recorded at that moment. Scientists and artists, as a result, more and more realize that our whole grasp of experience is metaphorical. It has to be metaphorical because the point of inscription which interests Nick is the gap, the interval, between kinetic response and signification: the inner core of consciousness is not a film or mirror but a series of hieroglyphs which are the terminal points in this signifiatory pulse.

BLUR: the interval, the gap between signifier and signified in states. Drive facilitation, temporarily arrested, marks discontinuities in what may be called the various which any number of connections material supports [matériaux] susceptible to semiotization: voice, gesture, colors. Phonic (later phonemic), may take root. Piombino wants to kinetic, or chromatic units and differences are the marks of these states in the drives. Connections or focus not on the end product of this functions are thereby established between these discrete marks which are based on drives and articulated state or moment, but on the blur, the according to their resemblance or opposition, either by slippage or by condensation. Here we find the opening of possibility before choice principles of metonymy and metaphor indissociable from the drive economy underlying them. These (delimitation) occurs.

meanings ordinarily are interpreted in interllic measures or "beats" of time. A pause. Wherein the saturated emotions invite inquiry, bending the average conversation into an attitude of mercy and grandiose overtones. The choice of a word silences the moment which, in this imprecise way covers the alternate significance with ranges from the mere implication to the full transmission of choral amplitude. Set out on this voyage to gain witness to this particularity of which not the gradual return is the most difficult, but the ageless hesitation to reveal its own intent, hiding it (covering it) and revealing it constantly, in an oscillating movement, characteristic of a slow-funneling sonic configuration, braced by a far earlier wall of pronouncements.

HISTORY The point at which the mind creates an adaptive fusion between unconscious or preconscious fantasy and conscious intention is the nexus point of a

metronomic, phenomenological apperception of the "given" synchrony. History is born during the moment of repression of multiplicity and contradiction. On the visual-perceptual level, time is experienced as a sequence of instances which follow, one upon the other, invoking an internal sequencing of experiences. The constellation of these instances, however, does not necessarily follow a chronological sequence in which presented as a constellation of continuously present potentialities which speak to and through each other without subordinating one to the other. But HISTORY obliterates the field of potentiality by fixing on only one connection between the recorded elements. History unfolds as genealogy and teleology, the imposition of beginnings and endings, of priority, onto these elements. But as the dialectical model reveals, history rises up in its grand synthesis of opposites, its negation of negation, only at the expense of excluding those elements which cannot be fused because they do not follow the hand of history towards one final and single synthesis. The model of succession in science and art is based in part, unconsciously, on the genealogical model of tracing experiences back in history to a prime source—the Father, originating God, or procreator. But what or where is this originator? It is in this sense that Prombino's term "experience" might invite the very hierarchization he wishes to avoid, posing experience as the origin of consciousness and thus somehow above or beyond the plague of historicism; and thus figuring as the primeval state towards which we must move. But it is this narrative of priority that he wants to avoid. Language today, . . . is the enemy of the state and historicity because of its power to germinate systems antithetical to custom because custom is partly dependent on coded laws. MEMORY functions as archeology, a linear reconstruction of past representations. Nick wants not

*An angel fell under a shadow of conceptions
And the whole atmosphere of immediate danger alluded to change.
Its texture suggests a puzzle, previous to disclosure
I say not now and it appears now, cast in eternal circumstance.*

*The wings cast in plaster are no imitation of perfection.
The sentences describing them don't match. As Such.
The sculpted lion in Lucerne sans tongue
Just as some imaginary lover of Sappho might be silenced by a letter
The wings of an angel might conceal a cryptogram,*

*A herald on a scarlet field, a fortification, a coat-of-arms.
Its wings fluttering without motion from a high cliff
Moving without sound, pausing at the inception of its ascension
An angel speaks silently into the still origins of its own signification.*

DERRIDA: Writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself [is conscious of itself]. "Memory" or writing is the opening of that process of appearance itself. The "perceived" may be read only in the past, beneath perception and after it.

The multiple instances are ordered hierarchically; they may also be re-

ARCHEOLOGY but ART; not history but aesthetic experience; not a recreation of past moments but a refined attention to future ones. There was something we missed in the past, but maybe we can get it right from now on. History is a catalogue of endings but poetry speaks of being, of beginnings. POETRY pays as much attention to what occurs in the sidelines of our peripheral vision as much as to that in the center of our focus.

*We had to invent shadows and earthquakes
To explain these dark tremors
The sea changes to ocean, terrain becomes
Land again, amour is love*

POETRY For the poet, thinking is writing. *The words shade the meaning of each glance!* We can't always speak the same grammar. It appears that both Einstein and Freud intuitively understood the relationship between time and the actualities of human experience by learning to direct the focus of attention within the thought process not on words in a literal way but on the correspondences and

DERRIDA: To relinquish materiality: such is the driving force of translation. And when that materiality is reinstated, translation becomes poetry.

DERRIDA: Trace as memory is not a pure breaching that might be reappropriated at any time as simple presence; it is rather the ungraspable and invisible difference between breaches. . . . Resistance itself is possible only if the opposition of forces lasts and is repeated at the beginning. It is the very idea of a first time which becomes enigmatic.

2B 78657. *The scheme.* Why don't they scream? Why does "leave" lead us to its homonymic twin, "Lee of"? And the latter rhyming "She of"? The "Rang" longs to "Ranch out" as much for its lack of an initial B as for its alphabetic similarity. ATTENTION: at any point we can change direction. Choice. It doesn't have to be this way.

archaeologically—reconstructing the past by rewriting its lingering traces—but in the present, arranging elements through such methods as juxtaposition, aural association, repetition, and physical placement in the text, to alter their character, symbolic value or relationship to the composition as a whole (their "scale"). Poetry=micrologics. History=macrologics. We are caught between the Scylla of historicity and the Charybdis of obfuscation.

But poetry opens us up to the multiplicity of voices in our linguistic environment, the polyphonic symphony (or stimulating cacophony) of social (potential) determinants. All systematized language is oppressive insofar as it supports ideologically based repression. Repression serves psychic economy. But in poetry actualities are apprehended by negating denial in all its forms, connecting denial to repression and opening up experience to a more democratic, open, punctual conception of time (and construction of identity in time). Biography—the writing (silencing) of identity, reduction to a linear SELF. I contrast identity and self in this way because it is possible to understand the entire being of a person as a dynamic process

How does Nick capture this poetic movement of choral amplitude in his own poems? Qualification, prognostication, shift, transfer, divergence, association, posture, the continual playful yet at times painful recapitulation and restatement and breaking down of order and nuance and rhythm and trajectory, "Stet." *Thunderous on or off of facts. As outside sitz on other. They cream. His on circumstantial. Wrong bye. The leave. Why. Lee of. She of. A day. Frong. Rang. Ranch out. B R. S. S1268.*

of becoming when one aspect of being, which I am calling identity, may be visualized as potential and virtual, and the other aspect, self, as actual and thus biographically determined (historical). . . In searching for a model that would transcend a linear, successive one, Freud postulated the repetition compulsion (an analogy to his discovery might be Gertrude Stein's method of composition which replaced linear succession with repetition). . . Subject matter-centered text: significance tends to be rapidly absorbed by the outside world; non-subject-centered text: tends to absorb significance from everywhere (super-saturated).

KRISTEVA: Although originally a precondition of the symbolic, the semiotic functions within signifying practices as a result of a transgression of the symbolic. Therefore the semiotic "precedes" symbolization is only a *theoretic* *cal supposition* justified by the need for description. It exists in practice only within the symbolic and requires the symbolic break to obtain so appealing. But I want to move towards *The joining of closures, exact fit, enclosures.*

KRISTEVA: On the contrary, the transgression [of the thetic by the semiotic] breaks up the thetic, splits it, fills it with empty spaces, and uses its device only to remove the "residues of first symbolizations" and make them "reason" ["raisonner"] within the symbolic chain. This explosion of the semiotic in the symbolic is far from a negation of negation, an *Aufhebung* that would suppress the contradiction generated by the thetic and establish in its place an ideal positivity, the restorer of pre-symbolic immediacy. It is, instead, a *transgression* of position, a reversed reactivation of the contradiction that instituted this very position.

UTOPIA
1. Only knowledge can change our perceptions of reality into a perception of the underlying actualities.

Glification in the blur: even the individual letters give themselves up to flux and possibility, acting as hinges between different worlds. 83. *I left an unlimited present aeons ago, in order to discover the secret of duration. Pisces, Pisces, choice. In a certain moment, the only one and it has a name. All the names are same to protect the innocent. Peaced together.* As Kristeva suggests, only after entering the Symbolic Order can we understand the Semiotic. The E-slot of pieces opens up to the S and to a whole new world order, the cosmos under control, no longer random elements. The key is choice, however, the choice between naming as delimiting and as conjoining (peacing/piecing together).

2. Language in its structure is the transitional element that is held between persons; it can't be dismissed.
3. The parameters of human relating are in some ways conditioned by the parameters of human attention.
4. Since a basic aspect of actuality is the innerness of experience, in this way the innerness of language perpetually reconstructs itself, rising, like a phoenix, annexing itself to sources of originating energy unknowable directly to the senses, but only traceable by some imaginative extension of them.
5. Poetry—that imaginative extension, the renewed flight of the Phoenix, the ecstasy of the polychrome. It presents the constellation that forms the original pattern of what the reader tries to retrace: any point in the text permits the other points.
6. The odd connection permits a reexperience of what was originally recorded but not really experienced.
7. In this way sections of actuality are marked, if not yet comprehended, so that a passage is made between a yet unknowable actuality and reality as we ordinarily experience it and explain it to ourselves.
8. Poetry becomes a model for reading in which attention is not focussed on the isolate subject but on the entire signifiatory field: Field reading looks for hidden connections in two otherwise irreconcilable areas, often with ludicrous results.
9. This method of extending awareness becomes a way of tracking repressed subjects rather than a way of perpetuating already existing subjects.
10. "The purpose is not to disclose the real essence of phenomena but only to track down, as far as possible, relations between the manifold aspects of experience," said one modern physicist.

TEHTS: Nick Piombino, *Poems*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1988: *The Boundary of Blur*, Sun & Moon (forthcoming). Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference*. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.