

TEMBLOR

C O N T E M P O R A R Y P O E T S

ISSUE NUMBER 6

Susan Howe	..... <i>Thorow</i>	3
David C.D. Gansz	..... <i>Sin Tactics</i>	22
Barbara Guest	..... <i>The Screen of Distance & other poems</i>	33
Clark Coolidge	..... 20 poems from <i>Literal Landscapes</i>	41
Denis Mahoney	..... 3 sections from <i>Black Pig</i>	51
Ronald Johnson	..... <i>The Fireworks Spires</i> with musical compositions by <i>William Hibbard</i>	60
Keith Waldrop	..... from <i>Transcendental Studies</i>	69
Fanny Howe	..... <i>Torn Parts: A Novel</i>	72
Dennis Phillips	..... 7 pieces from <i>A World</i>	76
Mei-mei Berssenbrugge	..... <i>Recitatif</i>	83
Paul Christensen	..... <i>Plumbing the Abyss with Eshleman</i>	84
Rachel Blau DuPlessis	..... <i>The Sisters' secret [interfering] child</i>	94
Gerald Burns	..... <i>Magic in Verse—Some Distinctions</i>	98
James Hillman	..... <i>Behind the Iron Grillwork</i>	100
Karin Lessing	..... <i>The Bill</i>	101
Jed Rasula	..... <i>To Moisten the Atmosphere</i>	103
Clayton Eshleman	..... <i>Golub The Axolotl</i>	109
Georges Bataille	..... "<i>Incomplete</i> " from <i>Guilty</i> translation: <i>Bruce Boone</i>	114
Bob Perelman	..... 5 poems from <i>Face Value</i>	117
Bruce Andrews	..... <i>Be Careful Now & other texts</i>	122
Diane Ward	..... 4 poems from <i>Concept Lyrics</i>	128
Marjorie Perloff	..... <i>On Steve McCaffery</i>	130
Michael Blitz	..... <i>On Jed Rasula</i>	135
George Hartley	..... <i>On "In the American Tree"</i>	137
Linda Reinfeld	..... <i>On Susan Howe</i>	139
Stephen Ratcliffe	..... <i>Two Hejinian Talks</i>	141
Pasquale Verdicchio	..... <i>Winter Insect, Summer Grass</i>	148
Rosmarie Waldrop	..... <i>A Form/ Of Taking/ It All</i>	152

E D I T E D B Y L E L A N D H I C K M A N

"This is an excellent magazine. . . . **Temblor** is one of this country's truly adventuresome publications; serving 'experimental' writers and drawing on a wide range of authors within the framework of exploratory writing. The publication has earned its high stature in the publication world; the editor is noted for his careful and excellent editing skills, providing a well-shaped publication." *Highest Rating.* — California Arts Council, 1987

Copyright © 1987 **TEMBLOR**: contemporary poets
(ISSN 0883-1599)

Arthaus Studio: Design

Typeset at Wood & Jones Type Works, Pasadena, California

Listed in *American Humanities Index* and *The Index of American Periodical Verse*.

Member, Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines

Subscriptions: (two issues) \$16.00, postpaid (individuals); \$20.00, postpaid (institutions)
(four issues) \$30.00, postpaid (individuals); \$40.00, postpaid (institutions)
Overseas: Add \$2.50 per issue.

Distributors to the trade:

Anton Mikofsky Distributing, 57 W. 84th Street, #1C, New York City, NY 10024

Cornucopia Distribution, 1504 14th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122

Segue Distribution, 300 Bowery, New York City, NY 10012

Small Press Distribution, Inc., 1814 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702

Small Press Traffic, 3599 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

Spectacular Diseases, c/o Paul Green, 83b London Road, Peterborough, Cambs. U.K.

This project is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, and by a grant from the California Arts Council, a state agency. Any findings, opinions, or conclusions contained herein are not necessarily those of the California Arts Council or of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Congratulations to Susan Howe and Jean McGarry, whose poems *Heliopathy* and *World With A Hard K* were recently awarded a Pushcart Prize. Both poems appeared originally in *Temblor* 4.

Enclose SASE with submissions. Address correspondence to:

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In the American Tree

Ron Silliman, Editor

(Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 1986)

IN THE AMERICAN TREE: a metaphor (organic).

“you notice a curious warp in the sequence/ Of events suggesting a time loop/ . . . it simply spreads out before you, a field” (xiii-xiv).

A field composed, as opposed to the inherited line, stanza, over-all form: ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION, but as a verse that “might offer readers the same opacity, density, otherness, challenge and relevance persons find in the ‘real’ world” (xvi).

Olson 1950: What we have suffered from, is manuscript, press, the removal of verse from its producer and its reproducer, the voice, a removal by one, by two removes from its place of origin and its destination. VOICE = ONE REMOVE FROM THE ORIGIN, already. If I HATE SPEECH then I’m stuck with manuscript, that twice-removed hairy palm. Twice-removed from here and there; thus standing in an open field, nowhere. “But . . . the simple, seemingly obvious concept that words should derive from speech and refer to things, was inscribed within all of the assumptions behind normative writing” (xvi).

1971, then: “the challenge posed by This was to open a broad territory of possibility where very different kinds of poets might explore and execute a wide range of projects. If nothing in the poem could be taken for granted, then anything might be possible” (xvi).

SUCH AS: the doghouse of the summer before the doghouse of the following summer don’t give it a second thought like where’s the dog (19)

What speech? What breath? More like a visual ecstasy, sort of I LOVE TYPE. Yet still in the American tree—perhaps a branch from Eigner:

there was nothing buildings stand for years thought back on stars flash the wind down the rain thunder cry arrives one minute dogs bark

IN THE AMERICAN GRAIN: a precursor (organic?).

Williams on Stein: Let it be granted that whatever is new in literature the germ of it will be found somewhere in the writings of other times; only the modern emphasis gives work a present distinction. . . . The feeling is of words themselves, a curious immediate quality quite apart from their meaning, much as in music different notes are dropped, so to speak, into repeated chords one at a time, one after another—for themselves alone.

One at a time, serially, yet falling together through time, in the mind, as a chord. “Only fragments are accurate. Break it up into single words, charge them to combination. Thinking about time in the book, it is really the time of your life” (52).

For themselves, alone:

laurel ratio sharp or hard instruments triple to or fro granule in award one to whom is made nave bean shin spectacle as the near wheel (243)

Zukofsky 1970-1973: Spittle-spawn/ (not laurel) nameless we name/ it, and sorrows dissolve—human:/ behind terrace boat plant under/ back wall pear tree hugged,/ its twigs paired axile thorns/ crossways opposite leaves through quincunx.

And New York, Ashbery, 1965:

19
Life pursued down these cliffs.
the omened birds
intrusion; skated, at night
clear waves of weather
fur you bring genious
over hell's curiosity
the librarian shabbily books on
You cannot illusion; the dust.
abstract vermin the garden worm smiles.

If I rest for a moment near The Equestrian/ pausing for a
liver sausage sandwich in the Mayflower Shoppe,/ that
angel seems to be leading the horse into Bergdorf's/ and I
am naked as a table cloth, my nerves humming; from east
to west in discrete city images, flashes of life like a Dublin
day, a landscape of language: "Heads in the cell flicker &
go out. In that sandal I saw countless toes. Zoo sky of caw.
A transmitter, like radar, atop each tall building. Transbay
transit. The word is more & less. The history of the foot.
The fogbank heavy on the beach like a slug" (140-1).

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;/ Petals on a wet,
black bough "which in a dry season might/ begin or might
precede its/ beginning with a list/ of truths self-evident:
these/ clouds (these crowds) you/ now see are permanent/
and fixed" (107).

But not all roots are recent. "When first I read Susan
Howe's work, I had no idea what she was trying to do. She
was using the vocabulary of the 'Old World' (terms from
the classics, mythology, the Bible, Latin liturgy, and so on)
and combining it with experimental techniques such as the
fragmentation of words and the isolation of individual let-
ters. With this mix, who would be her readers? I took her
work to heart with this puzzle in mind" (547).

TO HEART:

Shadows only shadows
mey my gaze Mediator
I lay down and conceived Love
(my dear Imaginary) Maze-believer
I remember you were called
sure-footed
and yet off the path (Where
are you) warmed and warming Body
turned and turning Soul (360)

Mimic presentation stained with mortality. Or "Poetry is
like a swoon, with this difference:/ it brings you to your
senses" (285). Emotion packed into absence, silence,
space—this heart puzzle in mind.

The vocabulary of the 'Old World' again:

thru drees, load dickening, keith
all occliffed, plinther, intos thaggle, instance

ilm deodr, mudxeast, paeon ximv,'s
another handsome attack, gline leverage, bsidb,
tuned full simple (339)

Jackson Mac Low 1965: The poet creates a *situation* where-
in he invites other persons & the world in general to be co-
creators with him! He does not wish to be a dictator but a
loyal co-initiator of action within the free society of equals
which he hopes his work will help bring about.

So 1980: "12. Some connectives. An order as clarity. Clar-
ity as transparency. Transparency as authority. Formal or-
der, and civil order, & the taboo against transgression, and
isn't this a taboo against the person?" (526)

So there's a need, a social need, to rid ourselves of taboo
(i.e., connectives, clarity, transparency, authority, formal
order). A poetics of participation, reader as construction
worker rather than TV viewer. Fill in the blanks. "Sur-
prised by his use of words, the moral presence swelled to
veracity plunging the social salad into the contemporary
fork. She looked deep into the merchandiser's past. 'Yes,'
she said, 'but you enjoy suffering'" (160).

And Leaves fritter.
Teased edges.
It's vacillation that pleases.
Who answers for
the 'whole being?'
This is
only the firing (155)

"The writer is a mirror, the writing is a crack" (125).

"Words are the axis, rather than the work of art;
Coolidge's disciplined, extensive writings extend art into
language rather than narrow language to art" (485).

THE RESULT: "Having integrated the impact of the
post-World-War-II protest movements both as critiques of
authority and as arguments for rights and prizing an awk-
wardly marginal status in the corporate hegemony, these
writers have developed strategies that test more markedly
than they indoctrinate, resist rather than seduce or assure;
apparent units within their works often function by appar-
ently nonprogrammatically and yet highly intentional juxta-
positions such that principles of opposition and analysis
are integrated and face off against circumstances including
the reader, who is offered no code to break nor transpar-
ently methodical procedure to appreciate" (486).

IN THE AMERICAN TREE: a metaphor (organic) for
the face in concrete (inorganic) we recognize as our own.