

DARK CITY

Charles Bernstein

Dark City, Charles Bernstein's twentieth book, is an at times comic, at times bleak, excursion into everyday life in the late 20th century. In *Dark City*, Bernstein moves through a startling range of languages and forms, from computer lingo to the cant of tv talk shows, from high-poetic diction to junk mail, from intimate address to philosophical imperatives, from would-be proverbs to nursery rhymes and songs.

Bernstein's city is flickering and evanescent, moving from Madras to New York to Los Angeles, from "Virtual Reality" to "The View from Nowhere." Yet his collage of diversive/divisive voices also represents, as *The Village Voice* has noted, "A tireless attempt to regain our attention and bring us from inertia into discourse again":

Love is like love, a baby
like a baby, meaning like
memory, light like light.
A journey's a detour
and a pocket a charm
in which deceits are borne.
A cloud is a cloud and
a story like a story,
song is a song, fury
like fury.

Author of, most recently, *A Poetics* (Harvard University Press), *Rough Trades* (Sun & Moon Press), and *The Sophist* (Sun & Moon Press), Charles Bernstein is the David Gray Professor of Poetry and Letters at the State University of New York, Buffalo.

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by

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Contents

The Lives of the Toll Takers	9
Sunsickness	31
Desalination	41
Locks Without Doors	49
How I Painted Certain of My Pictures	61
The View from Nowhere	71
Virtual Reality	79
Emotions of Normal People	85
Debris of Shock / Shock of Debris	105
Heart in My Eye	113
Reveal Codes	119
The Influence of Kinship Patterns...	131
Dark City	139

The Lives of the Toll Takers

There appears to be a receiver off the hook. Not that
you care.

Beside the gloves resided a hat and two
pinky rings, for which no
finger was ever found. Largesse

with no release became, after
not too long, atrophied, incendiary,

stupefying. Difference or

difference: it's

the distinction between hauling junk and
removing rubbish, while

I, needless not to say, take

out the garbage

(pragmatism)

Phone again, phone again jiggity jig.

I figured

they do good eggs here.

Funny \$: making a killing on
junk bonds and living to peddle the tale
(victimless rime)

(Laughing all the way to the Swiss bank where I put my money
in gold bars

[the prison house of language]
.) Simplicity is not

the
same as simplistic.

Sullen
supposition, salacious conjecture, slurpy ded
uction.

"A picture

[fixture]

is worth more than a thousand words":

With this
sally, likely to barely make it
into a 1965 "short stabs" poem
by Ted "bowl over" Berrigan

[a tincture gives birth to a gravely verve]

Barbara Kruger is enshrined in the window
of the Whitney's 1987 Biennial

[a mixture is worth a thousand one-line serves].

Nei

ther

speaking the unspeakable nor saying
the

unsayable

(though no doubt slurring
the unslurrable): never only

dedef

ining, always rec

onstricting (libidinal

flow just another

word for loose

st

ools). There was an old lady who lived in a
zoo,

she had so many admirers

she didn't know what to rue. Li

ke

a dull blade with a greasy handle (a
 docent page with an
 unfathomable ramble). Poetry's
 like a spoon, with three or four
 exemptions: in effect only
 off-peak, void
 were permitted by Lord,
 triple play
 on all designated *ghost* phonemes
 (you mean morphemes)
 [don't tell me what I mean!
].

Rhymes may come and
 rhymes may go, but ther
 e's
 no crime like presentiment. To refuse
 the
 affirmation
 of
 (a)
 straight-forward
 statement

(sentiment)
 is
 not
 to
 be
 so
 bent-over
 with
 irony
 as
 to
 be
 unable
 to
 assert
 anything
 but
 to
 find
 such
 statement
 already

undermined
 by the resistance
 it
 pretends
 to
 overpower
 by
 its
 idealism
 masked as
 realism.
What? No approach
 too gross if it gets a laugh. In Reagan's
 vocabulary, freedom's
 just another word for "watch out!" (I
 pride myself on my pleonastic a[r]mour.) {ardour}
 (Besides.)
 Love may come and love may
 go
 but uncertainty is here forever.
 {profit?}
 (There was an old lady

who lives in a stew...)
 (A picture is worth 44.95 but no price can be
 put on words.)
 She can slip and she can slide, she's every
 parent's j
 oy & j
 i
 b
 e
 (guide)
 .
 In dreams begin a lot of bad
 poetry.
 Then where is my place?
 Fatal Error F27: Disk directory full.
 The things I
 write are
 not about me
 though they
 become me.
 You look so bec
 oming, she said, attending the flower pots.

I'm a very
becom
ing guy
(tell it to
)
. That is, better
to
become than
(gestalt f[r]iction)
{traction?}
{flirtation?}
to
be: ac
tuality
is just around
the corner (just a spark
in the dark); self-actualization a glance in
a tank of concave [concatenating] mirrors. Not
angles, just
tangles. From which
a direction emerges, p
urges. Hope
gives way

to tire tracks. On the way without stipulating the destination, the better to get there (somewhere, *other*).

THE MAGIC PHONEME FOR TODAY IS "KTH".

Funny, you don't look
gluish. Poetry: the show-
me business.

You've just said the magic phoneme!

“Don’t give me
any of your
show-me business.”

She wore blue velvet but I was color blind and insensible.

Heavy tolls, few
advances. Are you cl
os
e

to your m

other?

The brain of Bill Casey preserved in a glass jar deep under-
cover in Brunei.

Andy

Warhol is the

P. T. Barnum

of the

(late)

twentieth century

:

there's a

succor dead every twenty seconds.

A depository of suppositories

(give it me where it counts:

one and

two and

one

two

thr

eee)

I had

it but

I misp

laced

it somewhere

in the

back burner

of what

is laug

hingly

called m

y

mind

(my

crim

e). A

mind is a terrible thing to steal:

intellectual property is also

theft.

Ollie North, pound of chalk—but who is writing,

what is writing? Nor

all your regret change one word of it; yet so long as the blood

flows in your veins there is ink
 left in the bottle. FAKE A
 WHISTLE TO WRITE (*spiritus sancti*). No “mere” readers only
 writers who read, actors who inter-
 act. Every day fades way, nor
 all your piety
 or greed bring back one hour: *take a swivel to*
strike.
 (The near-heroic obstinacy of his refusal [inability?] to despair.)
 & who
 can say
 whether dejection or elation will
 ensure the care for, care
in
 the world that may lead us
 weightless, into a new world or
 sink us, like lead
 baboons,
 deeper into this o
 ne? Yet
 you have to admit it’s highly

drinkable.

Delish.

I imagine you unbespectacled, upright,
 dictating with no hint of undercurrent,
 a victim of the tide.

What if

success scares you so much that at the point of some
 modest acceptance, midway through

life’s burning, you blast out
 onto the street, six-shooters smoking, still a rebel.

For what?

Of course new ventures always require risk, but by carefully
 analyzing the situation, we became smart risk

takers. Fear of
 softness characterized as rounded edges, indecisiveness, need to
 please

versus the humorless rigidity of the “phallic”
 edge, ready

to stand erect, take
 sides (false dichotomy, all dichotomies).

An affirmation that dissolves into the fabric of

unaccounted

desires, undertows of an imaginary that cannot be willed away but

neither need be mindlessly

obeyed. *What's that?* If it's not

good news

I don't want to hear it (

stand up and leer.) Our new

service orientation

mea

nt

not only changing the way we wrote poems but also diversifying

into new poetry services. Poetic

opportunities

,

however, do not fall into your lap, at least not

very often. You've got to seek them out, and when you find them

you've got to have the knowhow to take advantage

of them.

Keeping up with the new aesthetic environment is an ongoing process: you can't stand still. Besides, our current fees

barely cover our expenses; any deviation from these levels

would

mean working for nothing. Poetry services provide cost savings

to readers, such

as avoiding hospitalizations (you're less likely

to get in an accident if you're home reading poems), minimizing

wasted time (*condensare*), and reducing

adverse idea interactions

(studies show higher levels of resistance to double-bind political programming among those who read 7.7 poems or more each week)

$$).$$

Poets deserve compensation

for such services.

For readers unwilling to pay the price

we need to refuse to provide such

service as alliteration,

internal rhymes,

exogamic structure, and

unusual vocabulary.

Sharp edges which become shady groves,

mosaic walkways, emphatic asymptotes (asthmatic microtolls).

The hidden language of the Jews: self-reproach, laden with ambivalence, not this or this either, seeing five sides to every issue, the old *pilpul* song and dance, obfuscation

clowning as ingratiation, whose only motivation is never offend, criticize only with a discountable barb: Genocide is made of words like these, Pound laughing (with Nietzsche's gay laughter) all the way to the canon's bank spewing forth about the concrete value of gold, the "plain sense of the word", a people rooted in the land they sow, and cashing in on such verbal usury (language held hostage: year one thousand nine hundred eighty seven).

There is no plain sense of the word,
nothing is straightforward,
description a lie behind a lie:
but truths can still be told.

*These are the sounds of science (whoosh, blat,
flipahineyhoo), brought to
you by DuPont, a broadly diversified company dedicated to
exploitation through science and industry.*

Take this harrow off
my chest, I don't feel it anymore
it's getting stark, too stark
to see, feel I'm barking at Hell's spores.
The new sentence.

As if Harvard Law School
was not a re-education camp.
I had decided to go back
to school after fifteen years in
community poetry because I felt

I did not know enough to navigate
through the rocky waters that
lie ahead for all of us in this field.
How had Homer done it, what might Milton
teach? Business training turned
out to be just what I most needed.
Most importantly, I learned that
for a business to be successful, it
needs to be different, to stand out
from the competition. In poetry,
this differentiation is best
achieved through the kind of form
we present.

Seduced by its own critique, the heady operative with twin peaks and a nose for a brain, remodeled the envelope she was pushing only to find there was nobody home and no time when they were expected. Water in the brain, telescopic Malthusian dumbwaiter, what time will the train arrive?, I feel weird but then I'm on assignment, a plain blue wrapper with the taps torn, sultan of my erogenous bull's eyes, nothing gratis except the tall tales of the Mughali terraces, decked like plates into the Orangerie's glacial presentiment . . .

No,
only that the distinction

between nature and

culture may obs

cure

the

b

odily

gumption of language.

Hello

my name is Max Gomez

(g

houlis

hness is it

s own rewa

rd).

(Commanding without being a command.)

Or else to say,

Catalogs are free, why not we?

Clear as f

udge.

Then what can I believe in?

(She'd rather exploit

than be exploi

ted.) If you break it, you

won't have it anymore.

Solemn in functional midrift, tooting at

bellicose grinding, who can no more bear witness to the doddering

demise of diplomacy than uproot the cancer at the throat of those

trajectories.

"Daddy, what did you

do to stop the war?"

[p-
=]ovwhiu2g97hgbcf67q6dvqujx67sf21g97b.c.9327b97b987b87j 7
7td7tq98gdukbhq g9tq9798 icxqyj2f1o8ytscxags62jc .<Mz[
-\ io

We may be all one body but we're sure as hell not one mind.

(Tell her I had to

change my plans.) It's not

what you

know but

who knows

about it

& who's

likely to

squeal

. *Button*

your lip, cl

asp your tie, you

,

re on the B team. (A job

by any other name

would smell as

sour.) *It's*

not an operating system it

,

s an

op

erating environm

ent.

Besides

Sunsickness

Blame it on resembling, as if it would
change so easily, rough up glares
or trace avenues by fingertip.
You skirt on top afraid to sink
into and why not
falter, marched into elides, forked by
definition or conscripted from declamation—
the founding harbors faced it thus.
Then alone on hooks, trying
to get loss, the ground
refusing way. There's
no point, you proceed with intermittent
steps, & when the starting line appears
it can't be said
it's the same. No inanity suited
better than this poled tack. Nor
too much light either—heaving like
you'd just been hit in the face by a

wave—yet no particle
 cares that much. I'd wager you've
 had it by now—burn or defraud your
 comeuppance as some sort of serial madness,
 pegged to the flap that won't mind its
 places. There was azure, agate, fool's
 dust, but I never got any, just this
 speculative bonfire. I'd give you credit
 for that—but credit never satisfied
 you. & after that there's only bone or blood
 or sinew & not enough to share. Certain
 things are private or anyway demand
 privacy—but I'd be reluctant to say
 who. No more than you I'm content
 to lay low, tank up on decompression
 & sing a chord or two—not possible
 to remember many more than that. Or failing
 to note the calm (calamity), fall prey to
 remoter executions (I mean command
 from distant quarters). There is a choir
 here & don't know whether to blow

it out or blow it up. Less & less
 to hold onto but more & more to do, be
 done. If that doesn't stretch the point
 too far. Going cold turkey or lukewarm
 tongue. Not my language—just a lot of
 luggage—but no use jettisoning the fading
 with eau de cologne. Not my handle—
 just a lot of tags on bags of baggage
 that look
 none too familiar. Then everybody
 drops from sight & all the
 wrong things said repeat themselves like
 so many masquerades you can't pull
 yourself out of. & screaming down
 the hall without any signs of cause.
 Pleading for hope when hope was just
 the problem. Or should I throw a pie
 in your face? (Pronoun slips on banana.)
 —Michael writes of sun, but all I can think
 of is sunsickness, too much in the sun
 never a daughter. As if God's

light still shone on we who have shaded
 our eyes. A few phrases remain,
 but the drift is vanish. No way out
 & no way in—a straight call to blast.
 Adrift on stage for all to view—
 the cringe, the sigh, the curvilinear
 elide. The scholar-trancemaker hangs
 from the end of a trope and asks
 to be cut down. An umbilical cord
 signifies no less. Yet despite, I can now see
 or is it all
 a mistake? & does it splatter?
 The important thing is the sweep by which
 the specific is hampered
 on its way to the
 laundry. The “only objective comment”
 lifted from the interrogation, then fingered
 in this historical fantasy some have undertaken
 to get out of. & so our
 Reviewer can state that his false assertions
 are “absolutely true” & “patently true” even

in the face of being absolutely false &
 patently misleading. *Facts are a dime a*
dozen but opinions are like pearls. Society’s
 sailed amid so many stuffed shirts. The road
 redelivers the redaction. Yet form can contain
 almost nothing, just enough. & bursts
 onto the floor waving & jumping up &
 down. Sleighbells of an anticipated foreclosure
 chiming at a frequency beyond reach
 yet driving to distraction all the
 same; which is to say
 without goal & undecidable
 expectation—can’t even say
 toward—& naming the passage time or
 placelessness. Getting in bed with promise
 & waking up with make-believe.
 Fortunately impecunious, at least on a
 materials level. Floor board, window
 pane, ceiling fan, . . . *Cold* as a cow
 with a long tail going to confession, *crazy*
 as a one-legged chair at an ass-kicking contest,

states), defiance for the rest who wait
& are willing. For what
you may learn is that by going
down into the secrets of your
own crimes you descend
into the secrets of all
mimes (minds). Anyway:
some other. Worlds
hourly changing
sparring with cause to an
unknowable end. Asking
no less, demanding no
more.

Desalination

Then suddenly and without explanation
a bell rings. A grifter, his hands
covered by calfskin gloves, drives to
the station house to receive the goods.
Exemplary passages are cited. A
mystical blond with a scintillating
hat devours the nightlife. Overtures
are made to the underlying functionaries
in the hope that they might oil
the machinery. Fades prompt petty
tirades on the part of the tired
professor. Enabling fictions adorn
the prisoner's cells. In a minute
you can hear the dust settle on the
settee. The troupe fans out to
outflank the patrol. Portions
of lockets are auctioned at poolside.
A gazelle collides with a zebra

on the crowded skyway. Sentiment
 cements the well-settled arrangement.
 The fabricator eschews her prognostication.
 Streetlamps crash into pounding
 surf. Foreign lances punctuate the intermission.
 A billiard pictures a tumbling
 terrace. Sewage accumulates at rearmost
 flexpoint. Plumage flutters from
 above, gift of a departed origin.
 The regulator consults the ordinance
 but cannot determine its application.
 Sustenance evaporates in subsequent
 slumber. Amulets emit armatures.
 An obligation meets its reward. Laundry
 revolves in large metal tumblers filled
 with soapy water. The radio covers
 the burn in the table. Headwaiter
 pockets tip from man in wool
 suit, makes bet. Snow obliterates
 the distinction between here & eternally.
 Man's body stocking constricts the flow

of his blood. Oil tankers pour steam
 into the gulf, upsetting the balance
 of argument and insularity. Sorcery
 threatens the petulant perpetuators.
 Unequal in demand, frightening in
 reward, flares appear dim
 & the sky a tenement ceiling.
 Unguents unnerve the future bookie's
 wry predicament, mindful of deeds
 left unfinished, duties not
 discharged. Crumbling
 into the Seine, memories of mysteries never
 conceived. Then drops a lantern, a
 picture window. Notation develops on top of
 nuance. Crusts accrue like pillows
 in a fight. Voiced as if regard were
 trust or limousines malteds. The fun
 is over before the fun begins. As when
 a chance to speak becomes a chance to
 slip: accommodation its own desperation, dispute
 its own punishment. Pulling a dumbwaiter

& wishing for water. Discoloration of the enmazed
 tractor parts—shifting through the pieces to find
 the hearth. Hunt or hunched or clump or
 confront. Roads roll into the harbor, with
 no sign of the travelers. The crow flies
 over the abandoned mine, irrespective of
 penetratable homilies. Slow, maybe slender, taking
 foreground for must. Craters cantilever to the corner.
 A forager flushes his finds. Sacrifice
 deploys secreted salvage. Burgers
 bounce busily. Ratiocination cops
 plea to lesser offense. Curls dwindle
 in the high-pressure dome. The dreidel
 begins to wobble wildly before tumbling to
 ground. Emanations suffuse the body.
 Sound permeates the *schul*. Young man
 with horn can't hit imaginary note.
 Steeplechase cascades through valley.
 Someone says something. Motor oil materializes
 miraculously. Camels stagger in the desert.
 Snowballs batter the Mercedes as it speeds

through the puddle splashing the pedestrians.
 The bride, tripping on trail, makes her way
 to the launch. Holsters pile up in the checkroom.
 The mission is cancelled. Balloon slips
 from hand and floats into sky, like
 the soul of Jesus meeting
 its father. The bus disappears on route
 to Jakarta. Holiday sales mask the despair
 of a populace exhausted by good cheer and bad
 chocolate. Ice coats the windows and railing
 of the fabled outhouse. An apprentice disconnects
 the hose that irrigates the pavilion's
 ostentatious gardens. Workmen
 erect the towering edifice according to plan, then
 report to next job.

Locks Without Doors

"The world is half night"

—PETER STRAUB

I.

Will you promise not to get mad

if I tell you something? Nothing

notable except the prism without

light effects. Except that

expectations stymie hunger for

exceptions, such that

dedication rumples the doily

while in a tugboat there's

too little chance for remorse.

Like pillars of sand at a Revivalist

Meeting or pockets of pumice at a

Pita Party. For when the fire chief

told Pickles that he could stay

the cat knew he had finally

found a home. Any other solution

would be shallow and unseemly and so

seemingly inconsolable. An

inexorable

float bombarding an quixotic emission,

a fleeting factotum culminating in
gesellschaft.

Settle for less

and you'll get less.

A kettle of fish

is worth two pints of pink chocolate, a

bucket of kool-aid twice a coterie of
covens.

Slump not lest slip, slumber, swagger into
indelicacy, delirious indolence. The

world is half right, half flight, half
sorrow, half sliced. The

eucalyptus

bloomed in the decor, the dooryard

extruded the stall.

2.

*For long have I entombed my love
Less fleck than flayed upon
Who quaint and wary worry swarms
In tides lament nor laminations ore
As stare compares a bellys tumble
Have I awaited by the slope
Of lumined ledgers lumbering links
Foregone though never bent*

3.

Not that I mean to startle just
unsettle. The settlers pitched their tents
into foreign ground. All ground is
foreign ground when you get to know
it as well as I do. Well I wouldn't agree.
No agreement like egregious
refusal to hypostatize a suspension.
Suspension bridges like so many
drummers at bat, swatting flies in
the hot Carolina sun. No, son, it
wasn't like that — we only learned we
had to be proud not what's worth taking
pride in.

4.

Looking for truth but finding only
memory

5.

Like two boats with one oar
Two lives with one core

6.

Forest ranger, inflatable stranger
Show me the place to flop down
Longing to go, got a beer & hoe
Deep under this frown

My daddy told me
Were certain men
Sell you for fodder
In ocean of sense
Tried to talk to you
Given my word
No sense talking
To men with no curves

7.

I can't but make it con-
fluesce.

8.

never knew what west is / best is

9.

I got
no eyes

all ears
tear verbs

for very long
had no song

give me a day
to make my sway

glow and rasp
will not last

be kind
slow mind

go blow
fill holes

come clean
go away

in summer
get butter

floor plan
poor slant

regularize
close your eyes

summary
mummery

grumble
fumble

ice cold
innuendoes

in it
for keeps

all right
too slight

mike knows
it's over

sam helps those
cooperate

10.

not for you
the hullabaloo

11.

No touch like your touch
Tiled to the flap it spun
Holding windows make-shift blouse
In rolling tide would crest

Cold lurch spills spit fold
Wild by such splat is come
Flushing sinews buttressed blast
On twirling slides next bounce

12.

I'll swallow my pride
Before I die
I'd bury my song
Without your arm

13.

The quality of Hershey's is not
too great although I always preferred
Skippy's smooth to crunch. If
Devil Dogs are not so good as Mars
bars, Camel's can still do what
no Virginia Slim dares. There was a time
I'd take a chance on generic
but I've learned to take pride in Tide.

14.

"Put em away
or else I'll
take them away"

"I'll smack you on the face you say that again"

"There go
the lassoes"

15.

lovely to see you
lolling about the lake
eating cake

16.

the brotherhood of sleeping cars

17.

I used to be Detroit
Now I'm Tennessee
I used to be distraught
Now I'm hard to get along with

Then again the quality of Jersey is not
much to wriggle your teeth about
five o'clock I'd say
nothing about it to him at all
you've meant to her & she
turned it over in her head
straight for the moors

18.

you got a license for that torque?

19.

Books can be deceiving, for instance
that look you gave me does not faze me
or it'll be a frozen fog in Alberta
before the slot delivers.

20.

"He stepped right on our castle"

"It's a real crab with flaws"

"Don't blame me I'm from Idaho"

"Don't blush it only appears to be happening"

21.

Put lack in your pipe and stroke it.

22.

Not the hand
in the glove
but the mitten
in your mouth.

How I Painted Certain of My Pictures

“You say I’m like a Jewish mother but the kid
is losing weight.” Turning by turns as though
turns would make it different. Sunny
with shallows all about, the solvent
flush of fiduciary abandon. Mayhem
that may be all right for Craig or
Thomas but makes Dora duller. *By crater
lake, the minds too late.* Or do the
pushed pins pullulate; not that
the motivation to continue could ever be
just go on. Ingratiatingly grouchy, guardedly
unconscious. Or else the pride of admission
is not worth spitting on. *I got to
gargle* but the loop’s on the VCR
& the pillow’s in deep
fry. Similar
to dusting for fiberboard after each

feel. "I
 don't like mistakes, but purposes
 truly scare me." The lorry has left the
 levy lest the sandwiches lay
 lost, looted.
 Which cries out suddenly, incorrigibly
 that the gasket's blown an apricot. Or
 there'll be no more glowing. As in
 a deed is worth only half a word, over
 three-foot bird (seldom
 blurred). & then
 the launches sway in the cringe, fix
 flutters against green & yellow
 mutters (mothers). "Thomas
 is in my place & won't
 move." But it's not birds
 that are the problem. As if the
 ordinary
 were just there answering
 our call but we
 won't sound it

out, or find the work
 too demanding (de-
 meaning), too extra
 ordinary. There
 are sleigh bells I know but never
 mine. Yet nothing I've lost, nothing
 yet to
 find. If that makes you sad
 then I'm sad too, even though we've
 never met or meet just now. Events
 are no protection from circumstance
 & circumstance is a positive hindrance.

Darling girl, darling boy
 Let's burn the house
 Tear down the ploys

Stalled among the pantomimes,
 obsolete rimes. Never saw a bird
 that didn't want to fly—but there must be
 pigeons of different feather. Yet woman & man
 are no feather at all. Crazy like this
 rag gun rapping on my brain's floor.

So skip to the slaughter
 Just like you ought'er
 & take that smirk off your grimace

Yet kindness has such a bad
 name, deliverance no less. Trees won't
 say it any better than "O!"
 rings. Every syllable stings. & that's the
 hardest thing to stomach on a low-noise
 diet, if you can sink your teeth into
 the
 thought that all that sound gotta be
 digested. Anemic
 poetry—or roughage?—for the health-
 continent society? But
 why prize distraction over direction, song over
 solemnity? The times detail a change of
 pockets & everybody's loopy, mind made
 up with hospital corners, while the leaves
 of our lives unsettle their occupation. Or
 is it a value simply to glide in the
 turbulent air & push back when things
 get foreshortened? The fate of the earth—

like if the world doesn't care who will?

"Don't scream so close my face!"

That we have to inhabit the world to know where
 the earth might be, *is*. Then where was

it (was it?) lost. When I get

home I'll glue it together as a little book.

& if that won't work we can play Billie-
 come-gravely all the way to the moon. *If*

the clue slips tear it. Nor jingle your

jaundiced gestures in my directions.

I'm as plump as a cherry on the tree

George Washington never chopped, as carefree
 as a hornet in amphetamine

dive. You'll

be lucky if you get out of here with your

yarmulke intact—but the shadow world will

intervene before the last lost moment. "People

don't like you because you're a brat—selfish

& whiny." Although if you brush your teeth

twice you'll get more than enough advice.

"I had to leave the job because I couldn't

stand the people & the work was totally
 absorbing." Because humble is not
 the same as
 humiliated.

Notice which bugs.

& over & over again
 with aesthetic turpitude
 (Let's trade flavors).

Normally I'd say there was no jettisoning.
 But my friend Frisby-Love took all she could take
 before dead-ending in the herbervescent poker
 patch. Darn this dated elan, these holes
 of pure cheesecloth. *As if outside*
were anywheres at all. Bruised to the knees
 in amours & cleaves. Confidence
 just a prick—the man
 on the barge selling
 you the bridge between this thought
 &
 this.
 Still waters run about as deep

as you can blow them. But it's time
 I came clean & you swept the boat
 (I mean cameo): floor-length conscription
 with matching five-piece hush-orange ensemble.
 Reading the riot act in the middle of
 sacral pacts. "Whatever you say,
 Sheriff!" "It's been a long day,
 they always are." "But why can't I
 go out because I can see children
 playing?" Fluent in dreams, inconsolable
 otherwise. "I guess I have you
 to thank
 for the mustard." I guess
 we all just
 want to go home to bed.
 I guess
 light doesn't even notice
 it's going so fast.
 Drum beats on the meridian, sun beats on the
 Mercedes. Mr. Bush stares blankly
 on the podium wondering what to do next. M.

Mitterand has some warm words for Danton. Mrs.

Thatcher bangs a few notes on her bagpipe.

The silencers click onto

the muzzles.

"I just don't want

to have to

go through that again."

I'll

just put down my

pen.

Exeunt.

Curtain.

ACTION!

The View from Nowhere

“Zip it up—I don’t care—you listen
to me.” Proscriptive or prescriptive: the weight
of tradition or
a tradition of weights. Just
waiting to get the go ahead from my friends on
the force. Blanked
out on parry when route
has found alternative to clown-out, suction. Running
to meter the lawn in consequence of which
showers departure. “Chill
off!” Confining
masquerade
to detail, touching
promise until you’ve fingered
the figures out of it, out of
yourself. &
yelling behind the truck, inaudible

to the exhaust,
 like some nasty duck pounding against a pond.
 The view I am going to suggest, I hope in
 less obscure
 language, is related to this.
 Essentially, there are three
 types of problems. Sometimes
 with hardly a notion that she has
 heard a word. Blue & blue-
 black. For what's the point of having
 different words if they mean the same
 thing? Something made me
 want to get out of the house. I
 couldn't understand that money was going
 to be burned
 when people was
 in need. But the issue
 is different if we return
 to the question posed at the beginning. In
 addition to the question of objectivity is
 the question of

scale. The importance of this
 point will emerge when we see how complex
 a psychological interchange constitutes
 the natural development of sexual
 abstraction. I felt
 bad. I
 felt cold. I felt
 completely out of
 it.
 The article
 paints a picture
 of its author as seething with jealousy
 & egomania—hopelessly out
 of touch
 with the material
 that is his
 putative
 subject. The thing then to watch the spectacle
 without being sucked up
 in
 it—for there is

a danger in finding yourself dictating
defenses to crimes not only not committed
but really just the opposite
of crimes—what
is left to be done. Of course, what
many have regarded as a liberating
permission
to write in otherwise unsanctioned ways
will provoke professional sanction-takers to see
only red. Because
of casuistical problems
like this
I prefer to stay with the original
unanalyzed distinction between what
one does to people
& what merely
happens to them as a result of what one
does. Notions
for a September day, lying in the
hay
of tumultuous enfolding.

All this
is as clear as day
right now. The crow
slides low over the abandoned
mine, looking for correspondence &
twine. While in Gaza
the rioters have
nothing
to lose
but loss.
The view I am
going
to suggest
I hope in less obscure language
is related to
this.

Virtual Reality

for Susan

Swear

there is a sombrero
of illicit
desquamation
(composition).

I forgot to
get the
potatoes but the lakehouse
(ladle)
is spent
asunder. Gorgeous
gullibility—
or,
the origin
of testiness
(testimony).

Laura

does the laundry, Larry
lifts lacunas.

Such that
details commission of
misjudgment over 30-day
intervals.

By

the sleeve is the
cuff & cuff
link (lullaby, left offensive,
houseboat).

Nor

let your unconscious
get the better of you.

Still, all ropes
lead somewhere, all falls
cut to fade.

I.e.: 4 should always be followed
by 6, 6 by 13.

Or if

individuality is a false
front, group solidarity is a
false fort.

"ANY MORE FUSSING & YOU'LL
GO RIGHT TO YOUR ROOM!"

She flutes that slurp
admiringlier.

Any more blustering & I
collapse as deciduous
replenishment.

So sway the
swivels, corpusculate the
dilatations.

For I've
learned that relations
are a small
twig in the blizzard
of projections

& expectations.

The story
not capacity but care—
not size but desire.

& despair
makes dolts of any persons, shimmering
in the quiescence of
longing, skimming
disappointment & mixing it
with
breeze.

The sting of
recognition triggers
the memory & try to
take that apart (put
that together).

Popeye
no longer sails, but Betty
Boop will always
sing sweetlier
sweetliest
than the crow who fly
against the blank
remorse of castles made
by dusk, dissolved in
day's baked light.

Emotions of Normal People

"Truth is the antithesis of existing society."

—TH. ADORNO

With high expectations, you plug
Into your board & power up. The
Odds are shifted heavily in your
Favor as your logic simulator comes
On-screen. If there's a problem
You see exactly where it's located
& can probe either inside or
Outside with a schematic editor.
English-like commands make
Communication easy. Auto-scale
Gets waveform capacity on-board
Without the need for monolithic or
Highpass switch debouncers &
Dissipation separators. For
Correlating interactions, the 16-

Bit data bus & interrupt controller
 Lets you place a timestamp value on
 Every transaction stored—at no
 Cost to your memory depth.
 Normalization then corrects for
 Reflections & imperfections caused
 By connectors & cables. Enter the
 Digitalizing oscilloscope with 20
 GHz bandwidth, 10 ps resolution, &
 Floating-point primitives upwardly
 Compatible with target-embedded
 Resident assemblers & wet-wet
 Compilers. & the fact that you can
 Configure it yourself means you
 Get exactly what you want—and cut
 Down on chances for device failure.
 Moreover, all systems components
 Are easy to install & reconfigure
 Since interconnections use a
 Floating interface that produces
 Consistent low-loss mating. Add

Real-time, transparent emulation
 Capabilities, & the largest overlay
 Capability in the industry, in a
 Rugged package with state-of-the-
 Art flash-converter overflow flags
 & a family of workstations &
 Servers that thrive in a multi-
 Vendor environment. At which point
 You can connect a bi-directional
 Buffer or dumb terminal to the
 Module's digital inputs & relay
 Outputs with crystal-controlled
 External trigger for jitter-free
 Duplex data compression & protocol
 Source codes.

Dear Fran & Don,

Thanks so much for
 dinner last night. You two
 are terrific—we knew that about
 you, Fran, but, Don—we don't
 meet rocket engineers such as
 yourself very often and so
 meeting you was a special treat!

Next time—our little
Italian restaurant!

Warm Regards,

Scott & Linda

Suddenly, in spite of
worrisome statistics that had unnerved
the Street, we
developed conviction and acted on it. Aside
from the arbs
and the rumor mill, the major trend remains up regardless of
street noise.
The liquidity is there, so any catalyst
should hasten the major direction. The market's internal technical
condition is far from
overbought, which leaves
room to rally back to October's
2500.

I think our big problem is inhibiting post-normalization.

Success demands getting more from available space, taking
efficiency to extremes, paying less for improved performance.
Moreover, 2440 sacrifices none of 2430A's performance.

Intuitive user interfaces provide only part of the road map
out of the dark ages.

We've made debugging easier with differential nonlinearity,
monolithic time-delay generators, and remote-error sensing
terminals (RESTS). Yet, we still face a severe memory short-
age and rather than resolve the problem we're buying our way
out of it. We need a tariff on cheap foreign-made memory so
we can regroup our own. The current controversy, however,

stems from the attempts of several vendors to control the mar-
ketplace by promoting standards that especially benefit their
computing architecture.

I'd like you to meet Jane Franham.
Jane was my mother-in-law until I married
Jim. While I was sure of Joan's
love, I still
worried that she might be tempted
by other men. Now both hands
are able to work, since the magnifier
is suspended around
the neck on an adjustable length of
cord. We had argued about his
job before, about how wrong it was for a man with three kids
to spend so few days a year
at home, with
no end in sight. I
suspect that your father had an adrenal
gland tumor that was
driving his blood pressure
up. Lillie was very emphatic that she
wanted to be a ballet dancer; the nun thing
was just a passing
phase that lots of girls
go through. Lipstick
is meant to be the perfect
finishing touch—one that doesn't
compete with
your eyeshadow or clash
with your blushes.
Only
when the soup course
is finished is
the service plate
taken out. —*Who's the woman YOU*

most admire? Is it
 Shirley Temple Black, Raisa Gorbachev, Phyllis
 Schlafly, Winnie Mandela, Mother Teresa of
 Calcutta, or Ella Fitzgerald?
 After my neck surgery, Marge asked me
 if I would be
 investing in a lot of scarves.
 The Cowley's
 one exceptional
 expenditure is the \$583 they give every month
 to their church.
 This outlay represents nearly
 15 percent of their budget. And
 in 1985 and 1986, when the church was being enlarged
 to include a 2,500-seat chapel, Dick and Carol
 contributed nearly 25 percent
 of their income. "The church is the focus
 of our lives," says Carol.
 She is a volunteer in the church
 library; Dick teaches
 adult Sunday school, accompanies the choir (on
 trumpet), and
 every Tuesday evening goes out on
 "visitations".
 However you come to terms
 with your feelings about your husband, you must
 face the fact that your son is totally
 innocent of any
 responsibility. No matter how much bitterness
 his father deserves, you must not transfer it
 to the boy. Define
 brows with
 brown eye-shadow
 pencil; blend with
 stiff brow brush
 for natural
 effect. Use

powder one shade darker
 than skin tone. Brush on
 temples
 and under chin to widen
 face. For long-lasting
 color, dust lips
 with translucent powder
 before applying
 lip
 color. All
 things considered
 Joe
 was a thoughtful
 husband.
 The
 only thing nicer
 than a letter from a friend
 is taking the time to read it
 over a warm cup of Orange
 Cappucino.

In IntelICorp's KEE, frames are called units, properties of
 units are called slots, and properties of slots are called facets.
 In Teknowledge's 5.2, however, frames are called classes, prop-
 erties of classes are called attributes, and properties of at-
 tributes are called slots.

"When someone hits the board with the head in
 That fashion, you can get a scalping eff-
 Ect," Panzano said. "The board hits the head
 And the skin is peeled back and it requires
 Extensive suturing. The worst thing a
 Diver can do is hit the board or the
 Tower. When I see something like that, I
 Get a sick feeling in my stomach."

If you would love to be living your life in a different way but don't want to spend a lifetime learning how . . . Dynamic short-term social therapy can empower you to make the moves you've been afraid—or unable—to make, in your personal life and your career. You don't have to be a victim of loneliness, depression, "mid-life crisis", indecisiveness, or regrets. Free up your ability to grow and change as you learn the emotional and social skills you need to be intimate and passionate. Write The Dysraphism Center for more information.

Bernstein's argument is an important one and his discussion is consistently thoughtful, energetic, and smoothly handled. Any reader of the modern verse epic will find *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* stimulating and provocative.

This hereby serves as your second and final return notice. Since our previous notice to you remained unanswered, we must assume you do not want your Casio 300 rear projection color TV or your three piece Cardin designer luggage. As previously detailed, this sophisticated color projection television viewing system features the latest in television technology. This set delivers rich contrast and sharp resolution. This system must be given away in order to comply with state and federal regulations. The same is true of the designer luggage by Pierre Cardin. Your failure to respond immediately will release your television to other persons located in your region. Please call 1-800-233-4797 to schedule your tour of Tree Tops Resort. Operators are on duty.

Which best describes your dress size? What brands of bar soap have been used in your household in the past 6 months? Which of the following hypoallergenic products are currently being used in your household? Which of the following best describes the sensitivity of your skin? To which of the following products have you experienced a negative reaction? On average, how many days per week do you use foundation? Do you use a facial cleanser *other than bar soap*? Do you or anyone in your family wear support pantyhose? What brands of underwear do you wear? How often have you used a nasal spray in the last 6 months? How many tablets of pain relievers are used in your household each month? Did you ever use a nonprescription pain reliever in capsule form? Do you own an automatic dishwasher? If so, how many loads do you do in your automatic dishwasher in an average week? Do you use Mexican sauces such as salsa or picante? If you have burned artificial firelogs in your fireplace, which brands do you burn most often? If anyone in your family practices heart attack prevention, how? Which of the following home improvements do you plan in the next 6 to 12 months? How many times did you medicate for diarrhea in the past year? Are you concerned about the side effects allergy medicine can cause (drowsiness, dizziness, insomnia, sleeplessness, dry mouth)? In an average month, how many calls are made by you and any other household member living with you to places outside your area code? Have you moved in the last year and during which month? How many vehicles are owned by members of your household? How do you feel about your present auto insurance company? Do you invest in or would you welcome literature describing special offers on securities? Which of the following do you own or have, or are you considering for first-time purchase or replacement within the next six months? What organizations do any members of your household belong to? How many times have you shopped by mail in the past month? Do you frequently donate by mail to any of the following?

Dear Mr. Chinitz:

I am writing to follow-up on two previous phone calls on this subject and because I will not be able to reach you by phone late this afternoon when you are scheduled to be in your office.

As you know, I called you on September 30 and October 2 to report a very loud vibrating noise coming from the main water risers in our apartment—a noise that affects the whole “R” line and can be heard in the hallway of the building. This noise persisted throughout the middle-of-the-night and into the day on the occasions I called. The noise was such as to prevent sleeping and thus is a disturbing and serious problem. Almando the super checked out every apartment on the rear line of 464 on October 2 while the noise was going on and found it appeared to be unrelated to any water use in those apartments.

Subsequent to that time, the situation had improved: the noise would occur sporadically for periods of five minutes to one hour. During the day today, however, the noise has been persistent from 11:00 am on. Typically, the vibration occurs for about 10 seconds and then stops for about 20 seconds. The hot water riser can be felt to shake: and the adjacent walls also shake.

I had hope that this situation had been resolved, but evidently not. Your urgent attention to this matter is necessary and would be most appreciated.

A 1985 survey shows that 23.3 percent of all writers write poetry—that’s 2,180,000 people who are writing poetry and want to get published. *1989 Poet’s Market* contains current, accurate, and complete information to help poets to do just that.

Poets will find out where and how to publish their poetry through 1,700 listings (550 of which are brand new) of mass circulation and literary magazines, trade book publishers, small presses, and university quarterlies. Updated listings

enable poets to accurately target their work to receptive publishers. Poets will find details on who to contact, how to submit work, types of poetry needed, comments from editors, poets published, whether the publisher accepts unsolicited poems, type of compensation (where applicable), and sample lines of recently published poems. In addition, each listing is coded according to the level of submissions desired (beginner, experienced, or specialized).

Through 12 “Close-Up” interviews with such poets as Richard Wilbur, 1987 Poet Laureate of the United States, and Rita Dove, winner of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for poetry, poets will gain further insight into the process of writing and publishing poetry. They’ll also find advice on increasing their chances of being published by knowing how to judge their own work; participating in workshops, clubs, and networking; working with regional publications; plus opportunities in greeting card, poster, and postcard markets and information on contests and awards.

How do statesmen become aware of unfavorable shifts in relative power and how do they seek to respond to them? Who makes constitutional laws? Were early Americans a distinctly modern people, a people without a past? This is an exemplary work of mutually supportive normative argument and empirical investigation. Reading it is like backpacking through the nation’s forests in company with a modern-day Thoreau. Secondly, the posture that the work takes is frankly quite liberal, and, in recent years, open and undisguised liberalism has become something of a debased currency. After absorbing these revelations and analysis, it is hard to imagine comprehending the origins and evolution of the cold war without them. Drawing on the work of Indian and Japanese patients and displaying a professional anthropologist’s eye for telling detail, here is the first comprehensive study of Protestant theological concerns. A fascinating history that should be required reading for any serious student of turn-of-the-century

French gaiety. Abounds in rich description and valuable insight. Destined to become the definitive treatment for decades. All Americans who care about their country's place in the world will find this book worth reading.

Are you a normal person?

Probably for the most part you are.

Your sex complexes, your fears and furies and petty jealousies, your hatreds and deceptiveness, only serve

to secure your normalcy. I can still remember

vividly the fear I once experienced, as a child,

when threatened, on the way to school,

by a half-witted boy with an air-gun.

But a person who calls himself

a psychologist is in a peculiar position

these days. Dr. Cuit P.

Tichter of the Johns Hopkins University

found that Norway rats

died quickly if their whiskers were clipped

and they were put into a

tank of water. Actually,

we have two emotional levels, one

fundamental and the other more or less

superficial. Actually,

most people need only a few close

friends, with a larger circle

of casual friends. Experiments show that

if someone says these

things to a man on his way to the office,

sometimes he can scarcely work

and will go home to bed. Besides,

being busy is

not a virtue in itself!

There are no adequate emotional outlets

for many stresses and people who depend completely

on their emotions frequently find themselves

in jail. This explains why

persons with father-in-law, familial

or boss troubles develop

painful spasms. The intestine is

as sensitive to bombardments

from the brain as the skin of some people

to sun rays. The

bowel is a bear for punishment.
 In such an atmosphere
 a husband can develop a disturbing
 sense of inferiority. He begins
 to doubt that he still has the capacity
 to be attractive. He may
 become so convinced that he has lost his
 charm that he no longer
 makes any effort to look nice or
 appear charming. Of course, the
 opposite type of upbringing can be just as
 harmful. Of course,
 you can't grade husbands like apples or oranges,
 dropping each
 through a slot previously evaluated for size,
 shape, dis-
 position, and domesticity.
 "Men like to be bossed," says Dr.
 Cleo Dausson, University of Kentucky
 psychologist and authority on
 masculinity. "Men are fearful. Glandular

differences make them five times more fearful
 than women. They attach more
 importance to security than women do. Emotionally
 they are never
 on the same keel two days in a row; as a result, they need
 constant reassurance." But some parents
 always act fearsome and
 protective toward their children, not thinking
 that by killing
 their nerve they are also killing their chances
 of having rich,
 exciting, and successful lives. Children
 are born with
 practically no fears and if not repressed
 by their overanxious and tyrannical
 parents
 would have a natural courage that would
 sustain them throughout life. Nor can I second
 your notion that
 you've got moral grounds for divorce. Rather, I think
 your

misery calls for psychiatric treatment. In other words, the mother's natural reflex equilibrium could not be restored to a completely resting or balanced condition until Teddy had learned to perform his part of the rug-folding process perfectly, and was further able to take the initiative in directing his mother's movements so that they would cooperate completely with his own. Again the explanation of their incompetence in passing a mental test may lie in the subjects' seeming inability to regard fellow students as rivals, or to feel any element of opposition in either the test itself or the examiner. They frequently appear just as well satisfied with a poor record as a good one and seem

willing to submit to any degree of hardness or criticism or reproof from the teacher or examiner without assuming the least antagonism of attitude. In any case, sarcasm is evidence of a sadistic trend in one's personality.

Debris of Shock / Shock of Debris

The debt that pataphysics owes to sophism
cannot be overstated. A missionary with a horse
gets saddlesores as easily as a politburo
functionary. But this makes a mishmash of overriding ethical
impasses. If the liar
is a Cretan I wouldn't trust him
anyway—extenuating contexts wouldn't amount
to a hill of worms so far as I
would have been deeply concerned about
the fate of their, yes, spools. Never
burglarize a house with a standing army,
nor take the garbage to an unauthorized
junket. Yet when I told the learned
ecologist about my concern for landscape
she stared unsympathetically into the
carbon. Mr. Spoons shook his head, garbled his
hypostases. To level with you we'd have

to be on the same
 level. Then, with all honesty, we can
 only proceed to deplane. Looking for society
 in a lamppost will not necessarily eliminate
 need for empirical
 evidence. There are the
 below-the-surface conduits
 to consider. As a rule, I keep
 my mittens in the drawer. Structure
 is metaphorical, function metonymic. Meaning
 my aim is to blur
 the distinction between logic and normalization.
 ("Though I still don't get how confusion
 is supposed to be positive?") Are they literally
 bricks or are they literal steps? The infernal
 machinery of missing harness, by the bus,
 gates close to malediction, as in
 get off my bunt, churning
 in make-work flirtation, shocked to find a bandit
 loosened . . . Venetian red (Rem), prussian
 ultramarine (Rem), shiva red, thick

red, thick pink, thick ochre, medium green
 paintstick (thick), thin black, thin
 ochre, thin
 red, paper palette, tissues, garbage bags,
 wax.

Yet it is the virile voice of authority, the condescending
 smugness in tone, that is thrilling. What
 does it matter that he hasn't any . . . "Creative
 goals and financial goals are identical: we just
 have different approaches on how to research
 those goals, and we have different definitions
 of risk." A localization that may not
 dovetail with forced archaization, which
 is the groundswell of our importunity. &
 speaking of "pressmen's licence", here is a truly
 novel instance of "creating facts"
 riddled with holes like baloney. *Respond:*
yes or no. The point not to right wrong
 but to come to terms
 with error. It's not only
 the wrong road but the wrong

destination; still if
 there's no way back, there's company
 in the
 loss. Heeding without ceding . . . Couples
 dancing in the snow, in the blinding
 light. No matter how much you protest.
"If I'd have lived longer, I'd have lost
even more money." For months he retreated
 into his inner sanctuary, emerging only for meals
 & sleep; once, stealing through its
 locked doors, we briefly glimpsed
 the spot: bare
 walls without furniture or implement, floor
 covered with thick black
 loam. Better
 a barber than a splendor
 be. Fool's
 gold
 is the only kind of gold I
 ever cared about.
 The men, having lost their comrades in the

explosion, returned the next day to the mine
 & the memory: what other
 image of courage could have
 so little capital & so much
 weight? The salt
 of the earth is the tears
 of God, torn for
 penitence at having created this plenitude
 of sufferance. So we dismember (disremember)
 in homage to our maker, foraging
 in fits, forgiving in
 forests, spearing what we take
 to be our sustenance: belittling to rein things
 in to human scale. A holy land parched
 with grief & dulled
 envy. The land is soil
 & will not stain; such
 hope as we may rise from.

Heart in My Eye

Motion rises, sustains a
predilection in askance
who periodize location, slush

boat to chimes
slows emotion, like as
in thumping pummels
or pulverizes punt

vicarious want to
be possessed no room
arrays diphthong slope

gumption gum drilled or
guttered, the contraption
is delinquent must fly
trap or elevate

theatrical equivalent of lozenge
a.k.a. e'er do-well seamster
stirs up corollary antidote

or weightlier osmosis
stems looking glass affect
coddling codices in
endoskeletal humor mongering—you'd

have to admit—
belies the unpoetic poetic
who cruises palatially—

all adrift intended—I'll
get slumpy and
maybe open a garden
(leveled at about

30,000 fleet)—or hate
the boom-shebang effect
fostered at time

interlock, station flayed by
inoperable hampers, obsequious
swoops, as pulp bumps
plop, thingamawhoseit baffle

joint, glassed in gradually
gestures of gerrymand
origin, jitters jocose oblong—

nor say this—
materials not hard to
locate but reform—
like like or as

before, getting a
taxi in a sandstorm
breathes (not breaths)

a lie of belief
tokens of congregation
voids convivial handtray intubation
until detains corrode

lavalier pistol-whip upholstery
larvae of dysfunction
branding witless hip, demarcation

baloney, scintillating sway
of deadbeat ejaculation, sipping-
good aluminum: anything
that can be forgot

will be forgotten
blue ashtray on a
plexiglass puncture, plowed

to enclosure, moment before
enunciation: *I left*
you there but you
have never found

me though I hide
in visibility and
wade higglety pigglety among

archways or ski lifts
courting caresses while plummeting
occasionally to shoreline
sighting concavities like the

mannequin that had
no manners, trading flops
for angular inebriation

(awful salvage), lighting delay
as if details
could reverse the course
of reason's palsy:

heart in my eye
remorse buckles under
weight that overpowers all

I call mine
all touched by such
exposure imagination flings
tools formed in shell-

bent plan we
mourn at singular unleavening
excretes by fold

Reveal Codes

It is often said that the bladder is an unreliable witness. I've felt that way myself coming back from a sluggishly encumbered day at the computer bank. "They clammed up like so many turtles in overdrive"—but only if you didn't get to know their Mercurial propulsions. There's a version that says quell the branches before you braid or at least unload the interfusing hot buttons. Don't know much about chopped wax either, loop the reliquary, some cross-valent comet coming at 50,000 kilobytes per minute per mention, I left the rack at the store but recalled the combination to the cross, "he would suck up to an octopus if he thought it would strangle somebody for him", no pork barrel just juiced petunias . . .

It was one of those almost unfamiliar sections of LA, just beyond the tar pits, where you could get steak & eggs for breakfast for under ten & change. I wasn't quite a regular but they knew me well enough to bring the order without asking too many questions. It was a dive I went to to get my mind off work, my attention Intermittent Diffuse with just enough juice to register the scene at the end table by the picture of Hydra.

Ripping through the water like it was so much
Swiss cheese

"The only thing Swiss about you is the baloney!"

Dear Mr. Charles,

I wish and pray this letter finds you
in the best of health and cheers. May I
introduce myself as a missionary priest
working for North East India with its
thousands of downtrodden people, suffering
from the pangs of poverty, illiteracy
diseases, etc. Hence in their name this
begging letter to you for any little help.

So many innocent and poor children
are to be fed, educated, and looked
after. Timely aids for emergency needs
give us tensions in distress we
have no other way than to make
appeal in folded hands to kind
hearted people.

Fr. Pallatty M.
Madras 600 008

Dried ice or crunched innuendo, on your toes then on your
knees. To capitalize Despair—that was the old way; to
capitalize on despair, who promises an aspiring future
in piece goods . . . The boat found the hay but the ocean
had turned to a symphony of suction. *So long sweet tuna,*
so long gefilte fish. The only true traditions
the ones we invent to vent the spleen of the inconsolable
loss of history's ambient diffusion and victory's
unsparing parry. Witless in the rain, sober
in the dew . . .

Or more due than ever done, when debts
Soak the morning and regrets eventide

My name is Necromancer
My sister calls me Still
I'm widely known as Cast Away
've trouble with my Trill

Yet despite the disintegration of his personality, the
foolishness of his actions, his excessive drunkenness
and incurable extravagance, Goldsmith was, and is,
a great man—a man of rare talents that border on
genius, one of the finest natural writers in the English
language.

For Blake's art is ornamental
& rhetorical, not organic &
formal.

Slip & slide
pop 'n' fizz
blink and whine
drop, spin

There hangs the fade, there the woolen shoes.
The roof has swoops—
two fools under one hood, alarmed to the teeth
one with an eye on the sail
other with ear to the—.

Where the carcass is, there
the crow flies.

Swarming around the bandshell
waiting for the buzz saw
or Buick Pompadour convertible

coupe or any so-called doze-proof
buffet

Or, to put it more bluntly, no gain
no pain. As if no pain wasn't
pain enough.

This buttons the cue when the overlay
is toggled. "Hot keys"—i.e.
combinations you press to access
a resident, or underlying, program, as
"control" and "home", "mother" and "blanket",
"disguise" and "revenge".

As in a lifeguard's better than
no guard. As if
you could guard life
without blanking it out.

My friend Polly Vocal called the other
day just to say hello. I decided not
to pick up and returned the call
to the machine on her other number.

Go On Get Down

"Do they have a bar here?"

Short stabs or quick hits or is there
an exit & is it near the "exit" sign?

Is the Pope Polish? Does $3 + 5$ equal $5 + 3$?
Is Lincoln buried in Grant's Tomb? Is
the South Bronx a WASP enclave? Will this
burn at Fahrenheit 451? Is Napoleon the President
of the Bahamas? Is Communism finished? Do

hearts break when you don't touch them?
Are the rich getting richer or are you just
glad to see me?

"I didn't give it to you with any sand so
why do you give it to me with sand?"

"Well, Blanche, I just brought the egg over here
because the recipe says to separate two eggs."

LET'S CALL THE POLICE!

"Let's call the Swedish delegation!"

Call me irresistible or call me unreliable
but don't call me I'll call you

He showed a malignant unwillingness to differentiate
frames suggesting an underlying refusal
to distinguish between performative, substantive,
substantive-performative, and perfermo-substantive
utterances.

"I thought utterances were for cows"

"You think you're big but in reality you're
very little"

"In reality" I don't exist though I will recently
have moved to Buffalo.

Elbow or buckled philodendrom

"It's just hard it's not like you're gonna get killed"

First there is the build up & then the fizz (fix).
In Utopia the story will never end.

—“Or begin”

“Yah but a softball is still hard”

Or if this followed the other, that this? This that
other, the followed this if, or.

Just don’t say it like you mean it

You can’t substitute *heating oil* for ‘moral panic’

You get the hose, I got the biscuits

Look! Look!

I’m eternally attentive but nowhere sentient

“Just tell the snake, ‘NO’!”

Fluidly floral or floridly fluid

Butcha better belch

“No they’re not fighting it’s real play”

She doesn’t give up she doesn’t even try!

Flummoxed or flunked or flushed or refrigerator

Decals make the man much the way oilcloth
makes the kitchen. “Oilcloth” being an old-
fashioned way of saying *linoleum*, “decals”
being an oblique way of suggesting *models for*.

“I’m hungry and want someone to greet”

If sand’ll get you shore, sad’ll get
you exactly nowhere.

“But I can’t help it”

“Then I can’t help you”

(As if volition were voluntary)

You have to occupy yourself sometimes, draw
on your own resources.

As if *you* had any!

My inner resources are overdrawn, in the
sense of interest due & exaggerated, which go
together like an ant and a pineapple,
a zebra and polystyrene wrap, petunia
and DOS 4.01.

DOS, DOS and not a drop to drink

DOS, DOS don’t you know the road

What I’ve never understood about fashion is that
if you buy a new swimsuit (what we used to call
bathing suit) every summer what do you do with
the old trunks?

Ou sont les bikinis d’antan?

“Yeah yeah” [negative double positive]

MAKE MAYONNAISE NOT MUNITIONS

DISPOSSESS THE RICH NOT THE POOR

Save gas, stay at home.
Save electricity, sleep more.
Improve your mind, get a vasectomy.

No I'm not hostile, just unhappy.

No I'm not unhappy, just hostile.

I mean, *hospitable* . . . I mean I've been
a little grumpy the past few decades

Harder for a rich man to read a poem than
for a hippopotamus to sing bel canto.

Preposterous!

Para(pa)posterous.

Indubitably, indubitablier, emergency intubation

—But then you've probably never heard Rataxes sing!

Not only that, either—when two bits ain't
worth a dime, you might as well swap those
Swamis for some canned fish

No, I'm not sarcastic, just unsettled, like
images of the Indians trouble my sleep, like
we settled altogether too much too fast &
have to throw out our backs retracing our
steps

There is a madness to their method: Take no
prisoners, pensioners

For to dissect is to delight in the
sentient; all else is so much hocus
pocus, ring-a-leveos of repression and
triplebind, culpable blindness to what
is before our touch. Read to redress,
disguise as promise—not to submit.

Hollow words with a ring of truth,
signet of sorrow. Not to reprimand is
to be remanded to the custody of those
escaped the tide of moral pull:
accumulation beyond the wildest needs
of child or woman or man—this is
the first sin. Our jailers
are our constipating sense of self—
not that madmen claim many kin.
Rue or be ruled or take a ruler
to the wind to measure the gravity
that locates us surely as the morning
falls, whether or not we get up.

Or else—

wake me for meals

The Influence of Kinship Patterns upon
Perception of an Ambiguous Stimulus

What's money worth? Not a whole lot if
You come up a few bits short & come
Away empty handed. If that was the case
What would you have to say then? At least
The motorperson knows how to blow a whistle.
At least in the winter it's not summer
(God damn mosquitoes & horseflies). What did
The Mandela say to the Mandela? BOY
HITS IGLOO. Snowed motion, i.e., frosted or
Laminated. To be such a bitter pill
& have nothing wrong. *Don't laugh*
It really hurted. If you put on
My shirt then what shirt am I
Going to wear? The kind of people
Wear plaid Bermuda shorts. The kind of
People that judge people who wear
Plaid Bermuda shorts. The kind of

Day this has been (I think I am
 Falling into a tunnel of love but
 Forget to get on). For a long time I'd
 Say *twirl* when I meant 'spin'. Have you
 Heard the one about the fly & the
 Paper? The fly bottle could not found
 The fly. The Mother Bear could not
 Find the rest of the story. Harry has his
 Troubles too but these are not interesting enough
 To bear replay. "That's a very
 Suspicious-looking baby." "It's hard
 Not to be a baby." "But
 Are there really babies or just baby-
 Behavior?" —For the purpose
 Of your request I'm including this
 Sentence about the influence of John
 Ashbery. While the packet
 Boat sunk I can still imagine I am
 Crawling into it; at the same time the ice
 Is too thin to
 Pretend to fall through.

Meanwhile, the water is wetter in the
 Rich man's pond but doesn't taste
 As good. —Hey wait a minute!
 That's a bit *too* close, try to stay
 Back *at least* 10 inches. So what
 If the margins don't
 Turn out right? Whadda you *mean* you're
 Going to the next poem? *This is the best*
Part! Oh, I'm sorry, I guess I misunderstood
 You. —But nobody seems to want to hear
 About the pain we men feel
 Having our prerogatives questioned.
 A bunch of darn-dash pragmatists
 With justice on their side (for all
 The good that will do them). Don't
 Frame me or I'll bust you in the
 Doldrums. —*Now let's*
 Switch the subject & try to find
 Out what's on *your* mind. Voyage of life
 Getting you down? Felt better when things
 Were really rocky & now there's smooth

Sailing but it's lost its meaning? I'm a
 Good listener & only mildly demanding:
 There's just the one-time fee (mostly
 For paper & printing & distribution
 Costs) & unlimited returns. I'm bubbling over
 With empathy & good advice & I'm not
 Afraid to tell you where I think you've
 Gone wrong. Let's face it—
 From the word *go* you've
 Resented me—resented my being finished
 In the face of your—what?—continuing
 On? But I don't mean to be complete
 If that makes you feel distant; still
 As I say, I
 Do want some distance. She was a
 Sort of Betsy Ross figure but without the
 Accoutrements—no washer/dryer, just the one
 TV. I said to her—What can you *expect*
 From a poem? —evidently a lot less than
 She did. A poem bleeds
 Metaphorically, just like I do. I can

No more breathe than face
 The music. But if the first
 Banana smells a rat look out for
 Lost leader (tossed reader). —“I
 don't think I'm ever
 Going home.” —I don't think
 I've ever been home. *We are looking for*
Cheerful, enthusiastic self-starters
With solid backgrounds in detailed
Wails. The point
 Not to change history but to change
 Events. For instance, you
 Can change in the car, change on the
 Beach, or use a changing room
 At the beach. Don't change me
 & I won't change a hair on your
 Chinny chin chin. Or let me
 Put it this way: You can call
 Me anything you want to but give me
 The right change. That's right: I
 haven't changed, you have. It's

Not the time it's the beer. I'm in

A rush, don't forget to send a

Check. Not a con

Just a dodge. Not a dodge a Lincoln-

Mercury. *Take me to your leader.* Take me

To the 5 & Dime I've got to go.

Faith under leisure: as difficult as

Keeping a hat in a hurricane

Or an appointment with an erasure.

One Mandela hit the other Mandela in the nose.

What color blood came out?

R-E-D spells *red*.

Are you people? You're about the nicest people

I know & I know some pretty unpleasant

characters.

Dark City

"We're a great pair—
I've got no voice
& you've got no ear."

—LIZABETH SCOTT to
CHARLTON HESTON, *Dark City*

1. *Apple-Picking Time*

A transom stands bound to a flagpole. Hard
by we go hardly which way is which
lingering somewhere unsettled where evidence
comes harder by sockets, stems
etched in flexed omission like osmotic
molarities flickering edge and orange at flow
rates unrepresentative of ticking or torpor
any child or person requires for, well
against, that remorse remonstration
brings. It's cold outside, maybe
but the heart sinks daily in
slump of sampled parts and *I*
feel like carelessness, disowning what's
acquired in indifferent
animation, no body swaps to—
not as if elevated or cut down
to size up, like layers of lost
boys, like aspiration in a tub
at sea, lists all the scores and
scares at measures twice the fall.
I'm parked because I have no taste
to go—penned down, no row to call

if it was really a mistake, maybe
 I shouldn't have said what I
 said, did what I
 done. Mildred paced around the museum
 for another few hours before she spotted
 him, but it was much too crowded to
 finish the job right there. "They were
 my favorite boots," she cried. "They are
 your only boots," I replied.

2. *Early Frost*

I think it's time we let the cat out
 its bag, swung the dog over the
 shoulder, so to say, let the hens
 say "hey" to the woodpeckers, doled
 out some omniaversions to the
 too-tapped-upon, the tethers without
 toggles, the field-happy expeditioners
 on the march to Tuscaloosa, Beloit,
 Manual Falls, Florid Oasis.
 "Damn but you're a beautiful
 cow / of a / bell! Haven't
 I seen you on the radio?"
 Where are those fades (arcades, shades)
 when you need them? Who
 was that text I saw you with
 last night? Is there life after
 grammar (glamour)? The Czech
 is in the jail (the wreck is
 in the wail, the deck is in the
 sail, the Burma shave's shining over the
 starry blue skies, Waukeegan, New Jersey,
 1941). *He that cannot pay: let him pay!*
 She that peeps through a hole will kiss
 the wave that troubled her. No larder

but has its puddle, no rose without
overthrows. Ask no questions and at last
 you shall be blind! A stumble may
 prevent a fall but a fall guy's
 my kind of man. Every poem
 has its price, every anxiety its reward—
 but no person ever tripped in the same
 place more than *I* choose to
 recall. There are spots even on the
 sofa (meddle not with another person's
 meddling, i.e., the rock that falls
 from the sky breaks your toes).
 For the footprint makes the joint a
 well-appointed appurtenance aside the
 jesting hooligan, shenanigan, or
 general call to bedlam, or did
 she say, *be calm*? Clammy hands
 hurt the advancement of the waiter
 but I never heard no tell of no
 gust or gallon of time worth the
 curing in weight alone. Boxers
 can't live by punching alone, but
 stay clear of such as possible—a
 Divine Swerve will still land you
 in Hell's cauldron. *Thus*
 make your peace with yourself at
 your own risk for peace with the Devil
 costs everybody more than you could
 hope to destroy. *Holy is as holy does*.
 Essence precludes existence.

3. *Endless Destination*

If I should die
 cut out my throat
 and burn it on the pyre
 of their indifference.
 It means no more to me
 than that, to take
 your hand in my
 hand and turn our backs
 from the wreck
 not of our lives
 but where we have been given
 to live them. I would not
 walk alone here, where the
 dark surrounds, where your face
 radiates beyond my swollen
 misgivings and clarifies the mist
 of my belonging. Stay near
 that I may hold you lightly
 else the fear inside tear
 away what measures I have
 held against the night.

Love's no more than that
 a straw against the wind
 that blows us to the ground
 without submission. Come
 love, come, take this
 shadow I call me: cast
 it against stone, lest the gloom
 become us. Come cast me
 down 'gainst shore, where
 sand enfolds us.

Love is like love, a baby
 like a baby, meaning like
 memory, light like light.
 A journey's a detour
 and a pocket a charm
 in which deceits are borne.
 A cloud is a cloud and
 a story like a story,
 song is a song, fury
 like fury.

4. *In the Pink*

Now let's turn to some advise for expectant
 fathers. Never wear a hat to a
 hanging or carry a feather pillow to
 cello practice. Suffer not the
 professor of culture nor the minister
 of taste, but assail all who
 complacent sit in the place of those
 deserve it. Take the cracks on
 the wall as your credo or call—
 obscurity's in the eye of
 ones will not behold—
 what they can understand
 isn't worth the price of
 a used tin can. I may be loco
 but at least I listen: What
 you've tuned out would make a Paradise
 of Plies.

This is the difference between truth
 and reality: the one advertises itself
 in the court of brute circumstance
 the other is framed by its own
 insistences. Truth's religious, reality

cultural, or rather
truth is the ground of reality's
appearance but reality intervenes
against all odds.

5. *The Plight of the Bumblebee*

She was a rudder
without anchor
in a chaos
of expectation,
a comb
without teeth, a
brush without
bristles.

6. [untitled]

"The words
come out of
her heart
& into the
language"
& the language
is in the heart
of that girl
who is in the heart
of you.

Charles Bernstein was born in 1950 in New York City. He attended the Bronx High School of Science and Harvard College. He lives in Buffalo, and in Manhattan, with painter Susan Bee and their children Emma and Felix.

Bernstein's first book, *Parsing*, was published by his own Asylum's Press in 1976. In 1978 he began editing, with Bruce Andrews, the influential critical journal, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*. The same year, Sun & Moon Press published *Shade*, in its first book publication. *Controlling Interests* (1980) and *Islets/Irritations* (1983) further established the characteristic range of Bernstein's stylistic and philosophic preoccupations. *The Sophist*, published in 1987, made apparent that comedy was a fundamental element of his work.

Like *The Sophist*, *Rough Trades*, published in 1981, received international critical attention. Writing in *American Book Review* Pierre Joris declared: "*Rough Trades*—and starting with the title's witty punning on atmospheric conditions, sexuality, labor relations—does not only give pleasure through its intelligence and wit. It is also a book that demands the reader's constant rethinking of her own 'ground' and poetic presuppositions.... This is exhilarating and liberating work."

Bernstein has published two substantial, and widely reviewed, collections of essays—*Content's Dream* (1986) and *A Poetics* (1992). In 1990, he edited *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy* as well as *Patterns / Contexts / Time*, with Phillip Foss. He has also edited collections of poetry for *The Paris Review* and *boundary 2*.

In collaboration with Susan Bee, Bernstein has produced several books that explore visual settings of text. Bernstein is also active in musical theater; he has written three librettos with composer Ben Yarmolinsky.

From the early '70s to the late '80s, Bernstein worked as a writer/editor on healthcare and medical topics, with a break to serve as Associate Director of the CETA Artists Project (the largest postwar American public employment program for artists).

In 1990, Bernstein was appointed David Gray Professor of Poetry and Letters at the State University of New York, Buffalo, where he is a founding member of the Poetics Program in the Department of English.