

REDO

LYN HEJINIAN

Originally published in 1984 by Salt-Works Press

1.

Agreement swerves  
a sonnet to the consonants.  
Sparrows. As a wind  
blows over the twigs of a rough nest  
entered by a bird that impales

a vowel on its beak.  
When unable to think of two things  
unless we think twice, the rower  
in the water jerks to travel. Her autobiography  
is ninety percent picaresque.

While thus moralizing all we have done  
is shout  
the name of someone we know.  
In the intellectual water the rattling sweaters  
and the fluffy rocks seem to be wheezing

in the wind. As a child  
so simple with sincerity I found it unbearable  
to have friends while inhibited with sympathy  
I had them. Some were a) aggressive  
and beloved, b) consistently contradictory

or c) casual & splay — like raffia.  
With a Freudian sense of fun we felt  
remorse for our most aggressive howdies.  
But given fire the discovery  
of water was inevitable.

Clouds amass like the glaze on clay  
buttery birds collect in a glossy sky  
the fat moon coming our way looms out  
and slides. Anarchies sleep  
in this overabundance

of time like inert technicalities.  
A nameless crowd (I wonder whose) reminds me  
of unmortared masonry. Tomorrow is the same  
day in my experience. But sleep  
can only give us the pleasure of pleasure

generous if we're awake.

2.

Nostalgia is the elixir drained  
from guilt . . . I've been writing . . .  
with the fingers of my non-writing hand  
I patted the dashboard. "Hi, car."  
It responded "Hello Mommy."

The city is uncarlike. She who had lived  
all her life in the city and absorbed  
all its laws in her blood . . . madness, really  
. . . she waited for the light  
to change and stepped into the traffic

on red. Objects always flicker.  
Rain threatens but what can it do.  
Knocking, buzzing, sloshing . . .  
somewhere between empty and full . . .  
the excitement is mental, internal

as they remain urgently still.  
We have stayed in the city  
over which it really is raining.  
Reflections water the gardens.  
The fields that pressed in the passing

landscapes were immobilized by trees.  
Uneven individual glowing.  
The photograph craves history.  
The automobile drove to the photograph.  
It faces me as I awake.

3.

The sun is just appearing.  
The first bulky  
clogged, distorted moment was dairy  
yellow — an instant magnificent  
with claustrophobia. How could one contemplate

"paradise" without thinking about love?  
Rushing out into the open, I  
believing it to be . . .  
sometimes it takes just such  
a motivated coincidence. Gold

from a petrified honeycomb lies  
under the ironlike utility poles.  
My merchant horse wickers.  
My dog yaps in the park, always  
lamenting:  
"Marvelous! Perfect!"

She sees her subjects  
in an incomplete benevolent focus.  
Meanwhile a great music forms  
in the driveway — a band  
of finches. It seems

as if everything might be somewhere  
in that mass of sound  
where bound together with the lyricism of wasps  
and spiders they appear  
to crave their own innate activity. And going

by the usual criteria for knowledge  
I vowed not to laugh  
but to scatter things. In the bowl  
of my left palm I placed my right  
forefinger, to signify a) Feeding

b) A batch, c) The Appraisal, d) Too much consolation  
is like a forgetfully boundless vow.

4.

Imagine observing ones fear  
of death metaphorically by falling  
in love. And then today  
becomes tomorrow as one steps out  
of the bathtub into the pond —

aloof! — and down over the ditch.  
The water splits, opal in the sunlight  
— a moment when one, two, five — my words  
are the terminus of a long train  
of thought — and the sand dries.

The romantic intellect (the word  
is unavoidable) takes in the excellence  
of life on the whole. Thinking drops  
(our daylight is like a ball)  
and then leaps back. Lights

come on in the water  
(because daylight is domesticity's underline)  
and the pace of the movements  
lit by them is altered  
but inconsistently; some things go faster

others slower, and thus my flailing  
arms altogether miss the sluggish sleeve  
of my coat, and my mind has arrived  
at the park long before my legs  
slowly carry me to my front door.

Thus grotesquely elongated  
with longing, two courses  
of experience  
meet — how capably! A bouquet  
adds weight. A dog  
chases the rolling orange, the orange

opens and something is removed  
— a telephone. A man is ringing  
and he's divided horizontally.  
He has in tow the stillness  
of a barge, which takes on

the burden of the excellence  
of happiness, that nameless reliving  
spent in life.  
Commitment? that sort of autobiography.  
Confession? that sort of misunderstanding

— like infidelity to an impossible task.  
Who can take it over? It is as moral  
for night to fall.

5.

"Angels, it seems, don't always know  
they are moving." Spring  
is not my "instruction" . . . mildly prime  
. . . the remnants of a tremendous example.  
The tree set upright to give

more room jiggles in the wind.  
I've a complicated sense of injustice  
. . . solitude unused . . . while vibrating  
to music I draw on my napkin  
in a small sufficient apartment.

In a time of brain and desire  
patience is the mental equivalent of running.

## 6. Adolescence

Each fact gains mobility. Imagine  
enjoying that little bit of life naively  
as on a postcard associated with a gaping  
landscape or a sound that resembles its source.  
Apparently what the throat thinks, we drink.

Down the street a milky-colored (connective-  
white) dog stops, sits, looks  
at his tail with the impatient  
but suspicious attitude usually reserved  
for old friends. He pretends

to have a single serious schedule  
requiring solitude (like the shy man  
who attempts to intend  
to have no one to talk to)  
then scratches his left ear

with his left hind leg as  
if spending money and stands up  
and sniffs like a man who has just rented  
an apartment at the base of an undernourished tree.  
Unbearable anticipation of interruptions

whose cacaphony is familiar  
as the air. And cram . . . the great misfortune . . .  
otherwise I got flattened out (the platters  
spin away, wobbling) with congeniality . . .  
befalling words. With the inevitable

self-congratulatory description of a landscape  
. . . I love water with sufficient details . . .  
we were real young and I was so thrilled  
to get wall-to-wall carpeting that I just rolled  
over and over on the floor.

Resignation. Defiance.  
Hysteria is thrilling. Normal  
possessiveness (which is itself crucial  
to a sense of direction) disappears . . .  
sets forth a doctrine of efficient lessons.

I with my murky eyesight should have good ears  
having been a thing convulsively . . .  
combines and combines, never creates . . .  
brushing the flies of terrible nonsense  
in my head. There are pigments

in every probability . . . the doorknob's  
hole in the plaster wall, a house  
in the pasture . . . the things  
individuality grips with dependent desire.

7.

A person finds a certain pleasure  
in standing at the very edge of a cliff  
and thinking "what if I jump"  
with expansive sensations. Suddenly swings the sea  
and looks on with stupid interest.

The rain falls jellylike. Repentance  
and determination make a white beginning  
anti-sunwise. Even in post-Rational society  
the word is like a "foster" dog  
repeating the same thing, over and over

her resonant voice resounding  
with a little natural reverb in the deep wet  
murky morning air . . . a dangerous situation  
the child will be run down, I throw myself  
at her, knocking her to safety . . .

with interruptions. I couldn't "steal"  
the shells from nature.  
On the other hand, I couldn't simply throw them  
away. Eventually somewhere on the beach  
I dropped them, but when or where I don't remember.

Thus each new bit of knowledge  
(gratitude for myopia, etc.) merely contributes  
to a wider romanticism, a series of changes  
"sprinkled with a little melody"  
as if the traffic were throwing out

fragments of glass in the milky air.  
My claustrophobic luck, hilly . . . the sound  
of the traffic is almost maternal.  
My mouth in eating suggests . . .  
we made the rent, how cavalier!

The plates secure order in eating.  
The house states (the unsatisfied prototype)  
a car itself is an armed bookshelf. My claustrophobia  
is as sound-porous as a wood wall.



## 8. Innocence

There is a red car in the driveway  
ready to drive away. Awkward faith  
in the eager present tense is naive.  
A gardener is a poor critic of this.  
To be sorry is funny. Carnations

of Kleenex are scotchtaped  
to the swinging refrigerator door and fill  
the glass bowl, the Pyrex.  
Sometimes the simplest identifications may be  
a cruel innocence. The lake

was known for her fleas. I'd open the curtains  
for light . . . you know how families are  
. . . to be up before anyone was *serious* . . .  
but everything is indirect . . . spots  
sympathetic units, while the psyche

. . . mediated . . . it's scientifically  
self-conscious . . . this in turn was *romantic*  
as its literary character. Autobiographically  
repentance yields to determinism  
with restrictions (innocence).

9.

The sun has risen as high as a man's hat.  
An authoritative light is reducing  
action to powder or mist. Freight (panic  
is a psycho-technicality) or a skyline suffusion.  
As for we who like to think logically — astonished!

Color has faded away from the vacant lot  
which resembles a straw bag.  
In the restaurant I sat alone  
listening subjectively to sounds beyond  
my peripheral vision — intimate & similar.

The reversible heh of a yawn. The pronoun  
"ya" has long since lost its meaning.  
I want a faster logic, instantaneously  
consistent. The diamond-shape  
of the Doppler effect is wide-hipped

as domesticity. The floor  
was littered with small oranges  
and graham crackers and an oblate fluffy  
low-slung brown and white doglike pet  
was scampering (skimming) around in this muzzy scene

while two children (they had been taking turns  
swinging one-handed over a plate  
while casually but tenderly cradling an infant)  
were calling it, "Too-ey" or "Two-ee"  
or "Tu-uwie" with meticulous distortions.

It's true, I tend to get overstimulated  
among friends. Still if they like me  
they visit. Travellers have no day.

## 10. Coverage

My fingers are reduced to three  
for ease in writing. My nerves  
are a management and a graphic  
design. Typical are formulations  
like the morning. To tell in ambitious aphorisms

. . . news-based . . . delight in explanations  
proves what nature is . . . eyes  
fumbling over an anecdotal close wall  
pattern . . . the uneven partial idleness  
of apples . . . and decree it an arena.

Discontinuity in my experience  
to me means radical coverage. With garrulous scanning  
. . . as the cobweb that humiliates the space that waves  
. . . constantly distracted, the vulnerability  
not of the fragile but of the fake . . .

those whom it assimilates with anticipation.  
Now it is August 6 to 7, broad and flexible.  
Nature allows us to explore  
its effect on perception while giving  
satisfaction. Thus the clouds

which seem to be entering the world  
from one spot in the sky  
mediate time by taking on light and accumulate  
sound just as it's the desert highway that sucks in  
and dries out the landscape. The wind

thickens and the bird songs modulate  
paragraph, muscles, esophagus. A hard-windowed cave.  
Safely in the dark of some backyard  
a chained dog chiefly barks  
into the discontinuity that absorbs emotional work.

11.

Social movements accompany music  
with repetition. We begin. Then we invert  
the sounds, left shoe on right foot.  
We rush to the window and shout in a social voice  
"Family!" Mother was strict, this is Daddy.

He is in the gentle hold of his imagination.  
Still the equidistance maintains  
its fantastic symmetry. The door  
slams downstairs, toilet flushes  
on the street car engine revs, the radio

blares full of bass, children outside shout  
so that every word achieves its peak  
two dogs, one small and one deep  
are barking and the phone rings.  
The telephone is a weapon.

New noises in new American rhythms  
address the world with strain.  
In my sentence only a message. 0 clipboard  
. . . all aspens are the same tree.  
Clone, widening looseleaf.

The camera is a scissor . . . wipes the message  
from the sentence. The fingers reduce  
the surface. The holiday-makers are an audience  
at sea. A railroad track  
follows the passing waves.

In the waves there are two levels  
to which people calmly go: up to their knees  
and up to their elbows. At noon, standing there  
on the line, in no particular hurry  
it feels less like water than fire.

12.

I am the subject of an egotistical yearning  
to improve. Was my soul assigned?  
Under cover of the possessive, a man  
outside claims his dog is half-wolf.  
This is like speech finding a sonnet.

Elliptical vigor and a good appetite.  
It was easy work, sandblasting . . . spending all day  
telephoning . . . there was a box of zippers  
that were all mixed up . . . we arrived  
at a safe resemblance. I was on my own

in Europe . . . so full with workers and soldiers  
you could' t walk through  
to collect the fares, so I sat there  
and as they got off I took the money.  
Know a stone wall when you see one.

A transfer of the world into poetry?  
Mistaking drowsy for lusty. The anecdote  
one is saving to tell with direct desire.

### 13. Determinism

Putting facts by the thousands  
into the world, the toes take off  
with an appealing squeak which the thumping heel  
follows confidentially, the way men greet men.  
Sometimes walking is just such elated

pumping. As the dog bumps  
its head, the fog clears  
and it's sunny for the Sonnet  
Scouts march to (I was humming  
to myself but making the sound

in my head, not my neck  
where it remained, resonating against my temples)  
all the elements of which count: wordlessly-  
wars, prank-youth, heavily-all-together.  
They flicker, in order fully to correspond

with the perceptibility of life.  
Unfortunately this is a very busy time  
in which too much is noticeable. As news  
fills the sheets, topical blooms  
fill the streets and slope

against the coast. People  
think I have written an autobiography  
but my candor is false (I hear a few shots  
slouching at my realism).  
As if coralled, or slowed by cold

all that intentional and unintentional experience  
is unable to stop or change. Restlessly  
I moved to new positions — spots  
and postures — that's all. I am myopic  
with determination. And so

just as one might run ones fingers around  
the edge of a glass  
to make it squeal, similarly  
in the hollow night a car circles  
the edges of my consciousness

and this sentence is emitted.  
But of course occasionally one sinks  
into the sand that fills the locale  
with its clean opinionless lingering.  
The sea is being swept off

near the sea front. Every dime  
is a meter piece. The shore  
is very thin. Days  
wash past at their normal level  
wherever the shadows break.

14.

Planet and flat flesh — who  
can keep me as if it weren't really mine to complete.  
The sky swings out from shore . . .  
from work. A binge of convention  
"when everything appeared unrecognizable"

is muffled. Like an adolescent  
I skipped breakfast . . . the appeasing element  
and everything was in motion but me  
waving up and down in farewell.  
As if embarrassed arrogantly . . . superstition

is mostly the expectation  
of trouble. The photograph  
craves fresh traditions of an attempted jealousy  
in the sun blurred by gusts of pressure.