



# In the American Tree

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Poetry. The Language Poets have extended the Pound-Williams tradition in American writing into new and unexpected territories, ultimately establishing themselves as the most radically experimental avant-garde on the current literary scene. This second edition anthology features the most substantial body of work by the Language Poets now available, as well as with 130 pages of theoretic statements by the poets themselves. The poets represented include Barrett Watten, Lyn Hejinian, Clark Coolidge, Susan Howe, and Bernadette Mayer, among many others.

### **In the American Tree Details**

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## From Reader Review In the American Tree for online ebook

### TQ-tip Shandy says

A collection of the best word/language poets. Gets better with every reading.

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### Paul Belbusti says

Excellent collection of "Language Poetry," a term that becomes increasingly meaningless as you notice these writers have little in common with each other.

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### John McElhenney says

L A N G U A G E poetry.

Silliman is the master and one of the instigators of this odd poetic theme.

Example: (I just used the example and colon device to tell you what I think) this review was written a few seconds ago when I thought it up.

So that was my attempt to illustrate. The idea is that the language ::::: punctuation, and TyPiNG can all be part of the poem. This seems rather appropriate when applied to internet and txt language.

This is a collection of practitioners.

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### mwpm says

*...in rejecting a speech-based poetics and consciously raising the issue of reference, to suggest that any new direction would require poets to look (in some ways for the first time) at what a poem is actually made of - not images, not voice, not characters or plot, all of which appear on paper, or in one's mouth, only through the invocation of a specific medium, **language itself**.*

*- **Language, Realism, Poetry**, Ron Silliman*

In the tree of American poetics, there is a branch known as Language poetry. *In the American Tree* collects those poets who belong to the early canon of poets who practice language-based forms of poetry, including: Robert Grenier, Barrett Watten, Lyn Hejinian, Jean Day, David Melnick, Kit Robinson, Rae Armantrout,

Carla Harryman, Michael Davidson, Charles Bernstein, P. Inman, Susan Howe, Michael Gottlieb, Fanny Howe, John Mason, Ray DiPalma, and Ted Greenwald (among others)...

the clouds  
of the summer  
before

by extension to  
the clouds  
of the following

summer

and who for  
the chair

who for  
the beer

the doghouse  
of the following  
summer

don't  
give it a  
second

thought like

where's  
the dog

- **Striped Canvas**, Robert Grenier, pg. 19

\*

I  
The world is complete.  
Books demand limits.

II  
Things fall down to create drama.  
The materials are proof.

III  
Daylight accumulates in photos.  
Bright hands substitute for sun.

IV  
Crumbling supports undermine houses.

Connoisseurs locate stress.

V

Work breaks down to devices.

All features present.

VI

Necessary commonplaces form a word.

The elements of art are fixed.

VII

A mountain cannot be a picture.

Rapture stands in for style.

VIII

Worn-out words are invented.

We read daylight in books.

IX

Construction turns back in on itself.

Dogs have to be whipped.

X

Eyes open wide to see spots.

Explanations are given on demand.

XI

Brick buildings shut down in winter.

A monument works to change scale.

XII

False notes work on a staircase.

The hammer is as large as the sun.

[...]

- **Complete Thought**, Barrett Watten, pg. 40-41

\*

pandemonium hews  
no clouds

wakefulness  
is active

one is a statistic  
an ideal of exhaustiveness  
it meets this precise redundant limbo

stars of keyholes

laud the rain cloud

shapes sloshing  
off an awkward clay

a sea that only scatters  
in a halfbox

the gloss of observation  
in the dark

the soundds are in the ears  
a prima ragged brio

mute water crashes rise  
in a cloud

- Lyn Hejinian, pg. 63

\*

Ay chinga!  
Bright sun shines.  
God appears.  
Down in front!

I want to put  
This word here.  
The mind at  
Its shuffle.

I want to  
Hear this word.  
Dull person,  
Fish fish, water.

- **God**, BP, pg. 71

\*

After this conversation have another  
hill, high meadow, stream there. Then  
squat in a chair, this V a vector to that smoke  
across from the Chevron station.

Where there is pause, rush in.  
If a taxi gives kosher jelly, schmaltz.  
Your friend is a member of the US Labor Party. Even so,  
without sticking your head out the window

sound is. It is possible to go from A to B  
and not get trapped. Try being a moorhen or Jane Austen  
Think how it will look when you are really more.  
When traffic resumes, it's not night anywhere.

Okay a moment. I have a meadow.  
The unit is a comet of meaning as is gas, a glass of milk.  
Slow as this instrument is, the labor of parts  
makes matter apart from us and money.

The number 13. Swallow a ball of wax  
to see how important you are. For the first  
few hours the air seems perfumed. Then utterance  
throws in, where the modern lake should have been.

- **Gas**, Jean Day, pg. 84

\*

1.

thoeisu

thoiea

akcorn woi cirtus locqvump

icgja

cvmwoflux

epaosieusl

~~eirtus locqvump~~

a nex macheisoa

- from *Pcoet*, David Melnick, pg. 90

\*

bottle-neck

oh I'd

humor my

behemoth!

tales

take

powder

pills

set sea

ordinarily  
arbitrary  
time of arrival  
estimated as  
The Channel  
"The World's Greatest Assortment!"  
ORANGE RICE  
ATLANTIC OCEAN  
The Novel  
part of a trilogy  
after an episode  
based on fact  
of Dante's Inferno  
in London  
in 1920  
& so  
snow falls  
deep snow  
further off  
the train passes  
behind a red temple  
in the interval  
is a correspondence  
like across an arc  
triumphant tranquil  
mechanical take  
all round  
on the roofs

- **Tribute to Nervous**, Kit Robinson, pg. 119

\*

Leaves fritter.

Teased edges.

It's vacillation that pleases.

Who answers for  
the 'whole being?'

This is  
only the firing

\* \* \*

Daffy runs across  
the synapses, hooting  
in mock terror.

Then he's shown  
on an embankment, watching  
the noisy impulse pass.

\* \* \*

But there's always a steady hum  
shaped like a room  
whose door much lead to  
what really

where 'really'  
is a nervous  
tic as regular

\* \* \*

as as as as

the corner repeats itself

\* \* \*

Dull frond:  
giant lizard tongue  
stuck out  
in the murky distance  
sight slides off  
as a tiny elf.

\* \* \*

Patients are asked to picture  
health as an unobstructed  
hall or tube

through which Goofy now tumbles:  
Dumb Luck!

Unimagined  
creature scans postcard.

\* \* \*

Conclusions can be drawn.

Shadows add depth  
by falling

while deep secrets  
are superseded -

quaint.

Exhaling  
on second thought

- **Single Most**, Rae Armantrout, pg. 155-156

\*

"The period between the hyphen of marriage is best forgotten," said her uncle, salivating at the gate of that boundless menagerie primed with a moral shape which is framed to break down on approach to vivid fact. The property was neglected. A label peeled away from a jar in a city under cloudless skies. Anybody in the centre of the meadow where the cows stand still, where rivers spit and salt subdues the perspicacity of skin with humdrum metabolic flowering diminishing the general regard for this miscellaneous Hector while staring at one's own face through a deserving mirror, night hold to her bosom the happy halting view of this interesting case.

- **Property**, Carla Harryman, pg. 173

\*

All five of them  
(including Mr. Rubenstein)  
lost forever, their boat  
made out of the same  
lousy plastic.

- **Brahms**, Michael Davidson, pg. 200

\*

graphemic  
hinges  
discourse  
re-ordering  
SIGNS  
of  
*few little*  
whch  
speed &  
wh.  
inter-sentential  
connexions  
there's  
splendid  
"here too"  
in  
*not forced*

stuff  
the rest of  
*piecemeal*  
spins off  
"ethical"  
intrude  
wiTh tHaT kiNd oF  
schizophallic  
categories  
enfolding  
a proper place  
fix(ist)  
opting for a  
\* \* \* \* \*  
so find  
isn't  
TURN  
face to a  
*inevitable*  
picturesque  
balk  
DESIRE  
token by  
topology": the  
se e  
"OR"  
*verfrumsdungseffect*  
autonomous explosions  
*taste as*  
blocks, circling  
like (star), fl...m...n...g...  
aire, leap-  
as if we had  
*not gleaned*  
in a "possible"  
vectorate  
these: the  
issued  
, canopy  
as scratch (rune  
potential a  
s...n...r...ty  
*the pull*  
"buckle me"  
with a...pAt  
"i leap up"  
sights  
"iDeaLLy"  
being (?)  
"happens"  
nOt sParTaN  
: polish(s) (ed)

l l

TO FACE

ou//eg//t//

am (visit, subdue, impulse)

h...l...r...ty

- **ST. McC.**, Charles Bernstein, pg. 282-284

\*

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

- from *Ochre*, P. Inman, pg. 339

\*

He plodded away through drifts of i

ce

away into inapprehensible Peace

A portable altar strapped on his back

pure and severe

In the forests of Germany he will feed

on aromatic grass and browse in leaves

- from *Pythagorean silence*, Susan Howe, pg. 355

\*

1.

FOCKE - WULFS

c a l l o w

HELLING

s c r e e d

HEAD -

WOUNDS

s w a b

RAVE - UPS

a r b o r e a l

CONVENTICLES  
sledges  
TUMBLLED TO  
'narrativist'

2.

DONOT  
CRUISE THE  
HELP  
fib-  
rillation  
RECOMBINANT  
doreé  
guessed  
BLANCHING  
"phrasey"  
UTTER DELUSION  
the crowds  
SHORING  
more ink  
for them

- from *Fourteen Poems*, Michael Gottlieb, pg. 377

\*

"A lot of sky litters my view of home - oh  
split part, lost."  
Helium balloons spill off the horizon  
& knock her backwards  
Jealousy'd be too easy "I miss  
a better sentiment, ballooning pride  
could accomplish." Homesick  
for each hand, they miss the fragrance  
of their labors in them.

[...]

- **Alsace-Lorraine**, Fanny Howe, pg. 401

\*

human beings? i call them human borings  
said the dog, hungrily  
the police siren  
growling in the street  
as i moved about the house (empty)  
in search of your footprints

the house "bare as your thigh"  
(last night you said  
"funny you should be ticklish there"  
between balls and ass  
"the emptiest part of your body")  
plants and papers get in my way  
want to know everyone but i'm lazy  
arranging the pillow spilled  
coffee on some dollar bills hung  
them up to dry the police are such  
cub scouts i needed a friend  
"has it ever occurred to you that maybe  
x doesn't like you?"  
the birds tall as grass  
some with skunkheads  
bathe in the dogdish  
the dog whines at the door  
now from outside

- John Mason, pg. 409

\*

Above the tracks  
a slight embank-  
ment. Limestone.  
Mud. Weeds. A  
concrete wall  
three feet high  
stretches as far  
as the eye can  
see. Then the  
traffic on the  
boulevard. Homes.

Below. An iron  
meadow. Tar  
soaked timber.  
Cans. Small  
stones. More  
weeds at the  
back of the  
filling sta-  
tion near the  
track's edge.

To the left  
two ware-  
houses. Win-  
dows broken.  
One wall gone.

A staircase  
dangles like  
the torn wall-  
paper above it.  
Two women eat  
from a paper  
bag in its shadow.

To the right  
a long ramp  
to a viaduct  
carries the  
traffic over  
the boulevard.

- **Exile**, Ray DiPalma, pg. 449-450

\*

Experience a table of  
Contentment Thumb  
Through a continental  
Drift index Break in  
The open another case  
on skid would converse

Obviously not enough  
Place starts to allow de-  
Cay to mean a thing to  
Anybody Great cold wea-  
There feeling Whether in-  
Side or outside bucket

Straighten out Follow  
For awhile Bounce Ounce  
Off nouns While announc-  
Ing for bouncing Gossip  
Sip capsule swallowed  
Swollen pull wool over

Temper imply temperment  
By taking temperature A-  
Long comes the answer to  
Everybody's dream No  
Fantasy life worth speak  
Easy ing about Sharing

Spit Shoulders Live long  
Day enough to spend gotten  
A job bath Once-a-mon-  
Th-what-a-crowd even-

Ing phobes bot wet sand  
Carry streets in litters

[...]

- from *Word of Mouth*, Ted Greenwald, pg. 468

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## Jeff says

i read this a long time ago, in its original edition. the three stars work like this: its a great way to approach language poetry because it will give you a good sense of the amazingly beautiful heights and nauseatingly sordid depths that language poets are capable of. if that was the purpose of the selections it would get five stars. but since ol' ron seems to think these are all good poems, it only gets a 'c'.

i should probably cave and pick up the new edition. an ex stole my old one. wanker.

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