

The Logoclasody Manifesto

# The Logoclasody Manifesto

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

Second Edition

*The Luz Stone*

The logo consists of the text "E·RATIO" in a serif font, centered within a dark blue rectangular background. The dot between "E" and "R" is a small circle.

E·RATIO

A Response to Logoclasody  
by Carey Scott Wilkerson

In the turbulent economy of contemporary critical theory, there exists a restrictive and, therefore, regressive distinction between the philosophical and poetical projects. To be sure, this distinction is more than merely a received view insofar as the philosopher and the poet might imagine differing objectives. Indeed, there may be real, determinate limitations to what either can accomplish, given the exigencies of form, to say nothing of the tyrannies of tradition.

For Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, however, these exclusionary principles and boundary conditions are, finally, points of departure and as much open to conjecture as the puzzles they presume to resolve. Tracing that conceptual arc, “Logoclasody”—his sustained encounter with the question of “poetry as discourse”—delivers an astonishing inter-penetration of logical inquiry and lyrical invention. It is a major theoretical gesture and, therefore, a significant methodological provocation. I propose, here, to begin an exploration of the *logoclastic* synthesis and speculate on its implications for the critical enterprise of textual poetics.

As an exegetical object, “Logoclasody” documents quite brilliantly an ontological crisis in poetry and is, by design, an exemplar both of the problem and the solution. St. Thomasino conceives the central aporia of writing as one of recovering, from the ruin of a necessarily incomplete knowledge, the deep-structure(s) of representation. And by exploiting the tension between grammatical function and the irruptive energies of text itself, the St. Thomasinian program deploys *logos* as an expressive motif, through which are diffracted both meaning and its contested

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relationship to language. This “reverse nominalism” of *logoclasticity* authorizes the artifacts of poetic syllogism without invoking or displacing templates of semantic calculus, a delightfully subversive reading of the rules subtending metaphoric logic!

St. Thomasino’s image of “poetry as discourse / the poem as revealer,” is an open rejoinder to the instrumentalist motivation in criticism, that odd, reflexive tropism toward zero sum explication. And if, as he further suggests, passage into “the confidence of the poem” requires a double integration of the poet’s “creative intuition” and the reader’s “receptive intuition” turning on an axis of “tentative consent,” then *logoclasticity* becomes that sense in which language’s triple trajectories converge not upon, but rather, beyond the essentialist horizon of knowledge. It is on the strength of St. Thomasino’s eidetic idiom that we are permitted a glimpse of this exotic space.

That his system both invites and resists critical interrogation is evidence of a struggle to derive, from the metaphysical expenditures of writing, an exit strategy for the poet in peril: “the mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.” Yet it is precisely at this moment of casting off formal encumbrances that his “break in discourse” restores, to this aesthetic schema, the mechanism of a complex spatial grammar. This is perhaps the characteristic logoclastic moment, a stately modulation from the scattered coordinates of phenomenological mapping to the vertex of epistemological triangulation, from place to space, from modes of writing, to nodes of knowing.

“Logoclasody” is, at once, a work of scholarly elegance and poetic gallantry. St. Thomasino’s considerable achievement here is to illumine some of the foundational architectonics that animate the narratives of post-modernity. Because so much of contemporary poetry and criticism is propagated without risk—and, therefore, surely without revelation—speculative sophistication must become

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the new exemplar of investigative rigor. We have now, before us, precisely that object, conjured in the admonition to “make room for that-which-is” and, thus, a celebratory vision of what-might-be.

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*a legominism*

Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

The Logoclasody Manifesto

# E·ratio Editions

2018

Second Edition

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# The Logoclasody Manifesto

*for Carol*

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“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,  
Words without thoughts, never to Heaven go.”  
— Shakespeare. *Hamlet*, III, iii.

“Man, who is an organic continuation of the Logos, thinks he can sever  
that continuity and exist apart from it.”  
—Herakleitos (Tr. Guy Davenport.)

“Discourse is like a river.”  
—Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino

The stairs were such as whereon *Jacob* saw  
Angels ascending and descending, bands  
Of Guardians bright, when he from *Esau* fled  
To *Padan-Aram* in the field of *Luz*,  
Dreaming by night under the open Skie,  
And waking cri'd, *This is the Gate of Heav'n*.  
— Milton

“Light falls into a room in the form of the opening through which it  
enters.”  
—Lou Andreas-Salomé

“What is perfect teaches hope.”  
—Nietzsche

“Truth is the revealing of what is concealed.”  
— Martin Heidegger

“For He hath turned the shadow of death into the morning, . . .”  
— Christopher Smart. *Jubilate Agno*.



# Logoclasody

ody / ode / *aeidein*, to sing

of logoclastics and of eidetics and of pannarrativity

# Objective Art

## The Logoclasody Manifesto

Logoclasody is *objective art*,  
because signification is neutral (in a middle position / neither one nor the  
other), it is invariable.

Signification both “does” and “means” the same thing in each and every  
instance, which is to be “neutral” — “invariable.”

Signification is not “meaning.”  
Signification and meaning are distinct.

Signification is the same for each instance of meaning.

For while signification makes meaning happen, it does not determine  
that meaning.

*What is signification and where does it take place?*

Signification is the bond that holds between a sign and a signified.  
Signification is the making present [makes for the presence] of the  
signified.

signification / *the semiotic function*

sign

signification

signified

The Trinity

The Son

The Holy Spirit

The Father

## The Logoclasody Manifesto

Without signification, “writing” is a chaos of matter.

The sign is inert (it does not have motility — no inherent power of / or spontaneous motion — and it cannot resist being acted upon).

A signified “exists” within a collective mind.

A sign exists as a concrete individual thing (numerically distinct, but alike).

Signification takes place in the mind of a reader / redder.

A redder / *redding* is a putting into order, and the ordering [management] of change / of matter.

a concrete individual / an abstract universal concept in the mind

*What does it mean to say, “objective art”?*

Signification is not “meaning.”

Signification and meaning are distinct.

Signification is the same for each instance of meaning.

For while signification makes meaning happen, it does not determine that meaning.

## What is “logos”?

What is “logos”?

“Logos” is a principle.

“Logos” is an ordering principle.

It is by virtue of [the] *logos* that seemingly different things can [do] come together under a common name.

For instance: I have several different [specific] types of *chairs* in my home, they are *specific* (numerically distinct, but alike) but they all come together under the *general* name / noun “chair.”

The logos is the principle of the noun.

The logos is the principle of the noun, by virtue of which *the proper* [one’s own] is collected under / into *the common*.

proper / common  
specific / general

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What do words do? Words stand for things.

This is not to say that *a word* and *what it stands for* are one and the same. They exist *differently*.

*the word,  
that you see,  
that you hear,  
that you write,  
that you speak,  
that you feel,  
that you touch*

Words are, in a sense, *portable things*. I do not need to carry things around with me if I can just take out a word and give it to you and thereby give to you the thing I have *in mind* to give to you.

And with that, say,

*“listen not to me, but to the logos,”*

*[to what is common to all]*

listen to my *word*.

This is how names, *nouns*, function — they collect all those things that they stand for and make them available in a portable, transportable, translatable, *word*.

The logos is the principle of the noun.

# Logoclastics



## The Logoclasody Manifesto

The poem is / as a matter [*matter*] of interlocking, or, rather, *interlocuting* (*loqui*, to speak, *inter*, between), syntactical elements.

A syntactical element / a single word, a sentence, a clause, *or*, a semanteme, a sememe, a morpheme [a *sememe* is the meaning of a *morpheme*] *or* a suspension. . . .

How much thought [*matter / what is the matter?*] is represented by a suspension!

How much grammatical function is represented by a suspension!

### What is a “suspension”?

Think of a bridge, *a suspension bridge*. A suspension bridge “bridges” two sides . . . it brings them together, so to speak. And when you happen upon a suspension . . .

*if you could see a suspension, it would look like this*

• • •

*those are suspension points,  
a series of dots,  
a series of dots indicating “an omission” or “a holding back”*

. . . and when you happen upon a suspension, and you “bridge” that suspension . . .

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And what do you “bridge” it with, but with your own sense, your own logic, your own meaning [conception / enunciation / epitome / !].

And when you happen upon a suspension, and you *bridge* that suspension . . . you are making *signification* happen.

And you have set free the logos —

*logoclastics* has happened — the “breaking out” of logos.

### Suspensions

“Suspensions” are not, and ought not to be confused with, *the caesura*, which has to do with a pause in rhythm. Suspensions are a matter of logic, and I am using the term in a somewhat specialized sense. The suspension, however, is more than a mere device or contrivance to facilitate participation / reciprocation / intention on the part of the reader [the redder / *the redding*] — just be conscious of yourself when you are communicating and you’ll realize that suspensions are not only frequent-as-to-be-habitual but are indispensable, but are elemental to language usage. And neither is the suspension an instance of *aposiopesis* [“a becoming silent”] which is a rhetorical device employed for dramatic effect. Consider that the *aposiopesis* is “outward” while the suspension is “inward.”

A suspension . . . is at once a break, and a connection, a nexus for the radiance that is logos — and thereby, *discourse!*

the suspension / the anacoluthon [a discontinuity]

the suspension / the “lacking sequence” [*in a manner lacking sequence*]

poetry as discourse / the poem as revealer

Communication. A passage from the creative intuition [of the poet] to the receptive intuition [of the reader [a redding] / this requires a sort of previous, tentative consent — to the poem and to the intentions of the poet — without which we cannot be taken into the confidence of the poem].

Or: The relaxing of the critical intelligence. For how can you reflect upon an experience if you have not first had that experience?

Logoclastics is a making visible.

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*Of things immanent and transcendent.*

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Thomas Aquinas' "id quod visum placet," or, [the beautiful is] that which, being seen, pleases. [the body — *the bloc?* — of words / text]

integrity

proportion (consonance) / ratio [e · ratio — "*postmodern*" *proportion?*]

radiance / clarity [causes intelligence to see] [logos / *in itself*]

If the poet cannot act authentically in the way of logos . . . who, then?

*Who, then?*

The Latin, *vates*, was both a poet and a diviner, a bard and a seer.

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*Of things immanent and transcendent.*

## Logoclastics

“The break in discourse.”

*Logoclastics* is my term for “the break in discourse.” I translate *logos* as “discourse” and *clastics* as “to break,” and I do emphasize this “break” must be understood not as in to fault or to violate, but as in “to break the news,” or as in “the break of day,” or as in a “breaking out.”

# Abstract Poetry

*from figuration to abstraction*

if nouns are as “concrete word pictures”

In contrast to the use of nouns, which are as “concrete word pictures,” we turn to the meanings of those nouns, the meanings which are shared by all those things collected under the noun. E.g., the noun “chair.” All chairs share similar characteristics. These similar characteristics [*that which pertains to all*] are the “structures” [definitions / “meanings”] underlying the noun “chair.”

This is, in effect, a reverse Nominalism.

For whereas the Nominalist says “only names exist,”  
here we read “only meanings exist.”

*From Russell (and then the early Wittgenstein). It is Russell’s logical atomism [or, “atoms of meaning”]. These “atoms of meaning” are in essence the similar characteristics, or grammatical structures, underlying the nouns [or, names of things]. (Each part of a proposition, say of the proposition “chair,” is an atom of meaning. If the atom of meaning “seat” is absent, then the proposition is false, because a chair must have a seat to be a chair. Each atom can be split into more atoms.)*

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If nouns are as “concrete word pictures,”  
then, by analogy, meanings are as “*abstract* word pictures.”

**abstract terms** denote *notions, concepts, ideas*  
**concrete terms** denote *the physically real and perceptible by the senses*

Here, in essence, is a philosophy [*a poetics*] of abstract poetry.

What is the eidos, or, *form*, of a noun? Is not a noun a picture? Do we not “see” nouns?

[in what way does language “show”?]

eidos = *concretely*: actual shape, the visible

eidos = *abstractly*: conceptual intelligibility

*concrete* is to the senses as *abstract* is to the mind  
concrete is to *what shows* as abstract is to *what tells*

An analogue clock will *show* you the time.  
A digital clock will *tell* you the time.



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this statement is both *presentative* and *re-presentative*

this statement is both *an end in itself* [the intransitive]

and *a means* to another end [transitive]

language is both communication and self-expression

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

The mind knows the word in the figure of its substance.

Or, what is a crash course in eidetic poetry.

For only *in eidos* do words have the substantiality of things.

Or, think of eidos in the sense of *outline*. Think of the instrument we call

*the eidograph.*

*eidos*, “form, figure” / *graphein*, “to write”

The eidograph traces *an outline*. The eidograph traces *a figure*.

If I ask of you: Say, would you give me an “outline” of that novel?  
What would “outline” mean to you? How would you think of “outline”?  
What would you be giving me?

outline [eidos] / synopsis / blueprint / profile

Could you make of this sense of *outline* a guiding principle for a sort of poetry?

The eidograph is *a visualizing, a making concrete* of an eidos.

The eidos is both *the idea* and *the form of the visualization of the idea*.

eidos = *concretely*: actual shape, the visible

eidos = *abstractly*: conceptual intelligibility

Eidetics *studies the visualization of the idea.*

Eidetics is *the visualization of the idea.*

Think: *complementarities.*

eidetic / synoptic (*syn*, “together”)

syn · optic | *syn*, together, *opsis*, of sight

*Seeing the whole together.*

The eidograph is a picture of language-in-eidos, of language in conceptus, language in situ, in general, in ideal form.

An eidograph is a telling by way of showing, it is a concrete telling, it is the special poésie of the eidetic poet.

The eidograph is a picture of language-in-eidos.

Nietzsche said, *philosophy is biography*. It may be the same can be said for poetics. Or: What happened when concrete poetry deserted signification for the materiality of the letter?

This is not the biography of concrete poetry, but of the “visual poet.” Calling what he does “poetry,” the visual poet enables his work to be thought of as a form of literature. *But is it not really typography?* One thinks of the decorative swash letter. A flourish [or, elongation of the kern] here, a flourish [or, elongation of the kern] there. . . .

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Or, and in a most general sense, is it not simple *graphic symbollurgy*?  
Or ideography? (But . . . less the sounds that form its name [as in a  
phonetic system], less a name, less an idea or object. . . .)

Eidography? Symbollurgy?

Draw for me *the hieroglyphic of the world*. [By necessities *a griphos*?]

*Eidography* is the *symbollurgy* of *the hieroglyphic of the world*.

What does *the hieroglyphic of the world* look like? [By necessities *a griphos*?]

When we say of *the calligraphy*, “this is visual poetry,” what do we  
mean / what are we really saying?

Some abstract *ratio* in common is implied.

We ask, *in relation to what*?

We answer, *in relation to visual poetry*.

calligraphy = “beautiful writing”

*kalli*, *kalos*, “beautiful” / *graphein*, “to write”

When we say “calligraphy is visual poetry,” we are speaking  
analogically / we are saying “calligraphy is visual poetry analogically.”

analogy = *ana*, “according to” / *logos*, “ratio, proportion”

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We must distinguish between visual poetry and what is visual poetry analogically. They are not the same thing — one is visual poetry, the other is not.

Calligraphy and visual poetry are “visual poetry” not in the same sense but analogically.

Speaking analogically about visual poetry, we open ourselves to 1) vagueness, 2) inappropriateness, and 3) self-contradiction.

Where lies the eidetic in calligraphy? The calligraphic eidetic is found in the line, in the cursive-script line [in the gestures], as here we see the visualization of the idea insofar as the line depicts or portrays the quality of emotion [the temperamental disposition / the rhythmic character / the *emotive-evocative significance*] of the writing. In this we “see” joy, grace, wonderment. . . .

the calligraphic *predicate eidetic complement*

[predictive / that which, that about which / *that which is expected, what is to be expected*]

*You can't have a predicate without a subject. A predicate without a subject is a subject.*

[the image announces / *foretells* the word.]

And we hold in distinction to this:

the calligraphic *objective eidetic complement*

[existential]

Think: *complementarities*.

syn · optic | *syn*, together, *opsis*, of sight

Interlocation:

as mental interlocation / logical space [language in eidos]

collocation / a speaking together [a chorus]

*interlocution* / interlocation / topology

[topology: this is time, the simultaneity / knowing present, to past,  
present and past knowing / how memory (by definition of the past)  
exists concurrently!]

In this interlocking / *interlocution* [inter / ruption, dis / location] we  
discern the discourse, the logos.

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A reference to topology — which is the study of *surface*, or *location*, or *situation*, but never, however, of *place* — and to Lacan’s *non-seminar*, “Time and Topology.” Consider this “space” the space of topology — which is used by Lacan as a metaphor for mind [consider: *is this a more sophisticated “logical space”?*]. Space is but a want of intervening points. The space / time of topology begins when a point, in space, exists in relation, or location, or *pro-position* to another point in space [and prior to a surface].

Only once a point is positioned does “time” come into being [or, enter into consciousness], and this “time” spreads with space, it is contiguous with it and cannot exist without it — *it is the time it takes to travel from one*

*point*

*to*

*another. . . .*

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Here is *space*:

And here, a point *in space*:



And here, another point *in space*:



And when we connect the points . . . we have *a line*:



“Time” is “how long it takes” to “travel” from point to point.

[*stichos* / line / a stitch in time]



*If we say “thought-time is instantaneous,” what, then, about the time it takes for us to remember something we have forgotten — or is that “lost time”?*

Now consider the “point” [*what is your “point”?*] to be a *proposition* [it is a *syntactical element*, it is what I call a *compass-unit of logic*, or *discourse*, or *knowledge* — Lacan calls these units “mathemes”]. It is a “point,” in relation to other “points,” and in that relationship / the generation of discourse. . . .

The proposition — the grammatical structure [or, atom of meaning] — is an atopic abstract “anywhere” which becomes a *matheme* [a *compass-unit of discourse*] in the redding.

*mathēma* = “what is learned”

*matheme* = “a unit of learning,” “a compass-unit of discourse”

*In my Go work, the reverse indentations are as Cartesian coordinates, each node a matheme, a compass-unit of discourse.*

*The word basis has the Greek root bainein, “to go.” To be at basis is to be at “the get go,” to be “from the word go” (or, “from the very beginning”).*

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logoclastics / the poem is / as a matter [*matter*] of interlocking, or, rather, *interlocuting* (*loqui*, to speak, *inter*, between), syntactical elements.

A syntactical element / a single word, a sentence, a clause, *or*, a semanteme, a sememe, a morpheme [a *sememe* is “the meaning” of a *morpheme*]. . . .

a sememe is the meaning [the *sense* or *thought content*] of a morpheme

The logos, what was up to this time hidden (in poetry, in discourse).

The Latin, *vates*, was both a poet and a diviner, a bard and a seer.

## Logoclastics

### “The break in discourse.”

*Logoclastics* is my term for “the break in discourse.” I translate *logos* as “discourse” and *clastics* as “to break,” and I do emphasize this “break” must be understood not as in to fault or to violate, but as in “to break the news,” or as in “the break of day,” or as in a “breaking out.”

The effect of *logoclastics* is to realize of the reader a conscious participant in signification, and in *the breaking out of logos*.

The effect of *logoclastics* is not to render *meaning* indeterminate, but to make play of its elasticity, to make play at the very position at which signification [and hence meaning] occurs.

The effect of *logoclastics* is to break discourse, but such that it may be reformed — in the conscious, deliberative intellection / ideation of the reader / the reading [the redder / the redding] — and so as to actuate and to celebrate signification.

A redder / *redding* is a putting into order, and the ordering  
[management] of change / of matter.

*And so as to actuate and to celebrate signification.*

conscious / deliberative / intentional / *originative*

Break:

to lay open / to make a disclosure of / *to break the news*

to come into being / a beginning to appear / to dawn [it dawns upon me,  
it occurs to me] / *the break of day*

*to come into evidence*

This break, *this disjunctive* — a disjoining or separation, *a suspension*  
— the relation between two or more alternatives (of a proposition) /  
indicating a contrast or an alternative between ideas [an either / or].

to come into evidence [the emerging-in-language]

*the expressibility,*  
*the emerging-in-language,*  
*the entire articulatory movement*

## eVIDENCE

No wonder we say “seeing is believing.” This is the “eye-evidentiary.”

to *break out*

the suspension / suspension points

of what is to follow, or of what is to be the inference  
[dispersed, but not dissolved]

Indeterminacy: *not to be construed as the absence of intentionality.*

## e·ratio

*ratio* —

to think it, the inward thought, the name of it, *the noun*

*o·ratio* —

to speak it, to hear it, the oratory

*e·ratio* —

to show it, to write it, to make it visible:

*the complemental pointing finger!*

Vide “The Death of Socrates” (painting by Jacques-Louis David, 1787). Socrates is thinking a point, he is speaking his point, and he is showing that he is making a point by pointing with his index finger *to show an exclamation point!*

## e·ratio — *what shows*

iteration

it / *eratio* / n

*iteration* as a strategy:

the frequentative:

anaphora [the repeated / syntactical cross reference]

in oratory (*oratio*, to speak)

chromaticism

iteration || chromaticism

*This iteration* is at once *a conceit* and the means toward introducing conceits.

This formulaic and incremental *iteration* is at once *a conceit* [in itself] and the means toward introducing conceits.

Fractal [from the Latin, *frango, frangere*, “to break, fracture, fraction”]

The equations of fractal geometry are nonlinear, meaning that they do not have definite solutions but are recursive, *iterating* themselves fractionally, producing endless approximations with *a difference of scale*.

fractal [self-similarity]

Suspension:  
a nonappearance

“Suspensions” are not, and ought not to be confused with, *the caesura*, which has to do with a pause in rhythm. Suspensions are a matter of logic, and I am using the term in a somewhat specialized sense. The suspension, however, is more than a mere device or contrivance to facilitate participation / reciprocation / intention on the part of the reader [the redder / *the redding*] — just be conscious of yourself when you are communicating and you’ll realize that suspensions are not only frequent-as-to-be-habitual but are indispensable, but are elemental to language usage. And neither is the suspension an instance of *aposiopesis* [“a becoming silent”] which is a rhetorical device employed for dramatic effect. Consider that the *aposiopesis* is “outward” while the suspension is “inward.”

A suspension . . . is at once a break, and a connection, a nexus for the radiance that is logos — and thereby, *discourse!*

the suspension / the anacoluthon [a discontinuity]  
the suspension / the “lacking sequence” [*in a manner lacking sequence*]

# Pannarrativity



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There is a famous image out of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is from his first book, the ninety-five page volume, *Nature* (1836) and it is from the first chapter, or, *subject*, entitled, “Nature.” It is the image, or, *notion*, of the “transparent eyeball.” Emerson writes, “Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. . . . I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty.”

What this notion, this “transparent eyeball,” describes is a mode of perception (indeed, a mode of consciousness), a way of seeing, a way of knowing (*a way of being*).

This *mode of perception* is a perception that is both perception and apperception, that is simultaneously *perception* (of external things) and the *apperception* that is the inner state’s awareness of itself.

This mode of perception (pictured in the words) described by the image of the “transparent eyeball,” admits of “the currents of the Universal Being.” These “currents” enter and “circulate through,” they are known by way of, the “transparent eyeball.”

What I mean by “pannarrativity” — this is writing in the *mode of perception, in the mode of consciousness*, that is described by the image of the “transparent eyeball.”

This is writing in the *mode of perception, in the mode of consciousness*, that I call “pannarrativity.”

Pannarrativity: furthermore:

narratives — *fragments of narrative* [this is “quotation”] removed from their original context and placed [in-corporated / *in string*] into a new context take on new meanings (while retaining something of their original intention).

Narrative — the word / logos — is everywhere.

*The world is a narrative.*

The world “writ large.” Pan-narrativity.

quotation / connotation / denotation / quotation

“The mica glitter in sand.”

“The aftertaste of peels.”

All descriptions are quotations from the pannarrative.

Pannarrativity is making quotation.

The pannarrative text. If “text-collage” is the general term for such, then a “text collage” composed of *fragments* (word fragments, words, sentences, verses, elements [quotation]) of narrative (*narrative as found / appropriation*) “stitched” together. It is a sort of “list” or “roll call.”

*the word,  
that you see,  
that you hear,  
that you write,  
that you speak,  
that you feel,  
that you touch*

The pannarrative poem begins by seeing all the world as one great narration — a narrative that is known in proportion to the degree of the relation of its parts.

As an instance of the *pannarrative text* (or, of, *the collage text*) I here do offer a text. And notice, please, the composition, the assemblage, is of *things* from the world *writ large*, from the world encircling me, and these are mingled with my own sensibilities, with my own emotions (and that my poem is the analogue to the *expressionist* depiction, *and thus an ekphrasis of sorts*). [In poetry, and perhaps in all poetry, but especially in *expressionist* poetry, the more “things” are themselves, the more they signify something else.] In the act of placing these *things* into my poem, I am citing them, saying their names, *making quote of them* and as though listing them, calling them out, appropriating them (this is what I mean by “appropriation” — things are not quoted, or, *appropriated*, from other pre-existing texts [this is not a *language-cut-and-paste* from pre-existing texts] but here these *things* are found in the world encircling me, the world as one great narration, *the world writ large*):

Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear\*

the reed of a loom  
the guideways, of a loom, or  
  
when suddenly, when suddenly  
this is spring, and this is summer  
  
and this, this is open sky.  
the birds resemble a man.  
  
dandelion. giddyng.  
budded. spree.  
  
roundly, with joy  
for nothing and for everything  
  
the day, with my own heart  
too soon, arrayed. this haste  
  
this pasturing. this coffee companion.  
this cup. this yellow sky

\*The Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh left us a series of self-portraits, and among these the bandaged-ear self-portraits, upon which my poem is based. After van Gogh I am moved to feel there is a certain solitude in extreme emotion, a certain solitude in the sensibilities that cannot but know in such manner and that cannot but find expression in like passion and color (and as in *Iris*, where the I rises, and in *Wheat Fields*, where I am beside him). I tried to capture, to *express!* a fragment of that in my poem.

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The pannarrative poem, then, is constituted of fragments of narrative (which in their dislocative / disjunctive state are potentially *plurisignificative* — *plurisignation, plurisignative*) and uses *juxtaposition as a principle of composition*. (And like the metaphor, produces semantic changes, *and thereby increases language!*)

While not quite on the level of the metaphor, I see *pannarrativity* as coming to be a sort of stand-in for the metaphor, requiring, to its own end, an intuitive competence — an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars [*an eye for resemblances*] as found in the disjunction (the logoclastics) that posits the juxtaposition. (And like the metaphor, produces semantic changes, *and thereby increases language!*)

It becomes clear: the difference — between the pannarrative poem and what is commonly referred to as “collage poem.”

*The neologism increases language in the calculative way of the denotation, while the metaphor increases language in the poetic way of the connotation.*

edgèd words / edgeless words / sounds

*Nature is never silent.*

*The discourse of nature that is the word in its pannarrative.*

*“Keep this object faithfully.”*

Why, the self-mutilation of Vincent van Gogh? What is the significance of the self-mutilation of Vincent van Gogh?

I see van Gogh’s self-mutilation as the climax of the drama [the doing] of his personal suffering [from the depth of the abyss, *de profundis*]. His personal failure [to be the evangelist, a preacher of the Gospel, to minister to *the Christian laborer*] was a betrayal to his faith. I see van Gogh’s *personal suffering* [so much as one can see into another’s heart of hearts] as just that, a personal betrayal of Christ. The cutting off of his right ear, is the symbol of the betrayal of Christ. Did van Gogh pray, at that moment, for a miraculous healing of his suffering? And who better to bring the ear to than a woman [in this, *de profundis*]. I see van Gogh’s self-mutilation as the climax of the drama [the doing] of his personal Passion . . . a longing for redemption and peace.

John 18:10 — the injury, the symbol of the betrayal.

Luke 22:50/51 — the miraculous healing of the injury.

## Pannarrativity and Anonymity

the problem of *the collage poem* and anonymity

anonymous writing / *one does not belong to what one has written*

signature / voice / sensibilities / *whose?*

[Or, as follows Barthes, the view that all texts are *plural, equivocal* and *indeterminate?*]

Indeterminacy: *not to be construed as the absence of intentionality.*

Narrative — the word / logos — is everywhere.

*The world is a narrative.*

The world “writ large.” Pan-narrativity.

quotation / connotation / denotation / quotation

## Pannarrativity and the Feminine

Pannarrativity and the feminine text.

Femininity and the pannarrative text.

*Syllabic verse* and the pannarrative text.

*Is the sentence the new lyric?*

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Logoclasody

ody / ode / *aeidein*, to sing

of logoclastics and of eidetics and of pannarrativity



# Addenda

# Crash Course in Logoclastics

## Crash Course in Logoclastics

### Four Cardinal Notes of Logoclastics

(1) An exploration of *indeterminacy*. (2) There is *in effect* a dislocation of discourse, i.e., the discourse *is not anterior to* the reading, but (3) occurs in the text's being *redd*.

*Consider, that in our post-logocentric climate, works of logoclastics may be all that is left to us. Discourse is no longer centered in words — whose stability of meaning is ob-literate, strictly expunged from the letter — but occurs in the text's being redd.*

The term, *logoclastics*. *Logos*, is discourse. *Clastics*, to break. Logoclastics, *the break in discourse*. A dislocation of discourse. *Dislocation*, is the putting-out-of-place. Discourse is dis-located to the part (-icipation, the activity) of the reader.

*Redding*, is a putting-in-order.

To the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification.

To induce a narrativity in the reader!

In regard to a *foregrounding*, either in the text or of a “reading strategy,” *logoclastics* may be said to (4) foreground *the communicative value of discourse*.

*Indeterminacy*. Not to be confused with “indeterminism,” “inconclusive” or “uncertainty.” The root of this word is *terminus*, “limit.” *Indeterminacy* = “the state or quality of being indeterminate.” *Indeterminate* = “having inexact limits.” My alternate word for “indeterminacy” is *eratio*.

We will recall that for Plato there are in the universe only four kinds of things, which are called *limit*, *indeterminacy*, the *result* of mixing these two, and the *cause* of their mixing. And that reason (or, *ratio*) imposes *limit* on what is indeterminate. It is important to note that two of Plato’s four “kinds of things” are forerunners of two of Aristotle’s four causes: “indeterminate” is akin to the material cause, and “limit” is akin to the formal cause.

Where concerns logoclastics, indeterminacy is not the divorce of *the material* and *the formal*. They are taken together — and so, *eratio*. The point of distinction being that *the discourse is not anterior to the reading (but occurs in the text’s being redd)*.

*Eratio* [defined]

*E* = “indeterminate,” “material”

*ratio* = “limit,” “form,” “intellectual content”

“intellectual content” — behind every thought is a series of thoughts supportive of and supporting that thought, a series of thoughts that are, so to speak, behind the scenes, or, subliminal, no thought occurs in isolation (without relation) but is supported by a series of thoughts

it is in this sense that “intellectual content” is always already formed

## e·ratio

*ratio* —

to think it, the inward thought, the name of it, the noun

*o·ratio* —

to speak it, to hear it, the oratory

*e·ratio* —

to show it, to write it, to make it visible:

*the complementary pointing finger!*

Vide “The Death of Socrates” (painting by Jacques-Louis David, 1787). Socrates is thinking a point, he is speaking his point, and he is showing that he is making a point by pointing with his index finger *to show an exclamation point!*

e·ratio — *what shows*

*Our post-logocentric climate.* This is, first of all, a call to action (a call to consciousness). What has been obscured (“lost,” “post,” “past”) is the consciousness of signification — the consciousness of signification as an action, as a doing, as a conscious doing-with-deliberation (*a redding*). This consciousness does not awaken us to a degeneration, but (and to the opposite effect) to a higher level of purpose and procedure — to the consciousness of *signification as a doing-with-deliberation*.

To be conscious of signification, of *the-bond-that-holds-between*.

To the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification.

*Logoclastics breaks up the rhythm of the romantic line!*

Logoclastics = *the break in discourse*. The range of the works of logoclastics is great, and includes not only those works that are deliberately explorations of indeterminacy, in themselves *and* in the redding, but all works that present us with a break or dislocation of discourse, all works that in effect occasion (BUT MORE TO THE POINT, THAT AWAKEN AN AWARENESS OF) the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification. *All works that occasion a narrativity in the reader*. For starters, all works that begin in the consciousness that ours is a post-logocentric climate, all works that begin in the consciousness that discourse is no longer centered in words but occurs in the text’s being redd, in the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification — *these are works of logoclastics!*

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One of the cardinal notes of postmodern poetry is *the will to make play*, to make play of language, to make of language a building blocks, to make of language a sand box, but this can only *create value* if the objective is to recover, to recover language *in the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification* as the stuff, *the physis*, of poetry.

This can only *create value* if the objective is to recover, to recover language *in the conscious, deliberative, intentional act of signification* as the stuff, *the physis*, of poetry.

Ours is an age of anxiety, of dissociation of sensibility, of pessimism, cynicism, incredulousness. Ours is the age of canned laughter. (There is an analogue for this in poetry!) We — *we poets!* — must struggle to be free of this.

Ours is the age of canned laughter. (There is an analogue for this in poetry!)

# Concrete to Eidetic

## Concrete to Eidetic

*The visual poem has become a genus of poetry unto itself. When we speak of “visual poetry,” we no longer have in mind or make reference to just the “pattern” (or “shape,” or “emblematic”) poem.*

I prefer to call these “eidetic poems” — from the Greek *eidos*, meaning “that which is seen” — because the idea is given directly to the eye and *thus* a mental image is formed — one is interpreting *a figure* which seems to be external, in contrast to the interpretation of words *as such*.

The visual poem has become a genus of poetry unto itself. When we speak of “visual poetry,” we no longer have in mind or make reference to *just* the “pattern” (or “shape,” or “emblematic”) poem, in the manner, say, of George Herbert’s *Easter Wings*, his *Altar*, or his *Cross*, or Lewis Carroll’s *Mouse’s Tale*, or John Hollander’s *Swan and Shadow*, but we may be speaking of an ever extensible field or *genre* of poetry (yea, genre of *writing*) with respect to which we can discern certain common characteristics according to which the “eidetic poem” is but one species unto a genus. Of these common characteristics, we may say that as a general rule, the “visual poem,” or “eidetics” as such, *shows* as well as or in addition to what it *tells*, and these two ends are *complementary* in their exemplification. As a general rule, the visual poem has available to its *reader* the occasion or opportunity for a double (yea, a potentially multifold) and often (but not necessarily) coinciding, *if not*

*simultaneous*, interpretation (or, *understanding*). I would hold these decidedly abstract rules to apply to the Pompeian *Paternoster*, up to and beyond Herbert to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, to now.

What I refer to as, “the poetic template,” is the outlining pattern or eidos that (certainly traditionally, *but then in visual poetry as well and with a sense all its own*) coincidentally accrues to the poem upon its being quilled or scripted or inscribed or however recorded or preserved, or reproduced, whether by handwriting or typewriting or typographical (or word processor) design. The poetic template, generally speaking, consists of *the margin* and *the indentation* (*the margin and indentation pattern*).

The poetic template corresponds to, is communicated to, the eye; it is seen and it is read (interpreted and understood), but it is not, strictly speaking, heard or recited.

It is the poetic template that undergoes a dislocation in “open field poetics.” Predominantly, a dislocation of the margin. For while “open field” eschews the uniformity of the (nevertheless elastic) poetic template, it freely admits of anything and everything else. And yet, not unintentionally, while the open field procedure eschews the “traditional” margin and indentation poetic template pattern, it brings to the page a poetic template — *of margins and indentations and subdivisions* — all its own. The open field poetic template — while certainly in a sense *eidetic* — is in nowise *anterior* to the poem, is in a manner of speaking *interior* to the poem, and is properly given to insight and inference.

Vide *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. J. A. Cuddon (3rd ed., 1992). The entry for “concrete poetry/verse” (p. 184) reads in part, “The object is to present each poem as a different shape. It is thus a matter of pictorial typography which produces ‘visual poetry.’” The entry for “pattern poetry” (p. 693) reads in part, “Probably Oriental in origin, this kind of poem has its lines arranged to represent a



physical object, or to suggest action/motion, mood/feeling; but usually shape and motion.”

Vide *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. A. Preminger, F. J. Warnke and O. B. Hardison (enlarged ed., 1974). The entry for “pattern poetry” (p. 607) reads in part, “Verse in which the disposition of the lines is such as to represent some physical object or to suggest motion, place, or feeling in accord with the idea expressed in the words. The pattern poem, or ‘shaped’ poem, first appears in Western-world literature in the works of certain Gr. bucolic poets, notably in a few poems of Simias of Rhodes (ca. 300 B.C.), later much imitated.”

NB Where concerns *complementarities*, the operative words here are *in accord with the idea expressed in the words*. Thus *the pattern, or shape, and the idea expressed in the words*, must *complement* or *complete* each other, *and must be generative the one of the other!* There is a subtle and important distinction between “a complementarity” and “an equivalence.” While “an equivalence” is an equality of value (say, for instance, the illustration of a content), a “complementarity” is held to supply a complement, to complete or to make complete. The complementarity is in no wise tangential, but is of, or, toward the constitutive essence of the composition (i.e., of the object). I maintain, the complementarities of eidetic poetry (if not of all “concrete poetry”) *are equally* (though not necessarily in extent or to degree) *and essentially generative the one of the other!*

In this sense, “concrete poetry” (and “pattern” and “shaped”) would be synonymous with “visual poetry.”

When considering the history of “concrete poetry” (which is to say, of its forerunners, all which are by degrees approximations) it is most fruitful to take into account all the various names by which it has been called. “Concrete poetry” is a development of *carmen figuratum* (“figure poem” or “shaped poem”). At this point in time, it would seem that “visual poetry” (or, “vis-po”) is a recent development of “concrete

poetry.” Each term seems to denote both a generality (a genus) and a specificity (a species). It would seem that of all the terms in current usage, “visual poetry” is the most general, while being also the least informed.

What is *eidos*? It is language. *Languē. Chora.* The sea of language. The sea of relationality. *The great postulated transcendent totality of system.* It is *mystici corporis.* It is *antiquus mysticusque.* It is *prisca sapientia.* It is *logos.* It is logical space. It is plastic.

Not photograph, but eidograph. Not photographic, but eidographic. Not *a showing* made with light, but *a showing* of the . . . *making conscious the unconscious.* The made-visible e-merges (from obscurity — *clair-obscur*) depicting (a “looking-through,” the *trans-parens*) what takes place *below* our (superficial) verbal consciousness.

The eidograph is a picture of language-in-eidos, of language in conceptus, language in situ, in general, in ideal form. An eidograph is a telling by way of showing, it is a concrete telling, it is the special poésie of the eidetic poet. *The eidograph is a picture of language-in-eidos.*

What does it mean to say of one thing, this is a “depiction,” and of another, this is a “reality in itself”? Is this to deny of the depiction a “reality in itself”? Is this to deny of the “reality in itself” a significance that transcends that “reality”? For instance, let’s speak of value (if not of ontology). There is value in the depiction, and there is value in the thing that is a “reality in itself” — there is value in its being a “reality in itself,” there is value in that “reality,” that “in-itself-ness.”

[This is a painting: Washington’s crossing of the Delaware River. In terms of its being a painting, it is a reality in itself. In terms of its being a depiction, *it points away from itself to something else* (something that is not present except that it is present-to-mind). It has value both in that it

is a painting and a depiction. But it is a reality in itself only in terms of its being *a painting*.]

There is value in the depiction *in that* it is a depiction, and *in how* it is a depiction, and *in why* it is (said/seen to be) a depiction. When we say there is value in the “reality in itself,” we are saying that “reality in itself,” as such, is a value, and “as such” is given to mean that it is not about anything other than itself, it does not stand for anything other than itself, it is self-referential, it does not point away from itself but *means* only in so far as *it is* (in so far as it is *what* it is, if not *that* it is). It has value as an independent object. The object has a certain “objectivity” about it (a certain *whereness*, though we do not wish to restrict this whereness, this *ubiety* to the “prison house of the page”).

(One might say it is “anti-mimetic,” although to use the term “anti” would seem to attribute to the object *intention*, and it does not seem possible to me that a “reality in itself” can have *intention*, and so to say something is “anti-mimetic” is not to say something about the object but about the purpose of the object, at which point we have gone outside that “reality in itself.” And yet, such an object has been, and still is, held to stand for, to speak to or to otherwise illuminate certain artistic and/or social concerns — indeed, we might say it is *programmatically*, or even *theory laden*. In which case the “reality in itself” is positioned as *an object hypothesis*, something given in advance, and accepted without judgment. *Given A, is not B analogous to C?* This does seem to give the “reality in itself” a significance that transcends that “reality.” It does seem to stand for and to point to something *outside* itself, even if that something outside is *just* an object hypothesis.)

And herein lies its “concreteness.” But to speak of “concrete poetry” in terms of this understanding of the term “concreteness” is, or so it seems to me, to speak of only a particular kind of concrete poetry, and a kind of concrete poetry that is possibly more a form of art than of poetry. Why, then, call it poetry? Because it employs words (language)? Why not, “concrete writing” or even “language art”? It seems to me, if a form of writing is to partake of the title, of the encomium, “poetry,” we should

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be able to discern in it some or other poetic elements, *or even poetic forebears*. . . .

And besides, poetry doesn't have exhibitions, "visual poetry" has exhibitions.

meaning / naming

We can say: *They are not against meaning, but naming, because to name would be to point away, to a reality outside, to a separate reality, to an "other." To what is not.*

But, as for the work itself, as for that "reality in itself," how, *if it is to have meaning*, can it not be in some sense mimetic?

To mean, to signify, must correspond to something other, even if that something other were a mirror image of itself.

Or is the "reality in itself" unintelligible? *Can the unintelligible be [be rendered] beautiful?*

We can say: *This is writing that is not writing words. This is writing that is showing words, but not words qua words, that is to say not words as signs (parole), but rather words as symbols.*

are these *words as symbols* "verbal"? do they "express"? or are they "visual"?

faced with a symbol, what do we see? what do we know? what comes to mind? what does it mean to be "in community" with a symbol?

to communicate / to be *in community* / to hold in common

*ainissesthai* — “to speak darkly,” “to speak in riddles” *Follow the lion’s gaze.*

Eidography? Symbolurgy?

Draw for me the hieroglyphic of the world. [By necessities *a griphos?*]

Eidography is the symbolurgy of the hieroglyphic of the world.

What does the hieroglyphic of the world look like? [By necessities *a griphos?*]

intellection / ideation

Let us consider: “poetry in general.” I offer here a simple proposition: “The poem” exists on the page, in concrete language, in the form of a *deposition* (“a putting down”), but *the poetry* exists, or rather *comes into being*, or, *is realized*, in the mind (via the conscious intellection / the conscious ideation) of the reader [the redding]. While “the poem” exists in deposition, *the poetry* resides with the reader [the redding]. Now where concerns concrete poetry, but specifically the concrete poetry that is the “reality in itself,” we can say that *the whereness of the poetry* of concrete poetry is at the level of that deposition. Now bear in mind, this is not to say of that “reality in itself” that it does not have *or show* an *eidos* (a form, an eidetic form), as in fact this *eidos* is this “text’s” entire *raison d’etre*.

Bear in mind the difference between the “concrete” *eidos* and that *eidos* that accompanies the text of “poetry in general.” In the case of “poetry in general,” here we find an *eidos* that is properly understood to be a margin and indentation pattern, this pattern, or scheme, or, template (I call this “the poetic template”) signals to the reader a number of things, beginning with, “I am a poem.” Compare the outward eidetic form of a

sonnet to, say, Solt's "Moonshot Sonnet" or to Christian Morgenstern's "Fisches Nachtgesang."

We can draw the outlines of three distinct types of concrete poetry: Let us call the first type, "concrete," and here find that text that *is identical with what it shows*, that is the "anti-mimetic" text, the "reality in itself," the text that *means* but does not *name*. Let's call the next type, "shape," and here find, among others, George Herbert's "Easter Wings" and John Hollander's "Swan and Shadow." And let us, but provisionally, call the third type "abstract," and say that here "language elements" are not employed as signals-to-meaning but as *symbols* suggestive of a system of meaning, *a thought structure*.

I think we can safely say of all three types that each is, in a sense, a "reality in itself." Moreover, to the degree that each type presents, or is, a spatial arrangement (and to the extent that such presents, or is, or is perceived to be, a shape, a figure, an outline, a pattern, or to be meaningful or significant visually), I think we can safely say of all three types that each is, or presents, *an eidos*. And on that basis, each type — "concrete," "shape," "abstract" — is, I maintain, a type of "eidetic poetry." But this is not to restrict "eidos" to a form that is perceived only visually, for while we may speak of *an eidetic element* that is *given to instantaneous apprehension*, as per to look upon, we can also speak of *an eidetic element* that is given to conscious intellection and ideation, for indeed while it is one thing to see a spatial arrangement, it is another thing to know it as meaningful (and indeed, as significant).

As for *this eidos* (as we speak of it here as the visual component or *complementarity*), I think it is this aspect of the concrete-poetry composition that Mary Ellen Solt is referring to when she says of concrete poetry (in her footnote to "Moonshot Sonnet") that it is "supranational, supralingual." And this can be so because there is no language barrier interfering with the instantaneous apprehension of the object (its shape or pattern, its spatial arrangement). Here we find the truly supranational nature of eidetic poetry. But this is not to reduce eidetic poetry to its eidetic (i.e., "visual") complementarity only, as then

we would be acknowledging only one half of the equation. We must also acknowledge its poetic elements, its “lingual” or language complementarity, as here we find an *eidos*, *a form*, of a different nature, the *eidos*, or form, of the noun.

We’ll skip over the second type of eidetic poetry (the “shape poem”) except to mention that in Herbert’s “Easter-wings” and in Hollander’s “Swan and Shadow” we find instances of the consummate working out (the working together) of both the eidetic and poetic elements (both serve to complete each other, *as complementarities*, and both are generative the one of the other), and we’ll move on to the third type, the “abstract” eidetic poem. It may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of *an abstract concrete poem*, that is unless we bear in mind a keen distinction:

Quite simply, concrete is to the senses as abstract is to the mind.

Consider: a picture drawn in words [a narrative, say], however detailed or explicit, will always be *an abstraction* (literally *a drawing-away, a separation*) from nature, requiring conscious intellection and ideation on the part of the reader, whereas to see a picture is a matter of instantaneous apprehension — it is there (it has *whereness*), it appears to the senses, it has a material, perceptible existence, it is a “reality in itself.”

NB The forms found in the first type of concrete poetry are rarely found in nature, unlike those found in the second type, which usually are. This is important if the “forms” found in the first type are to be considered “nonrepresentational,” and a “reality in itself,” and not a depiction (*not mimetic*) from nature! We may ask, then, just what kind of forms are to be found in the first type of concrete poetry. . . ? I do not think it will be an imposition on these works (to the contrary, it may increase them) to say of these forms that they are Platonic. (See Plato, *Philebus*, 51a. “I mean not the figures of creatures in real life. I mean a straight line, a curve and the plane and solid figures. These are not relatively beautiful, but are beautiful in their very nature.”) And we should not be surprised

to find in the third type, in the “abstract” type, that the same kind of forms apply.

*Concrete is to the senses as abstract is to the mind* can also be conceived of as *concrete is to what shows as abstract is to what tells*. In the preamble to my *Go Mirrored* [collected in *Six Comets Are Coming* (E·ratio Editions, 2009)] I present this analogy: “We might say, then, that the ‘visual’ component of the concrete poem is to the analogue clock what the semantic component is to the digital clock, in that the one shows what the other tells.”

We must bear in mind, that the “concrete” in “concrete poetry” has always, above all, been rooted in this distinction, in this sense of instantaneous apprehension — as distinct from the conscious intellection of words. There is no contradiction, then, to considering a concrete poetry, an “eidetic poetry,” that is both at basis “concrete” and formally abstract.

Compare / contrast this idea of “instantaneous apprehension” with Pound’s authoritative assertion on *the image* in the “Imagist” poem: “An ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. . . . It is the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneously. . . .”

Why has concrete poetry become abstract? We must consider our answer in regard to both the “shaped” and the “concrete” poem — that poets have simply given up on depicting shapes and figures from nature. I don’t see this as a matter of talent or ability, but rather, and what is more crucial, as a sign of the “dissociation of sensibility” which while having its origin elsewhere (and in another time) has never ceased to hold sway. We might call this situation “a fragmentation of sensibility,” in which the individual exists “in exploded view” (a consequence, perhaps, of being analyzed to pieces, pieces which relate but find their relation to be problematical). Interest has turned inward, has become intra-subjective, in the knowledge of and in search of and in the exploration of a transcendent system of meaning. If not the collective



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unconscious, the occupation is with relationality as such (the very nature of interrelation, of interdependence, of mutual aver). If it is not to know, and to subdue, Langue — the current, great preoccupation — it is to know and to subdue the self, or perhaps to know and to subdue the world writ large. While willing, and able, to turn from naming, there remains an unwillingness, or an unableness, to turn from meaning. Even the signs turn inward and become symbols, unable to say with certainty but only to suggest (only to show, and to tell, indirectly).

# On Mathematical Poetry

a math poem grammar / a math poem gramarye

As in the case of Cubist poetry, there has to be considered the analogy: The analogy between the geometry of the picture [the array, the arrangement, of geometric forms] and the grammar of the sentence, between the grammar (the structural rules) of the sentence and the geometry of the picture, *of the depicted*, between the grammar and the mathematics.

The analogy between the grammatical sentence (the linguistic sentence) and the mathematical sentence (the mathematical equation / the mathematics of the equation).

Already (“mathematical sentence”) I’m thinking analogically.

There has to be considered the analogy between the grammar of the sentence and the “mathematics” of the equation (of the “statement” / of the “proposition”).

What is the grammar [the syntax, the semantics] of numbers and symbols? What is the grammar of magnitudes, relationships and attributes? Or is this already clear. . . ?

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Write for me the mathematical sentence equivalent of the sentence, “Peter is sitting on the chair.” Write for me the mathematical sentence equivalent of “sitting on” existing as an entity apart from any sitter.

a math poem grammar / a math poem gramarye

Here I offer a working definition of “mathematical poetry”:

The “mathematical poem,” if it is to be, or to contain, poetry, must have some poetic / poetical elements, as well as some formal symbols and operations of math.

I want to emphasize that by “operations of math” I do not mean that the poem will be “doing math.”

What I mean is that the poem will be, in some way or in some sense — be that metaphorical, allegorical, but for the most part figurative — mimicking or imitating (*a mimesis*) or finding a trope in that operation (whichever that operation may be).

I emphasize: I do not mean that the poem is “doing math.”

Math does math. The poem is representational.

The idea is to imitate, to represent — *a mimesis* — the mathematical operations.

I’m thinking analogically.

## Set 1 “mutually inverse operations”

These are my formal symbols

+ , =

and as such they are indicative of operations / *they signify operations*.

What then are my poetic / poetical elements? They would be ideas and images / imagery (not excluding metaphor and simile) — and these occupy the place of the addends and augends.

change + purse = church

kite + propeller = wing

to + to = too (to + to = toto)

am = be + I

secrets = ? + whispers

celebrity + prestige = leverage

“To,” “am” and “be” are ideas, while “kite” and “propeller” are images — and an image can at the same time be an idea (“church”), and be as general or abstract as it can be specific or concrete.

## Set 2 “place-value poems”

Whereas the “mutually inverse operations” were concerned with the formal symbols and operations of our math, here we’re going to be concerned with structure, which is to say, with arrangement, with system, with the rules for writing math in analogy with the syntax or with the rules for the arrangement of the words in the linguistic sentence.

Consider: *Grammar* is concerned with the structure of a language and the rules and principles of its use. *Morphology* is concerned with the forms and formation of words. *Semantics* is concerned with the relations between words and the changes in the meanings of words. *Syntax* is concerned with sentence construction, with the relation of words as parts of the structures of sentences. Our concern, here, is going to be with syntax.

The idea is to write a “mathematical poetry” based on the analogy between the “grammar of the number system and of the mathematical equation” and the grammar of the linguistic sentence.

To do this, I take the “place value” system in arithmetic (where within a number each digit is given a *place value* depending on its location — for instance: millions, hundred-thousands, ten-thousands, thousands, hundreds, tens . . .) as an analogue to the syntax (the syntactic structure, or, *arrangement*) of my grammar (where sentences are generated by means of a series of choices made from left to right as after the first, or leftmost, element has been selected, every subsequent choice is determined by the immediately preceding elements).

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Consider the “place-value system” of the Fibonacci numbers:

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 . . .

Each number is the sum of the two numbers before it. *Each number in the sequence is the sum of the previous two.*

Let's name this type of math poem, “place-value poems” and we'll call our first one, *which is also a haiku*,

“Molotov's Sister”

a blonde bomber,she.smokes filterless,plays upright bass & writes haiku

There is no space before and after the comma and the decimal point.

The separation of sentence elements takes this form:

noun,pronoun.verb,verb conjunction verb

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Here are some “place-value poems”:

undistorted,Zeno’s perceptions.so says Simplicius  
Iamblichos,AKA “ruffian,”slew.old Apollodoros  
Anaximander’s walking stick,his evening constitutional.  
Semele,importunate summons,the environing naught  
Sos’thenes,our brother.called by God  
Carneades.Cato banished him

a math poem grammar / a math poem gramarye

Mathematical Prose?

When we speak the numbers we speak the names of the numbers, while when we observe the numbers, when we *see* the numbers, it is then that we see the actual numbers themselves.

The actual numbers are seen, not heard. What is heard is the names of the numbers.

Is “mathematical prose,” then, to be defined as “the narrative complement of the formal structure”?

What happens when I narrate, *when I paraphrase*, the equation?

Is paraphrase = “mathematical prose”?

Is the “math word problem” = “mathematical prose”?

Or: Is this, 7, equal to this, *seven*? Is this, 7, just another word?

They share a sound. Do they share a sense?



### Set 3 “transversal poems”

Within the mathematical poetry *genre* there exists different types of mathematical poem and our three types are but one family type and this expressly concerned with the analogy between “the grammar” of the mathematical proposition and *the grammar* of the linguistic statement.

Our third type of mathematical poem is *banked* off of the “parallel lines” situation. A word on parallel lines:

Robert Recorde wrote, in his textbook of algebra entitled *The Whetstone of Witte* (1557), “I will set as I do often in work use, a pair of parallels, of twin lines of one length, thus: =, because no two things can be more equal.”

Recorde’s use of the twin lines as a mnemonic (i.e., assisting the memory) shorthand for *equals* works better than writing out the word *aequare* (the Latin for, *to make equal*). Note how the symbol (the sign) resembles its meaning:

=

But parallel lines are lines that never intersect! What can be the “poetic analogue” to this?

A poetic element is to a parallel line that never intersects its complement in that the poetic element (whether an idea or an image) never loses its identity (*what it brings to the equation*) but gains *in relationship* — the “poetry” or “statement” of the poem being as a *transversal line* simultaneously coming into being to relate the two (creating a correspondence between the two, a discourse, a context, a juxtaposition).

“Parallel lines” exist side-by-side, as do complementary, competing and contradictory ideas. Parallel lines create situations, are situational, they are the place where things happen.

Our formal symbol, here, will be two horizontal lines, the one parallel to the other, that make for the “parallel lines” situation — however, as we progress, that formal symbol will change, and the change will represent an actual situation come into being, as distinct from a potential situation or from what is simply *the place* or *topos* for a future situation, and we will call this actual situation a “transversal.”

So while we may speak of two formal symbols, we will actually be using only one formal symbol. Why then still speak of a first formal symbol and what does it mean in relation to our poem? To that end, let’s gain some perspective on this *first* formal symbol (and on formal symbols as such):

Every good student en route to Aquinas via Copleston will have come upon this proposition, which *in situ* is for the relation between substance and accident, namely those qualities and relations which exist only as qualities and relations of that of which they are predicated. Here is my rendering of that proposition:

Write for me the mathematical sentence equivalent of the sentence, “Peter is sitting on the chair.” Write for me the mathematical sentence equivalent of “sitting on” existing as an entity apart from any sitter.

There is a distinction here, between “Peter is sitting on the chair” and “sitting on” *per se*. We might speak of “sitting on” as *a position without magnitude*, or, as *abstract* as opposed to *concrete* (and indeed in that you cannot picture it!), or, as *empty*, or, as without specification, or, as being in the same position as a formal symbol. The formal symbol, *per se*, is empty, it is without circumstance, it is like a predicate without a subject (thinkable only in the abstract) — and in the case of our *first* formal symbol, *the parallel lines*, what we have is a situation *in posse*, a place *in posse*, a *topos in posse*, awaiting some action or state of affairs. This state of affairs is brought on by the transversal line, which crosses both parallel lines thus bringing them via their formal relation into an actual relation, or, indeed, into many possible relations, each signaled by the angle and by analogy with the angle the many possible poetic and ideational senses.

Formally, parallel lines are situational, they are the place, the topos, where things come to happen. That happening is the transversal line — *and the angles or by analogy the poetic and ideational senses it carries with it*. Our poem, then, which we will name “the transversal poem,” requires a formal symbol other than the two horizontal lines that indicate the parallel lines situation — our symbol will have to indicate or show or signal to the reader that here is an actual situation, that here is a poem, and that here we must consent to the intention of the poem, that here we must as it were enter into the confidence of the poem. Our formal symbol, then, will be:

≠

and will thus be known in this context as the “transversal poem.”

And our poem will take this structure, or, syntax or arrangement:

lines ≠ spirals

particles ≠ waves

constancy ≠ change

permanence ≠ transience

The transversal line, along with the angles it suggests, is then analogous to the many senses brought about by the juxtaposition of our words (of the poetic elements or ideas or images we bring to our formal symbols situation). These *angles*, or, *senses*, or, “transversals,” if you will, exist side-by-side — as often do complementary, competing and/or contradictory ideas. Some of these ideas can be said to exist in a state of “perpendicularity” or to be at right angles with each other, which is to be “at odds with each other.” Such as:

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multiculturalism ≠ ethnocentricity

determinism ≠ character and motive

turpitude ≠ enlightenment

a poetics ≠ an attitude

creationism ≠ evolution

the order of ideas ≠ the order of causes

the causal relation ≠ the relation of logical implication

word ≠ memory

paradox ≠ semantic tension

attractive ≠ repulsive

force ≠ matter

Notes on Bob Grumman's Christmas Mathemaku  
*and on mathematical poetry generally,  
or, how to deconstruct a division sign*

First things first: I think the only fair and general term that one [that we?] should use is “math-themed poetry.” I think the term “mathematical poetry” ought to always be in quotation marks. And one [and we?] should use the term, “math-themed poetry.” I think it is fair, and within our power, to maintain that this poetry is “influenced” by mathematics. But the claim that this poetry is “carrying out a mathematical operation,” has, in my opinion, not been substantiated and is, in my opinion, false. The reasons for these things ought to be immediately obvious (and if they are not, then I think we’ve gone beyond the usual skepticism and cynicism and have entered the realm of the incredulous).

If there is indeed something we can locate and identify as the math-themed poetry community, then it is in no way a “close-knit” community, but is made up of quite various and distinct individuals (not all of whom are established poets) with quite various and distinct ideas as to what a math-themed or “mathematical” poetry should look like, and a constellation of probably only *three* so-dedicated blogs. (However, that there does or does not exist an “official” mathematical poetry community, and that they in good conscience ignore outsiders for fear such should undermine them or for fear such should do it better than they are, speaks volumes.) I am here, in this essay, concerned with just one creator of math-themed poetry, Bob Grumman, because Bob has probably been doing it the longest and his is the work that I am most familiar with (having interviewed him on the subject and, probably, having written more words than anybody else on his work), and because Bob claims that his “mathemaku” “in long division” is actually “carrying out a mathematical operation.” And because Bob has a blog at

the *Scientific American Blog Network*, with respect to which I am writing this in the spirit of a peer review. \*

Which raises an interesting question: Who is the “math-themed” poet’s peer? The poet or the mathematician? One particular opinion, which I have frequently encountered, holds that only the capital M mathematician is a *real* mathematician while anybody and everybody (who tries his hand at poetry) is a poet. This opinion is held by mathematicians. (I’m tempted to rest it there, but I’ll go on.) The fact is there are instincts for poetry just as there are instincts for mathematics, only the instincts for poetry cannot be taught — they can be aspired to but they cannot be won by rote. As for who is a mathematician, it is my opinion that anybody and everybody is a mathematician who uses math. We are surrounded by math and mathematical concepts — anybody who has ever taught math to a child with zero interest in math knows that the way into his “mathematical heart” is to awaken him to the fact that he is already a mathematician, and this is done by demonstrating to him that he is already using, and being used by, mathematical concepts all the time, only now he is going to be aware of it and from now on he will avail himself of it with facility. Plato’s *Meno*, anybody? (This is not to downplay the difficulty in teaching math to a child, boy or girl, with zero interest in math, or with zero attention span.)

Rather than “math-themed” poetry, I think *math art* is better suited for teaching math. I don’t put math art in quotation marks because with regard to the math art object the claim is not being made that it is carrying out a mathematical operation — it seems one can demonstrate a math concept in action without actually doing any math.

About paraphrase: *To see a mathematical statement is one thing while to speak a mathematical statement is another, in that when we speak it we paraphrase.* (Seeing / listening. We see the sign (a physical form), the signifier / we hear the sense (a meaning), the signified.) \*\*

With regard to the claim that the *mathemaku* (a lovely name, by the way, that I have suggested might mean “learned-” ku) is “carrying out a

mathematical operation,” Bob’s only evidence, his *proof*, ultimately, is the mathemaku itself. This is not to downplay that steady stream of interpretation (the paraphrase, restatement and what is ostensibly establishing argument) that surrounds the mathemaku and the other examples of “mathematical poetry” that Bob exhibits. On the contrary, this steady stream of interpretation is quite imaginative and oftentimes fascinating, if more poetical than mathematical. Which is to say, literary exegesis is not the step by step, sequential analysis and elucidation we expect in mathematics, which may, however, and with regard to Bob’s interpretive wit, ultimately prove to be inappropriate for the math-themed poem (in particular, the “mathemaku”), which asks to be known in its entirety, to be apprehended as a unity — given more readily to sight than to intellection, and this despite the three-step *division-multiplication-subtraction* usually associated with the long division problem.

Recourse to the mathemaku itself, and to the reader’s technical expertise in mathematics, as the final determinant of whether the mathemaku, or as to whether any such “mathematical poetry” is actually carrying out a mathematical operation, is, in my opinion, a dodge — it is tantamount to saying, *You don’t see it as I intend it because, mathematically, your knowledge is not equal to mine*. Or else, who is the “mathematical poetry” for? Is it for capital M mathematicians, or for readers generally? (If it is only for capital M mathematicians, then I would expect that it was actually carrying out a mathematical operation. If it is for readers generally, then I would expect, and I would settle for, an analogy based on the semantics (the meaning, *the content*), if not on the syntax (the order, *the address*), of the words and the mathematical operations of, in this instance, the long division problem (yea, *the long division table*.)

As for the level of technical expertise required to “read” and to comprehend the mathemaku, we are reminded that we are at the “level” of the long division problem, and that Bob’s mathemaku — or, rather, let’s just stick with the “Christmas Mathemaku,” — never goes beyond the first step in the long division procedure, namely, the division step. (There does not follow a multiplication step, nor a subtraction step.)

Why do I say *never goes beyond the division step*?

We can say that when it comes to *long division*, Bob is taking poetic license — he is departing from the conventional rules in order to create an effect. \*\*\* If we left it at that, there would be no debate. But Bob’s blog is not just anywhere, Bob’s blog is a part of the *Scientific American Blog Network*. And why (is Bob’s blog a part of the *Scientific American Blog Network*)? Apparently it is because his mathemaku is *carrying out a mathematical operation*. (Someone at the *Scientific American Blog Network* must agree with him!)

But Bob also maintains, “If one of my long division poems is not carrying out a mathematical operation, I would like to know just what it IS doing.” \*\*\*\*

Well: *That IS the question*. Just what IS Bob’s “long division poem” doing?

Let us then begin at the beginning, and to do so we begin at the “division sign.” Here we see not an obelus, but what we will for our purposes refer to as “the long division sign” (or what is, technically, a vinculum attached to the top of a close parenthesis). We begin here because this “long division sign” immediately identifies the poem as a specimen of “mathematical poetry,” and we have to ask, What role does it play?

*What role does the division sign play in the mathemaku. . . ?*



# The Logoclasody Manifesto



## The Logoclasody Manifesto

The first time I laid my eyes on Bob's "Christmas Mathemaku," I mistook the division sign for a toboggan. Now that's not hard to do when you consider a toboggan (in profile, anyway) is made up of a vinculum and a parenthesis — just turn the profile upside down and change the open parenthesis to a close parenthesis. (It is also said to resemble a snow shovel.) And I thought, What a lovely Christmas postcard! \*\*\*\*\*

I was focused on the long division sign. My eye instinctively, *learnedly*, went straight for it. And I was asking, *What do I know that I should know to begin here? What role does this sign play?*

I know that, beyond identifying the poem as a specimen of "mathematical poetry," the division sign signals that here, at this place, this is my *point of departure*. It signals that here is where I am to begin if I am "to read" the poem, and it signals that here is where I am to begin if I am "to solve" the long division problem. And it does this without contradiction. The division sign, as point of departure, holds true for both the poetical and the mathematical "operations" of the mathemaku. And so: If the division sign is going to operate both mathematically and poetically, *and without contradiction*, then the division sign needs be so construed, so interpreted, that both poetry and math can share in its operation. And so it is, first of all, *a point of departure*.

But it would not suffice to end it there. For beyond indentifying, beyond locating, the division sign is also instructional, indeed it is prescriptive — it is in that the division sign also signals a rules for procedure. Most importantly of all, *the division sign signals a rules for procedure*.

What is this long division sign signaling, *expressing*, here in this "Christmas Mathemaku"? Is it not at once stating a problem and a poetry? Is it not stating:

"Christmas divided by children," or, "[how many times] *children* [will go] *into Christmas*."

If so, how then reconcile, how then make the one consistent with the other, this poetical idea and this mathematical statement? (Indeed: *How apply these rules for procedure?*)

“Christmas” cannot be “divided by children.” Not literally, which is to say, not mathematically. But if we read it as “children into Christmas,” and rethink it as “children” *and* “Christmas,” we begin to see what our poetical steps are leading to.

But this is not a mathematical demonstration, let alone the procedure for long division. Rather, this is a demonstration of semantics! (One might here object, that this is not a matter of stating a long division problem at all, because long division problems are made up of numbers, not of words. But that would be to miss the point of “mathematical poetry,” which is to use semantics in a way that is analogous to mathematical operations!)

Let us return to the division sign and ask once more, *What role does this division sign play?* Because it is here, I think, we’ll see just where our poetical-*cum*-mathematical steps are leading.

Now consider, that just as the long division problem is said to have, or to unfold, if you will, *a table*, the “Christmas Mathemaku” may be said to have, or to unfold, *a tableau*. What must be the case for this to be so?

We have seen how if taken as “a point of departure,” the division sign can be both mathematical and poetical *without contradiction*. And yet, where concerns “a rules for procedure,” we must have recourse to semantics if we are to proceed beyond the contradiction of using words in place of numbers. What other role, then, might the division sign play in the carrying out of the operations of the “Christmas Mathemaku” in its unfolding of the mathemaku tableau?

Now consider, that just as the long division problem unfolds its table by proceeding by way of an analytical calculation, the mathemaku unfolds its tableau *by proceeding by way of a collocation of images*.

This collocation of images, thusly arrayed, which is to say, *expressively visually arrayed*, adds up to a tableau, *a picture*.

The mathemaku *picture* is quite distinct from the long division *picture*, and not only because the one is made up of words while the other is made up of numbers. The mathemaku has its own dynamics and its own sense of coherence. Its dynamics are not those of an analytical calculation and reasoning, but are those of semantics and word association. Its coherence is not a mathematical coherence, but an emotional coherence.

There is a sense in which numbers are evocative (certainly, certain numbers we associate with certain events in our lives — birth dates, death dates, anniversaries and such), but as to any sentimental appeal, the number as number, notwithstanding a certain platonic appeal, the number as number cannot move us to reverie and to reminiscence, it does not bring to mind such memories and feelings as of tenderness or sadness or loss, it is not associative.

In its proceeding by way of a collocation of images, the mathemaku moves by content, not by address (which is to say, it moves by virtue of what these things are, and by the sentiments they in turn evoke, rather than by where they belong, which is to say, by their place in the long division table). This is the movement of a poetical expression, not of a mathematical expression. This movement, in analogy to the calculative *steps* in the long division equation, is by association.

And now we ask: What must be necessary for this analogy between the long division *table* and the mathemaku *tableau* to work? What other role must the long division sign play — and play *without contradiction*?

The division sign signals to be *the equivalent of to rule lines on paper*. That is its most significant role, for without that there would be no structure upon which to find the poetical tableau that is the entire visual and semantic field of the mathemaku poem. The division sign signals to

be *the equivalent of to rule lines on paper*. That is its most significant role, for without that there would be no structure upon which to find the long division table, for without that there would be no structure upon which to find the poetical tableau that is the entire visual and semantic field of the mathemaku poem.

\* <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/mhpoetica/>

\*\* About paraphrase: *To see a mathematical statement is one thing while to speak a mathematical statement is another, in that when we speak it we paraphrase.* (Seeing / listening. We see the sign (a physical form), the signifier / we hear the sense (a meaning), the signified.) Indeed we hear a word, *a name*, what is representative of that physical sign, and from this we construe a meaning. Not counting the name as a sound form, we are some steps removed from that physical sign, and are in the realm of mental representation, and so perhaps we ought to speak of this as *meta-phrase*.

\*\*\* Bob writes in a footnote: “. . . I am proud of the way this poem slops [sic] anti-mathematically out of the extremely formal and rule-bound structure than [sic] a long division example is. I bring this use of carefree art against rigorous science not for the first time to advertise the long-division poetic form as often as possible in hopes of inspiring other poets to use it.” (Capital M mathematicians may leave it at that.) <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/mhpoetica-happy-holidays/>

\*\*\*\* “Thanks, Gregory, for making me look up ‘lexeme,’ one of those words I know and use for a while, then forget after not using them for a while. Unfortunately, it does not mean anything close to what ‘texteme’ does.

“As for mathematical poetry’s ‘doing math,’ I may have lossely said that’s what it does. More strictly speaking, it carries out mathematical operations. If one of my long division poems is not carrying out a mathematical operation, I would like to know just what it IS doing.”

—Bob (Comment made on Friday, June 4, 2010, at 4:10 PM, in reply in conversation regarding a post “On Mathematical Poetry (Post One)” at the Eratio Blog-Auxiliary.)

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\*\*\*\*\* The “Christmas Mathemaku” reads: *a thousand / poemfuls of / falling snow // children Christmas // cld // O // opening for / sled forevering downhill / toward the Grumblys’ front yard // Mother and Dad inside, reading.*

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/mhpoetica-happy-holidays/>

## Mathematical Prose?

Let us consider “mathematical plainness” and the case of Samuel Beckett. . . .

Consider: “Royal Society” prose, the specifications for which, as set forth by Thomas Sprat in his *History of the Royal Society* (1667), are: “a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive Expressions, clear senses.” The object of which is “to bring all things as near to the mathematical Plainness” as was humanly possible.

*The aim was to restore the prelapsarian speech of Adam, whom God charged with the naming of the creatures! (A crucial role, as Adam saw things he did not have names for!)*

Is “Royal Society” prose (“mathematical Plainness”) what we mean by “mathematical prose”?

From the article “Samuel Beckett: Putting Language in Its Place” by Hugh Kenner. (Taken from the *NYT* Book Review Section for April 13, 1986.) Kenner writes: At Trinity, Beckett wrote a master’s dissertation on Descartes. In France, two decades later, we find him composing Cartesian sentences like the following:

“Not that Watt felt calm and free and glad, for he did not, and had never done so. But he thought that perhaps he felt calm and free and glad, or if not calm and free and glad, at least calm and free, or free and glad, or glad and calm, or if not calm and free, or free and glad, or glad and calm, at least calm, or free, or glad, without knowing it.” (*Watt* 1944.)

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Kenner continues: This is brought as close to the mathematical plainness as may be, since, as the careful reader will have noticed, every possible combination of calm and free and glad, by threes, by twos, or by ones, has been accounted for. Thus literally everything it is possible to say has been said. . . . We note, moreover, that this whole virtuoso exercise, all 75 words of it, contains but four words of more than a single syllable; these are *never*, *perhaps*, *without* and *knowing*. We are close to the economy of algebra with its signs and brackets; we are close to a Calculus of Propositions:

$[c + f + g] \text{ OR } [(c + f) \text{ OR } (f + g) \text{ OR } (g + c)] \text{ OR } [c \text{ or } f \text{ or } g]$

And concluding, Hugh Kenner writes: And we're close to the languages of digital computers, which weren't heard of till a decade after "Watt" was written, though their logical rites, thanks to Dublin's Hamilton and England's Boole, were already a century old. . . . A program for a digital computer must define all its terms and represent them symbolically. It must also account for every possibility, else some day some rare unforeseen combination may slip through and cause a malfunction.

"The processes of mathematics offer themselves to the Beckett protagonists as a bridge into number's realm of the spectrally perfect, where enmired existence may be annihilated by essence utterly declared." Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett A Critical Study*.



# pieces to the point

*Symbols and mathematical logic. That mathematical symbols make an appearance in poetry does not make that poetry mathematical (it can, however, make it “math-themed” or “math poetry” but not “mathematical” poetry).*

*It seems to me you are using math symbols as a form of shorthand. When I read your text, I find I am interpreting these symbols into paraphrase. That is a matter of semantics, not mathematics. I do not think mathematical symbols are in themselves mathematical — so in the context of the sentence they are not performing a mathematical function, they are simply mathematical symbols performing a sort of visual shorthand. Which is not necessarily a bad thing. It is in fact a commonplace. I don't think the poetry, however, can be derived from the mathematical symbols, it has to come from the words, or from the ideas conveyed through the words, expressed, alas (?), in paraphrase. Mathematical symbols can indeed function as an eidetic complement (a dramatic, visual complement) to the poetry — but this operation is not mathematical, albeit the symbols signify their mathematical operation, adding to their significance.*

*So you're saying my analogy is false. I say there are similarities between the “grammar” of the mathematical statement and the grammar of the linguistic statement, and I base my analogy on those similarities. You're saying that it isn't even a matter of similarities, that they are all “part of our verbal language,” “not something different in kind,” and so no analogy need be involved. Math and language are both rule-following. Are the rules the same for each? A point of difference between “math grammar” and poetry grammar is that in the case of poetry grammar we can be ungrammatical and still be poetical*

— and not only that, we can still be meaningful — while if we are “mathematically ungrammatical” we then fall into error.

*I think, just saying “this is a poem” doesn’t make “it” a poem. When I state, “here is a poem, and that here we must consent to the intention of the poem, that we must as it were enter into the confidence of the poem,” that is not meant as an unqualified assertion on the order of, “This is a poem!” That would be ridiculous. It is, rather, an invitation. I speak of a passage from the creative intuition of the poet to the receptive intuition of the reader and state that this requires a sort of previous, tentative consent to “the poem” and to the intentions of the poet, without which we cannot be taken into the confidence of the poem. And that this requires a certain relaxing of the critical intelligence, for how can you reflect upon an experience if you have not first had that experience? But once you have had that experience, you are free to judge it as to whether it has satisfied your expectations, critical or otherwise. I want to emphasize that by “operations of math” I do not mean that the poem will be “doing math.” What I mean is that the poem will be, in some way or in some sense — be that metaphorical, allegorical, but for the most part figurative — mimicking or imitating or finding a trope in that operation (whichever that operation may be). I emphasize: I do not mean that the poem is “doing math.”*

*You say you are “speaking of the set of language-objects used to represent the real world and that you and I differ in what those objects are.” By “language objects” do you mean words and symbols? Are numbers language objects? Are the names we call numbers by language objects? Is the correctness of math but a matter of the correctness of “grammar”? Is the correctness of math but a matter of the correctness of operation (of application of operational principles/rules)? When I write math it is said that I am “doing” math. When I read math, a math equation, say, am I still “doing” math. What if I don’t know the rules? (So to be “mathematically ungrammatical” would apply here?) You say, “no analogy need be involved.” How then do your math poems work, how do they signify, how do they function? Or are they, in the*

*end, just pictures? How would you describe the grammar of your math poems?*

*My math poem is not doing math — math does math, poetry does poetry. My math poem follows the rules of math only insofar as to turn in analogy with those rules, and when one considers the expectations he or she brings to the math equation alongside the expectations he brings to the poem, to bring the math and the poetry together is to necessarily modify one's expectations of the math, but not to expect any less from the poetry. It is a fallacy to think mathematical poetry is "doing math."*

*Analogy is not metaphor. Analogy makes metaphor happen, but they are not the same. Metaphor, simile, allegory, all figurative language works by way of analogy. Analogy makes possible the metaphor, but it is not the metaphor. The metaphor turns on the analogy, but analogy does not need metaphor. In the case with my math poetry, it is by way of the analogy that they are "mathematical," not by way of metaphor, but if there is a metaphor, it would come by way of the poetry. For me: To theorize about "mathematical poetry" is to first "see" the analogy and then to create a trope out of it, and I think that's what I've done.*

*Your question is: "Does a mathematical equation from Physics do math?" I'm not sure what you mean by "Physics" and why you capitalize it. It makes me think of theoretical physics and then of the whole question of "meta" languages. The paraphrase in math is a sort of meta language and I should not want to be ungrammatical there. We ask: In theoretical physics, are errors a matter of grammar and of punctuation, or are they a matter of math? If the answer is both (sometimes the one, sometimes the other, as either can lead to error), then my answer to you is Yes.*

*I think maybe the question should be, not is my poem doing math but is my math-poem doing poetry. (I've been very liberal with you so far as definition of what is poetry goes, but I know very well that if I ask you to point out the poetic elements in your poetry your reply will be to ask me what a "poetic element" is.)*

*I think if you are going to make up the rules for mathematical poetry, then anybody can. Me included. And I would offer, for starters: 1) It is a fallacy to think mathematical poetry is “doing math.” And 2) The “sum” of a mathematical poem need not be the same for everyone. Now I know you disagree with the first point. But I wonder how you feel about the second: Do you really expect that two people reading one of your math poems will have, will reach, will come to the same identical outcome and impressions? Will reach the same sum? I do not believe that is an expectation a poet brings, or should bring, to his work. (The mathematician, yes; the poet, no.) To the contrary, I think. The variations come about in the reading [the redding], and that the variations come about in the reading in good part makes for the poetic experience, which I maintain is to a great extent “personal” and even “private”. Maybe we need to consider the word “sum,” and ask, what is the “sum” of a math poem. Now speaking about your “mathematical poetry,” and the impressions it gives off, one would have to cite immediately the fact that you use pictures (and not “word pictures” but actual pictures of things, and I mean aside from your formal symbols) and the fact that you use color (whether color background or otherwise). So we’re definitely in the realm of visual poetry or of some kind of collage. And while you do refer to your math poems as “equational,” I would have to say that, notwithstanding that you do that, that given how I think of my own math poems as “grammatical,” I have to, then, think of yours as “visual.”*

*You ask where are the “mutually” inverse operations (did you mean to emphasize mutually, or did you wish me to write them, the operations, out, as I would write out the permutations, the combinations, the pieces are suggestive of?) and you ask which elements are the formal symbols. Gee whiz, if these points are not obvious to you, then the entire concept, nay the wit of it, is lost on you. The entire concept, nay the wit of these pieces, “turns” on the understanding of “mutually inverse operations” (it is “a play” on the “mutually inverse operation”) and to a small degree the play on “verse” which it pains me to have to point out — it’s as though I have to remind you that you’re reading poetry and all the*

*things to look for when reading poetry, and that you must read differently than if you were reading a mathematical equation, which is to say if you are going to read this “literally,” in spite of that I make it perfectly clear in what sense (metaphorical, allegorical, figurative — these are the way of poetry) I am to be taken, then the failure to launch is yours, not mine. The “poetic” elements (the words that are the ideas and images) share (they must share) a common, consistent logic (enabling at once an integration and a differentiation), or else they would not be able to survive, semantically, their outcome. And this should be obvious to the reader without any permutations taking place. All the more frustrating when my audience is a mathematician, as I expect the mathematician to see it and to get it immediately. Mathematical poetry is a form of “conceptual poetry,” if you will, and if you do not get the concept, or if you simply refuse to grant the concept, and be smugly conventional about it, then you will not get it. Without the concept, you cannot see it. I must say I think your thinking in this matter is remarkably two-dimensional. You have to think three-dimensionally, and that third dimension is the analogy. That’s the getting of perspective. That analogy makes for the metaphor and for the allegory and above all for the poetry. It’s the zen. It’s the ch’i. It’s the wit. It’s “the poetry.” If you can’t get the analogy, then you can’t see the poetry. And that you do not see this, well, my reaction is the logical equivalent of a raising of the eyebrow. When you use words in place of numbers, which is to say, when you assign quantity- or magnitude-values, so to speak, to words, or when you assign grammatical or semantic outcomes to what are otherwise mathematical operations, you are working analogically, whether you realize it or not. That’s the way language works.*

*The “sum” of a mathematical poem need not be the same for everyone. If we’re going to make up mathematical poetry rules, then that’s mine. And btw, to “write out the permutations, the combinations, the pieces are suggestive of” is not necessary for the getting, or, for the appreciation, of the concept. That is not the point of the poems and indeed I do not expect it or require it of my reader. The idea, the task, is*

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*to take a mathematical operation and by analogy create a trope, a sort of formula, for making poetry out of it.*

*I wish to repeat here something: When I state, “here is a poem, and that here we must consent to the intention of the poem; that we must as it were enter into the confidence of the poem,” that is not meant as an unqualified assertion on the order of, “This is a poem!” That would be ridiculous. It is, rather, an invitation. I speak of a passage from the creative intuition of the poet to the receptive intuition of the reader and state that this requires a sort of previous, tentative consent to “the poem” and to the intentions of the poet, without which we cannot be taken into the confidence of the poem. And that this requires a certain relaxing of the critical intelligence, for how can you reflect upon an experience if you have not first had that experience? But once you have had that experience, you are free to judge it as to whether it has satisfied your expectations, critical or otherwise.*

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For “Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear,” *Onedit* #7, 2007. For “Crash Course in Logoclastics,” *Fell Swoop* #43, 1996, *Disturbed Guillotine* #3, 1997, and *Neologisms* #3, 1997. For “Logoclasody,” *The Argotist Online*, *Generator*, and *Word For/Word* #8, 2005. For “Logoclastics,” *Pudding Magazine: The International Journal of Applied Poetry* #29, 1996, *Aught* #14, 2005, and *Unpleasant Event Schedule*. For “Mathematical Poetry,” see “Notes on Bob Grumman’s Mathemaku and on Mathematical Poetry Generally” by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino (with commentary by mathematician John Randall), *Meat Epoch* #20, 1997 reprinted online *Word For/Word* #13, 2008, see “Bob Grumman Interviewed” by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, *eratio eidetics* issue one, 2003, and see “Kaz Maslanka Interviewed” by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, *Word For/Word* #13, 2008. And for “Visual Poetry,” see “Some Notes after Irving Weiss’ *Visual Voices*” by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, *Meat Epoch* #19, 1996 reprinted online *The Eratio Blog-Auxiliary*, September 4, 2006, and see “Afterword and Addendum to Nico Vassilakis’ STAMPOLOGUE” by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino, *eratio eidetics* issue three, 2004, reprinted *The Argotist Online*, 2006.

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