

# verbal paradise

no *simurgh* soars too high  
if she soars with your own wings

—ONTONOMYOUS THE PARTICULAR



verbal  
paradise  
preverbs

George Quasha

Zasterle Press

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# pre play

## *there is no end to language*

That statement might speak for a big part of what drives the work of *preverbs*<sup>1</sup>. Of course the sentence is multivalent in the way it strikes the mind, which might include saying of language that “there’s no end in sight,” “there’s plenty of it,” “it doesn’t just go away,” “there’s no intrinsic end point,” “it’s unlimited in its nature . . .” How can one ever think of being on top of what can’t be bounded? Yet mostly we humans do keep language under locks (with or without keys) of one kind or another, and we’re not evidently comfortable when it tries to run free—really free, beyond “control.” Perhaps dolphins and whales have found a better way.

At the most complex level the principle of language limitation is constitutive within our poetics. And no doubt one could do a history of poetry and poetics purely on the basis of direct and indirect attitudes toward language and its limitations, although the evidence may not be as easy to gather as would seem.

Blake saw language like everything else as intrinsically self-regulating, a precarious self-balancing of dynamic contraries. Of course in practice language rarely appears to regulate itself. Most of what we think of as limits and limitations are extremes we go to (“mind-forg’d manacles”), forgetful of natural constraints of energetic play in mind and body. And Blake created a body of work, by no means easy to read or fully comprehend, in which reader/viewer is offered a means of engagement with the problematics of language self-limitation. It’s a process of entering the unexperienced inner workings of mind in language, one that would reflect the very nature of mind and its responsibility for life at large. Perhaps this kind of engagement is of the nature of poetry itself, at least indirectly, yet it’s not always manifest; and it’s no simple matter to discover it. Some poetry encourages a very basic and thorough inquiry into, or exploration of, what might be called *language mind*; this would seem related to Stevens’ “poem of the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice.”

The work of preverbs, of which this is the first book to enjoy publication, resists introductory or explanatory remarks, even as it makes them inevitable in the context

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<sup>1</sup> See A Note on Definition at the end of *pre play*.

of poetry. Preverbs precede themselves, so to speak, with hidden trapdoors; but this rather elusive distinction regarding a radical of composition is not like premeditation or conceptualization. One instance has to do with the relationship of preverbs to poetry in any pre-existing sense. The question “is this poetry?” has to remain open; if preverbs have a program it’s an openness regarding their own nature, especially in relation to the big consensual distinctions (*poetry, even language*). (Preverbially: *poetry is what still exists on the other side of the distinction*.) The escape-hatch approach to definition-qualification is not a defensive act by which, say, preverbs would ward off all conceptual framing or aesthetic theory (which they quite willingly play with); rather, it’s an expression of their nature to promote *mind-degradable utterance*. Thinking, unthinking, further thinking; saying, unsaying, further saying.<sup>2</sup>

In biology *degrading* is hardly negative; in fact, it’s positive at least in the sense of being a necessary stage of the so-called life cycle. Yet “cycling” is only one perspective on what life is doing; it’s also passing through a sort of Klein bottle wherein recycling language formulations are continuously changing in the process of sustaining linguistic life—and an attitude of: Don’t look back, old meaning might be gaining on you. Even when seeming to change levels in meaning, one’s *reading*, one’s vehicle, never departs from a sort of continuous single surface reality: language, the actual language that is always just now happening in front of us.

Preverbs in this sense could be pre-mind-degraded verbal action matrices—apparently accidental reconfigurations waiting to happen. (And that’s what Bucky Fuller called a “mental mouthful.”)

This approach to language might at first seem manipulative, that is, unless one considers its relation to the way language works at large—and the way *that* relates to (in Stevens’ felicitous phrase) *the structure of reality*. It must be acknowledged that this view allows for a certain independent *life* in language, and one can entertain this view without taking a position as to the nature of that life. One can, after all, dialogue with something of unknown existential status. Stones, mysterious objects. . . .

Preverbs are neutral on various issues of identity, yet they are in a state of tension

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<sup>2</sup> I consider this the real meaning of apophasis (literally “speaking away”), rather than the more limited customary sense of either a rhetorical device of apparent denial, as used in literature and oratory, or logical reasoning/argument by denial, as in the designation “negative theology.” Happily some have gone far beyond the unfortunate claim of programmatic negation in, say, Meister Eckhart or Ibn ‘Arabi, especially Michael Sells in his use of the term “unsaying” (see his great work *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* [University of Chicago Press, 1994]).

in the presence of certain identity acts—especially, *naming* things. Personally I have the sense that many things get tired of their names, particularly when they no longer really fit; they seem to be requesting liberation, which draws poetic mind to them (acknowledgments here to Bachelardian phenomenology). One of the great poetic functions working for the public good is the destabilization of naming. But this is not the place to discuss the politics of nominal reification, although it's deeply important in the less evident processes behind preverbs. Fundamentalist approaches to language, including a naïve belief in the public meaning of words, are obviously linked (causally as well as reflectively) to the state of the world and I think of such powerful naming as mostly *bad magic*.

Preverbs could in part be viewed in terms of their commitment to attracting language away from entropic verbal behavior. Language deprived of its wild loses power, grows weak, as it seems, in the immune system, and is subject to contamination and corruption. But what does it take to actually subvert the ever blackening magic that holds sway over the public mind through language? A core question, no doubt, yet let's not try to answer it, at least not here. There are endless possible responses (and it should stay that way). In fact, it's important at this point in prelude discourse to cop out, because any serious pretention of answering that question could betray actual power in the things said. Attempting to answer such “big questions” tends to involve belief, often hidden belief, in fixtures of order—contributors to a private fundamentalism. It's the human thing, this survivalist's dementia hardened into dogmata; throughout the day the mind reverts (inadvertently) to basic fundamentalist grasping at truth—something we cover up not only to others but to ourselves. It's embarrassing, as it should be. To call attention to it blows the whistle on ontological distraction and linguistic disorientation.

Preverbs have their oblique point of origin in a long-term response to Blake's “Proverbs of Hell.” His “Anything possible to be believed is an image of the truth” embodies a principle of self-regulation as intrinsic possibility of language itself. Anything possible to be said with the intensity of belief participates language at the level of imaginable truth. And such a realization is not the end of the discussion but the beginning.

Preverbs began, in one of its ways, to take on that possible endlessness, while remaining wary of one's tendency to corrupt language with literalizing belief.<sup>3</sup> Again, it's not just other people's fundamentalist fearful symmetries and self-righteous

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<sup>3</sup> Of course one must acknowledge the relevance of *deconstruction* here, yet quickly discriminating a less aggressive approach by way of the *principle of axiality*.

animadversions but one's own, stretched through emotional sinews and sequestered within theory and doctrine. (Coercive symmetry and self-serving righteousness are about as close as I get to a sense of sin, among the umpteen slipperiest sins.) Language is the memory bank of all these tendencies. Blake preferred the Daughters of Inspiration to the Daughters of Memory because the latter held language to its limitations, yet in reality one stands at the limen between them, as Blake's work persistently engaged that dividing *line* with oscillatory intensity.

Preverbs also stand at the lintel of *self and other* and listen in on the ongoing conversation. In that focus they perform a sort of kledomantic gathering of stray language according to a singularity-centered principle of organization. But that process is not random, as might sometimes seem in casual reading. It's less like a chance operation than, say, dowsing—with a soft grip on the talking stick. One moves with exacting ambivalence according to certain spirited attractions (with often minimal understanding in play). Robert Duncan was for me one of the initiators in this view, particularly in statements like this one from *The HD Book*, Chapter Two, 1969:

In Cocteau's film *Orpheus* the guardian angel Heurtebise tells Orpheus not to try to understand but to follow. It is a law in the reading of poetry that is a law too in the writing. Unless we follow, unless we follow thru the work to be done, there is no other way of understanding. Participation is all.

My interest in axiality is in part the wish to align with a basic principle at work inside accurate following. The way in which one tracks the impulse, the release into a sudden inner curve, a pulse as much as a rhythm—all point to a movement within language *of its own accord*.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there are no necessary patterning tendencies, but there are endless optional ones; these show up when compulsive and otherwise dominant patterning forces are loosened, spaced.

From one view, the axial is the freedom of conscious things—intentional entities—to be more than they appear, more than we experience at once, more than we know how to know we can know. Poetics, in this sense, is self-observation as integral to the exercise of the principle itself—a life-sustaining intrinsic variable.

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<sup>4</sup> I would avoid here association with aleatorics as with automaticity, particularly in the way Surrealist practices have been construed, which is a complex subject about which I'm not aware of any satisfying discussion. The Unconscious, Freudianism, Jungianism conceived as definites—up for grabs.

And this puts poetics on the plane of responsible practice beyond specialization (poetry, literature) as consequential acts of mind with possible evolutionary force.

Yet no sooner do we elevate a domain and reify its importance than the mind protective of its freedom to think pulls back. It's so tricky to specify a domain of sustained singularity—of the *state* generative of what recreates itself beyond precedent, of what is continually *pre*... Baudelaire characterized a quality of mind that he associated with *philosopher*: “The man who trips would be the last to laugh at his own fall, unless he happened to be a philosopher, one who had acquired, by habit, the power of rapid self-division and thus of witnessing the phenomena of his own ego as a disinterested spectator.” This double-voiced ability to be of two (or multiple) minds—a state of intentional liminality, of *me/not me*, indeed of *never just me/never not at all me*—creates a gap in identity security, and startled access to one's *further nature* (Olson's inspired phrase).

In “On the Essence of Laughter” (1855), Baudelaire explores laughter—an involuntary spasm, comparable to a sneeze—as state of singularity that reaches a higher intensity in the “grotesque”<sup>5</sup>—the utterly original articulation engaging scarcely exercised faculties. He contrasts the ordinary (“significant”) comic with the *absolute comic*, “which comes much closer to nature, emerging as a unity that calls for the intuition to grasp it.” Closer to nature! Because nature itself, up close, very close, sheds recognition and arouses sheer configuration. It calls for a “science of imaginal solutions” (Jarry's ‘pataphysics) based “on the truth of contradictions and exceptions” (Queneau), since, following Jarry, ultimately there are no reliable laws, only exceptions. The natural world is always already a separate reality, yet accessible by way of a work of singularity. And in what tone of voice does it speak to release its hilaritas of the dark and actual soil?

The lonely preverb emerges from its own instance, and seems to find its way out back. It often comes in a flash, and always subject to further flashing/fleshing—like the mind impulse we can call sudden thought, at times, brain squall. It has to be written as it comes, or else it goes, a bumblebee in the foreground instantly lost in the farground. Once written it can go solo or, if it sticks around, take on refugee status, subject to communitarian induction by precise attraction. But I resist the impulse to “construct” poems out of these unitaries. Rather, an axial complex

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<sup>5</sup> Instantaneity of the breach: “There is but one criterion of the grotesque, and that is laughter—immediate laughter. Whereas with the significant [ordinary] comic it is quite permissible to laugh a moment late...” The primitive startle that jolts the laugh reflex may not yet have known humor, but itself be messenger of *an* unknown humor.

takes place over time. Lines find each other like stones.<sup>6</sup> They co-configure, and over years, with a certain avid patience, they re-co-configure. They come together in event-structurings, rather like encampments of entities at large, learning to live together in ways that *mean*, where meaning is matrix. According to the axial principle: *like* attracts *like* and *unlike* alike. Non-symbolizing entities come into relation from unexampled streamings and crossings. And at a certain point they abide. Then the stories begin.

### A Note on Definition

The standard definition of *preverb* indicates a prefix or particle preceding the root or stem of a verb, such as *for-* in *forget*. But my usage is neologistic, and in fact I was unaware of the linguistic usage for many months after the work began over a decade ago. However, that usage is interesting and sometimes relevant, especially in an extended application in which, say, the *pre-* of *preverb* is itself a preverb, creating the possibility of an unknown and still unused verb, *to preverb*. (This very possibility further axializes—makes more variable—both *pre* and *verb*, which event the present work celebrates.) The extended application also makes inevitable notions like “the preverb of the preverb.” NB: *preverbs* can be singular or plural: “*the preverbs*” or just “preverbs” (the whole project), or indeed “*a preverbs*” (a named unit, that is, a *poem* or, alternatively, *poem-complex* or *preverb complex*). Note too: “a preverb” can mean either a single line or a “whole” poem. The distinction *preverb* is in this and many other ways axial. A name that is performative of its kind resists fixity and is transdefinitional (axial). And whatever is true of the smallest unit (a singularity) is necessarily true, at the level of possibility, of the whole (a field of singularity).

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<sup>6</sup> This statement is not basically metaphoric; it approaches a special literal status when registered in the context of work presented in my *Axial Stones: An Art of Precarious Balance* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2006), which includes preverbs.

# this is not what you think

I

*thinking map*

Words hold back.

Stones crave falling.

The tongue is a killer.

A line thickens across the page.

This is the map to a land trapped underhand.

Beings are marked by what you do.

My life is on this line.

Think right through.

Take this stone sitting on a volcano.

Translation is further saying.

*Do you read me?* Seed sees.

Mind catches what it can't yet think.

Contact with the pure element shows in its speaking at all.

This is between everything. But especially between us.

Words hiding take the rap for what is pushing through.

Unique sense's one-way street is both-ways from the beginning.

Let it rip crossing.

Why attract resenting?

Imagine the woman she is beyond herself.

Poems want to be read back to themselves before thinking about them.

Future postponed—grammar's hidden tense.

What you hear is the whole surface talking in the sense of one. At once.

Self-agreement is not requisite for singularity.

Identity is a variable.

I multiply in the ways it can be said to be itself—straightforwardly on the curve.

I want to use the word *overarching* in such a way that you sense yourself crossing.

The view may be characterized as *from above* and *down within*. At once.

The question of art would be the art of the question, if only....

Sadly words contract spoken ills.

When the coil fails seed spoils.

*What is written to be read backwards is complete from the start, unendingly.*

“If I talk to the dog who talks to me, who’s talking to you?”

Poetry is language saying what it knows when no one is around.

Own it and then some, I thought to my other.

*Where’s my bone?*

No good word will do everything you say.

You think you know the middle only to discover it knowing without you.

No one knows how to be here.

It’s cold without, feel my mind.

The subject multiplies in the end through which it flows along this line.

I’m on my way out, feel free to join me.

*They don’t serve good coffee in hell.*

No one knows how to be.

Invaginate the object catching hell inside, bright, bright, bright, bright.

Being instrumental I am listened through — through and through.

Isolate me further in this moment between.

I can still hear in her eyes, *Welcome to the precarious.*

Landslide—a hard habit for stones to break.

Gravity needs all the levity it can get.

Who's winning in the war against good and evil?

Words wear our shame of showing.

Feeling lost makes me rush ahead.

Living denial outlives refusal of its own.

Most truly said the mind can't get around it.

*Her flower budding destabilizes a world word by word.*

The unimaginable is beyond bad.

These words don't have what it takes to say what you're thinking.

*Not now, but not not ever.*

A proverb is a one-line paragraph condensing a world to access.

Self-secret art keeps its secret from the artist till the deed is done.

If not now, never not now. Is *not now* not a variable?

I return to the thinkable for the best I can be in vain.

Many a line is lines of the many, all by itself.

Why go longer when touching this spot enters the body at large?

Reference to present action proves thinking so local it's hyper.

These words are not being honest.

Poetics is the honest man's paradox.

The work is elsewhere.

The sense is otherwise.

*In poetic discursus words run about like discus throwers gone feral.*

Honestly.

Truth or dare it comes to the same.

*Cuts the airy way ... a vast world of delight.*

Never forget words remember what you do to them.

Accordingly own up to continuous retroactive transformation.

Starting now.

Resembling waves, differing saves.

Falling asleep reading proves waking in the middle unendingly.

Proust, Proust, onomatopoeia or la vida es sueño.

I still hear in her eyes, *This is shaky entitlement.*

Light the magic lantern to see what thou lovest well.

Words retain, at your own risk.

Step back to hear *where*.

Thinking to dreaming, back & forth, forth & back, crack of dawn.

Self catching stones, self stretching tones, half reaching alone.

How do you know it here but it notices itself before you?

Forgotten modality of misplaced cartography, or rather, reading is not yet.

Incursive bounding line — shapes on the other side of seeing.

Hwæt! lost purelands folded inside said words!

7 *language speaking for itself is the only one speaking for all*

I write with this pen on a big stem.

Words say too much to let you know the truth.

Walking looking for a world is empty with clutter.

Any turning's into.

Locomotion produces its own ecology.

*Steady as she blows.* [**Exotic energy storage device**]

I can say nothing that isn't heard.

A stone sounds the space it grounds.

Substance inside substance is seeing what it is.

Seeding seas.

The poem is what it is until it changes.

Now it's the same.

The point so hot it turns center bound.

Organism wants it, to home in on.

It is the title it's so *discriminantly* entitled to.

Seasoned words do not give up their hard-earned truth willingly.

Burying treasure for later poetic living is piracy.

Written in, scratched in, rubbed into, scrubbed in through to.

Between you and me, between everything, between itself.

The dream is talking to itself within hearing.

And here it goes again.

Pirate poetics. Strange attractors at large at sea willing to take all.

Ride the edge until horizon breaches.

The sadness of words is to live what you say.

Telling the heart bereaves.

In zero point connects direct.

Being sounds, language resounds.

Words on their way out catch in the throat.

Barely free to sing along the same line, unending bounds.

Truly inside the map you're there already.

# my past's different from what used to be

I

*showing up over*

Cobalt blue reminds the deserted sky of this longing.

Her eyes draw down to image themselves against the vast.

See here, they seem to say, flexing to outlast their instance.

Never before do I see distance so contained. And so telling.

Passion passing without hands over the body.

This is how shape feels, her action at a distance and curving gently away.

It deflects aspiration in favor of breathing further down.

The *I want* you don't know knows for you.

A way down inside in surround.

Reflecting in shapely mind, according.

Here to spend time, here where this is the place, I feel myself calling in.

If I didn't have it to give, why would I be here?

Immemorially like dream it inscribes in caved surround sounding true.

*Any stone that speaks to you is a stone worth listening to.*

The ancient ring.

Language is teasing itself out in arousing indiscriminated faculties.

The timeless tones.

*Extrasensory thinking in situ sensualis is hypersensual by attraction.*

Meaning responds to request.

I found this out in how she shows, it's her way with things.

All arms around.

The past is writing itself all over.

I'd know her anywhere, I know her in the dark.

The truth eats its own.

This is one of the ancient tones.

In the beginning the line is a desert. It colors.

In mourning for oneself from the start, on edge for the dark cave raising.

Anything possible to say is leaked possibility, said and gone, instant.

Still on the tongue.

A saying is the end of an existence flicker.

Here to hear near humors.

Poems all meet somewhere, if only we can be there.

*The synaptic genie shows syntactic.*

There s plenty of where there.

I lie on the line to know her inside.

Saying *I want you* knows you as you can't know yourself.

*Bees compete when she spits.*

The space between runs along the line inside. Nature.

There is no same to say.

*If you knew what the poem is you'd stone it.*

No same saying to say.

Objects you say push back.

Time to stop telling things what to be.

This thing's self-inflecting while deep-tracking.

*A wing proprioceives in sprung patterning downflow graving.*

Wonder. *It wonders me that she conceives.*

A map knows when you're all the way inside.

One overhears the converse of lands.

The sound turns around its own on empty.

The line—one edge of a switch—*on* now, *not* now.

MA!

Between's within, everywhere freely.

No exceptions—that there are only exceptions up close, once inside.

One shrill bird cry never heard startles time.

A gate's an opening connecting with, not with.

I have a belief system stuck in my liver.

She crawled along this line to get out.

*I speak as the last living being in my dead and dying self.*

Who dares hear who's not heard?

Every new formulation cuts a groove with a swerve and a wave.

May I take on the courage of my question.

Poetry educates time.

The past differs from what it used to be.

This line is between itself. No end in sight.

Truly offered it reflects the elemental clear.

Therapy is unfolding within hearing.

Time-space addiction relents in accordance with arousal of undersense.

Let a moment spring itself a line at a time.

Writing wants to wrap itself right around the globe.

Crossing the timeline spreads.

And the moment has the momentum of itself.

Anything heard is hyperlocal.

Yes, we have zero bananas.

Time out. A cry heard round the lobe. On down the tube in interspace.

Pure sensing tribe words clearing the way through to *your* lands.

Thinking you have to keep it going misses it is already, and waiting.

The nearest not hearing is one's own.

A saying, mere saying, is mind talking its pulse.

It's not waiting when you see it coming.

# verbal paradise is not a turn away

A rock is a raging mass of activity.

A.N. WHITEHEAD

I

*contrary indications*

A journey across this spot changes everything between us.

Its bounding line wishes us awake to move along itself.

Belly to belly lifts our breath away—speaking silent.

Every moment twins at its rim.

The poem registers fear of doubling, a continuous quivering surface.

*Hold it there with your speaking tongue*, she says in hands.

Self-contradiction opens the way to basic truth.

Feedback configuring all that dread.

She returns: *Ride the principle back into its wilderness*.

You can feel the earth ripple through her sentence.

This knows a truth I barely dream, dolphins, folds, the turns.

The flowing object stabilizes a wonder world—fear, heartfelt thunder.

Every sound you make here sounds like forever.

This mouth stutters to say the more it is.

Peeling away talk exposes thinking in its fleshy bed.

Mind longs—or how did I get here?

Sequence is a pressure from outside time.

I make objects to think, and they think me back.

I hear me coming as they hear through me.

Clouds billowed a city to hide my desire that I still find here.

No clouds are like that, there's no *like that* with clouds.

It gives a path of thought I couldn't find on my own through bone alone.

Like signals like in passing, I see in her eyes that see in me.

Double troubles in the love-rung, cross-ripple in the tongue.

I feel her long in curving the line.

The thinking tongue knows its way along her.

Fresh time tastes true.

Suck a new tone from the musical bone.

Bend mind back under itself.

Beginning links in dance at the end of the line.

*This is right now not dying.*

Already the line is washing away and moving beyond its edge.

Thought scales to the aperture.

What you are reading died before it got here, and now I say, revive!

Cave calls in.

Down-beckoned brow-betokened sighs in levitation.

*Time to get up even as mind goes to ground.*

No end in flight.

Hats off jest that bats flit.

Things seen home in sound.

Flap gravity to twist it in: self-conception on the rise.

A word is a raging mass of activity.

Evolution is going from blowback to feedback.

Another mouth for the other brain.

Age cuts me to the core.

Art comes up behind.

It says: What you see is what gets you.

Behold.

This line's not the same as when you started reading—it edges over now.

Loping mind borders the empty world at either end.

This call back is that neither ends here, in middle world.

No trend, no big bend, no one prehends me in place.

Sometimes I can't get far enough into this body, it's a squeeze.

Objects on page are as real as you think.

Seeing shows itself. So I'm privy.

Poetry declares itself, *pro bono* subversion.

Subtext: There is not much danger of a counterfeit free point.

What works itself in here owns its measure of richly endowed.

There is no touching bottom.

It would take you in your turn.

Surf the letters.

The construction construes as you let land.

*The lay of the terrain shores another tide of brain.*

*O let her treasure rain.*

I tangle with the attracting strands, we come together, *blow, wind...*

I keep saying the language alive.

So she revives in here with me, no need to gender her farther.

I only know where I'm told.

## **7bis**

*This comes to you live.*

Over there's whereunder I'm conceived.

Birth back down, we're here to know through clear.

I'm happy to tell you what I cannot not.

It stories up from the middle.

Strange tongues to free estranged fruit.

I'd rather hang *up*. Feet from earth out. *It's alive!*

Stand on principle at the precipice lest it get away.

A line, a flow, a sphere, a little fear, blink! Surrounded.

This black-and-white mystery is that we are enjoined to be here.

Surf her a letter at a time.

Life in the cursive green room rimes high, free-running beyond strife.

Line up a sail to propel us between nothing and something.

Glance flows, cloud shows, graph trail knows.

We're here for the ride but who knew such fractals...

Every tongue tip waves particle internals eternal, so to say.

Stuttering mouth quakes its own evolution.

Happenstantiation—the controls come later.

This is the next instant, already in tow, bearing the coming.

*Life is all life all the time.*

## IO

*saying safe in a lean-to*

A timeline gets physical starting at the lip.

I listen through clutter to utter outer.

Either a world forms in mid-lift or like hot lead dropped from the tower.

*Words are just visiting, don't get attached.*

I think these objects to know myself in a world.

Vocal rise vs. molten rain.

Listening recomposes.

## II

## *the point of knowing*

When a poem is all here it is living its future now.

A line is an age.

Any word carries untold emptiness equal to what it says.

*Resistance to dying holds secret what darkness tells: contraries converge.*

A word takes you up to say its other.

Now knows, there's no point.

# defining gesture

I

*that rimes that times itself*

*I promise you a rose garden. Now can we have dinner?*

She longs to settle down in a mind with a view.

With all due respect she thinks that preprogramming optimize.

Divine syntax has yet to translate *point final*.

The fruit is the verb.

Let each thing be until its own extinction in fullness (*she goes on*).

Until then give way to the originary middle voicing itself.

Not born again, made over, that decomposed recompose.

That wild field rose full-fledged subjunct... feathers flying!

*If the line were not alive would it be talking to you like this?*

Near messages may be hyperlocal rhetorics.

*Remember, every dirty little secret hides a line of its own.*

As the mouth opens so the space fields.

Wield the tongue and flare the hearer.

*Even bad jokes enjoy a claim on reality.*

Her round cry cups a landscape.

*You call wit what I witness calling.*

Verbal dry fall, what once flowed, circling the hole in thought.

The wisdom impulse holds a dark cry concealed in flame.

I hear things.

*Blank underline from unknown time—true home of what knows you?*

Soon the living may find a way out through a sliver of line.

*Just as you think the force is spent it double-dares you.*

Not forward, yet all around throughout in its own permission.

*A constant circular movement around a mentally unseizable point.*

*Al-hayrah!* — onto-onomatopoeic shakeout, hyperlocal being on the loose.

Ambiguity annoys unto the very root.

Word rounds on the way down.

Death lays bare the unsaid.

#### 4 *a hunt for defining gesture hints the stroke ending all doubt*

Stand still when you smile at meaning waving your quill.

*Wonder further!*

Line, circumstance—going straight in bounding the empty.

Sign on the ledge: *slight alteration in signal wakes across.*

*Would the undead please line up.*

Nature articulates particulates.

*...round bird cry situating in the moment that engenders it...*

Torque potentiates the tongue that conjures.

In the monologue the world is only description, strut, strut.

Everything slants according to the life/death outcome of the present instant.

Discovery makes us—reach out lip first.

The legible edge strips bare.

# bottling up

I *in these lengthened vigils his brain often reeled*

HAWTHORNE

She swings in her body tall with these trees.

Almost known is almost to have been.

Half a heart, half heavy, half open—still fluid and looking on.

No matter how hot it gets in here *nothing* refers to the gods.

Poem—endless in longing however long it lasts.

Things that can't be said enough grow in voice.

I come to myself slowly, however loudly I cry.

And things unable to say themselves compose sub-audible worlds.

Words audition.

*Is that you calling?* I must be overhearing.

Almost knowing, almost being, almost telling.

Flow.

So she shows.

Sounding familiar is not repeat, and not yet replete.

Wind shreds things alive.

Her voice—dandelion downy tufts of puffball blowing—parachutes over me.

Down, down, down, down, wafting shifts in seeing out—seed time.

And here we are alone together.

Hearing things.

At heart a line is endlessly, arrhythmiatic.

Half in the open tells time, only to be known in time.

This ambient space is not retelling yet sounds to itself of you too.

It's how I know I'm here, and with—wild child inner willing aloft.

*The art is service to its own.*

Unsayable things bear unrepeatable names.

The message draws round to bottle its line.

*Poetry resists immortality with difficulty.* Like love.

My body's bounding medium speaks around me.

It's her on the line, right through me, reaching for you.

*Leave no word unturned.*

No line's too long that lengthens in longing.

Time present and time past present presently.

It's sure to shore but am I still round?

Radiance. Verbal circle.

Her heartfelt hearing hasn't wound around me yet.

Longing alone is long all along.

Wave magic.

Still joint.

The line of vision horizons the real, reeling.

The one at hand bobs one bare bone.

Once read is one less to bear, aware.

A senseless breach—bottles awake.

## response request

I

*whence what come*

Let the stones act on you.

I talk to myself to cut in on the distance, yet I know you're there.

Objects in free space are separated by their music.

Know them only in the place of one, plural, the singular *they*.

Sex hides identity in the double fold.

Any intimate connection owns a grammar of synapse.

Yet here we are at the threshold of cutting oneself off along the line.

Steady as she bounds.

There's a meaning between assertions the poem can hardly escape.

The line rides a wish but has none of its own.

Hearing sounds.

Language flags, the poem comes up from behind.

*The young woman's mode of surviving early abuse sounded like hyper-irony.*

*Caused a flap but the feathers settled and everyone sat down to read this.*

*Tea?*

These particular words fidgeted before surrendering to the eye.

They rushed back to their stones.

Things do so to speak.

She knew they were hyper and could barely help themselves.

Random access reversibility shows optimal eros.

*Diagnosis* is knowing itself between.

What lies under the flap?

The knowing that stands apart from me.

The stone's invitation was something you just felt or didn't.

It cut into the truth letting go the covering fold.

*Circumcision*, the telltale grammatical rollover, divine fig lust in drag.

What if the head is only the title of the body?

Slam it in reverse.

Back into the present, wherever it finds itself.

Precarious balance is the prayer of the edge.

*Under the foreskin the eye divines.*

This is a true story.

Certainty is not contradictory to the precarious—a boulder on the edge.

*Do not think of wild stones.*

How one sits the instant before landslide.

The point of freedom, revealed, alas, precisely where it is not—cresting.

Finding who hears is the heart of the told.

Access beyond right under your foot.

Or: watching the wave peak at its infinite (infinitesimal) ledge.

Step right out where the breathing is good.

*Dialognosis.* Everything I say is asking.

Strictly speaking the between is not self-limiting.

*A moment in every day that Satan cannot find.*

Each one has a radically particular free point.

The voice of your conscience or the woman behind the stone?

It just won't settle down alone in one tone.

*Apparently still anticipating a counterfeit release....*

In truth the question speaks for itself, or it's not mine.

The interesting “sense of freedom” tends to evoke lyricism.

No slamming up against limits but the song goes long, even when short.

Sudden incubation.

Poetics in discovery’s voice of its own, now down, now gone.

The singing of light volume and modest range easily knows its place.

*This is how I signal you from afar*, she says from deep in the lair.

Lyric abstinence presses its hungry nose against the pane.

*Lurk in a hovel to lay down sounding pholeos in ancient earth mouth.*

Teachings array that lips lift away.

The descent feels female that the wet tongue primes the word.

Vocal resurrection starts raw.

Saying *whence come* reaches right through stretching out subjunction.

*Please go back in where it’s still happening that you scent my area.*

I look for myself between words and slip in here to hear, no, there.

Back up to the apparent beginning.

*Revised request: think only of wild stones.*

Voice of the poem, voice of your teacher, your lover's voice, *earth angel* ....

Lyre of stone.

A breath is a singularity, and the only question now's *how to*.

Declaring poetic vocation responds to a call to put it all on the line.

There stones lie with people, words in their sounds lie, lyres lie aligned.

Otherwise the line is wide open.

We shift on the ground according to undersensed variables.

Death is singular in rime. Like birth like earth. The big wake.

Like *being given birth to into death*—self-opening caesura.

Mind the gap, lest you entrain bodily.

Teachings flay.

A natural breath dies—at the limen of the pulse.

Present bardo, all this training, back & forth, forth & back.

Sway, the play, the way out is through the saying.

*Ahhh*, fresh air.

*Like* stones attract in the sense, being itself is open.

Art gives me bright ideas at the end of the tunnel.

Light to read by, lode in a line, lies beyond the sense of ending.

Knowing long as always is—already!

# holding you at a distance

I

*refusion*

My mouth says these words that they be seen.

Sememes heat up as they wake up.

Saying with night eyes is further seeing.

I lose track dreaming of whether *I'm* reading the poem or it me.

*Fear of the text*—is that not the strangest root of poetry? (*dream refuses*).

Press unknowing into bosom unknown and milk a darker saying.

Lips read with gentle suction.

My present state of syntactic confusion tells my dream it's still raging.

Exhausting reading gets the mind home early.

Never to bed, ever to rise, wake eyes in the sky with diamonds.

Air palpates the words that fit her lips.

Thought struck, mind fled, heart played dead, poem burst like swamp birds!

*Feeling true*—who was it never taught me how?

Life is doing all the talking, and time is here to listen through.

Time to speak at the inner edge.

*I see through you to you.*

So why drag along a story so long?

It longs.

It's all about to have been.

A mouth-ready manifestation of soul has undertow historical.

I listen with my ear to the ground till the line slips out from under.

Close up her working mouth was in surround sound, slow.

The poetic reflex reads back to get it straight.

Along the long road lengthening the long word sounds, as the saying weighs.

Logos flaps in bios as when the pistil spreads and calls you in. *Lingua*.

*Flower* attracts *our*.

This is visual.

The word itself feels satin—history trembles!

Breaking views.

*A vigorous cigar waves its virile tale-reading right to her spot.*

Hardly surprising poetic justice *lies true*.

Languishing languaging.

Nine little Finnegans all in a row.

Hear the quaking muse.

What flies understood wakes: *it's moving* (under the breath).

This is spoken none too soon: Hercule Poirot, snapping synaptic fact finding.

Seeming memes. Hot.

When the thing in the mind gets going it verbs.

And worlds! what populates particulates.

Wake a word today. None other will do. Or's true.

Forget it's me altogether. That's not half difficult.

Anything less than invited is aggression.

Can you feel the cool breeze riffing through the letters to speak?

I'm in no mood for preconditions to meaning.

Everything teaches basic reading. Garden is no kind of noun.

*Li vida es baño.*      (We fly free out here)

Translation requires clearing through to the other side.

Living waters.

Etym plies.

Waves. How the life of the ludic magus seems memic yet isn't, inflowing on.

On & on & to & fro, it scatters in the breeze.

Rhythmus letters.

Linqualingus matters to mind.

So let's not bother trying to take anything back.

Won't go. *Dream further.* Paradise is a verb.

Nor predict the *dictive*, as is, word of first saying, only time ever.

Wherefore the word announces itself before it's even thought.

Well, *as*.

Swallow before declaring.

*Slices right through.*

Are you ready for the coming *lingualia*?

All the while lips trap a tongue tip talking a word away.

This is just to say.

“I’ll spot you a hundred hot words.”

A tongue flames blue burning to listen.

The purpose of poetry is to put you back on the spot.

Sloping indicative.

The glisten gardens.

Sacred breach. Delphinus interruptus.

The way the true center of a line gets hot is self-secret.

I am poking my nose across a darkened line to get feedback.

It is vital I *hold* you at a distance.

Words, get a grip... *dhr dhr dhr*. Sounds afield.

History pushes at the lips from within, and it has spin.

Hyper-resonance: wherever they die *to* escapes not our listening *through*.

Rustling here and there. Ruptus. Pattern racket.

Some secrets are waiting to break out. Scare!

The poetics of exposure. May her golem appear!

This is the turnout of lost time and the long term down under.

*Das Ding* sounds like itself, and more!

For the thing told true has a mystical ring.

*Rebrand* the *lived* stock, so to say, and catch the strays.

The darn thing can turn up anywhere. Music of the fears.

Poem! no need to lose your composure.

Terminologos paradisos like home on the range has a long-range ring.

Noetic bird hears two high notes winging in a breeze—*these? these?*

Joy translates itself in slip or flip of tongue.

*Find your sway...*

Ask what it says but don't spill it.

Not to breathe with forked lung.

There, poetry's two-way mirror—line intersects, line deflects.

Breaking through all over.

Gnosemes!

Hotter yet.

Find your spot on the line, says Don Juan or some other wand wave.

Not ahead of its time, *on* time, like nothing other.

Blue bird flung from uncertain verbal knots.

Song of sex tense, torqued tongue to sing.

New phonemes bound the sensorium, leaping from on high.

Eyes claim body in slowmo flow, down low.

Learning on the curve swerves straight.

Mind with a view.

## II

*twice told*

Play hard, sleep hard: ground swells, underground tells.

*Reading...* this mirroring two-way: a side looks back, one sees through.

Everything births when a line moves through you.

Lack tracks to see back.

Many words to go before a word wakes empty.

Any line spaces at the threshold.

Self-true reading strips a text bare.

## IIbis

Fuse me back to her the better to hear.

Blue light sprung from a certain verbal spot.

Work with no principle of ending teaches readiness in dying.

*She lives!*

This is the very distance withholding.

## pre, a coda

I

*speaking by way of a tail*

I spent decades tracking an incurve to reality release points.

A matter of honing what no one yet can hear.

I learn on the listening curve.

It's all happening before.

Identity is contagious.

2

*flash through*

She talks up a field.

I'm smelling storm.

3

*still thinking*

There's an absent place I seem to find everywhere.

But for the wag I'm keeping this from you to find where it belongs.

Longing is lengthening, and it's catching.

I smile like a storm in a talking field.

That's what it takes to get as far as I am.

Nothing I like is like anything I like.

## 4

## *just dowsing*

I think to rescue the mind where the poem falls off.

Persist it, in transitive transforming.

This is an act of which we cannot speak, that which must we.

Sheer crack by which sounding entitles the end.

Clear break.

Far through, where meditation mediates.

## 5

## *refining gest*

*I have no more tolerance with the language*, meaning in partial translation.

The poem is not yet this far through. Nowhere near staying.

Hearing before it is said.

This is the life. Feel the telling flaw.

*No need to think me thinking, who meets you halfway.*

Significant hand gesture visible from above, glimpsed in face-first fall forth.

The palm is opening to reflect further.

It mirrors gazing.

Hearing voices. From the ground up.

There where interiors syntax on the face of earth, flex.

That talking round corners.

6

*doing with mirrors*

It slows back all the way to the go.  
Showing is the backflow.  
From this point forward I know, as you do so.  
In this very place lost.

7

*seeming saying*

To be or not to be is not a question.  
Texturing tones to tell.  
Woman in the dunes, inevitable runes, still waving.  
  
These are not the objects but that seems so in the flay of the flaw.  
  
That language is that it turns of its accord, talking back in feeding mind.  
Sounding that says surfaces, then comes crossing.  
  
Thinking true possibly believes nothing telling.  
In lieu of a bottom line sounding ridges.  
  
No end of language is to be found here.

## about the author

GEORGE QUASHA'S work as poet, including *Somapoetics* (1973) and *Ainu Dreams* (1999) among others, has steadily broadened to explore principles in common within language, sculpture, drawing, video, sound, installation, and performance. *Preverbs*, of which this is the first book, has been a core vehicle of this exploration. His recent *Axial Stones: An Art of Precarious Balance*, Foreword by Carter Ratcliff (2006), focuses on sculpture, drawing, and language (as text and installation) shown at the Baumgartner Gallery (Chelsea), Slought Foundation (Philadelphia), the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art (SUNY New Paltz), and elsewhere. His axial video works with language, sound, and portraiture, including *art is: Speaking Portraits*, recording over 800 artists, poets, and musicians in eleven countries (saying what art/music/poetry is) and exhibited internationally at museums, galleries, and universities. Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in video art and an NEA Fellowship in poetry, the latest of his twenty books is *An Art of Limina: Gary Hill's Works and Writings* (with Charles Stein; foreword by Lynne Cooke) (2009). Co-founder and -publisher with Susan Quasha of Station Hill Press of Barrytown, New York, he performs both solo and in collaboration with Gary Hill, Charles Stein, and David Arner. Continuing work appears at [www.quasha.com](http://www.quasha.com).

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