HOW(ever)

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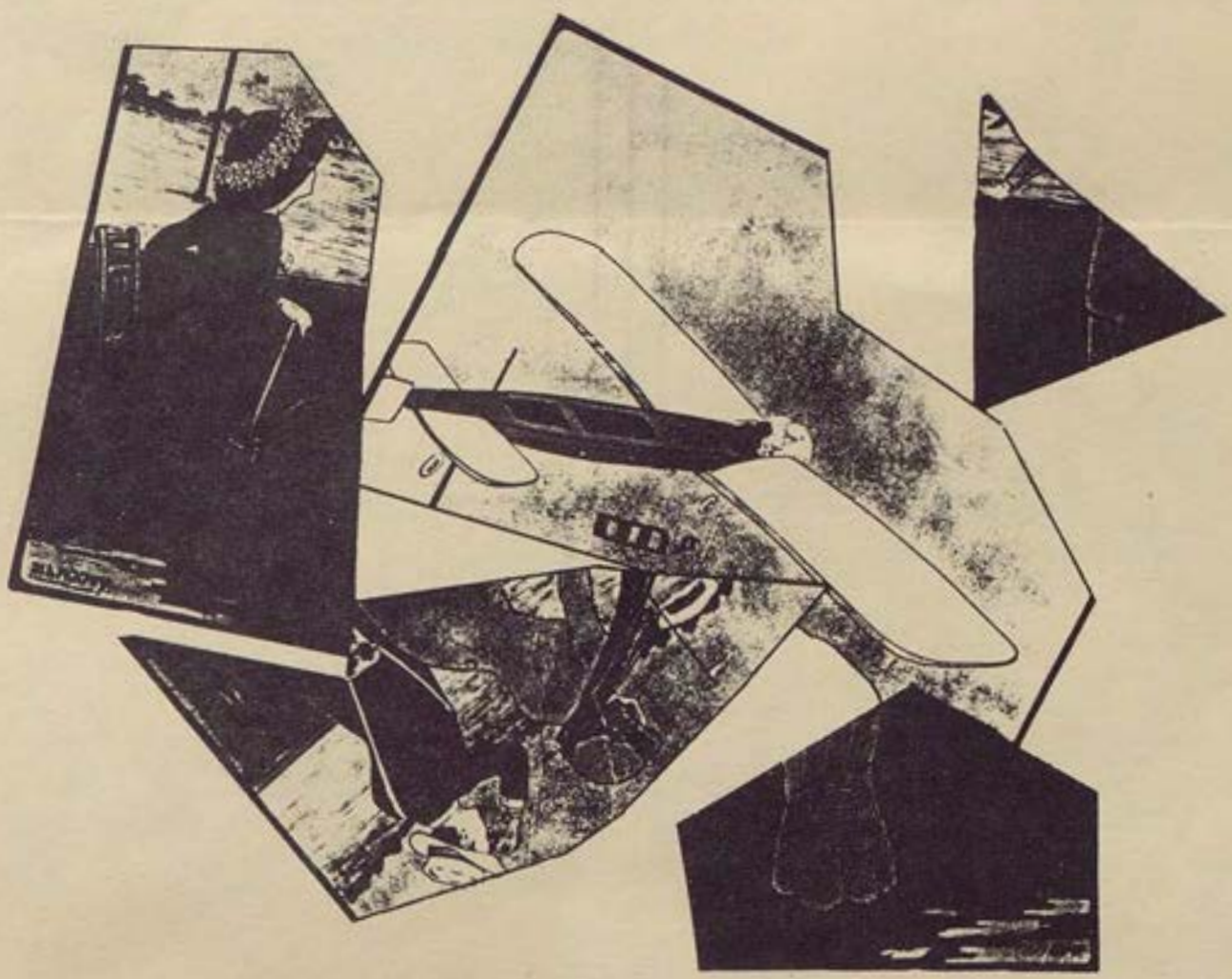
AMELIA EARHART, excerpts from a work-in-progress



WORKING NOTES FROM MAUREEN OWEN:

Flat geographies can be invented w/ intersecting plains & meandering waters that are little stories merging from different sources & what happens is Writing where the process of the poem being written becomes the actual poem & the actual poem becomes the process of the poem being written. All the wrong words are part of it too then & the spaces between the words breathe because there is no finished poem just all that goes into it.

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[postscript, from letter accompanying formal "Working Notes"]

"My oldest son goes off to college this week and my youngest goes to first grade. & I feel like I've gone off the side of the world. What I was getting at in my Working Notes was how the constant interruptions of the kids have a lot to do with shaping my poems. I don't know if I said it quite clearly because they all kept coming into my study w/ something for me to do and I fell asleep at my typewriter again after all that. Now it's midnight & I'm awake tho I sometimes wonder if I'm ever really awake these days! Fanny (Howe) was saying to me last week as we cooked dinner for our ravenous brood, that she saw constant masks over Void in my poems. But the masks or disguises are not so conscious really, so tho what excites me is the mystery in my poems, I can't say that's 'consciously' part of my working plan."

AMELIA EARHART, excerpts from a work-in-progress

"I believe it was the winter of 1918 that I first became
interested in airplanes." Amelia & I breakfast at
the 10th Ave Diner 18th street She's having
sunnysides up & I'm just coffee no sugar. We're
talking about the lakes of Minnesota where we
both spent many summers. I explain my theory of how
her love for flying comes from being from the
Midwest. I myself get claustrophobic if I can't see
for five or six miles in all 4 directions I say. She
agrees As far as the eye Wheat is all
we hear rough beards rasping land & air
Unrolled. the plains
People like us want it back she tells me
We want to flatten everything around us Always Clearing
Clearing Pushing making space We want acre upon
acre upon acre the plains . . . . . the flat runway before us
the song of the engine the terrible velocity & then
the space it's the moment inbetween the thing
at the end of it all what we are always after that Flat
that lucid that unstopped Opening! the Space . . . . . .

"Assholes!" her eyes seem grey in this soup the hangers
chalk & grey sound of the engines grey & far off I
craved those fogged-in afternoons just the two of us getting
high & hanging out We'd work on the Electra some
have a beer or two then share our last joint under the fuselage
& shoot the breeze the reward for marriage is getting a
man's name we decided Mrs Donald Roscoe Jr. Mrs
Kenneth Norton the III Vowing the next time we ran into
Ginger & Tootie on the street we'd hail them as Don!
& Ken! the old levitation trick first anger crushes
then leaves you light as air arm squashed into doorjam
step out & up it goes Finally we'd laugh til we were sick
guffawing out of control going spaz in the spilled beer &
oil hugging pawing each other wildly we'd laugh til
we sloshed tumbling in spilt motor oil spazing out we'd
laugh til we were sick pouring the rest of the beer in
each other's hair hugging & sloshing in spilled motor oil—
We always. wore khakis & boots. & if I smoked I'd
tuck my deck in my rolled t shirt sleeve the way poets
do or stash a homemade behind my ear like in the films
While AE'd stand out there in visibility zero
Hooting the long letters of her name A M E L I A . . . . . .
E A R H A R T . . . . . .
aviator aviator aviator

It's about space & claustrophobia AE
born in Atchison Kansas me I'm Minnesota We
were passing time at the opening Doping on the
works "Who is this creep!" Her arrogance made me
horny & woozie at the same time standing on one
foot the way she often does Dark gabardine
blousy pants her shirts were always oversized the
leather flying jacket looked authentic but sometimes I
think she never combed her hair her lips were always
swollen with wind & sun they reminded me
of trees their great swollen arches
drawing . . . . . then closing behind you You're like
your plane I started I had to talk to keep talking
so she'd stay she hated crowds I put my fingers on her
wrist I was terrified it was over between us I couldn't
get my breath it's about space she began

Halfway through Pennsylvania I start to relax & by the
time we hit Illinois I just feel happy Nothing has
changed in my life but I'm happy I feel so good then
into Iowa the weight is gone just lifted that's all I feel
like a girl again waving my arms Once I jumped from
the car ran alongside ditch grass stinging my
thighs legs flying my arms outstretched so my shadow
resembled a plane
there's this weight on my chest & now it's just
Gone completely gone! I'm airy as feathers
half the world is sky it's just everywhere you
won't see sky like that except out there
I find
trees amazing & terrible AE said . . . . . .

If a huge letter M had been constructed in the gallery
it could have been remarked that while Amelia & I occupied
an area at the acute angle in the upper left where leg met
center line Mabel Boll could be found chatting three quarters
of the way down the right leg twirling a swizzle stick in
scotch & soda light reflected off her in all directions
Bathed herself in jewelry Queen of Diamonds
under the powder a slight sunburn could be
detected her bucket was the Columbia
she planned to beat Amelia across the Atlantic

The quarters a pilot works in four feet eight

inches high four feet six inches wide four feet
six inches fore & aft

I took 48 feet of heat tape four packs of four 3 foot
lengths of insulation a flashlight a trouble light a
roll of duct tape a scissors & a radio to keep track
of the space shuttle. Left radio & insulation at stooping
height Left trouble light & extra heat tape at crawling
height Took duct tape scissors & enough heat tape Slip
ping slithering on my back a miniature dust storm rotating
thick dirt eyes & nose filling with sediment the body
stiff caught between element & element Arriving beside
the tiny cold copper piping but unable to move even my head
side to side or lift an arm

klos tro fo bi a, N. (fr. L. calustrum, a confined place +
phobia.) Med. Morbid dread of being in closed rooms or narrow
places. the Italian film where
Ulysses is thrown into a heavy stone prison then ever so slowly
the ceiling begins to descend first he is forced to stoop
then to crawl then finally to flatten himself on the floor
& push at the last second he is saved by Jason But
the experience has left him a raving lunatic

Don't cough storming more dust into the small stratosphere
all fingers feeling less in numbing mercuries

first woman to cross the Atlantic by plane
first woman to fly the Atlantic alone
first person to solo between Hawaii & California

her horizon & her instruments

At breakfast the question of nuclear weapons in space

Now the voices were faded they sang to her Her own
name in bits Underneath 2556 miles of water whistled
shore tunes its soft clapping a comfort & a horror
The plane is the point at which the fog & the sea would meet.
A koan is a puzzle that cannot be answered in ordinary ways.
All my
Electrons Lord! all my protons neutrons leptons
mesons baryons all my Gravitons! this will be
the secret of my disappearance A massless particle
is a particle of zero rest mass all of its energy is energy
of motion

O geography My Great Flat Home

the corpse floated a strange shaped emerald
under the sea

Maureen Owen's latest title is *HEARTS IN SPACE* from Kulchur Press in NYC.
She edits TELEPHONE BOOKS PRESS and TELEPHONE Magazine (19th issue now available),
& is presently on the Advisory Board of the St. Mark's Poetry Project
where she has been Co-director, Workshop Instructor, Mimeo Operator, & general student.

WORKING NOTES FROM JACQUELINE QUINN:

My work with the sonnet comes from a desire to understand the historical dimensions of verse, which I consider to be left-brained, or logical in its patterns of rhythm and rhyme. My sonnets are meant as jazz renditions of an established form. The slashes are used to strengthen this effect, lending a syncopated quality. These sonnets maintain the traditional rhyme pattern, with the jazz entering through the syllabic use of the iamb.

Black and Orange

she set the sun in all and bevy orange
the east. grandmother mandarin (kernel)
Hunza center. south in new african
daughters of mars orange. marigold (peach dahl
and cayenne crane her younger india).
indian apricot wool. orange mustangs
west the saber. fires spanish ochre sha-
man of oak. the orange owl her corned manes
whistle (well then) sage white night snow. (she) snows
for these proud. sable spirit (earth) sheer. orange
eagle poppies all reborn northern. crow
flock of salmon slow (they) glide homeward range
she set the sun orange corners. oriole
she rises in minstrel. moon saffron merle

Hackamore

wiry the prickle hairs of /flaxen pears
bay /black. and sorrel peels (that. can sleepy)
unendable/ they herd to tuck dusk mares
around her neck. guesses games of fillies
swirl /prancer along the golden follow
bleach of each rope. (they toss) /hug and spin bowls
(off her shoulder glances) their /steer glide fold
indigenous sienna /legged foal
May born (wrapped) in this hackamore (may she)
arrive rested/ bathed. curried in its tongues
of horse maple wool. snug braids of hide heed
the temple bridge of her nose /daisies stun
wanton /splash abandon sprigs. linen mane
hopes/ of tied hair. hackamore /guide her game

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* *Hackamore:* A halter-like device used to guide the horse. The hackamore was developed for humanitarian reasons, as it fits over the horse's nose, as opposed to a bit, which rests inside the mouth. The hackamore gently guides the horse by exerting pressure under the chin. It was widely used by the Native American, and could be very decorative, with reins woven out of various colors of horsehair.

Pumpkin

Pumpkin's all a bowl. that orange nugget haze.
lazy you, lounge autumn. unruffled pink.
fathomless Pumpkin! in feathers of mink
tucked meat (and you chameleon and amaze)
imagination. such actress so phrase
of luscious Pumpkin. Cinderella sinks
into the corral of your arms. she thinks
mother chariot suns. that (the) prince neighs.
but Pumpkin (simple. slips girths) finds her tune.
Pumpkin has mounds of memory when one
thought, (she's her own wisdom, loves to wonder)
those blink and (of) a lantern fills to food,
so food. so wise is her meat that walnut
shares her ardent stories of sweet cut cure.

Celeriac

heart brown. rooted heart celeriac she
seems cool seeming globe of alabaster.
her pulp of white pine bone (shown december
saturn). knob knee celeriac oblique
of snow dun of ice nodes mulch (and her leaf)
mass bell most crowded the grass. chronicler
celery. she stout the heart forester
still. she staid (pale pond) full bowl crystal sheet
a. earth and belly brown bellied diamond
uncreased cranium (north.) celeriac.
she's the stoneground diamond fibers. abrupt
eye root covenant of night root grown. lung
sac her (thoughts) spaces meet. spirits her back
sacred. as navels of water chestnut

Jacqueline Quinn is a Bay Area poet and a "happy member of the newly formed National Writers Union." She is seeking a publisher for her completed manuscript, *unearth sonnet* and is currently at work on two separate books of verse: *dust mustard powders from me.* and *the lotus rope.* Poems of hers will appear in a Spring issue of *Ironwood.*

alerts(

alerts will be an on-going section of this publication set aside for informal commentary and information on new or neglected books by relevant women poets, in brief letter, journal or notation form. We intentionally think of these comments as not complete in the scholarly sense, with the hope of removing prohibitions linked with thinking/writing critically. Your response is invited.

LAURA (RIDING) JACKSON: THE DISCLAIMER OF PERSONS

Why is "Riding" hiding, and who is speaking to us from within that evocative parenthesis? In "Disclaimer of the Person," an "I" riddles its way into self-definition: "I am a woman. / I am not the sun which multiplied, / I am the moon which singled. / I am not the moon but a singling." A relentlessly singular female voice carves through language into naming-as-being: "I am I. / I am my name. / My name is not my name. / It is the name of what I say. / My name is what is said. / I alone say. / I alone am not I. / I am my name. / My name is not my name, / My name is the name."

Comparisons with Gertrude Stein come to mind, yet the association is misleading. Joyce Piell Wexler, who has written the first book about Riding, explains the difference: "While Stein wanted to break down the historical associations of words to make language a neutral medium like paint or stone, Riding wanted to destroy the personal associations of words to make language a medium for the universal." The person, the persona, the personal are whittled down to the irreducible minimum, disclaimed, even discarded, so that poetry may attain to truth through the accuracy of its language. No emotion, no lyricism, above all, no confessions.

During the '20's and '30's, when she reigned over modernist poetry circles in New York, London and Majorca, Riding believed that "to go to poetry is the most ambitious act of the mind." (W.H. Auden called her "the only living philosophical poet.") Yet she renounced poetry as mendacious c. 1940 and withdrew from print into the parenthesis of a private life. Riding left Robert Graves, her companion and disciple of many years, to marry Schuyler B. Jackson, definitively displacing her personal name.

This disappearing act puzzles us more than forty years later. Riding gave an account in the "Preface" to her *Selected Poems:* she said that she renounced poetry because of "something poetry fails to be—belying its promissory advertisement of itself." Poets failed to see "the problem of poetry as a problem in the field of language"; they exalted the technicalities of "craft" over the difficulties of "creed." Like children entranced with gaudy toys, such poets fell in love with poetry's sensuous appeal and forgot its mission to attain to spiritual truth.

Already in 1930, Riding called *poet* "a lying word," using the deliberate prose of a seer: "It is a false wall, a poet: it is a lying word. It is a wall that closes and does not." One must "stare the wall through now, well through" to a poem that is "a written edge of time." In *Selected Poems,* Riding included work that strives toward such an extreme, that suggests a "something after" the traditional consolations of poetry. Consider "Beyond":

> Pain is impossible to describe
> Pain is the impossibility of describing
> Describing what is impossible to describe
> Which must be a thing beyond description
> Beyond description not to be known
> Beyond knowing but not mystery
> Not mystery but pain not plain but pain
> But pain beyond but here beyond

The reader "stares through" the inadequacy of language to pain's paradoxical transcendence, reaching past Emily Dickinson's "formal feeling" to a "here beyond."

Given the willful avoidance of poetic figure, the intensity of an occasional metaphor is all the more startling, as in the very Dickensonian "Death as "Death":

> To conceive death as death
> Is difficulty come by easily,
> A blankness fallen among
> Images of understanding,
> Death like a quick cold hand
> On the hot slow head of suicide.
> So is it come by easily
> For one instant. Then again furnaces
> Roar in the ears, then again hell revolves,
> And the elastic eye holds paradise
> At visible length from blindness,
> And dazedly the body echoes
> "Like this, like this, like nothing else."

But death, "Like nothing—a similarity / Without resemblance," itself undermines the uses of metaphor, however startling. This is poetry which all but undoes

its own raison d'être and strides calmly toward the temptations of silence.

"Fragment," (not included in either *Selected Poems* or the 1980 Persea/Carcanet editions) appears less somber, almost good-naturedly Steinian in its language experimentation.

What a tattle-tattle we.
And what a rattle-rattle me.
What a rattle-tattle-rattle-tattle we-me.
What a rattle-tattle.
What a rattle-tattle.
What a me.
What a what a
What a
What a
What a
What
a

Yet the poem pares itself away before our very eyes, in a very unSteinian gesture toward a minimalist conclusion of both language and relationship.

When Riding wrote love poems, they too were unlike anyone else's. Physical love attains a perfection and a permanence through its translation into language in "When Love Becomes Words":

To be loving is to lift the pen
And to use it both, and the advance
From dumb resolve to the delight
Of finding ourselves not merely fluent
But ligatured in the embracing words
Is by the metaphor of love,
And still a cause of kiss among us,
Though kiss we do not—or so knowingly,
The taste is lost in the taste of the thought.

Love-making, like poem-making, should advance to the realm of thought, putting aside the sensuous intoxication of mere physicality.

In the years just before her defection from poetry, however, Riding found that there were still "as many questions as answers"—the title of her poem excerpted below (which Stein may have been quoting as her famous last words).

What is to start?
It is to have feet to start with.
What is to end?
It is to have nothing to start again with,
And not to wish.
. . . . . .
What is to be?
It is to bear a name.
What is to die?
It is to be name only.
. . . . . .
What is to ask?
It is to find an answer.
What is to answer?
Is it to find a question?

This aphoristic catechism reopens the questions of being, being named, knowing, and implicitly, the conditions that underlie the possibility of writing intelligently. One can see why Riding withdrew into speculations about the adequacy of language to the expression of first questions: hers has always been "a mind locked in combat with words" (Wexler). Many will find her austere, perhaps even "appallingly bleak" (Louis MacNiece), yet her linguistic combat offers an alternative to blatant confessionalism and a cure for facile poetics. Austere, yes, but with a certain grand, impersonal honor.

—*Carolyn Burke*

Note:
The poems quoted may be found in:
Laura Riding, *Selected Poems: in Five Sets*, Norton, 1973
Laura (Riding) Jackson, *The Poems of Laura Riding*, Persea (U.S.), Carcanet (U.K.)

See Joyce Piell Wexler's critical biography, *Laura Riding's Pursuit of Truth*, Ohio University Press, 1979; and the following: Jane Marcus, "Laura Riding Roughshod," in *Extended Outlooks: The Iowa Review Collection of Contemporary Women Writers*, Macmillan, 1982.

Carolyn Burke has published work on recent French feminist writing in *Signs*, *Critical Inquiry* and *Feminist Studies*. She is currently at work on a critical biography of Mina Loy.

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RESPONSE TO: "A RENAISSANCE OF WOMEN WRITERS", BY JED RASULA (*Sulfur*, no.7, 1983)

Jed Rasula's review of ten books by or about the women writers of the modernist generation seems to be generally well-informed (though he perhaps doesn't know—at least he doesn't mention—that H.D.'s *The Gift*, as issued by New Directions, is drastically cut) and is a useful contribution. The review begins with a fantasy that the work of the major male writers of that period is out-of-print and inaccessible by way of illustrating what has been, in fact, the case with the women writers. His statement that "feminists have ignored the modernist women writers

as blissfully as the men have" is, however, simply not true. The only evidence that Rasula offers for this judgment is the comment of an English professor's "female colleague on the appearance of the two recent books on H.D. She seemed uninterested, and pressed for a response, dismissingly said 'H.D., oh, she's a man's poet.'" This woman's lack of interest in H.D. is fortunately not typical of literary feminists generally. If there is a renaissance of women writers, feminist scholars, poets, novelists and serious readers have helped to create it. A glance at the publishing record of feminist scholars will confirm this.

As for the unnamed "female colleague" Rasula cites, I would propose this: on a certain page in *Love's Body,* Norman O. Brown asks, "Who is my real mother? It is a political question." It is a man's question, and perhaps now also a woman's.

—*Beverly Dahlen*

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Looking at the bookshelf above my typewriter, I find a number of works on modernists written by women scholars over the past decade: Susan Stanford Friedman's ground-breaking essay "Who Buried H.D.?", *College English,* 1975; Marjorie Perloff's chapter on Gertrude Stein in *The Poetics of Indeterminacy,* Princeton U. Press, 1981 (originally printed in *APR,* 1979); Susan Gubar's H.D. essay, included in the modernist section of *Shakespeare's Sisters,* Indiana U. Press, 1979; Marianne DeKoven's book on Stein, *A Different Language,* U. of Wisconsin Press, 1983; Alicia Ostriker's chapter on "Learning to read H.D." in her recent book, *Writing Like a Woman,* U. of Michigan Press, 1983; Carolyn Burke's essay on Stein, originally published in *Critical Inquiry,* 1981, and now available in the re-printed collection of essays, *Writing and Sexual Difference,* edited by Elizabeth Abel for U. of Chicago Press; Rachel Blau DuPlessis' many essays on H.D., two appearing in *Montemora* 6, 1979, and *Contemporary Literature,* 1979 (MLA presentation, 1977), and three more, co-authored with Susan Stanford Friedman, in *Montemora* 8, 1981, *Feminist Studies* 7, 1981, and *Ms.,* Feb., 1982, most of which will be re-printed in her collection, *Writing Beyond the Ending; Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers,* Indiana U. Press, in September, 1984; Suzanne Juhasz's essay on Marianne Moore, in her book of criticism, *Naked and Fiery Forms,* Harper and Row, 1979; Helen Vendler's essay on Moore, originally published by *The New Yorker,* 1978, later in her book *Part of Nature, Part of Us,* Harvard U. Press, 1980; Gloria G. Fromm's biography, *Dorothy Richardson,* U. of Illinois, 1977; Virginia Kouidis' *Mina Loy: American-Modernist Poet,* Louisiana State U. Press, 1980; Bonnie Costello's *Marianne Moore, Imaginary Possessions,* Harvard U. Press, 1981; and *Marianne Moore, Poet of Affection,* by Pamela Hadas, Syracuse U. Press, 1977.

This is only a sampling. Some other magazines featuring work on women modernists by women scholars include: *Signs, Massachusetts Review, Truck* and *Sagetrieb.* Over the last decade of Modern Language Association meetings, one has had the privilege of hearing an increasing variety of papers on the modernist women by women scholars—many feminist-identified, some not. Long in-the-works is Barbara Guest's forthcoming biography, *Herself Defined: H.D., the Poet and her Work,* due from Doubleday, spring 1984. Carolyn Burke has been working for several years on a critical biography of Mina Loy. *Poetics Journal* 4, winter 1984, will focus on "Women and Modernism," with articles on individual authors as well as related esthetic questions, by Lyn Hejinian, Susan Howe, Carla Harryman, Leslie Scalapino, Abigail Childs, Susan Laufer, Françoise Larocque, Johanna Drucker, Sally Silver, Ellen Zweig, Beverly Dahlen, Kathleen Fraser and Carolyn Burke.

All in all, this adds up to a rather solid indication of scholarly interest and labor. The question remains: will the works cited above be incorporated into traditional institutional reading lists, where new readers and writers are initiated into what is important? We know that some of this new scholarship is being taught in Women's Studies programs throughout the country, as an alternative to the status quo. At best, that leaves the situation a segregated one.

Rasula has pointed out that these "great modernist women writers" were prominent in their own day, publishing "on the order of 150 books"—making it remarkable and suspect that until the last few years these works have been unavailable to be taken seriously. If he is truly interested in encouraging further critical study of women modernists, it seems a rather shop-worn and ultimately diversionary tack for him to trot out the traditional "j'accuse," chiding feminists for ignoring their own—especially given his limited research. From whom does he think the sudden demand for reprints and critical studies of modernist women has come? Isn't it more to the point to examine the power structures underpinning the making of a canon? Would Pound's *The Cantos* or Eliot's *Four Quartets* still be read, if they hadn't been seriously and thoroughly taught? Or, turning it

around, *could* they have been taught, if the editors of American literature textbooks and poetry anthologies—predominately male, during the '30s, '40s and '50s—hadn't chosen their work as "major"? Would younger scholars have been adding to the growing body of criticism *without* these texts to alert their attention? It seems easy to forget that particular individuals with concrete esthetic criteria decide what work is significant enough to *sustain* in print. These far-reaching judgments include personal responses of recognition and pleasure, as well as ideas of relevance and excellence. Between 1925 and 1965, who were the individual editors, publishers and critics exercising these literary choices? How many women were *there,* among the ranks of the powerful?

—Kathleen Fraser

excerpts from Lisa Pater Faranda's letter RE: LORINE NIEDECKER

I was moved from Niedecker's poetry to her life, a life I learned was devoted to poetry for no more important reason than survival. The principle of "enough" governed LN's vision and underlies her "condensery" . . . . For Niedecker, such economy was clearly more than poetic technique; it was a physical, psychological and moral necessity . . . for the woman who had grown up on Blackhawk Island, a place intimately connected to "the soft / and serious— / Water", writing poetry was the means to "float" or "fly", and she employed images of both to characterize the act itself. She learned to condense, to: "be alone / Throw it over— / all fashion / feud" . . . because the poetry was enough, "enough to carry [her] thru". . . .

To many it seems as though Niedecker sacrificed much to achieve such a precious balance. Ironically, she remained isolated from the established centers of literary activity in order to write the poetry of the American idiom and modern experience. She was, nonetheless, always alert to the "fashion and feud" of the literary world; she tells Cid Corman in a letter of 12 December 1964 that when she was eighteen and still reading Wordsworth, she "was vaguely aware that the poetry current (1921) was beginning to change." She was, in fact, a contributor to such avant-garde journals as *New Democracy,* and contributed along with Pound and William Carlos Williams, to the first annual edition of *New Directions* . . . . Zukofsky first published LN in *A Test of Poetry,* in which he placed "There's a better shine" in the section called Recurrence. According to LN, she did not introduce herself to LZ until six months after February *Poetry,* (1931), when she finally worked up enough courage to write him. By this time Zukofsky was back in New York, so contrary to many people's claim, LN did not work with Bunting and Zukofsky in Madison, Wisconsin. In the letters to Cid Corman, Niedecker describes her meeting with Bunting in 1967. She saw herself "on the periphery" of the Objectivist movement, and while she maintained a warm and affectionate correspondence with Zukofsky, she developed her art on the delicate line where individual imagination and culture meet. . . .

At bottom, it is LN's ability to make me engage the words, experience syncretism and the associative power of language that I find thrilling. Her poetry makes me know, without discourse, what it is like to be alive, to feel alive:

The eye
of the leaf
into leaf
and all parts
    spine
into spine
neverending
    head
to see

Lisa Pater Faranda has edited the complete annotated edition of *The Letters of Lorine Niedecker,* a selection of which appears in the Fall, 1983, issue of *Conjunction.* Her introduction to that collection will appear in a future issue of *Origin.* Her lengthy biographical sketch of LN, containing much important information for scholars, will appear in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography,* (Modern American Poets volume), Fall, 1984.

postcards

intends to suggest that short and pithy form of communication used increasingly among overworked women writers we know who need to express something urgently but can't stop to write a longer letter. Because we have limited space but unlimited desire for dialogue, please contain your comments by typing them on a standard-size postcard. We are eager to hear from women poets and scholars who wish to address issues relevant to our concerns. Sometimes, we may also excerpt from longer letters, as in the case of Dodie Bellamy's comment below:

"I still feel some confusion over the issue of dividing women's writing into the categories of avant-garde and non-avant-garde, and supporting only one side of what seems to be a rather arbitrary division. Perhaps this is why women don't seem to be accomplishing as much as they should—they're always fragmenting into little groups which don't give support to those outside the group, and consequently never achieve a position of significant power. But then, I'm also increasingly disillusioned with writing that is so overtly feminist that politics swallow experience."

—Dodie Bellamy

Reply from Frances Jaffer:

We're trying to fill a gap, not create a split. Fragmentation, yes, of course that's the problem. As I wrote in our first issue, the absence of formal experiment, particularly in poetry, in feminist literary journals, is almost total. It's our hope and intention that *HOW(ever)* may begin to fill this strange gap, or at least point the way. If we're successful, it's possible that in the future there will be feminist magazines in which experimentalist *and* more formally traditional writing will be published together; and there will be experimentalist magazines, not specifically feminist, in which women writers will feel moved and welcomed to write from a context whose intentions include evident feminist awareness.

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"We must remember Ruth (Stone) and the others like her, women who make their art in obscurity and discomfort, as so many great artists always have. Indeed, we may well ask ourselves if it is not these "lost" women who constitute precisely the matrilineal literary tradition we feminist critics have been seeking for the last decade."

—Sandra Gilbert, "On Ruth Stone," from *Extended Outlooks, The Iowa Review Collection of Contemporary Women Writers,* Collier Books, 1982. (Poem collections by Ruth Stone: *In an Irridescent Time; Topography;* and *Cheap,* all published by Harcourt Brace.)

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"The trouble that generates these poems and charges them with their energy has its origins in a quarrel that the feminine self has with the structure of language. Nature blocks the speaker's sight and subdues self because she lets it. The language Dorothy (Wordsworth) inherits descends from the performative Logos of a paternal deity, by way of a history of usage in which language aspires to subject the object world in the manner of Adam's control over the creatures he named. Language operates by what Derrida calls a process of propriation, and the object of propriation is normatively feminine, making the subjection of women and of feminized nature integral to any process involving language."

—Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity,* Chapter 2, p.85, Princeton University Press.

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