

Jean Valentine—Handout

From Jean Valentine, “What Remains Unseen,” from *A God in the House*; Poets Talk about Faith, ed Kaminsky and Tower:

*The difference between Despair
And Fear—is like the one
Between the instant of a Wreck
--
And when the Wreck has been
--
The Mind is smooth—no mo-
tion--
Contented as the eye
Upon the Forehead of a Bust--
That knows—it cannot see*
--Emily Dickinson

Valentine on Dickinson:

“She is describing a sort of silence almost silently; everything has been accomplished, only the chill, “smooth,” untroubled iambic blind witness is left.”

“... I know that for me she’s been a lightning rod of belief in love of the invisible.”

“I am drawn to poets whose work allows the other its existence.”

“For me, poetry is mostly silence. The deeper, the better.”

Poems “seem to come out of silence, to exist in the midst of silence, and go toward silence.”

Poetry and prayer are linked by “the more unconscious activity of dreaming.”

Charles Olson, (mostly) from *Projective Verse*

“A poem is energy transferred from where a poet got it (he will have some several causations), by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader.”

“Is it not the play of the mind we are after? Is it not that that shows a mind is there at all?”

“Of rhythm is image/ of image is knowing/ of knowing there is/ a construct”

“The HEAD by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE”

To pay attention (“listen”) to the breath is “to engage speech where it is most careless—most illogical.”

From “Still in its Longing It Flies To You: Silence in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson, Ocean Vuong and Jean Valentine,” Rachel Neve-Midbar, Grist online, April 2020

Silence comes before speech and it comes after it; words are sensible only because a silence surrounds each one, separating it from the others.” (Evans quoted in Neve-Midbar)

It doesn’t matter what language a poet writes in, “his real medium is silence... to inflect the inner silence, to give it body...we use the voice to make silence more present.” Neve-Midar, quoting the Sun Online.

Kalstone, on Jean Valentine, NYT, 1970:

“this is a risky kind of poetry. It depends in part on the poet’s inner eye, finding images to make palpable the odd unseen. Miss Valentine has a gift for tough strangeness but also a dreamlike syntax and manner of arranging the lines of the short poems so as to draw us into doubleness and fluency of feelings.”

“[Jean Valentine is] straining for a new language, testing its limits like thin ice.”

On the fragment:

From *If Not, Winter: fragments of Sappho*, Anne Carson, Vintage 2002:

“Brackets are exciting [...] [...] --brackets imply a free space of imaginal adventure.”

“At the inside edge, where her words go missing, a sort of antipoem...”

(see addendum, Sappho, trans Anne Carson)

From “The ‘Tradition’ of the Fragment,” Kazim Ali (Poetry Foundation blog)

“This scintillating effect of fragment-wholeness-fragment shares an architecture with many contemporary poems. One example might be Jean Valentine...”

“Contemporary poets use all three modes of fragment, sometimes all at once. First, the fragment can illicit [sic] a response or echo what is lost or missing. Secondly, fragments can respond to fractures of experience between an individual’s lived daily life and the way media creates experience at a distance. Finally, the individual lyric sometimes fractures because of the way perception itself has been impacted in the information era. So rarely does one “recollect in tranquility;” rather one is always already in the perceptual and linguistic moment in the eternal present perfect tense.”

“All earthly experience is partial. Not merely because it is subjective but because that which we do not know of the universe, of mortality is so much more vast than what we do know.”

--Louise Gluck

Form is never more than an extension of content.

Robert Creeley

Pound: “to compose in the sequence of a musical phrase”

Williams: a poem is “a field of action.”

Olson: “composition by field” (Black Mountain Poets)

For Sharon Cameron, the lyric poem “stops time.” “Elemented by what Stevens would have called “flawed words and stubborn sounds,” Dickinson’s poems attempt to stall time to a stasis.” From Cameron, *Lyric Time*

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes creates the terms “*studium*” and “*punctum*” to describe two elements present in every photograph (or poem?). The *studium* is what we investigate, what composes the human context—historical interest, culture, etc. “The second element will break or (punctuate) the *studium*. This time is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the stadium with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out like an arrow and pierces me. [...] This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefor call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the

dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident that pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me.)" --Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

Handout 2—artists/slide show

There is no such thing as inanimate matter... there is God or divinity in all matter and it is all living energy. --Jay DeFeo

Everything is a mystery, ourselves, and all things both simple and humble.
--Giorgio Morandi

dreams ever different
dreams ever varied
endless voyages
endless realms
ever strange
ever wonderful.

--Joseph Cornell

The formula for doing a good job as a photographer is to think like a poet.
--Imogene Cunningham

Space has a way of looking. It seems like it has a presence of vision. When you come into it, it is there, it's been waiting for you.
--James Terrell

24A

]]
]you will remember
]for we in our youth
did these things

yes many and beautiful things

]]
]]

24C

]]
]we live
]]
the opposite

]]
daring

]]
]]
]]

Sappho—trans Anne Carson