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# Poems to the Sea and Painterly Poetics: Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Cole Swensen

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Plymouth University

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***POEMS TO THE SEA***

and

**PAINTERLY POETICS:**

CHARLES OLSON, ROBERT CREELEY, COLE SWENSEN

by

**PETER GILLIES**

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Humanities & Performing Arts  
Faculty of Arts & Humanities

July 2016

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## Acknowledgements

The genesis of this research lies in a visit to the exhibition *Starting at Zero: Black Mountain College 1933-57* at the Arnolfini, Bristol in November 2005. The show included some poems, on pages taken from the *Black Mountain Review*, by Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. The display cases in which the poems were placed were surrounded by the paintings of those Abstract Expressionist artists who had passed through the college. Having seen this wondrous juxtaposition, I soon discovered the lack of critical writing on the symbiotic relationship between poetry and abstract painting at Black Mountain, and so the seeds of an idea for my PhD research project were sown at this revealing exhibition.

I would first of all like to thank Plymouth University for awarding me a Faculty of Arts Research Studentship (2011) that has enabled me to undertake this period of full-time study. While the institution and source of funding have made the research possible, so members of staff, fellow-researchers and my own undergraduate students have enriched the learning process. My writing has been enhanced by many conversations at Plymouth, as well as at several academic conferences in the UK where I have presented papers or read work-in-progress.

Throughout these four years, I have been extremely fortunate to be supervised and mentored by my inspirational Director of Studies, Anthony Caleshu, whose passion, dedication and insight has helped me at every stage along the way. I would also like to express my gratitude to Chris Cook, Angela Szczepaniak and Lytton Smith for their academic guidance and attentive supervision. Thank you for all your valuable contributions and assistance.

A special thank you to Cole Swensen for greeting me so warmly after my paper on Olson and Cy Twombly at the 'Writing into Art' Conference in Glasgow (2013), and for giving so generously of her time over those two days. Her enthusiasm for my research and her openness during our discussions were greatly appreciated. Thanks are also due to Henry Ferrini for sending me a DVD copy of his documentary *Polis Is This*, and for his correspondence.

I would like to record my gratitude to Rupert Loydell for introducing me to the full range of Creeley's collaborations with artists, and for continuing to publish my writing both on visual art and poetry in *Stride* magazine. I am most grateful to the staff at Woodlane Library in Falmouth, all of whom were especially kind and helpful while I was writing my thesis. I would like to thank all those who facilitated my research in the Doctoral Training Centre and Graduate School at Plymouth University, particularly Tim Batchelor and Sarah Kearns, who provided me with invaluable support.

I would also like to pay tribute to my mother, Doris Irene Gillies (1912-2009), who helped to finance my initial career shift from fine art to creative writing and who, I have come to realise during the span of this project, is always there in what I do.

Finally, there is no one I'm indebted to more than my wife, Ann Gillies, whose encouragement, creative sensibility and loving care enabled me to see this project through to completion.

## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

Relevant research seminars and academic conferences have been regularly attended at which several papers have been presented. Seminars, symposia and conferences attended include the following:

- 2012 'Contemporary Poetry and Source' Conference, Plymouth University, 18-20<sup>th</sup> May. Paper: 'Source in the Act: The Poetic Impulse from Abstract Painting at Black Mountain'.
- 2013 English Research Group Seminar, Plymouth University, 1<sup>st</sup> May. Paper: 'Scrawling Across an Open Field: Charles Olson & Cy Twombly'.
- 2013 'Writing into Art' Conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 18-19<sup>th</sup> June. Paper: 'Scrawling Across an Open Field: Charles Olson & Cy Twombly'.
- 2013 'Plymouth University and U.W.E., Bristol: Graduate Schools Residential PhD Conference', Buckland Hall, Brecon Beacons, 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> July. Poetry Presentation: 'Poems to the Sea: A reading of work-in-progress'.
- 2014 'Writing Communities: People as Place' Conference, Falmouth University, 29-30<sup>th</sup> July. Paper: 'In Company: Poets and Painters at Black Mountain College'. Poetry Presentation: 'Poems to the Sea: A reading from work-in-progress'.
- 2014 'A Residential Postgraduate Conference: Life Beyond the PhD', Cumberland Lodge, Windsor, 26-29<sup>th</sup> August. Poetry Presentation: 'Poems to the Sea: A reading from work-in-progress'.
- 2016 'Contemporary Poetry: Thinking and Feeling' Conference, Plymouth University, 20-22<sup>nd</sup> May. Paper: 'Looping the Loop: Cy Twombly's Poetics of Paint'.
- 2016 'Transatlantic Studies Association: 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference', Plymouth University, 4-6<sup>th</sup> July. Practice-based Paper: 'From Black Mountain to Poems to the Sea'.

Word count of main body of thesis (including poetry collection): 60,093.

## **Peter Gillies**

### **Abstracts:**

#### **Poems to the Sea**

Rather than narrating or describing a work of visual art, the poems that form this collection show an accumulation, juxtaposition and realignment of material ranging from art historical detail and critique to a more personal, location specific response to works viewed in galleries and museums. Many of the poems engage with non-representational artworks and question how best to reflect, translate or expand upon their transformative effects. The first section, 'Museum Notes', explores Charles Olson's open field poetics by giving artists and writers a conversational voice. 'Sound Fields', the second section, responds to individual works of art and reflects a systems-based approach. The authorial voice within 'Poems to the Sea', the third section, is that of an artist involved in making a series of palimpsest drawings to capture a sense of place as drawing and writing overlaps and intertwines.

#### **Painterly Poetics: Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Cole Swensen**

This thesis explores three American poets from successive generations to examine three related types of engagement with visual art. As literary models that have informed my own poetic practice, Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Cole Swensen have theorized their own writing process to consider ways of using language to enhance the transmission and transcription of their visual stimuli and ideas. All three are interested in visual art as a model for the writing process: as a means of seeing, thinking and perceiving. After an introduction that surveys relations between verbal and visual art, a chapter is devoted to each of the three poets. In the opening and longest chapter, examples of Olson's writing are compared to the approach of several Abstract Expressionist painters who contributed to the culture of experimentation and spontaneity that emerged under Olson's leadership at Black Mountain College in the early 1950s. Following a discussion of Olson as a uniquely influential figure, the chapter on Creeley considers the role of visual art in his poetics. Swensen's writing is subsequently explored for its extension of the Black Mountain legacy: how she builds upon established critical methods to achieve what she calls 'a side-by-side, walking-along-with' relationship between the poem and the artwork.

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**CHARLES OLSON, ROBERT CREELEY, COLE SWENSEN**

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## PREFACE

### *Poems to the Sea*

As a dialogue between the verbal and the visual, my collection *Poems to the Sea* reflects an interdisciplinary mode of research that is interested in the relationship between poetry and painting: the poems present the process of writing as analogous to the process of painting, in that the speaker is always concerned with articulating the procedures of creative practice and the experience of someone working in both disciplines. Building through a series of experimental phases of composition, the totality and openness of this approach has allowed me to constantly explore the interdependence of these two mediums in my own creative work.

The influence of specific visual artists on poetic forms dominates the collection while many of the poems consider the poetic enactment of painterly gesture. The range and scope of the poetry reflects my preoccupation with artists from the last seventy years, in particular those who have been involved with Abstract Expressionism, Colour-Field Painting and Post-Painterly Abstraction. The intensity of the relationship between visual and poetic forms of expression at Black Mountain College in North Carolina (1933-57) was the starting point, and my awareness of the painterly aesthetic of painters and poets associated with the college has continued to underpin my poetic concerns. In constructing *Poems to the Sea*, it is the process of making the artwork that provides the catalyst for writing the poetry.

Black Mountain poetics is the active force that propels the collection: Charles Olson's concept of composition-by-field as expressed in his theory and practice of projective verse is ever-present. Although there are different kinds of poetic space and lineation

at work in each of the three sections, I wanted the sensation of open space to permeate *Poems to the Sea* by creating three versions of an airy space that would collectively suggest the condition of being at the edge of an ocean, experiencing the spaces of the beach, the sea and the sky; these felt intensities that, despite being intangible and enigmatic, aim to provide a sense of place. The over-riding influence is transatlantic, for I am fascinated by the work of painters and poets that reflects an American awareness of space that is more open and expansive compared with traditional British conceptions within the literary and visual arts.

My intention was for the poems to connect with Olson's sense of a boundless ocean continuing into infinity as he looked out from Gloucester, Massachusetts. Many of my notebook drafts, diagrammatic notes and preparatory visual studies make reference either to the rhythmic motion of the sea, or, to the play of sparkling patches of sunlight or moonlight on the surface of water, observed from staring out at the horizon line from Falmouth, Cornwall. Olson's writing provided the verbal counterpart to the spatial and painterly qualities I was seeking in my own work: that within certain poems (for example, those focusing on paintings by Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, Joan Mitchell, Richard Diebenkorn, Agnes Martin and Cy Twombly), I could open-up the white page to utilize a similar interplay of energies that is present in their paintings, notably their rendering of an all-over visual field that radiates spatial patterns of shimmering light.

In the poems that form the opening section 'Museum Notes', artists and writers are brought together in conversation to explore their correspondences in attitude towards the creative process. A further dialogue is produced by the sequencing of these

twenty-four poems to reflect the speaker thinking moment-to-moment as they move from image-to-image, artist-to-artist, gallery-to-gallery, as the objects of their attention both explain and conceal themselves in terms of their own making. As a way of constructing each poem through this accrued experience of looking at and responding to 'process', I wanted to establish and underline a personal dynamic in my practice where the mediums of painting and writing are shown to be informing each other.

Successive exhibitions of work by my favoured artists provided vital opportunity for working in-situ so as 'to be with' the original artworks for extended periods: shows such as those of Twombly in London (2011, 2014) and Liverpool (2012); Martin in London (2011, 2015) and St Ives (2011); and Mondrian in London (2012) and Liverpool (2014), enabled me to make frequent gallery visits during the span of particular exhibitions. The role of notebooks, journals and sketchbooks was vital to my process. Using them in the galleries, I worked on written and drawn responses to the physical and material presence of the work as an object, as it was essential to get a textual process in motion. Taking notes, making lists, drawing diagrams, I aimed to find phrases not as description but as equivalent to the dominant forms and colours, the marks and gestures reverberating through an image. To reconfigure and distil this raw material away from the gallery, the process then became about how to manipulate these properties in making the poem, while still preserving one's initial emotional reaction when one was face-to-face with the actual work, absorbing the texture and qualities of paint along with the distinctive character of the brushstrokes.

In the development of these poems, the notebook activity in the gallery established an underlying ground to work on so that layers of text could subsequently be added to or removed in the same way that I would create an image on canvas. When making a painting, I obliterate and cast off parts of both the original and emerging image: similarly in constructing a poem, I will tear up, collage, ‘draw-into’ and ‘work-over’ with language instead of paint. Constantly revisiting the poems for the purpose of breaking up the lines and physically placing or replacing certain words and phrases, this approach of making a series of paper collages – a process where every element of text can be subjected to change through layering – was integral to the fabric of ‘Museum Notes’.

In writing *Poems to the Sea*, apart from conveying meaning, I wanted to acknowledge the materiality of language; that I was working with a medium that is sonic, visual and experiential. What began as a projective and spacial reading of Diebenkorn’s and Martin’s original paintings, especially their subtle atmospheric geometry loosely based upon the grid, shifted towards further considerations in the second section ‘Sound Fields’. My intention became to show more decisively how a poem embodies a relationship between the sound, the sense and the visual impression of words. The organisation of grids in this sequence allows for frequent repetition to intensify the physicality and presence of each unit of language so as to plot letters, words, phrases and sentences to be more ‘there’ on the page. Enveloped within the field, each component can act either as a descriptive or non-descriptive gesture, while contributing both to the sonic and visual rhythm of the poem.

One of the earliest poems in ‘Sound Fields’ was aimed at paralleling Willem de Kooning’s mode of making a gestural image. Concentrating on his stark calligraphic markings that have seeped into the weave of the canvas, in the poem these become elements of language transformed into pure sound. In the act of translating de Kooning’s adept painterly brushwork, one improvised sound races towards another as the content of the painting coalesces into tiny words, phonically emerging and disappearing as the poem moves along. As in other poems in the sequence, the emphasis on repetition through mirroring or multiplying a pattern for the sake of pace and rhythm, ‘pushes’ the poetic line towards a predetermined edge of a sonic and visual field. In some cases, the development of the grid depends upon the interplay of alternate lines running at two different speeds of travel in the same direction. As well as the visual image of the poem as a graphic work on the page, the entire sonic fabric of the poetic grid becomes charged by these rhythmically opposed but meshed forces of energy. This configuration allows qualities of sound and vision to merge with one another.

Attending to rhythmical and syntactical tensions within the grid relates to my study of paintings by Mondrian and Klee; both artists show how geometrical construction can be realized through intuition. The poems in ‘Sound Fields’ were also influenced by examples of procedural writing that I encountered in exhibitions of work by John Cage (Gateshead, 2010) and Carl Andre (Middlesbrough, 2013), especially the materiality of letters and words as ‘things’ that is evident in their poetry. Cage and Andre utilized cadences reminiscent of Gertrude Stein’s sound play: the way a poetic phrase can be used as a self-generating device. In ‘Sound Fields’ I adopted a similar approach to the repetition, inversion and different permutations of key words and

phrases; where each repeat becomes a new event that contributes significantly to the expressive density of the text, as well as a means of continuing and developing the poem.

Rather than remaining an almost anonymous observer of selected artworks, the speaker in the third and final section 'Poems to the Sea' adopts a more personal position. In moving closer to a lyrical mode, the struggle to make one's own work through the handling of materials is at the core of every poem. 'Poems to the Sea' began as sketches, paintings and diagrammatic renderings of a beach setting. These studies fed into a process of exploration whereby each poem discovered itself through my work in the studio where, over several weeks, I let visual and written detail accumulate on large sheets of watercolour paper, allowing image and text to fuse together in the act of composition.

To achieve a more open osmosis of ideas between the verbal and the visual, between the hand-written and the painted, between the page and the studio wall, I then developed a vast wall-based grid consisting of sixty A3-sized sheets. By emphasizing the physical actions of reaching up, down and across the sheets to superimpose words and gestural marks upon each other, this practice-as-research directly addressed the process of composition: the way I was 'making' a poem and how it could carry the essence of my painterly operation. By refusing to separate the acts of painting and writing in this studio work, I adopted a self-determining experimental mode primarily concerned with the material presence of the poem as a visual object. These preliminary studies filling the four walls of my studio became the formative drafts of 'Poems to the Sea'.

My study of visual art has inspired all three sections of the collection. In *Poems to the Sea* I have focused on constructing a sequence concerned with process and strategy; especially writing poems that ask what kinds of poetical response might be provoked by engaging with non-representational art, thereby continuing to translate and expand upon the transformative elements of such encounters in a gallery or studio situation.

***POEMS TO THE SEA***

PETER GILLIES

*for Rosa*

CONTENTS:

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***MUSEUM NOTES***

JASPER JOHNS – W S GRAHAM

dead-ends / fresh starts & regrets:

*take a canvas put a mark on it put another mark on it put another mark on it ...*

forms veer from figurative to abstract but remain

spare / halfway

to equate

with objects:

relationships between them

with spaces:

that surround them

fast dissolving / evolving forms

around

*one aloneness to another*

that imaginary tone

one positioned figure to another

temporal & spacial

verbal & visual

become equalised resemblances

not so easily separated

in their greyness

each one less reliable than what came before

AGNES MARTIN – RENATA ADLER

her  
undisturbed  
state  
maintained with paint

her  
perception triggered  
processed-in ruled-in to waves that

meander & flow sip & sweep over  
the skins of everyday objects

of coming & going an impulse attracts

episodes to be recorded either as visual or aural mistakes  
*this is what matters ... that all the rest is only motion*  
*I said emotion?*  
*he said motion*  
*there we were*

on a manhattan roof with INDIANA & KELLY  
for the archival photo  
to then spend ideas in the studio

often whole hours of improbable luck with  
a metre of thread 2 or 3 pencils  
tied together let the drawings be flipped over

let them crease & stream  
upside down

time-lines ahead / illusions & echoes

throw them around

25.06.11 – *The Minimal Gesture*, Timothy Taylor Gallery, London  
09.02.11 – *Agnes Martin: Artist Rooms*, Tate Modern, London

AGNES MARTIN – GERTRUDE STEIN

pale matrix: made to be tight / pencil traces refract multiply  
 sightlines  
 to lighten the square / axial  
 release inside

knows ROTHKO had *reached for zero*  
*so that nothing could stand in the way*

she approaches wide on no fear of falling into it

reads dawn-leading / dusk-leaning ideas

sun-struck images becoming these wavering all-over:

as TWO DIMENSIONAL: a series of lined linen sheets  
 as SCORE: to sonically mark-up each of 8 notes  
 as MATERIAL: absorbed into structure / left to action  
 as MIRROR: to capture surface parts / no histories repeat

as PRESENTATION: what becomes indicative of glassy sea  
 by  
 kaleidoscopic similarity

painted / drawn pages facing down each day

allows *push sea push / sea push sea push sea*

weeks later silvery  
 unruly notes written / regulated

with or without measuring

less rubbing out on an iridescent grid

03.09.11 – *Agnes Martin: Paintings – Summer Exhibition*, Tate St Ives  
 11.06.15 – *Agnes Martin*, Tate Modern, London

## KAZIMIR MALEVICH – MARK ROTHKO – LYNETTE ROBERTS

nuance / tone of every black square  
 monochrome re-emerges  
 as lessons elsewhere:

PLANE ENERGY = end point of a broad-edged pencil around it

SPATIAL ENERGY = uneven stroke of a full brush over it

introduces chaos / plays with instability

affirms at once

LINE & MASS FULL & EMPTY  
 not as contradiction to turn action into mark

FORMS DEFINE SPACE focusing on a breaking wave  
 skirting its movement  
 it was all endless return  
 & spillage

tones whole & half to gain / sustain  
 an elemental hold

involves intangible objects

where shapes rimmed red-violet  
 swim lightweight like

*dripping rust low on blue lined eddies of wind*

13.08.14 – *Malevich*, Tate Modern, London

06.11.14 – *Mark Rothko: The Seagram Murals*, Tate Modern, London

JOAN MITCHELL – JAMES JOYCE

full  
 crimson  
 & vermilion

cobalt set low  
                   on  
 cinnabar coat

book-marking episodes  
                           in monet's old river-home

                  at vetheuil   dizzy when  
*the heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit*

                  was a gift  
 of glimpses  
                   slipping:

                                  opposite – pinks – kiss

                  positively – opposite – pink – skiss – pinsky – inks

reckless astral reds next to   gold ribbons tumbling

JOAN MITCHELL – OCTAVIO PAZ

flickering  
 with mountains / clearings / solid points of reference

her  
 swimming vision

shifts bends to a butterfly beach  
 jagged  
 with  
 ocean-mist-streaks  
 left to veer out of sync  
 into

quilted  
 f-i-e-l-d-s

& ripple-effect grids

*i think of the midwest snow ...*  
*icy blue shadows*

tide-marks clouds rain

call it voices or  
 residues reached

blotched sand wet orange  
 spliced between

swirling

u. l. t. r. a. *M A R I N E*

*lapis lazuli*

not for nothing means beyond the sea

fetching flowers – making colours – learning  
 how light breaks diagonally

*i saw the appearances / and i named that half hour*

seeing now only the trceries are real

13.08.14 – *Making Colour*, The National Gallery, London  
 14.03.12 – *Joan Mitchell: The Last Paintings*, Hauser & Wirth, London

RICHARD DIEBENKORN – ROBERT CREELEY

reserve of strength in ocean park  
 tension beneath the calm  
     when light  
         finds      divisions  
                     left o-p-e-n  
                             that resume  
                                 recognisable shape  
                                     faith to know  
   when an edge    is gaining through  
   losing  
   direction:  
                             geometric    complexity    an occasion to act upon  
                             *sun's intensity at the window much like the day it all began*  
                                     *crazy washed-out red    not a pink but a white red*  
                             whose eye caught what was going on  
                             -to  
                                 blue -to fine grey -to indigo    rose watery  
   light  
                     gulfs of time between    FIELDS  
   BLOCKS  
   SPACES    aired as punctual surprises  
                     but using contained yet limitless  
                                     surfaces of water    to make grids with:  
                             abstract                      broken                      tri-coloured  
                                 FIGURES                      +                      PATHS                      +                      LINES  
   have to subside as they touch  
   oblique / incomplete shapes  
   tilted yellow against  
   plain white  
   falling  
   as in  
   angular currents owned by the wind

05.05.15 – Richard Diebenkorn, Royal Academy of Arts, London

CY TWOMBLY – GEOFF DYER

balanced horizon the freest place to be

compelling  
connection

next

breath

gestures the run of it no definition

writing back to wilder shores:

*a thousand small explosions of glitter*

middle of the sea was dazzling

matters of space  
matters of light  
matters of noise

waterside

each crest of a wave connects threads through

reaches towards whiteness

three-quarters of the time

in that half-place between water & sky

resolves best

left

undone

stumbling with roman animation

quest turned back on itself

disrupts image & text

bends P A I N T I N T O W O R D S into

T I N T A D E N T R O L E P A R O L E

reducing seascape detail to a few lines & edges

intensified by rushing miles & miles / unfolding in wrong directions

colouring in from all sides

CY TWOMBLY – RAINER MARIA RILKE – CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

CAPITALS / CALLIGRAPHIC HEADINGS / TEXTURES / COLOUR NEEDS QUOTATIONS / WORDS CALLIGRAPHIC NEED COLOUR / EVERYTHING LITERARY / PENCIL TO BEGIN WITH / CANVAS WRITING BEGINS QUOTATION / TOP COLOURS BEGIN / NEED CANVAS / CALLIGRAPHIC BLACK OVER QUOTATIONS / BEGIN TEXTURE / CALLIGRAPHIC TEXT / TEXTURE CALLIGRAPHIC / OVER LITERARY / BEGIN WORDS IN CALLIGRAPHIC BLACK / TOP COLOUR BEGINS / CALLIGRAPHIC CANVAS / OVER QUOTATIONS HEADINGS IN COLOUR / WRITE HEADINGS IN SPIDERY-LITERARY COLOUR / USE TEXTURE / USE LITERARY-SPIDERY WRITING / USE CANVAS COLOUR / USE CAPITALS:

not too late for escape  
 could find ways  
 to madcap  
 victory sp-ACE  
 other side of air

WIN-d-on-the-WIN-g  
 air victory ACE / to r-ACE  
 to es-CAPE on the winning WIN-g  
 of this MAD-ness

air victory  
 es-CAPER

air  
 outside    felt  
                  thinner

as mad  
 as the other  
 amazing s-PACE

viceroy  
 victory p-ACE

false starts & fragments / quicksilver glances / blasts of makeshift flame  
 another side of air





DAVID SMITH – JOHN ASHBERY

*space could only hurt him / or agree with him*  
who toyed with ice-cold / oil splattered bits

graded to size

in spite of  
no  
compatibility

chalking their outlines on the floor  
ready to rephrase pieces

heat-damaged & faded

walking  
so  
big a space to build it

all

hammered / beaten / wrenched  
from beneath stacked sleepers

free of travel back & forth

between

albany & poughkeepsie

CARL ANDRE – DAVID SMITH – GERTRUDE STEIN

simple  
weather-beaten

monuments that form  
this american grid

as numbers

that break into entries /

headings / places  
them  
to  
interchange them

*every time there is an exception there is an exception  
& every time there is a division there is a division*

scrap iron found  
from  
along the tracks:

hooks  
springs  
bearings

carefully laid out

9 more displaced parts      stutter & resound

sideways

restored

12.09.13 – *Carl Andre: Mass & Matter*, Middlesbrough Institute of Art  
07.09.13 – *David Smith: Sculptures / Energy & Process*, Tate Modern, London

TACITA DEAN – GEOFF DYER – RICHARD DIEBENKORN

jagged texture coated with sober  
change

her gaze expands interior space like JOHN CAGE

wants *a way of thinking about sound & vision*  
*like the way thunder & lightning are*

cathedral choir  
going past  
glazed-over heads  
emblematic of the dead:

bare view reduced to  
chiaroscuro  
patchwork-grabs

*demotic where the response takes up the call & pitches it back*

colour disrupts as stop-go jabs

ghosts in a stained glass window

evensong as elegy

stripped down & polished  
week after week

bay-area jazz as haphazard warm-up act

17.12.14 – *Archive Exhibition*, Sheffield Cathedral  
21.10.11 – *Tacita Dean: FILM 2011*, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London  
29.07.09 – *Colour Chart: Reinventing Colour*, Tate Liverpool

TACITA DEAN – ROBERT CREELEY

black light pressed into a black surface

bends numerical sense / 7 boards in 7 days  
as her sequence of wrecks:

1<sup>st</sup> chalk  
storyboard 3pm / roaring 40s / same flux as an angry sea  
breakdown of signs into more splintering account

numbers words letters  
stretched / get width

to weigh

configure

narrate romantic depth with contoured shade

figures frozen out

in a milky shift of paralysis revered in  
stills / their chronologies

of arms / hips & chins flying imperfectly across  
bisect the air

mast coming apart

parking with a rhythmic thump as the binding breaks:

rising / sinking in time like the collective breath  
of a wipe-out

*where everything has the quality of a photographic negative*

weird blacked-out lightships stand half-erased  
go again tomorrow

will persevere / steer / whiten as though  
perilous in monochrome

so every stroke fights against its own disappearance

CALLUM INNES – JORIE GRAHAM

VISCOUS GREEN DOWN & OVER / GLOSS WHITE TOP SIDE / MATT BLACK WASH OVER CANVAS - **TRAP TURPENTINE ON RIGHT SIDE** / CENTRE-TO-LEFT MATT BLACK / CENTRE-TO-RIGHT VISCOUS GREEN / MASK DOWN SAME LINE FOR SINGLE BLACK PAINT - **BLEED-IN TURPENTINE ON RIGHT SIDE** / MATT PAINT OVER SINGLE GREEN TO RIGHT / MASK WHITE GLOSS TO BLACK CANVAS / LEAVE SAME VISCOUS GREEN ON TOP - **WASH-IN TURPENTINE ON RIGHT SIDE** / BLACK PAINT DOWN CENTRE / LEAVE ON VISCOUS GREEN SAME WAY / MASK OVER MATT BLACK TO WHITE CANVAS TOP - **DROP-IN TURPENTINE ON RIGHT SIDE**

SEA / EARTH / SKY no longer deep in the shadows of themselves joined by  
a 3 millimetre sliver etched through the centre of a vast projective field

resonant choice of 3 distinct zones:

BLACK / OLIVE / WHITE voices exposed *slippery against it where it  
never knows they are pressing delirious accents trying to reach in fit / in*

rest in a dark red quarter consigned yet  
slowly warping

T-square green lake  
escapes  
bifurcates making the painter's labour visible  
through ritual moves layers go  
although  
ongoing hues  
drift aside with each repetition

09.04.13 – *Callum Innes*, The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester  
25.06.11 – *Callum Innes: New Paintings*, Frith Street Gallery, London

BARNETT NEWMAN – OCTAVIO PAZ

beginning in one place &amp; finding yourself in another

*that every stroke one makes is violent  
... you've got to move with*

the weight of red  
  burgundy stripe  
    eve is land  
      is landslide

*eve* is red  
stepping  
testament  
of  
burgundy  
might

painted *eve* / evening  
starts here & finds uneven  
change  
  in human height

earth brown with zips  
*adam* / all slightly skewed

this badly taped  
  central band provides feeling

but  
  numbed by process

                          for in hebrew  
*adamah* is earth    *adom* is red

                          while *dam* is blood

to be teased-out  
in

gaps   *lighter than water / lighter than air / lighter than lips*

## PIET MONDRIAN – DON DELILLO

different in every kind of weather  
whiteness

runs off horizons begins to act

cleansing white smoothly  
slides

facing

percussive white casting  
around  
outside of

his poetics:  
scans wide  
thinking out space  
measuring

left from grey

to white

going right / going down  
all sides

    L    I    G    H    T    

                                  T    U    R    Q    U    O    I    S    E  
                                  t o g r e e n / g r e y

light -----  
                                  small square / opaque red

*five colours*

*classified*

*catalogued this colour for that ...*

*jutting*

*crisscrossing in streaks & tremors*

refracting surfaces \_\_\_\_\_ abstracting a seascape sky

07.08.14 – *Mondrian & his Studios*, Tate Liverpool

14.03.12 – *Mondrian & Nicholson: In Parallel*, The Courtauld Gallery, London

ANA MENDIETA – TIM WINTON

super 8 cameras placed where there is always surf  
 gets you obsessed with elemental encounters:

atlantic buffeted  
 material  
           built into  
 short films

all fixated with magic

leaves body shapes filling-up  
 to spill over  
                   with foam

margins giving way

she tracks  
 sea-water on shingle

what is exposed / what is folded-in

to water not catching  
 as a wave breaks churns & animates when

*the swell has travelled great distances but only the energy is moving*

herself the subject

moans windblown  
 gathering a precarious archive:

an ocean dreaming ghost with a catalogue of looming skies

PAUL KLEE – LEE HARWOOD

sensations dreams concepts to render them visible  
as imaginary scripts:

*move your whole body / to make the marks a flow of sorts  
paint the character for 'sea' again & again*

figure ways  
to translate

a line losing itself / a line growing stronger

weaving in & out / your experience of space

of things incomplete or faint:

luminously strange  
hint of horizon between sea & sky

dematerializes through looking

to track material intervals tentative limits  
on  
different  
kinds

of paper size

to trace around pebbles

set them down as a series of fractional squares

before they dissolve

PHILIP GUSTON – DYLAN THOMAS

be careful  
not to squeeze the life out of it

to guard against this  
by  
incessant  
recomposing

glimmers of self analysis in his grey zones /

an overdose of sourcing:

*the brassy orator / laying my ghost in metal*

handles  
stark paint

for his forms escalate:  
figures returning  
grooved together

jostling each other a little

spontaneous strokes cajole /

anticipate them

in repetition deletion

faces  
rotate  
to jettison

ominous signs  
hovering wide

ALEX KATZ – COLE SWENSEN

turn to  
 token stencils on  
 full moon

terrain stepping  
 towards nightly  
 fenced-in  
 prussian blue

medium range present tense present state  
*where we shatter / into patterns / counting threads*

more dark walk past walk out observing stars

sky slanting throws a field to float  
 while holding

off-set edges

to trace / fake / take  
 less of  
 an insomniac's mood

going into mineral / november time faced-as-skeletal

wrought through missing texture: relative & made with reason

corrodes  
 below  
 reflective  
 glaze

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO – CHARLES OLSON

channels / lakes / rivers  
 fleeting traces of wind  
  
 coaxed out of long exposures  
  
 & behind this emptiness  
  
 LINES PLANES POINTS  
  
 these are means  
  
 emulsified  
 as borderlines  
  
 digested down  
  
 dark & thick  
 from night  
 & its  
 B L A C K  
 L I G H T  
  
 gently  
 animates / agitates  
 imposes  
 exposes  
  
 harsh geometry  
  
 on smooth  
  
 seas  
 matt  
  
 searching  
 for movement / countermovement  
  
 it lures us to abstraction –  
  
 eyes at a place  
 to put arms out:  
  
*on dogtown the other side of heaven  
 is ocean*  
  
 though alert to all voices in between

PIERRE SOULAGES – JAMES JOYCE

as reminder  
 all that experimentation  
 see stars fading  
 into darkness:  
 stacked blacks  
 those facts  
 of cross-cutting grey  
 by the second going blacker  
 time painting it = excessive  
 before it  
 hints at a spoiled point of day  
 ill-defined & passing    sleight of hand  
 throws up highlights  
 &    accumulates time

WHITENESS = A DOUBLE BIND

watch any moist heavy sea / coming from the blackness:

an emotive double blindness in  
 eye-catching spotlights

OPEN FORMS    SHORELINE WAVES    RIPPLING SLATE    TIDAL NIGHT

*he would caligulate by multiplicables the altitude & malltitude  
 until he saw by neatlight*

therefore    opposites respect

elemental offshore noise

## ***SOUND FIELDS***

angled**licoricebend** ... (**greystogether** / **jasperjohnsregrets**)... material**worlddead**  
**ends** ... letentangled**licoricebend** ... (**greystogether** / **jasperjohnsregrets**) ... **mat**  
**erialworlddeadends** ... letentangled**licoricebend** ... (**greystogether** / **jasperjohnsre**  
**grets**) ... **materialworlddeadends** ... letentangled**licoricebend** ... (**greystogether** /  
**jasperjohnsregrets**) ... material**worlddeadends** ... letentangled**licoricebend** ... (g  
 reystogether / **jasperjohnsregrets**) ... **materialworlddeadends** ... letentangled**licor**  
**icebend** ... (**greystogether** / **jasperjohnsregrets**) ... **materialworlddeadends** ... la  
 r**grey** / **bluedome** ... (**eyesocketsjaw&nose** / **hisownfolds**) ... source**imageofluci**  
**anfreudsuperimposed** ... (**fleshlikemetal** / **distressedfilmroll**) ... **largegrey** / **blued**  
**ome** ... (**eyesocketsjaw&nose** / **hisownfolds**) ... **sourceimageoflucianfreudsuperim**  
**posed** ... (**fleshlikemetal** / **distressedfilmroll**) ... letangled**greysregretdead** ... (mat  
 erial**endstogether**) ... johns**licoricejasperworld** ... grey**entangleddead** ... (johns**re**  
**gretshisownfolds**) ... **greyfleshlikegreymetaldistressed** ... imposed**filmends** ... (ey  
 es**largesuperbluetherangledtogether**) ... johnsregrets**jasperjohnspose** ... distresse  
 nds ... (**distressedjohnsregrets**) ... **johnslastimposedregrets** ... **jasperjohnsregrets**

*the four-story mountain / you will not think form-space-line-contour  
 just a suggestion of nature gives weight / light & heavy / light like a  
 empty form goes all the way to heaven | the observer makes the painting | an empty  
 feather / you get light enough & you levitate / the four-story mountain  
 you will not think form-space-line-contour / just a suggestion of nature  
 form goes all the way to heaven | the observer makes the painting | an empty form  
 gives weight / light & heavy / light like a feather / you get light enough  
 goes all the way to heaven | the observer makes the painting | an empty form goes  
 & you levitate / the four-story mountain / you will not think form-space  
 line-contour / just a suggestion of nature gives weight / light & heavy  
 all the way to heaven | the observer makes the painting | an empty form goes all the  
 light like a feather / you get light enough & you levitate / the four-story  
 mountain / you will not think form-space-line-contour / just a suggestion  
 way to heaven | the observer makes the painting | an empty form goes all the way to  
 of nature gives weight / light & heavy / light like a feather / you get light  
 enough & you levitate / the four-story mountain / you will not think form  
 heaven | the observer makes the painting | an empty form goes all the way to heaven  
 space-line-contour / just a suggestion of nature gives weight / light &  
 heavy / light like a feather / you get light enough & you levitate / the four*

AGNES MARTIN  
*This Rain*, 1960  
*The Islands*, 1961  
*Night Sea*, 1963

**BLACKSQUARE REDCROSS WHITEONWHITESQUA  
 REBLACKQUADRILATERALREDSQUAREBLACKCR  
 OSSOFFSQUAREREDSHAPEBLACKONBLACKSQUA  
 RE REDQUADRILATERALOFFSQUAREBLACKSHAP  
 ERDONREDSQUARE OFFSQUARE WHITESHAPEW  
 HITECROSSWHITESQUAREBLACKSQUAREREDCR  
 OSSWHITEONWHITESQUAREBLACKQUADRILATE  
 RALREDSQUAREBLACKCROSSOFFSQUAREREDSH  
 APEBLACKONBLACKSQUAREREDQUADRILATERA  
 LOFFSQUAREBLACKSHAPEPEREDONREDSQUAREOF  
 FSQUAREWHITESHAPE WHITECROSSWHITESQUA  
 REBLACKSQUAREREDCROSSWHITEONWHITESQU  
 AREBLACKQUADRILATERALREDSQUAREBLACKC  
 ROSSOFFSQUAREREDSHAPEBLACKONBLACKSQU  
 ARE REDQUADRILATERALOFFSQUARE BLACKSHA  
 PEREDONREDSQUAREOFFSQUAREWHITESHAPEW  
 HITECROSS WHITESQUAREBLACKSQUAREREDCR  
 OSSWHITEONWHITESQUAREBLACKQUADRILATE  
 RALREDSQUAREBLACKCROSSOFFSQUAREREDSH**

KAZIMIR MALEVICH  
*Black Square, 1915*

**BLACKSQUAREREDCROSSWHITEONWHITESQUAR**  
**EBLACKQUADRILATERALREDSQUAREBLACKCRO**  
**SSOFFSQUARE REDSHAPEBLACKONBLACKSQUAR**  
**EREDQUADRILATERALOFFSQUARE BLACKSHAPE**  
**RED ONREDSQUAREOFFSQUAREWHITESHAPEDI**  
**TECROSSWHITE SQUAREBLACKSQUAREREDCRO**  
**SSWHITE ONWHITESQUAREBLACKQUADRILATERA**  
**LREDSQUAREBLACKCROSSOFFSQUARE REDSHAP**  
**EBLACKONBLACKSQUAREREDQUADRILATERALO**  
**FFSQUARE BLACKSHAPEREDONREDSQUAREOFFS**  
**QUAREWHITESHAPEDIWHITECROSSWHITESQUARE**  
**BLACKSQUARE REDCROSS WHITEONWHITESQUA**  
**REBLACKQUADRILATERALREDSQUAREBLACKCR**  
**OSSOFFSQUAREREDSHAPE BLACKONBLACKSQUA**  
**REREDQUADRILATERAL OFFSQUAREBLACKSHAP**  
**EREDONREDSQUARE OFFSQUAREWHITESHAPEDI**  
**WHITECROSSWHITESQUAREBLACKSQUAREREDCR**  
**OSSWHITE ONWHITESQUAREBLACKQUADRILATE**  
**RALREDSQUAREBLACKCROSSOFFSQUAREREDSH**

KAZIMIR MALEVICH  
*Black Square, 1923*

c a d m i u m y e l l o w d e e p      i v o r y b l a c k

i n d i a n r e d      c r i m s o n      o v e r      c o b a l t  
                          v e n e t i a n      r e d

n a p l e s      y e l l o w

o            c            h            r            e  
 y        e        l        l        o        w  
 o            c            h            r            e

o v e r

c r i m s o n                                  c o b a l t

RICHARD DIEBENKORN  
*Ocean Park 90, 1976*

lllll l i d AXE j a r rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrzzzz z o t DOT s k y yyyyyyy  
 yyyyyyyyyyyyyyooooo o n e JAM l o t ttttttttttttt t i p ZOT a x e  
 eeeeeeeeeezzzzzzzzz z o t LID t i p ppppppppppoooooooooooo  
 ooooooooo o n e SKY z o t ttttttttttttttttttttjjjjj j i p JAR j o t tttt  
 tttttkkkkkkkkkk k i n ZOT s a c cccccccccccrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr  
 rrr r u n LIP d o t ttttttttttssssssssss s k y SAC s o y yyyyyyy  
 yyyyyyyzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz z o t AGE d i p ppppppppaaaaaaaa  
 aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa a x e JAM d o t tttttttttttaa a g e KIN z o t tttt  
 ttttttttttssss s o y LID l i p ppppppkkkkkkk k i n ZIP j a r rrrrrr  
 rrrrrrrjujujkrrrrrrrrrjujujkrrrrrrrrrjujujkrrrrrrrrrzzzz z o t DOT  
 ttttrrrrrjujujkrrrrrzzz z o t DIP pppprrrrrjujujkrppp p o p ZOT tttttt  
 ttttrrrrrjujujkrzzz z o t DUT c h f ORF o o l ISH zotdotzotdotzotdot  
 zotdotzotddd d u t CHF o r f OOL i s h hhhhfoolishfoolishfoolishfool  
 lllllffff f o r DOU b l e DUT c h e eeeseeforfoolishforfoolishforfool  
 lfffordotfordotfordotfordotfordotford d o u BLE d u t CHE eeeeeese

WILLEM DE KOONING  
*Zot*, 1949

*i have felt the Wind of the Wing of Madness*

*june*

**CT**

**VICTORY**

**90**

*outside as amazing space*

*gaeta*

*as the other side of*

**AIR**

*the*

*conquistadors*

*dorees*

CY TWOMBLY  
*Untitled, 1992*

felt wind of the wing where outside as amazing space other side of air felt wind  
of the wing where outside as amazing space where outside amazing space felt  
wind of the wing other side of air where outside as amazing space other side of  
air felt wind of the wing felt wind of the wing felt wind of the wing other side  
of air felt wind of the wing other side of air where felt wind of the wing other  
side of air felt wind other side of air where outside as amazing space felt wind  
of the wing other side of air felt wind of the wing other side of air other side of  
air felt wind of the wing other side of air felt wind of the wing other side of air  
other side of air felt wind of the wing another side of air felt wind of the wing  
other side of air felt wind of the wing other side of air felt wind madness other  
side of air felt wind madness another side of air where the wing of madness felt  
wind of the wing felt wind madness felt wind of the wing another side of air the  
wing of madness another side of air felt wind of the wing felt wind madness felt  
wind of the wing another side of air felt wind of the wing other side of air other  
side of air felt wind of the wing amazing space other side of air felt wind of the  
wing felt wind of the wing other side of air felt wind of the wing of another side  
of space amazing air the other side of space amazing where another side of air  
felt wind madness where other side of air where outside as amazing space on  
the other side of air have felt the wind of the wing of madness as on other sides  
of air where outside as amazing space felt wind of the wing another side of air

CY TWOMBLY  
*Untitled, 1992*

only in that **d**ouble world / or**p**heus **h**en **h**e first sang / we **f**l**u**tter in mid-air / voices **s** altered  
 that **o**utlasts these **s**ur**p**luses / she **h**eard in shadow / **w**e **f**l**u**tter in mid-air / edge**s** shredded  
 in a gale **n**ow chate**r**ing Or**p**heus when **h**e first sang / that **o**utlasts the**s**e surpluses / only  
 one wh**o** can raise the lyre / she **h**ea**r**d in shadow / Or**p**heus w**h**en **h**e first sang / that **o**ut-  
 lasts these **S**urpluses / only in that double-w**o**rd whe**r**e the lyre was lifted / that outlasts these  
 sur**p**luses / edges **h**redded in a gale now chate**e**ring / only in that do**u**ble world / only one  
 who can rai**S**e the lyre / only in that d**o**uble world / she **h**ea**r**d in shadow / that outlasts these  
 sur**p**luses ringing the un**h**heard of cor**e** / we **f**l**u**tter in mid-air / orpheu**S** when he first sang  
 only in that d**o**uble wo**r**ld / or**p**heus w**h**en **h**e first sang / we **f**l**u**tter in mid-air / rai**S**e

CY TWOMBLY  
*Orpheus*, 1979

words double **C**rossed

over surfaces **Y**et more condensed

phrases pic**T**ured imperfectly

for **W**ho can see

col**O**urs shot through with

cadences so **M**onumental

they are **B**ricolaged

on 2 sheets of **L**oose off-square paper

& in italian **Y**our gorgeous mimicry

CY TWOMBLY  
*Petals of Fire*, 1989

**content:** window – cakes with neighbours – their southern drawl / **next up:** content / **next:** studio or cakes / hesitates / **content:** cakes – hesitates with neighbours cakes with neighbours / or hesitates with his cakes / **content:** neighbours watch his window or briefly next door / inside studio – draws / outside parks-up / **content:** door / hesitates – his content – draws / **neighbours:** next window – southern drawl / park-up with cakes / **content:** hesitates briefly – his studio for cakes – he hesitates / **next:** content – he hesitates / **content:** cakes – hesitates – cakes / content – hesitates – door – hesitates briefly / **window:** neighbours next door outside of studio – their southern drawl / park-up / **next:** draws / **door:** his content / door

neighbours – hesitates – drawls – hesitates / **content:** his studio door – reads or he draws – hesitates – drawls / **content:** reads – hesitates / door / or briefly hesitates – his content / **next:** reads – window – next southern drawl – parks-up with cakes / **window:** content – hesitates briefly – their cakes – hesitates with neighbours cakes or with neighbours at the door / hesitates – his cakes / **content:** neighbours watch his window or briefly next door / **next-up:** their southern drawl / neighbours park-up – buy cakes – studio window – studio door / **neighbours:** next window – next southern drawl – studio or cakes / hesitates / draws / **content:** his window / neighbours – reads / hesitates – or draws / **content:** his southern drawl

TACITA DEAN  
*Edwin Parker (16mm film), 2011*

[] *film as time made manifest: time as physical length* []  
 [] *24 frames per second 16 frames in a 35mm foot --* []  
 [] *-- as celluloid film-strip dense as stained glass with* []  
 [] *sprocket holes on either side -- need the stuff of film* []  
 [] *as a painter needs the stuff of paint - metamorphosis* []  
 [] *or shadow play in portrait format -- rhythm & metre* []  
 [] *from the material itself -- in the soft shove of a glass* []  
 [] *globe's curve of resistance --- shimmering of a colour* []  
 [] *filter change ----- widens into steps & reconvenes as* []  
 [] *as architectural play ----- flickering projected image* []  
 [] *offers some surrealist surprise --- flash frames of over* []  
 [] *exposure as the camera stops & starts -- make a late* []  
 [] *party of fountains & light ----- montage shots inter-* []  
 [] *weaving the real & artificial world -- cross-coloured* []  
 [] *giants climb mountain-peaks wearing over-polished* []  
 [] *shoes - flickers & fades phantasmagorically before us* []  
 [] *as a barely moving escalator signposted with cerulean* []  
 [] *dots --- those 24 gaps per second of blackness -- as a* []  
 [] *shore-line musical ensemble vanishes under a dark &* []  
 [] *crinkled viridian leaf ----- contains no post-production* []

TACITA DEAN  
*FILM (35mm film), 2011*

w h i t e  
w h i t e  
w h i t e  
i v o r y  
b l a c k  
w h i t e

relations of scale this special view:	or just sensing /	faced with
<i>it's not that I'm bigger than the ocean</i>		
<i>it's that somehow I'm in that</i>		S P A C E
<i>I'm really involved in</i>		P
<i>it's true</i>		A
measuring		C
to gain		E
plain knowledge from		
looking through & over	a surface as	FIELD
opening as		
vast expanse	add	
band of colour = GAP	= thin rip	
the sum becomes	sensation + exhilaration	
	in columns	
poignant		
parallel points		Z
of the ZIP interrupt		
		I
to exaggerate SPACE / mark		
height / width		P
as if		
from a bridge		
or cliff to create / inspire		
the entire design of the painting		
	call them zips or strips	
	or strings	
	or glittering	
	flickering	occasions
<u>HER</u> : bright cadmium orange with burgundy stripe running along right edge		
<u>HIM</u> : earth brown with intervals		3 hues of red

BARNETT NEWMAN  
*Eve*, 1950 / *Adam*, 1952

mock-up

of paris workroom to walk around | years before his new york grids  
| \_\_\_\_\_

[in rue-du-depart go  
past gare montparnasse]  
where

green cross-pieces of \_\_\_\_\_

starlit night became  
*pier en oceaan* 1915

gained & affixed

| | \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ oval ascent

jazz \_\_\_\_\_ | |  
\_\_\_\_\_ waves | duration / rhythm |

2<sup>nd</sup> state composition:

| | \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ *the perpetual movement of changing oppositions*

taking opinions for

*double lines & yellow* 1936-44

transatlantic from starting over / draws  
inclined not to hope

but \_\_\_\_\_ | | | \_\_\_\_\_  
hoping for  
its finish \_\_\_\_\_ | | \_\_\_\_\_ black-held-guide / contours

buckled

ghosting

| \_\_\_\_\_ | || \_\_\_\_\_

no

grey (= eliminated colour) | \_\_\_\_\_ | 3 across || rests against || 3 more

incomplete

unrestrained charcoal tracks make a palimpsest

bound stripes & planes dissolve can't quite copy themselves

*Reconstructed Paris Studio of PIET MONDRIAN*  
after a photograph (1926) by PAUL DELBO, 2014

b r o w n m a d d e r  
s c a r l e t l a k e  
p e r m a n e n t m a g e n t a  
a l i z a r i n c r i m s o n  
r e d o c h r e  
m a r o o n s e p i a m a r o o n  
c a d m i u m r e d d e e p

MARK ROTHKO  
*Four Darks in Red, 1958*

of identically sized blocks are columns of identical cedar / column units with cedar titles sized identically / cedar identically sized simply arranged / cedar is to a degree  
 CEDAR PIECE 1959 / MAPLE FRENCH CURVE EXERCISE 1959 / PYRAMID 1959 / PYRAM  
 ee cedar composed as columns / together are blocks sized into columns to vertical-  
 ly form simply arranged columns of identically sized blocks / cedar identically siz-  
 ID (VARIATION ON SQUARE PLAN) 1959 / QUINCY SLOT WORK 1959 / TIMBER SPOOL  
 ed & simply arranged / cedar is to a degree vertical columns / vertical forms put si-  
 mply vertical / simple cedar arranged into blocks / arranged units of identically siz-  
 EXERCISE 1959 / LAST LADDER 1959 / TIMBER PIECE (WELL) 1964 / FIRST TREE BONE  
 ed blocks of cedar arranged to size / with cedar titles sized identically / cedar iden-  
 tically sized & arranged simply / cedar is to a degree identically sized blocks / ced-  
 1969 / TIMBER PIECE (WELL) 1970 / REDAN 1970 / TAU & RIGHT THRESHOLD (ELEMEN-  
 ar identically arranged & simply sized / cedar to a degree is simply cedar with titl-  
 es arranged identically / cedar formed into sized blocks simply sized / identically  
 NT SERIES) 1971 / INVERTED HENGE (MEDITATION ON THE YEAR 1960) 1971 / UNCA-  
 sized blocks are columns / cedar identically sized simply arranged are rows of ced-  
 ar columns titled & sized identically / cedar placed into rows of blocks simply siz-  
 RVED BLOCKS 1975 / SECANT 1977 / TRISKAIDEK 1979 / PHALANX 1981 / PHILEMON  
 ed identically / blocks identically sized as columns / cedar identically sized simply  
 arranged as rows with cedar titles sized & arranged identically / units as cedar blo-  
 1981 / BAUCIS 1981 / ROMAYTYR 1989 / PYRAMUS & THISBE 1990 / GLARNISH-STAR-  
 cks form columns simply arranged / blocks as columns in 90-degree rows / units in  
 columns composed together in rows / titled as cedar simply arranged & sized in ro-  
 URN 2001 / COPPER TIMBER 2003 / CEDAR SOLID 2008 / 9<sup>TH</sup> CEDAR CORNER 2007 / CE-

CARL ANDRE  
*Timber-based Pieces, 1959-2007*

phrases songs single forms as individual formal graphic vertical arrangements /  
 existing forms vertical columns invoke graphic columns of single words / colum-  
 TYPEWRITER ON PAPER XEROX LIMITED EDITIONS: FIRST FIVE POEMS 1958 / ROSE  
 ns translate as actual musical structural columns / columns invoke musical structu-  
 re that underpins songs / literary translations vertical formal columns / graphic co-  
 WEDGE 1959 / VISAS 1960 / MAP OF POETRY – AUTOBIOGRAPHY MAN RUNNING 1961  
 lumns as song structure phrases songs alphabetically as song-phrases graphic wo-  
 rds underpinning / alphabetically invoking vertical single word-songs graphically-  
 / DITHYRAMB 1962 / A MAN CARRYING A SAXOPHONE 1963 / ONE HUNDRED SONNE  
 underpinned / musical vertical graphic forms existing as song-words / alphabetic-  
 ally invoke single vertical word-songs graphically underpinned / graphically verti-  
 ETS – MOON 1963 / ONE HUNDRED SONNETS – TWO 1963 / AMERICA DRILL 1963 / POE  
 cal vertically graphic invokes musical structure form invokes structural single co-  
 lumns / invokes length invokes single columns musical song structure / literary t-  
 M FOR THREE VOICES 1963 / ONE HUNDRED SONNETS – I ... FLOWERS 1963 / BLUE ...  
 ranslations vertical formal columns / alphabetically invoke single vertical word-so-  
 ngs graphically underpinned / words translate underpinned words in formally stru-  
 STEP 1964 / RED CUT 1964 / BEAM ... ROOM 1966 / LEVERWORDS 1966 / MAP OF POET  
 ctured columns / song-structure alphabetically translates invokes sonnets / music-  
 al vertical graphic forms existing as song-words / words translate underpinned wo-  
 RY – SCULPTURE WORDS 1966 / SCATTER PIECE 1966 / STILL A NOVEL 1972 / CITY OS  
 rds in formally structured columns / translates literature / columns invoke musical  
 structure that underpins songs / columns translate musical column-structure / mus-  
 TRICHES FOREHEAD 1972 / SEARCH–JOURNEY–RUINED 1972 / ART-RITE COVER 1976

CARL ANDRE  
*Text-based Pieces, 1958-1976*

**BLACKSQUARE REDCROS**  
**RE BLACK QUADRILATER**  
**OSS OFFSQUARE REDSHA**  
**RE RED QUADRILATERAL**  
**EREDONREDSQUARE OFF**  
**HITECROSS WHITE SQUA**  
**OSSWHITEONWHITE SQU**  
**RALREDSQUAREBLACKC**  
**APEBLACKONBLACKSQU**  
**LOFFSQUARE BLACKSHA**

**HITECROSS WHITESQUA**  
**OSSWHITEONWHITESQU**  
**AL RED SQUARE BLACKC**  
**PE BLACKONBLACK SQU**  
**OFF SQUARE BLACK SHA**  
**FSQUAREWHITESHAPW**  
**E BLACK SQUARE REDCR**  
**ARE BLACKQUADRILATE**  
**ROSSOFFSQUARE REDSH**

KAZIMIR MALEVICH  
*4 Squares, 1915*

**BLACKSQUAREREDCROSSWHITEONWHITESQUAR**  
**EBLACKQUADRILATERALREDSQUAREBLACKCRO**  
**SSOFFSQUARE REDSHAPEBLACKONBLACKSQUAR**  
**EREDQUADRILATERALOFFSQUARE BLACKSHAPE**  
**RED ONREDSQUAREOFFSQUAREWHITESHAPewHI**  
**TECROSSWHITE SQUAREBLACKSQUAREREDCROS**  
**SWHITE ONWHITESQUAREBLACKQUADRILATERA**  
**LREDSQUAREBLACKCROSSOFFSQUARE REDSHAP**  
**UAREREDQUADRILATERALO**  
**PE REDONREDSQUARE OFFS**  
**WHITECROSSWHITESQUARE**  
**ROSS WHITEONWHITESQUA**  
**ERAL REDSQUAREBLACK CR**  
**HAPE BLACKONBLACKSQUA**  
**AL OFFSQUAREBLACK SHAP**  
**OFF SQUAREWHITESHAPew**  
**UARE BLACKSQUARERED CR**  
**QU ARE BLACKQUADRILATE**  
**CKCROSSOFFSQUAREREDSH**

KAZIMIR MALEVICH

*Black & White Suprematist Composition, 1915*

zero light / giddiness / no restraint / late canvas / outlined black / cartoon-like

*there is a guy lying in bed eating a bunch of french fries  
imagining this pile of stuff above him*

things on top of other things like heaped-up shoes lined up with their soles showing  
fries ketchup brush pots a hand paints another shoe not painstaking not some-  
thing mystical puts head on his pillow his bed his cigarette light bulb window  
blind & string peeking at routine things in a tense situation: horizontal painter with  
just one beady eye lays peeking at stays until paint on his brush gets used up

zero light / giddiness / no restraint / late canvas / outlined black / cartoon like  
zero light / giddiness / no restraint / late canvas / outlined black / cartoon-like  
zero light / giddiness / no restraint / late canvas / outlined black / cartoon-like

PHILIP GUSTON  
*Painting Smoking Eating, 1973*

s i e n n a

r o s e p i n k g e r a n i u m l a k e

s a p g r e e n

t r a n s p a r e n t y e l l o w

b u r n t u m b e r

l a m p b l a c k

HELEN FRANKENTHALER  
*Fiesta, 1973*

O P E N				
F L L E	fetch	leeward	long waves	ebb
F U E A	fusion	underneath	energy	across
S N M R	slate	navigation	maritime	ripple
H G E S	heavy sea	generating	eye-catching	spotlights
O E N H	other	expand	night	history
R T O	range		tide	opposite
A R			arranged	respect
L E			lunar / solar	emblem

**OPEN:** the offshore plunge is elemental near the shoreline  
it fetches leeward into long waves it even ebbs (as the moon does) into fusion  
underneath that energises as if across slate  
while our navigation is maritime a rippling  
heavy sea might generate eye-catching spotlights other expansive night histories  
range across tidal opposites  
what we arrange as respect adds another lunar or solar emblem

	<b>OPEN:</b>	plunge	near the shoreline
leeward	waves		into fusion
	across slate		
	while		rippling
might generate			night histories
across tidal opposites			
	as respect		

PIERRE SOULAGES  
*Peinture 5th Janvier, 2008*

**slate rippling slate**

-----  
 night **tidal** night  
 -----

**slow grey graphite**

-----D E R E V N Y A-----

subtracts colour – writes *DEREVNYA* across a drawing – makes something mystical out of it on small paper – frames a word as a thing among things – forming letters as sugared-up noir

V I L L A G E

*... instead of painting huts & corners of nature it is better to write the VILLAGE & it will appear to everyone in great detail encompassing the entire village ... ..*

-----D E R E V N Y A-----

## ***POEMS TO THE SEA***

*after Cy Twombly's suite of 24 drawings:  
**Poems to the Sea** 1959, oil, graphite & wax  
crayon on paper, each sheet approx. 33 x 31cm*

1

drawn-in map drawn blank

plenty of signs  
riding

against  
repetition

the repetitive on-shore breeze  
to cross boundaries

marking  
edges more  
as borders that move

places merely to step through  
these  
changes seem too periodical  
to hang on a wall

coming in last thing bringing  
the roundness of hills &  
trees

to write 'over the sea' then 'over the sea'  
then 'over the sea' as poem nineteen  
with its pale width-length-height

when everything is equal  
in the flatness of water

2

moving  
in blue ink

sightline into ghost-line  
ghost-line into note-line  
note-line into song-line  
full of 3 / 4 time

crooning  
splintered-lines

to concoct a story

to reconstruct a beach

keep in touch with

instances of colour turning:  
pictorial / psychological stances  
become a place to wait

repeated motifs imply spatial meaning  
so linger & consider  
& contemplate

speak to here & now

of material objects in space:  
forms one by one  
open up the page

allow each intricate detail  
to blatantly intercept / contravene  
all known fields

break lines or halve words

rule-them-in then rule-them-out  
of spaces actual  
as well as virtual:

the sea is steep & tilted  
the sky is a deep gap  
held by a broken mark

task:  
 to record daily  
 & fast  
 white-grey-blue tessellated sea

10.05 / beach  
 this café is a lightbox  
 there to sit not with  
 but in front of  
 layers of dancing shapes  
 that interlock

to get the immediate effect

hope to show  
 that  
 colour floats to catch  
 the glow of water & light

4.25 / from the rocks  
 pale pink  
 jump-cuts to phthalo blue

7.10 / back home  
 working at night

ocean-blown

beachcombing

by starlight

by moonlight  
 whirlpools run

with acrobatic editing  
 look

deliberately done

9.45 / on pages

soon creased-up  
 images leap / balloon out

a torch replaces the moon

on the HORIZONTAL:

*space* sea waves beach shore wind cloud sky horizon *light*

on the VERTICAL:

*space*  
sea  
waves  
beach  
shore  
wind  
cloud  
sky  
horizon  
*light*

seawards a display of distance  
 points extend then retreat:

previously  
 gathered  
 numbers suddenly close-up  
*en plein air*  
 perfect as minutes  
 standing

fragments  
 as a sum of light

pencil-touch:  
 dot carry one    then dot carry two  
    then dot carry three  
 gets the spread  
 of ocean into it

sand  
 that empties    that fills

confirms human scale  
 slight against mass  
 perceived as geological

date bottom left    initials bottom right

sea								
day	sea							
grid	day	sea						
edge	grid	day	sea					
tide	edge	grid	day	sea				
light	tide	edge	grid	day	sea			
beach	light	tide	edge	grid	day	sea		
wind	beach	light	tide	edge	grid	day	sea	
storm	wind	beach	light	tide	edge	grid	day	sea

8

to keenly look  
watch  
scan  
spin  
squinting  
as if through 3D frames

to slowly lean  
immersed  
in space  
clouds / sea / horizon  
tilting  
strong light to push on with

geometry to  
assist observation  
& understanding  
to be in conversation  
or land on its own

standing outside with traces:

walking into this quest  
with nothing less  
than energy driving it

leaning towards an incomplete edge  
on air

crayoned  
numbers crossing-in  
where  
torn-through letters get to:

when  
a poem crosses over

empirical proof gets erased

at this distance  
 abbreviated bathers  
 who call

make whispers

4 figures  
 crossed-off  
 leaving 8  
 before spits of rain overtake

rows & rows numbered  
 tallied

as if dishevelled disguises  
 will hide everything  
 passed left-to-right

as if  
 every cancellation  
 which is vertical  
 gets overworked

with  
 endless joined-up writing  
 too  
 pink

that hesitates

deviates  
 to sepia shades

& carbon-copied blues in waiting

W H I T E C A P H O R I Z O N

12

9am

promise flows    blue sky notes  
upward path / narrow map / follow it down

sunlight is key

abrupt decision / incision  
sea of sound

tracing    framing  
to render each thought & divide  
adding up the means to multiply  
although

towards  
future / or

past  
roaming                    subtraction is to zero

in crayon / gesso / pencil / pastel / biro

geometry assists / can test observation

to measure with:  
 a human hand as a hand    an arm as an arm    a body  
    as a body  
    as a field

different permutations will occur up & down in space  
 but on the horizontal all is intuitive

entered    exerted upon  
    from every side

sky  
 instantly onto the page

network of white wandering  
 in a skein

cumulus half-erased



SO	TO	I
KNOWING	ABSORB	HAVE
NOTHING	SUCH	A
ABOUT	RAW	FEELING
METHODS	SENSATION	THIS
OF	THEN	MIGHT
PAINTING	TREAT	JUST
THE	IT	BE
SEA	WITH	THE
I	THE	RIGHT
CAN	GREATEST	PLACE
BUT	RESPECT	AND
WAIT	FOR	TIME

this scattering  
 gets rewritten  
 as diagrams of air

even clean hands leave marks that are telling

arcs for numbers  
 held as confetti  
 or revised as petals  
 thrown  
 by diagonal weather

scale scope  
 open & generous for  
 on the shoreline:

stones  
 shells  
 sea-weed &  
 silver paper

on the page:  
 these gestures settle into patterns

or disappear-as-red

walk away

write / draw more in the hours left

warm wet sea air  
fresh salt air  
&  
gradual

white light

ROSE white light

PEARL white light

CREAM white light

COPPER white light

MAGENTA white light

that shines COBALT

mood & matter inhabits  
over & over

each state's surviving trace speaks up

could say be careful

could be  
careful  
or could say cancel  
& catalogue  
what could  
be careful or  
could say cancel  
or could be  
careful &  
catalogue  
what  
turns up

but

be

careful  
simply with your hands  
the unlikeliest shapes arrest

cancel & go beyond simply what  
should cancel what will be differently heard

something signalling  
something

something  
disappearing to red

disappeared disappear-red

so close to broken ground

script in translation  
quietly cursive

action of letters:  
their crowdedness  
their sound

in space where things shift  
where  
animations of light get pressed into  
one breath of air  
& the next  
& the next

incongruous as letters torn out

impossible diagram  
to write  
draw

need to squeeze signs through it

words

to move

those erase about

grim EL the forming

rise IN EM version grids rain & tide create new surfaces each instant  
 & CL ENTS to last HORIZON by its nature not known  
 fall EMENT be arranged rumble as INCAN TA TION of  
 to new weather colour IN FIN IT IES felt  
 be deep & level as blurry sea water

21

each scrawl valid as if  
glazed / fired  
without the safety of blue  
inscription

to finger tap & mime each new question  
while still running  
with a score

atmosphere recorded  
then drawn wide as sea water

only perspective left  
is of minutes

with post-epic perspective  
 everything has to mesh at the level of myth

on this beach  
 something  
 rounded-up or rounded upon

zig zags  
 in a diary  
 becoming a maze  
 becoming a field circled about  
 or a field circled around

not just one angle to it:

a continuous sweep & tally  
 concentrated in an absurd document

mapping the territory  
 it goes right here:  
 any teller will tread a fine line  
 rounding the sun's sparkle

refining performance it suspends

refusing contrivance it scatters

shapes overlap as forms change  
 both ways  
 they contradict:

as diagrams encased in waves

as co-ordinates that interlace & hide

can this debris reflect  
                                  psychic images washed up  
                                  always decaying  
  from the sea bed

accrued using  
          blurred printer's blue

reversing green to obscure   changes  
  that do come landing

24 frames produced earlier  
imply long-shots   whatever our concepts do

like rebels who reframe questions / messages / quotations:

          fragments

          for the sea to carry  
                                  over sand & stones looping

not only white & its relationship to light

that cancelled beach

that rampant slang

this perpendicular location

those dislodged number rows

their shuffle left-to-right

those wordless surfers

their abbreviated summersaults

this overtaking tide

these cross-listed players

these crisscrossing signs

in mid-gesture    white underneath / white inside

## POSTSCRIPT

### *Poems to the Sea* in relation to *Painterly Poetics* – An Explication

I have used three American poets – Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Cole Swensen – as literary models to inform my own writing process. In recognizing creative practice as a network of conversations, my approach was to contextualize the construction of *Poems to the Sea* with the disciplines of critical reading and critical writing, specifically drawing upon the spirit of literary experiment that emerged at Black Mountain College in the early 1950s.

The development of my critical thesis reflects how my creative energy has been concentrated upon insights gained from American predecessors, for Black Mountain enabled and put into action Olson and Creeley's belief that poetry was capable of the ambition and sensibility of Abstract Expressionist painting. I identify with poets and painters associated with the college and its legacy, especially with their adoption of composition-by-field. I see them as companions in the creative process, producing work that reveals the inter-connectedness of artistic practice. Discovering equivalences between disciplines through close-reading of poems and paintings, I wanted to make my analysis of the actual process, in terms of a poet or painter's means of seeing and constructing, of primary importance. Consequently, the poems and paintings I have chosen to consider within the thesis act as sites of formation and process, while I discuss them as always in a state of 'becoming'. This understanding of openness that informs the symbiotic relations between poetry and painting was formalised not only in the teaching and creative activities that took place at Black Mountain, but also in Olson's significant essay 'Projective Verse' (1950).

Olson is an instinctive writer: the example he sets in both his essays and his poems is to use language as an action, as I have tried to do in *Poems to the Sea*. His guiding theories such as ‘Projective Verse’ utilise the intuitive gesture as a cohesive means of research. Similarly, within the spatial flow of every *Maximus* poem, the content is made to hold its own position. In keeping with Olson’s pursuit, the Abstract Expressionist’s aim was to make the application of paint the experiential source of each work. The structure of the opening chapter on Olson is designed to elucidate this connection between the verbal and the visual. I situate Olson’s sense of gestural rhythm in relation to Jackson Pollock; his use of gestural scale in relation to Robert Motherwell; his understanding of history in relation to Cy Twombly; his awareness of proprioception in relation to the dancer Merce Cunningham; and his consideration of painterly process in relation to Willem de Kooning and Joseph Fiore.

In researching and writing *Poems to the Sea* I became increasingly aware of how Olson’s theories rely on his innovative interplay of disciplines and his ability to draw upon different bodies of knowledge. In terms of his influence on the collection, I have remained fascinated by the speech currents of language that drive Olson’s poems, revealing the vitality of each gesture. I am especially struck by the immediacy of his words, phrases or lines when seen and experienced as physical things on the page. These attributes of Olson’s poetry bear comparison to the intense energy of a painting by Pollock, de Kooning or Twombly, the painterliness contained within the surface of a specific work, especially when one is able to scrutinize the original painting in a gallery. Olson’s effect on my writing was pivotal when developing poems that reveal the artist’s physical activity and connection to their materials, the involvement of the body in creating an artwork.

Insights gained from Olson's spontaneous open field poetics made me more aware of the role of the breath: how its instinctive expansiveness equates with the painter's largeness of expression. This was supported by a number of artist statements I collected while viewing various exhibitions, declarations that affiliate them closely to Olson, such as: 'active form is good ... formation is movement, act. Formation is life' (Klee); 'it is really a matter of ending this silence and solitude, of breathing and stretching one's arms again' (Rothko); and 'no limits, just edges' (Pollock). Olson's understanding of unrestricted gestural-bodily movement in any medium has been central to the writing of *Poems to the Sea*. Learning from his example and becoming more aware of the spatial and syntactical relations of the open-field, whereby images are answering to other images, has particularly influenced the form and development of the collection.

Olson and Creeley were engaged in a shared poetic project: both were concerned with the motion of the line propelled by the breath; one thought or observation shifting into another; the form of the poem discovering itself as it moved along. Contributing directly to Olson's development of 'Projective Verse' through their extensive correspondence, Creeley (like his mentor) absorbed and responded to the energies and abilities of several visual artists, instigating and participating in a series of collaborations. In Chapter Two I consider the way that Creeley understood and valued visual experience. My focus on his connection with Philip Guston, Frank Stella and Robert Indiana – their methods of seeing and making – reveals in each case an affinity between poet and painter while emphasizing the respect Creeley accorded these and other members of first and second generation post-war American artists, including a number of them in his 'company' of aesthetic fellow-travellers and

explorers. Through the juxtaposition of poems and paintings I have chosen for discussion, the chapter shows how Creeley endorses the experiential basis of composition-by-field: finding the means to project the speaker's dynamic attentive presence where, at all times, every object and image becomes an unfolding event in the poem.

Immersed in open field poetics while writing *Poems to the Sea*, I found myself constantly adopting Creeley's aim 'to give account' of the mutability that is characteristic of the creative process. In common with Olson and Creeley, as well as the painters I connected them with, I wanted to liberate these poems from any presiding descriptive intention. Creeley's surges of feeling that are often halted by awkward or uncertain instances of expression perfectly convey the inhibiting effect of moments of self-doubt, the incessant unrest that goes into the making of my own poems. In writing the collection, I wanted to use the properties of the medium to link the process of making a poem with that of making a painting: in *Poems to the Sea* I searched for utterances equivalent to painterly energies and gestures, while at the same time, tracking the speaker's paratactic leaps of thought. The subject is always in the act of making, involved in the act of reaching and struggling towards an elusive image. From Creeley I have learned that emotion is implicit to the effort, and this striving to construct a concrete image from something intangible informs the means of each poem's articulation.

Similarly aware of the possibilities of visual art, Swensen participates in the actualities of the creative process: building upon Olson's innovative use of the extended line, she provides an immediate response to vision. In the third and final

chapter I discuss how, as a contemporary ekphrastic poet, Swensen explores the manner in which her subject begins to really ‘see’ and then continues both ‘seeing’ and ‘not seeing’; and in the particular case of the painter Pierre Bonnard, how Swensen examines his methods of organizing a composition and his approach to constructing a view. By concerning herself with contrasting ways of ‘seeing’ and ways of ‘making’, she tests the capability of language to enact the painterly and the visual. In a Swensen poem, what is seen within the frame is directing the speaker’s train of thought but, as with Creeley, there is often an instability and uncertainty attached to the speaker’s perspective, for their position is never static. Intervals as leaps of perception or gaps left within the poetic line create a tension between what is audible and what is visible; these leaps or gaps produce a tautness between what is being seen and what is being said.

Swensen integrates passages of prose with sections of verse that nevertheless maintain an open, spatial and rhythmic quality, the text adopting the motion of her specific nature as she sets each run of words into the white space. In terms of enhancing the visual aspects of the poem, she devotes great attention to how different facets can be variously placed upon the page. Swensen’s productive mix of construction and intuition to achieve spatial exactness in her layout has been a considerable influence on my own writing. The shaping and positioning of letters, words, lines and stanzas according to their rhythm and sound play, while simultaneously assessing their visual emphasis and sense of weight, has been vital to establishing a distinctive aesthetic appearance to each of the three sections of *Poems to the Sea*. I wanted every page of the collection to provide a visual as well as a verbal experience for the reader.

As a medium of exploration, writing the collection in conjunction with the analytical prose of my thesis on the painterly poetics of Olson, Creeley and Swensen has effectively revealed many of the intricacies and dimensions of my creative practice. This confluence of creative and critical work has resulted in a deep attentiveness to process. In an autobiographical sense, *Poems to the Sea* documents what became a powerful impulse in the studio to construct a specific series of non-representational images: painterly-diagrammatic-textual impressions of coastal light marked by an ever-shifting atmosphere. Inspired by Twombly's series of the same title, I wanted to record sensations of light and air in a visual field where everything is moving.

With each image, I aimed to express vision and movement all at once and looking now at these palimpsests on the studio wall, I get the sense of being left with traces of action and sensation, fragments of feeling and thought. Changes of direction have been the catalyst of numerous transformations so that ideas submerged in the layering – which was sometimes transparent and other times opaque – have often re-emerged later on in the series. In Olson's terms, every one of these foundational and residual images could be read as 'a complex of occasions'.

The poetry of Olson, Creeley and Swensen addresses the kinetics of experience: through the resonances of their words, each poet demonstrates a concern for the association of objects in the open field of the poem, and the intense way these objects then inter-operate with one another on the page; each reveals how the exterior world becomes accessible to the writer in split seconds of consciousness. As in the case of the painters they admire whom connected directly with the properties of their chosen media, all three poets have treated language as an art material. Spatial orientation is

also a significant consideration: at various points in my reading of their verse, Olson, Creeley and Swensen have all facilitated in my writing process an acceptance of a momentary loss of bearings where disorientation occurs before the subject gains recognition and locates the self in space. Olson, Creeley and Swensen also convey an appreciation of geometry that can be simultaneously conceptual and concrete, a projective way of seeing the world only presently coming into view. This bringing together of what is intimate and what is situated far away, putting them equally against the arm's length reach of the artist in the studio was crucial in the development of *Poems to the Sea*.

Acts of measuring and numbering involved in making a composition occur in several of my poems and often these are juxtaposed with the roaming consciousness of the speaker who, if they are to make progress, must avoid being distracted from the geometrical drawing, most usually a grid of some kind, that is their task under hand. The parallel poetics between visual artists and Olson, Creeley and Swensen that I emphasize throughout the thesis are intrinsic to the content of my poems. The painter's focus on horizontals and verticals and how they might intersect chimes with the concerns of the poet; for both have to work with the effects of lengthening and shortening lines as the emergence of an all-over rhythm demands.

From studying Olson's, Creeley's and Swensen's poetry, I have recognized that the drama of recurrence and variation critically depends upon individual line breaks. As with a painting, the poem is built of units and forces: the concentrations of energy contained within the intervals, as well as inside the actual lines. The process that drives the subjects in several of my poems is typified by Mondrian who simplified his

diagrammatic rendering of place (in the series *Pier and Ocean*, for example) into a partial grid-like structure, full of the kind of gaps and ghost-lines that Swensen refers to as either extending or abbreviating our way of looking at the world.

The writing of *Poems to the Sea* has been informed by Swensen's ability to merge physical and ethereal realities, for her poetry is carefully packed with a wealth of both erudite and sensory detail. While historical and scientific knowledge is included in her poetic treatment of reflections, for instance, intangible factors are dealt with as they emerge into the field of view: she asks us to consider all of the uncertainties, instabilities and distortions experienced when staring either into bright sunlight or ambient lamplight; she asks what the acts of looking 'at' water or 'through' glass lead us to see or think; she reveals the constant happening of familiar images recalled in things seen for the first time.

This conversation between the verbal and the visual, epitomized by Olson, Creeley and Swensen, shaped the form and content of my collection of poems, enabling my investigation of the affinities shared between poetry and visual art. Throughout this body of work, the process of writing is seen as congruent with the process of painting. I distinguish various modes of expression in my own creative practice that encompasses both disciplines. Olson's open field model that has influenced Creeley and Swensen continues to be an inspiration for me: its potential as immense as the limitless space of the open sea.