

A "Reasonable Reader of Poetry's" Briefed Introduction:

A Sam Harris Application on the Lack of Authorship in Poetry and Poems

by

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis document entitled, "A 'Reasonable Reader of Poetry's' Briefed Introduction: A Sam Harris Application on the Lack of Authorship in Poetry and Poems" explores the concept of writing itself applied to the world of poetry. This document uses Sam Harris' critique and redefinition of free will as an illusion applied to authorship and the concept of self within poetry. This thesis upholds Sam Harris' application of the illusion of free will against and within conventions of experimental poetry to do with the persona poem, deviated syntax, memory, Confessionalist poetry, and so on. The document pulls in examples from Modernist poetry, Confessionalist poetry, prose poetry, contemporary poetry, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, and experimental poetry. This thesis ends with the conclusion that further research needs to be done with regard to how this lack of authorship applies to copyright law within the poetry field.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I want to make something clear. I am not a writer. I do not write, author, scribble—not of it. Let me make something additionally clear—neither does anyone else. Even as whatever version of a reader (myself included) comes to this word and this word and the next and this word and an elephant and another “and” and, perhaps, even a stripped polka dot—I’m not writing those words and not even writing these words. The denotative meaning of writing is precise in its scientific remove as a form of communication conveyed through inscription of symbols. However, the connotative meaning or rather, meanings are far more menacing when applied personally. Connotatively, there is a intertwining of the author’s own will when writing—the author in their authorship is willing the words on the page, and is granted all of the freedom that free will grants an author to author such magic. This exposition is not a redundancy or branched argument to do with the nature of influence and the author’s inability to express or write something new. Instead, my initial claims are more subtly picking at the uniformed language and seemingly arrogant nature in the very thought or perceived act of “authorship” and me *the* author creating, like some masterful god on the page, the very words or arrangement of words that the reader is so graciously receiving, entertained by, frustrated with, indifferent to, or not even reading because they do not have access or refuse to read or are illiterate or or or. Broadly stated, “Free will *is* an illusion. Our wills are simply not of our own making. Thoughts and intentions emerge from background causes of which we are unaware and over which we exert no conscious control. We do

not have the freedom we think we have” (Harris 5). And if writing is the inscription of thoughts, then...

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Now, unlike Sam Harris, in addition to not being a writer like everyone else (or even a considerably “great writer” just now using a double negative)—I am also not a neuroscientist. I do not have access or, as I eat a bigger slice of humble pie, the mental faculties to disprove, within a twenty to twenty five page span, the existence of free will in its entanglement with authorship. I am not a godlike consciousness, although neuroscientists and technologists are only a few decades away from being able to feasibly download a human consciousness onto some hardware. In the following pages I wish to disprove that poets have even been able to themselves artfully project the illusion of free will itself onto the page using such *free* verse conventions like italicizing, the employment of characters, the speaker’s persona, line breaks, diction, and on and on and on (although not to infinity—this conventions list might be too long a finite list to list out). In denying the existence of free will, there coexists the idea of ownership and of ego, of intellect and the right to purport such surety in *knowing* a number of “things,” one being a human’s individual concept of themselves, but also the author’s projected concept of *the* self. In Yates’, not Yeats’, *The Art of Memory* he historicizes the concept of memory and shows its progression into the world of science hinting at the physical network of the memory, which provably exists in the physical brain. Philosophers and rhetoricians alike forming their concepts on the various enactments of the memory or, as a scientist would be inclined to say, memories within a single individual. Yates writes about the expanse of the memory in quoting Bacon’s “use of the ‘force of imagination’” in the “story of a card trick.” (372). Yates quotes:

We find in the art of memory, that images visible work better than other conceits: as if you would remember the word *philosophy*, you shall more surely do it by imagining that such a man (for men are best places) is reading upon Aristotle's Physics; than if you should imagine him to say, *I'll go study philosophy*. And therefore this observation would be translated to the subject we now speak of (the card trick): for the more lustrous the imagination is, it filleth and fixeth better (373).

Here Yates captures a number of concepts relevant to the memory and the memory's own entanglement with intelligence. The Deep Imagist movement can be said to be partially founded in this writer-ly and smart convention of "show, don't tell," because the physical brain's and memories' faculties are more susceptible to "imagine"-ing as opposed to hearing *the tell*. What is further demonstrated in this inclination for good writer-ly impulse in the sheer history of capturing images as opposed to the abstract is the historical development of ease in smart and simple employment of images—an argument of usability. Even the counteracting writer-ly movements against such a developed imagist convention and into the abstract are all founded in the memory or memories and in the physical brain. In Ashbery's title poem "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," he overtly comments on the memory as a construct of convention, not necessarily a conventional construct—that is to say, not necessarily a commonplace convention so *overtly* employed before: "...A peculiar slant/ Of memory that intrudes on the dreaming model/ In the silence of the studio as he considers/ Lifting the pencil to the self-portrait" (71). Ashbery is famously employing a great deal of abstraction and fractal-ing, in a

sense, this idea of self in creating an *Ars Poetica* commenting on the painter Parmigianino's new and tiny perspective painting in a mirror.

Both Parmigianino's and Ashbery's creativity in employing such seemingly unique and artful tactics is not to be famously garnered as so grand or so reductive or even so new. But so *seemingly* new rather—both an artful subscription to the physical brains that have read or even publicized their works (Ashbery's poem can be reductively seen as Ashbery himself publicizing—the great publicist of Parmigianino). It is also to be made clear that choice and intention are separate concepts from free will. Choice and intention can and do still exist in this universe and in the made up universes of writers and poets on the page, but their definitions are just that much more hairsplitting especially in conflation with what is available and conscious to Parmigianino in the act of painting or in Ashbery's conscious imagining in Parmigianino's intention to paint. Ashbery and Parmigianino are simply making choices which are victim to “background causes over which” they “are unaware and exert no conscious control” (Harris 5). What is evident are the works in which Ashbery and Parmigianino have produced and over which they employ identifiable conventions.

These identifiable conventions are just that...identifiable, to be named, to be recognized, and to be entangled with memory networks...networks of human intelligence. Even with overt subversion—there is a counteraction...a reaction against a developed trend or concept that has in its experiment become the standard. Gertrude Stein is the ideal of all this. An experimenter making her experiment overt and seemingly “new”—seemingly “free,” yet her work is still entirely free of the word “free.” In Stein's

Tender Buttons she makes sentences—she makes statements. One such instantiation subtitled “DIRT AND NOT COPPER.” reads as follows:

Dirt and not copper makes a color darker. It makes
the shape so heavy and makes no melody harder.

It makes mercy and relaxation and even a strength
to spread a table fuller. There are more places not
empty. They see cover (13).

What? If a legal concept of a reader of poetry exists—“a reasonable reader of poetry”—then what are they to make of Stein’s work...of this quoted piece? Some slant rhyme—darker with harder—five lines, four line breaks, an overt nodding to the definitional standards of labeling color, or perhaps a full blown upheaval in the concept of color itself. Stein is only creating a work that is *seemingly new*, especially in comparison to the surrounding writers of her time. But there is convention in her experiment—a convention set forth by using a relatively new arrangement of words, but even these words are constrained in and of themselves. Was Stein “free” to write that which did not occur to her?

Well...no. And I am arguing that the existence of pause or a “well...” does not give rise to the existence of “free will” either—my brain already knew that I would choose “well...” well before I became aware of this “choice.” Neurologist Oliver Sacks, who socially circles in the same circles as neuroscientist Sam Harris (and even wrote a positive blurb for Sam Harris’ essay book *Free Will*), explores the workings of the physical brain by pulling in unique case studies in his book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat and Other Clinical Tales*. The brain is a physical structure and any

damage to this physical system gives rise to an altering form of behavior. As most scientists know—this is a two way street—meaning that behavior can alter the physical constructs of the brain. In Sacks’ book, he briefly details one case in which a man fell out of bed because he claimed that someone else’s leg was in the bed with him—“a severed human leg” (53). The mystery revealed—the leg was the man’s own. The man had a condition due to a prior injury which made him not recognize his own limbs as his own. What is fascinating here—is this can further give rise to the idea of ownership and will and the concept of the self as being inherently necessary illusions to do with the very nature of survivability and “heathy” human functioning. However, this injury to the physical brain *is* logical and “res ipsa loquitur”—translation: “the thing itself speaks.” Or the thing speaks for itself—this proves the logical universe of which “free will” does and cannot feasibly exist. The connection between Sacks’ case studies and Stein’s employment of seemingly new conventions just makes what is conscious overt.

Harris references a famous experiment performed by physiologist Benjamin Libet in which Libet “used EEG to show that activity in the brain’s motor cortex can be detected some 300 milliseconds before a person feels that he has decided to move” (8). Harris continues to cite more examples of this nature, but further argues that even if there were no time discrepancy there is no room for free will to exist either—not even in subjective experience. Regarding the nature of the experiments that he cites like Libet’s, Harris states:

These findings are difficult to reconcile with the sense that we are the conscious authors of our actions. One fact now seems indisputable: Some moments before you are aware of what you will do next—a time in which you

subjectively appear to have complete freedom to behave however you please—your brain has already determined what you will do. You then become conscious of this ‘decision’ and believe that you are in the process of making it.

The distinction between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ systems in the brain offers no relief: I, as the conscious witness of my experience, no more initiate events in my prefrontal cortex than I cause my heart to beat. There will always be some delay between the first neurophysiological events that kindle my next conscious thought and the thought itself (9).

The connection to be made between the man with the severed leg and Stein’s works is that the dissociative nature of what is produced—odd behavior in the man and arguably “odd” writing by Stein—are just as culpable and exculpatory in their origins in the physical brain. The severity of the man’s condition and the extreme “oddness” of Stein’s works are simply more overtly dissociative and therefore, *seemingly* “free.”

And, to a certain extent, Wallace Stevens agrees with me and with what I just “wrote.” Stevens was a unique figure—a poet who happened to be an insurance lawyer, not an insurance lawyer poet. He can be said to be one of the more severely “abstract” Modernist poets to come out of his time. In his book (to do with craft mostly) *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination*, he comments on, defines and defines and redefines and defines “the imagination.” He begins one such essay entitled “Imagination as Value,” saying,

It does not seem possible to say of the imagination that it has a certain single characteristic which of itself gives it a certain single value as, for example, good

or evil. To say such a thing would be the same thing as to say that the reason is good or evil or, for that matter, that human nature is good or evil (133).

Now to be clear about the connection Stevens is making—he is saying that the imagination does not hold a *single* characteristic which allows for it to have defining value. He is not saying that the imagination itself cannot be characterized or hold multiple characteristics or be defined. He is making a direct connection with Harris or rather Harris (as he is still living) is making a direct connection with Stevens. Harris makes this argument that recognizing the illusion of free will with regard to criminal law alters how the world should handle punishment and “authored” intent (Harris 1-6). In relation to a convention employed by, arguably, all poets all the time—this lack of “authorship” either further complicates or simplifies the persona and the persona poem. The persona poem is a poem in which the poet employs a dramatic character that is separate from themselves and acts as the speaker of the poem. Even if a direct statement in the poem is made that the speaker and poet are one in the same—the argument can still be made that the poet is employing a persona. One famous employment of multiple and overt personas is John Berryman’s *The Dream Songs*. One “Dream Song” that exemplifies the criminality associated with writing in persona is “Dream Song 14”—the first stanza and beginning of the second stanza is quoted below:

Life, friends is boring. We must not say so.

After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,

we ourselves flash and yearn,

and moreover my mother told me as a boy

(repeatingly) ‘Ever to confess you’re bored

means you have no

Inner Resources.’ I conclude now I have no

inner resources, because I am heavy bored (16)...

At the time this was published Berryman received lots of blowback critiques from this one “Dream Song”—which is odd because he is overtly employing a persona. But even if he were not so overtly employing persona—he is still employing persona. Because what human being can be characterized as fixed for all time or what poem itself can be fixed for all time? This is a definitional argument of the word “fixed.” But life itself involves change and the physical brain involves change. As I scratch my nose and around 150 skin cells drift down to my seat cushion—am I less myself...less of a full human being? The prefrontal cortex allows humans to imagine, to have thoughts and fantasies and to lie. The prefrontal cortex is a physical system comparable to any other physical system in the human body—such as the heart. So if my heart causes my veins to look really cool and pumped up—did “I” make that happen? If Berryman’s prefrontal cortex caused him to write such a poem—is he to be held responsible or liable for the creation of the poem? In enduring blowback critiques as reasonable? Well...no.

Ralph J. Mills, Jr.—a critic who also happened to be a poet (although not well-known as a poet)—wrote a number of essays and books of essays about the state of “Recent American Poetry” in mostly the 1950s. Mills was able to capture positively, slantingly to a certain extent, the Modernist, Confessionalist, and Contemporary state of poetry. He begins his book *Essays on Poetry*, saying,

CATEGORIES AND CLASSIFICATIONS ARE AMONG THE DEHUMANIZING EVILS OF OUR time. Almost anywhere we turn in these bleak, disordered days of recent history there lies in wait one kind of mechanism or other which has as its end the obscuration or destruction of what is unique and particular, unmistakably itself: the very identity of a person, an experience, and object (3).

In my inclinations to search for Confessionalist poets specifically and the Confessionalist movement in relation to the variations of persona, I was at a loss in performing this “evil” by grouping such figures as Theodore Roethke, Stanley Kunitz, and Anne Sexton. Even Theodore Roethke and Stanley Kunitz having direct influence over each other’s works—being friends—their works are quite different. There are only these broad strokes in employment of the “Confessionalist” persona that remain similar in all three individuals. Roethke himself is not necessarily considered a shoe-in as a Modernist poet or as a Confessionalist poet, neither is Stanley Kunitz. But the temporality of such labels is logical and sensible when applied to the ever-changing state(s) of the human mind and the physicality of the human brain. In Mills’ first essay entitled “Creation’s Very Self: On the Personal Element of Recent American Poetry,” he writes on the consideration of contemporary American poetry at the time, “Contemporary poets, then, with a few forerunners providing guidance, begin to cultivate their own inwardness as material for poetry or to look to the immediacies of their own situation for valid experience” (6). Mills is intuitively commenting on Confessional poetry, the “Confessional” label not yet appropriated back then. With this inclination for poets to use their own lives and lived experiences as material—it might be arguably easier for a neuroscientist to determine the influence or lack of free will applied to the actual work itself. Because a neuroscientist

can use the person as direct reference and does not have to become a historian of all culture necessarily. The Confessional movement in and of itself can be seen as a natural progression or rebellion against rebellion voices—a change that would predictably exist up against the visionary, the mythical, and the traditional.

The question however is with Roethke's, Kunitz's, and Sexton's direct employment of self-personas—speakers overtly acting as themselves in their work—are they as individuals to be held responsible for the effects of their works? I'm not sure. Effects do and will happen, but that the idea of authorship and therefore, positive or negative consequences, have befallen such writers—I'm still not sure. Sexton seems to be one of the more extreme examples of having such overt effects or is able to garner extreme reactions because of her self-persona and the circumstances of her life and what she includes about her life. In her poem "The Truth the Dead Know," she has a long attribution that reads, "For my mother, born March 1902, died March 1959,/ and my father, born February 1900, died June 1959" (43). This inscription is journalistic and *is* true. There is a precision experiment to be done with Anne Sexton's biographer Diane Middlebrook and Anne Sexton's poetry. However, in analyzing the title and dedication alone up against the name of Anne Sexton as "a reasonable reader of poetry"—two binary and extreme reactions can be made (along with countless and less affective reactions). One is that Sexton is writing with such a journalistic and dry remove because she has issues with her parents or the other is that Sexton is writing with such remove because she has issues with her parents. Meaning that Sexton is either cynical about the death of her parents because she was abused by them and never had "properly" attached feelings to them before or that she is saddened by the death of her parents and is in a state

of denial or removed acceptance. Or both or neither. If a “reasonable reader of poetry” attaches Sexton’s name to the dedication then they are holding her as the “self” which is writing—the conflated writer with speaker—so the experience written is “genuine” experience. With the two extreme reactions to the dedication of this poem, like with Berryman’s “Dream Song 14,” is Sexton to be held responsible...to be the recipient of negative blowback comments or positive comments from readers? If the reasonable adoption of free will as an illusion is culturally applied...then no.

Even with the aside of positive comments. This seems like a ridiculous venture now because what is the point of negating the opportunity of positive experience as well as negative—to nix experience all together? Although this is not necessarily the case. Free will as an illusion provides an allowance for understanding the origin of human experience—at the level of the brain. And, like Stevens’ earlier quote implies, there is no judgment that can reasonably exist that the imagination is good or evil...it simply is. Although, the brain is not simply anything, but a complex physical structure akin to a central processing unit. A machine metaphor aptly applied by writers with the advent of mechanical technology. A related and affirmative argument to do with the nature of associative learning in application. This overt negation of the binary of positive and negative has its origins in Post-Modernism, but also is in line with how the brain works and how people, dare I say, “ought” to be thinking about the brain. The difficult part would be negating positive experience because, well...doesn’t it feel good? But at the root of the mammalian brain are motivations to seek pleasure. So reading a lovely lovely Kunitz poem *might* seem tarnished by this fact. When Kunitz writes a poem like “My Mother’s Pears,” saying in the first stanza, “Plump, green-gold, Worcester’s pride,/

transported through autumn skies/ in a box marked Handle With Care” (141). A “reasonable reader of poetry” might be inclined, with this scientific critique of no free will, to say, but “hey that was lovely” and “that poem wasn’t hurting anyone” and “that felt good” and “Stanley should be paid a million dollars for that.” And that might all be true and naturally occurring reactions. But those reactions do not have to be reduced and are not necessarily reduced with the notion that free will is an illusion. Rather they are curtailed into logic and, perhaps, the reactions seem more whimsical and wondrous. Because they had their determined origins in the pleasure seeking of the mammalian brain and the “reasonable reader of poetry” now knows this fact. And reacts accordingly and/or in conjunction with the wiring and experience of their own memories and their own processing unit. The mammalian brain being a general consideration among all peoples with brains.

Harris continues in his essay book to argue that this illusion of free will does not have to be reducing in the meaning or view of all human experience. Often, scientists are critiqued about taking away the artful elegance of life and replacing this with cold calculations. This is and does not have to be the case. Harris addresses a point on this topic saying,

One of the most refreshing ideas to come out of existentialism (perhaps the only one) is that we are free to interpret and reinterpret the meaning of our lives. You can consider your first marriage, which ended in divorce, to be a ‘failure,’ or you can view it as a circumstance that caused you to grow in ways that were crucial to your future happiness. Does this freedom of interpretation require free will? No. It simply suggests that different ways of thinking have different consequences.

Some thoughts are depressing and disempowering; others inspire us. We can pursue any line of thought we want—but our choice is the product of prior events that we did not bring into being (40).

So applied to poets—even the construct of applying meaning or alternate meaning or weird meaning is the product of a decision made, which is the prior product of a past experience or an array of prior unconscious experience. This “strangeness” of meaning as a convention of experimental poetry can be no more perfectly embodied than in the work of Russell Edson. Edson often anthropomorphizes intangible objects in an absurd logic appropriate to the poem. There is an overt logic in the poems and a justification in the poems’ unraveling that allows objects speaking and having personality to be warranted...seem natural amidst the initial encounter of such “strangeness.” One example is Edson’s short poem “The Autopsy,” which reads:

In a back room a man is performing an autopsy on an old raincoat.

His wife appears in the doorway with a candle and asks, how does it go?

Not now, not now, I’m just getting to the lining, he murmurs with impatience.

I just wanted to know if you found any blood clots?

Blood clots?!

For my necklace...(172)

Edson, the grandfather of the prose poem, is employing metaphor, creating characters, constructing his lines without any seemingly intentional line breaks, and using lots of simple, little words. Up against what can be said as standard free verse conventions, the

content of the poem—the strangeness of the autopsy on the old raincoat moves to the forefront. The story and the dialogue are presented simply without obscurity as everyday statement. This is meaning making at its best. Because free verse conventions are employed...are to be identified and are evident in the deconstruction of this poem. That is to say that meaning that is so good and so simple has its origin in the decisions of the poet which have origins in an unconscious notion. This can perhaps be attached or associated with John Keats' idea of negative capability. This is an artful notion that is actually a scientific notion. The other side of the face in the painting. The uncertainty and the benefits of having a certain amount of uncertainty in life or presented in the strange goings-on of Edson's poetry.

Russell Edson is an odd figure not necessarily fitting into the umbrella of any movement in poetry except his own. But he does what many in experimenting do and that is employ conventions in poetry in a seeming way that has not quite been manifested before—he was a lone wolf in comparison to those employing Charles Olson's "Projective Verse,"—those in the Black Mountain School of Poetry. Olson's essay "Projective Verse" was published in 1950 and sets forth seemingly new claims about the state of poetry and the employment of this new and not so new verse in poetry. Olson refers to poetry being in line with the speaking breath and mental breath of the reader—a notion similar to William Carlos Williams' employment of poetic breath (5). Olson also famously quotes his fellow Black Mountain Poet Robert Creeley, who said "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT" (4). So if a poet writes about tornadoes—then the form of the poem should on the page share characteristics of tornadoes or a tornado (dark, spiraling, destructive, etc.). Creeley's dictum can be applied

to the logic necessary to exist in any poem. A poem has rules and poets are constrained in their efforts to align themselves with a particular set of rules. Projective Verse is realistically reasonable in its alliance with physical reality—having poets of Projective Verse score breath onto the page, score content on the page, score meaning on the page, and so on. One such Projective Verse poem by Creeley is entitled “Return,” and reads:

Quiet as is proper for such places;
The street, subdued, half-snow, half-rain,
Endless, but ending in the darkened doors.
Inside, they who will be there always,
Quiet as is proper for such people—
Enough for now to be here, and
To know my door is one of these (3).

This poem is an enactment of the very title. The diction returning back to itself—the phrase “Quiet is as proper for such...” being experienced in the first line and justifiably warranted in the fifth line of the poem through the first experience of the title. Having the content return to the doors—the poem is not folding in on itself, but subverting slightly what was phrased before. Saying after the first experience of “Quiet is as proper for such places...” then changing the word “places” to “people” in the fifth line. The poem is returning to the exact same line construct as opposed to coming up with a similarly expressed idea using different diction or a different arrangement—this might be more overtly in line with a poem folding in on itself. This seven line poem, having seven words per line (with the exception of the last line having eight)—is rigid in its employment of free verse conventions. It is highly unlikely that Creeley did not become consciously

aware or make a decision to construct the poem in such a countable manner. Creeley's Projective Verse poem has physical components that match the logic of the world and the logic of the world developed within the poem. Creeley is not inventing a new language necessarily, but is following what can be, in essence, reduced to new grammatical or mechanical standards for a type of poem that he is choosing to create.

Returning to the notion of the self-persona in a poem and the poet held responsible. The inevitability of "writing" as work...the job of it all. The remove from the personal in reaction. In her book *Proofs & Theories: Essays on Poetry*, Louise Glück addresses this notion writing in her essay "Against Sincerity" about Poet Diane Wakoski. Glück says:

...the work of Diane Wakoski fosters as intense an identification of poet with speaker as any body of work I can think of. But when a listener, some years ago, praised Wakoski's courage, Wakoski was indignantly dismissive. She reminded her audience that, after all, she decided what she set down. So the "secret" contents of the poems, the extreme intimacy, was regularly transformed by acts of decision, which is to say, by assertions of power. The "I" on the page, the all-revealing Diane, was her creation. The secrets we choose to betray lose power over us (34).

This choice in revealing secrets can be interpreted as a "regular" symptom of the job in writing. A natural consequence if this choice is applied in the poem. Wakoski's remove in her reaction to the listener's comment on Wakoski's "courage" is a professionalism in craft...a respect paid to the process of arrangement—not that much different from the

logistics of a service job. A beautician designing a head of hair, a customer paying too gracious a compliment, and the beautician reacting in some version of removed humility possibly claiming “this is simply what I do for a living.” Wakoski’s reaction points to the overt reality in decision making and the inclination to be “dismissive” of a labeled “courage” which is entangled with the intent and commonplace of decision making involved with her work and with any writer’s manipulation of words or “creation” on the page. Decision making, placed in the truth of the physical brain (although Glück is making a slight argument to the side of this in her essay), is real and is a tool necessary for poetry.

Even in movements when all decision making seems to be left out—decisions are still happening at the level of the poet’s brain. One such encompassing example that may at first seem to fully go against the notion of decision making lies with Language poetry. Language poetry having reared against the free verse conventionality set before it so that words can be heard—the reader can be more involved. Using allusive referential from works of prose in order to get rid of narrative as a last link holding the words together—messing with the heads of readers—messing with their inclinations to superimpose a narrative. One of the founders of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry magazine, Charles Bernstein, writes on “The State of Art” in his book *A Poetics* published in 1992 (some twenty to thirty years after the onset of Language poetry):

What poetry belabors is more important than what poetry says, for “saying is not a game” and the names that we speak are no more our names than the words that enter our ears and flow through our veins, on loan from the past, interest due at

the dawn of each day, though not to the Collector who claims to represent us in the court of public discourse but to the Collector we become when we start to collect what belongs to us by right of our care in and for the world (8).

Simply put, Charles Bernstein agrees with me as well. The language of public discourse is the language of poetry is the language of every day is English. English being a democratic pool from which we all pull...from which poets pull. This is not necessarily a new idea but has its roots and foundations in Whitman's work. But to take responsibility for having ears and "owning" words...the arrangement of words is a silly idea when phrased so poignantly here by Bernstein. People/poets do not choose their parents, where they were born, their predominant language, and the words that they will be exposed to once made of product of this world.

There are many circumstances which can exemplify that writers are victims of circumstances—of the brain and the conscious world alike...of access and action. One such overt example lies in the varied work and works of R. Buckminster Fuller—primarily an architect (among other various concurrent career choices—theorist, author, and on and on) and the son of Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller. In Fuller's book *No More Secondhand God and other writings*, he crafts poetic essays exploring science, mathematics, his own research, and, occasionally, personal matters. In quite a few of these poetic essays, Fuller references his daughter Allegra, who died before her fourth birthday due to polio and other related health problems. Fuller explores the notion of responsibility for his daughter's death in a number of the essays and writes homage to

Jonas Salk who invented a vaccine for polio shortly after his daughter's death. One such exposition reads:

“And I've thought through to tomorrow

which is also today.

The telephone rings

and you say to me

Hello Buckling this is Christopher; or

Daddy it's Allegra; or

Mr. Fuller this is the Telephone Company Business

Office;

and I say you are inaccurate.

Because I knew you were going to call

and furthermore I recognize

that it is God who is “speaking” (28-29).

This is an exemplified pseudo-thesis of the book. Fuller is mustering up responsibility and is placing the notion of God into himself and the people around him as opposed to the Judeo-Christian figure in the sky. An amass of ideas surrounding the nature of consciousness and a god or God or gods or Gods is fundamentally entangled with free will and authored responsibility. Which is separate from responsibility in action because

authored responsibility implies the existence of “feeling”—usually on a spectrum of shame to pride or pride to shame. And pride and shame are legitimized feelings—they do exist and have characteristic features. But a greater understanding in this entanglement of the illusion of free will does not disprove pride and shame, rather it proves pride and shame to be ridiculous in their constructs...unnecessary in their aims. Later, Fuller provides exposition on his daughter’s death as an unfortunate circumstance to do with timing—expressing gratitude to Dr. Salk.

CHAPTER 3

FURTHER RESEARCH

Harris concludes his essay book *Free Will* on an exemplary note saying, “Now I feel that it really is time for me to leave. I’m hungry, yes, but it also seems that I’ve made my point. In fact, I can’t think of anything else to say on the subject. And where is the freedom in *that*” (66)? I have not exhaustively myself made my point or made it a point to make my point prolific. Some poets in their economic dealings in language posing this habit as natural or bad and that is true. My shortness and my shortness are not attributions of precise concision, but of an elsewhere cause or causes. I wish here to only make further recommendations for how the idea of free will as an illusion can and possibly will alter the world of writing. That “reasonable readers of poetry” and reasonable poets themselves should be cognizant of ownership and of what is really created in and by themselves. This can be pulled out into the mass market of copyright law or into the content focus in the movement of poetry. I’ll leave then with stanzas from a poem which, at least consciously, guides my own writing, my fanatical attachments to Sam Harris, my disheartenment in uncertainty. From “The Buried Life” by Matthew Arnold:

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met

With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;

I knew they lived and moved

Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest

Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet

The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb

Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?

Ah! well for us, if even we,

Even for a moment, can get free

Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd;

For that which seals them hath been deep-ordain'd!

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