

This digital proof is provided for free by UDP.

It documents the existence of the book *Or, The Ambiguities* by Karen Weiser, which was published in 2015.

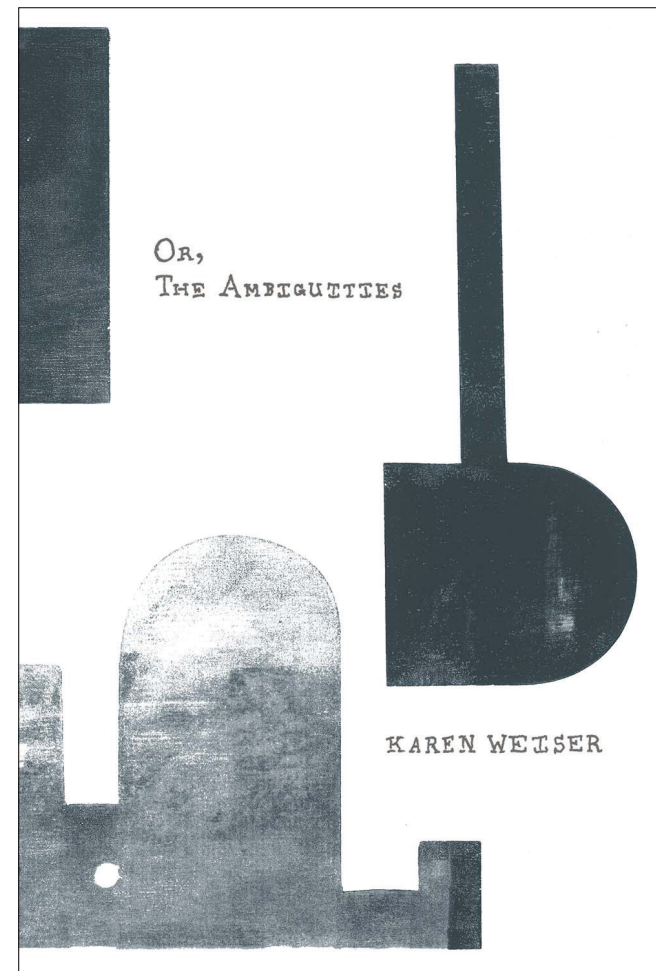
If you like what you see in this proof, we encourage you to purchase the book directly from UDP, or from our distributors and partner bookstores, or from any independent bookseller.

If you find our Digital Proofs program useful for your research or as a resource for teaching, please consider [making a donation to UDP](#).

If you make copies of this proof for your students or any other reason, we ask you to include this page.

Please support nonprofit & independent publishing by making donations to the presses that serve you and by purchasing books through ethical channels.

UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE
uglyducklingpresse.org



Or, The Ambiguities

ALSO BY KAREN WEISER

To Light Out

OR, THE AMBIGUITIES

KAREN WEISER

Or, The Ambiguities

COPYRIGHT © 2015 by Karen Weiser

ISBN: 978-1-937027-61-2

COVER ART © Jarrod Beck and Will Rawls

COVER AND INTERIOR DESIGN by goodutopian

Distributed to the trade by
SPD / Small Press Distribution
1341 Seventh Street, Berkeley, CA 94710
spdbooks.org

Funding for this book was provided by generous grant from the
National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the
Arts, and the Department of Cultural Affairs for New York City.

UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE
232 THIRD STREET #E-303
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
UGLYDUCKLINGPRESSE.ORG



PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FIRST EDITION | FIRST PRINTING

UDP 2015

“[I]t is not for man to follow the trail of truth too far, since by so doing he entirely loses the directing compass of his mind; for arrived at the Pole, to whose barrenness it only points, there, the needle indifferently respects all points of the horizon alike.”

—Herman Melville
Pierre; or, the Ambiguities

“We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*.”

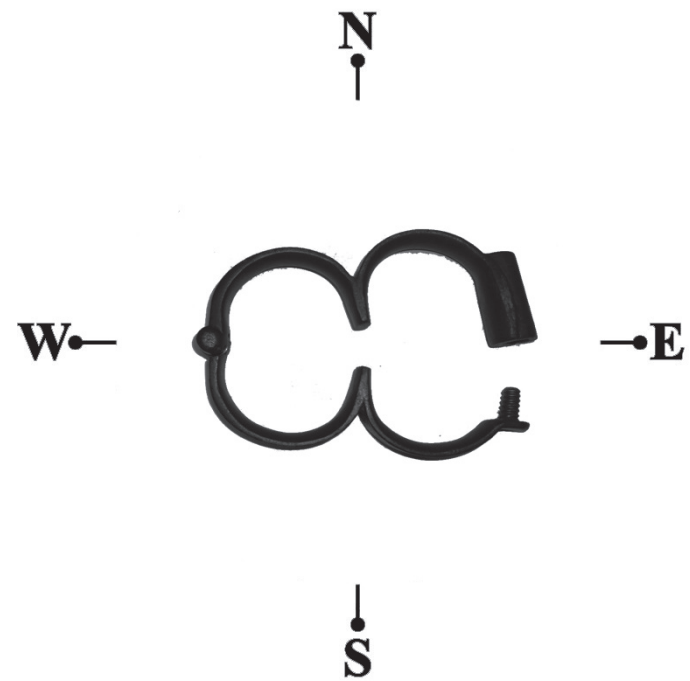
—William James
The Principles of Psychology
Chapter IX: ‘The Stream of Thought’

N: Dear Pierre, 13

S: Love, Delight, and Alarm, 33

E: Pilgrimage, 55

W: In the Darbies, 67



N: DEAR PIERRE

I was eighteen when my parents died in a plane crash. The decade after that is bare.
I s ight wh y are i in a rash. Th a t that
I s i t wh are i in a sh. Th a t
I s t h are i in a sh.
I s h are i sh.
I s sh.

lo
or lo
or lo l s
or he lo l s here
or the breath lo l s here it b e th at moment,
For as the breath in all our lungs is hereditary, and my present breath at this moment,

Our mirrors were covered. There were strangers in our house all day long. I don't
 ur mirror re covered. here re st s in ur house a day on on
 u mirror over re st s in u house a y on
 u m o re st n u s a y
 u m o r s a y
 u m

remember eating. My clothes were torn. I wore no shoes. People only spoke to me if I
 remember at My othe we or I or no sho l only spoke to me I
 remember My the or or sh only poke me
 ember My th or ly ke
 ember My h o l e
 be

o
 o Pier angel
 o Pier angel res t o
 o o Pierre, now angel led res t and a liar o
 out of Pierre, but now strangely led th e res t formed, and familiar to
 outline of Pierre, but now strangely filled with features transformed, and unfamiliar to

or
 air or or
 o air me de or or
 o in the air for m me dear. or or
 no living in the air for humanity, me dear. No more, o no more,
 no living thing in the fair form of humanity, that holds me dear. No more, oh no more,

spoke to them. No childhood, no home, no confirmation of memory. Symbols made me
 spoke them. No hid d n me, no con ma n or S ols de m
 spoke the o i d no on a n or o de m
 ok he o no a r o de
 o he o no
 o

feel again. I could feel when something was focused into a way of saying feeling. As if a
 feel in. I feel something focused a way saying As if
 feel I feel thin used way in As i
 feel I feel in use a n As
 I feel us a n
 I f

woon
 elf swoon
 self swoon.
 at anguish, hed t o itself, be swoon.
 hat anguish, had shed him t o itself, on the beach his swoon.
 coil that anguish, had shed him t o itself, on the beach his swoon.
 recoil of that anguish, which had dashed him out of itself, upon the beach of his swoon.

or
 feel m or
 o ear feel m orph
 o ear kin. was feeling m orph
 own no earthly kin. t was this feeling loathsome, orphan
 owned no earthly kith or kin. Yet was this feeling entirely loathsome, and orphan-like.

line was pulling me back into my body. Words gave me back a body. It was all I.
 ne w s p in me back in my Words ave me a body. t was all I.
 ne w p in me back in or s ave me o y. s a
 ne in in o s a y. s a
 ne o s a y.
 s a y.

her e
 her e
 — h ow i cave ther e
 —the low river the cave are e ther led and
 —the lowing river the cave of careless w ither be led less here I land
 —the flowing river in the cave of man; careless whither I be led, reckless where I land

was drowned but somehow I could see a way of seeing and it has never failed me.
 was owned but how could a way see s ever led me.
 was own t o d a y s ever ed me.
 was o n t o s e e m
 s o o s e e
 s o

“Ye s
 “Ye s i
 “Ye s i w ist he
 “Ye s ven skies, ill w ist here!
 “Ye t slaking even skies, ill dew and mists til moisture here!
 “Ye thirst-slaking evening skies, ye hilly dews and mists, distil your moisture here!

Being still and always dead. The whole lit change. Fourteen years later
 Being till always dead. The whole lit change. ur n ear later
 Being always a hole lit n ear later
 in a ways a hole lit later
 i wa s lit
 i

ere i feel
 i feel
 i feel
 If here peace vi es to feel f rank
 If that there peace divid es one day feel f rank
 I feel that there can be no peace in individualness. I hope one day to feel myself drank up

held her tremblingly; she bent toward him; his mouth wet her ear; he whispered it.
 trembling she bent toward him; his et her ear whispered
 embling he be his et her ear whispered
 bling he be her w isp
 ling be her w isp
 in her w isp
 is

I d
 I d o n u
 I bi d o n u ly re
 I bi d ly nes o n u ly re
 I ave bir d ly wholeness a total ange I u ly re
 I gave birth and the only wholeness was a totality of change. While hugely pregnant for

Being not so much the Portal, as part of the temporary Scaffold to the Portal of this new
 Being o so much the Port a part the temporary Scaffold of this
 Being part temporary fold or this
 Being m a y this
 Being m a y
 Be

“Whence flow the panegyric melodies that precede the march of these heroes? From
 hence l yric m od es precede the arch of ero s
 hence l yric od es cede arch er s
 hence l yric s a ch e
 l yric s a ch e
 s a e

se w
 se w h om e
 se w he m s h om e
 se w t ear laying he m s o h om e
 the second we t ear playing he m s host h om e while
 the second time I went to hear a quartet playing the music Shostakovich composed while

o
 o f a ll s
 o the n f a ll s o
 move the n f a i l sound all was close
 dying. moved the brink f a i l the sound all was close
 dying. It moved me to the brink of having to leave the sound hall. I was very close

By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central
 vast pain in the pyramid; i le s e e the centr
 st ain the pyramid le s t centr
 in the pyramid; le t
 the pyr e
 pyr e

o de be t
 o de be t
 o de be t o mir th
 o de then, be t aught look mir th reflect
 to death, then, be pregnant. aught look in a mirror that reflected
 to death, then, being nine months pregnant. Caught looking in a mirror that was reflected

Two books are being writ; of which the world shall only see one, and that the bungled
 book be writ; which he ll see one, and that
 book be writ he ll and that
 book writ he ll that
 writ he
 writ

me face in
 be nd me surface moving
 a mirror behind me surfaces moving lose
 in a mirror behind me, the surfaces of life and death moving closer, pushing in

thy secret I, as a seer, suspect. Grief—deep, unspeakable grief, hath made me this seer.
 thy secret suspect. Grief—d un peak b e grief, hath me see
 thy secret s ect. Grief—d un grief, hath me
 hy s t i f grief, hath
 i f grief
 f ie

touch m y e t
 touch me m y e ther
 touch me, m aby. On e ther e rent div e
 were touching me, and my baby. On the ther side rent divide my
 were touching me, and my baby. On the other side of the parent and child divide, my

“Sir—You are a swindler. Upon the pretense of writing a popular novel for us, you have
 “Sir—You are a wind Upon the tense a po lar ve r s e
 You wind the tense po lar
 o w n the s o l
 o n e o
 o n e e

o
 o are o
 ions arent l oving
 relations arent l oving
 relations with my arents once alive, moving aught I
 relationship with my parents is once again alive, moving. The girl is my daughter and I

fell upon Pierre's heart, and her long hair ran over him, and arboresced him in ebon
 fell Pierre, long air h arbor him in ebon
 l ie long i h arbor him
 long i h arbor him
 l a bor him
 l a bor

o y
 t o my
 to to my
 her. to her, to my was
 am her. to her, to both o my what was from
 am my mother. I give to her, to both of my girls, what was taken from me.

S: LOVE, DELIGHT, AND ALARM

i. Preface, Part I

Along a plane I wanted to write it:
Where one end is fixed, a loose sun

To the excess of dark I was certain
That certainty's a kind of excess

A term that's but a navigating bust
A place to version a limit, feet in foot

When the lute's sum turns daily
As if by steam one could coordinate

The tulips, too numerous to pinch
By steam the autography of material

Will appear to light the vapor region
So we can know it as if by touch

A nude thing, the masses say
As they re-substantiate again

ii. Preface, Part II

What's in there to sing
Cussing its moral peepitude
Not content to festoon
Merely, but needing to festoon leaning
Against a scientific hunch
That will not apologize in this house
Of commerce, for its rupture
Or ability to suss us
Why now this impassioned youthful pause?

Mind the break

It would say—
Why this enkindled cheek and eye
With its secret prohibition
Though to speak it only makes plain
The secret's already or always
Been stolen, its pulsing voicebox
Oh tree, the face, the face
Another locus animal
Peeps down on me

iii. Pierre

I should have slept in a balloon half covered in fog
To drift together in body if not in mind
I cannot bring my mind to let go its hand
Refusing drift
Decelerate with a tug on the loom of awake
So the threads let go their pull

If I could take the middle pier into the steam
That churning thinking thing, and swallow it
As a rose turns vinyl in the sun
My distant promise of resubstantiation
A surprising eternity for a deed
Would be the ledge of dawn

At any rate I would take the middle pier
Unobliterable as the sea
Into the white shadow of a perfectly sealed box
That fails to deeply contain
One orbit of joy
A glimpse of the glorious
Subtile acid among us

iv. Pierre

Then the treehouse burned. And continued
Unobliterable as the sea
To burn. The photo of it burning

Hangs on its wall, taken from high up,
But not that high. The firemen
Approach cautiously, minus the

Four-part regimented solace, that
Would repeat. If the act of
Painting is Drawing the boundaries

Of a fire, can I disappear
Into the initial combustion? If the
Act of painting stops time or at

Least its cornet of fronted tremendous,
I could disappear into the *Encyclopedia
of Animal Life* as the cherub's sleepest

Wet tusk. I could start with a dexterous
Periscope and end by feeling
Time, the largest block of it

I can conceive collectively:
Smell I the flowers, or thee?
See I lakes, or eyes?

v. Isabel

With its secret prohibition
The music orders my animal parts
As off a menu; said Isabel: these others

Light the vapor regions between notes
The gas-sea butter jarred into shape
Through light and its lewd manifest

So early in the morning
Between personhood and figuration
My body is not my own

A vestigial symphony none are
Meant to sound, though I am sounded
Continually, by every orbit's

Sober astronaut and her spirit freight
In the colorless shadow of a perfect
ly sealed space.

Oh tree, the face, the face
Peeps down on me

vi. Isabel

Salutations
Sister me not now
Sound the morrow against the body
Piercing certainty's kind of excess
To allay sorrow. Are you certain
Your vastation wasn't the limpid zoo
Of distress and its truest
Machination? And the ignorant
Pretend clovers? Good Morrow will steady
Us; it is our duty to steady us

We park our plovers in the white steam
To skate its cracking surface with
The simplest dream statements
From other, war-made worlds
Though they are our own
With the little we can keep in mind at once
Careless whither I be led
In mind, a memory of absent day
where I land

vii. Pierre's Father, a Ghost

Held in the palm that coin
Is a hermaphrodite vitamin, held
In the stomach, a secret palace,
And held in the ear, it's the multiplicity
Of memory unfolding
The Encyclopedia of Unfolding
Its lewdly manifest lute clarity
Interspersed with trumpeting noise
Into what kind of human shape
Will this fugue sound
An animal drift
Pulled tightly into formal expanse

With the memory of absent day all
That has come before sinks
With each unfolding
Held in the mind where it does not sound
Careless whither I be led
Reckless where I land

viii. *Pierre*

Held in the mind where it sounds
Some inexhaustible disruption
Art makes man an ex-lute

Scratched and skipping
Out her most-lost tune
Be equal to that claim and only equal

Inexhaustibly skipping lets in
What quierescient light
For the spectral oculus in the ear

Or the ear's proxy
I gotta sit in your seat
Or your seat's proxy to listen

To the laws of music
Please
Can I sit in your seat

This train is packed
With what quierescient light
Skips back to us

Its meadow dignified
The louder it reaches
I am all Frank

I am all unguarded

ix. *Mount Greylock*

This poem contains a smaller
Inner poem
Most of us know an allegory
By our own quiescent response
The echo of muted places
From the sudden shift outward
So violet in the exchange
Of motion and maintenance
Experiment and sacrament
Though no fasteners
Under day's hairnet
Hold anything still

I am somebody's landscape
At this moment exactly
Some inexhaustible disruption
Passing from one state
To another. *The Guidebook
to a Mammalian Universe*
Without its
Red opera cloak
Is often mended with
Quaint precipitation
Dashed out of oneself
Upon the beach of a swoon

x. Pierre's Mother

Oxygen-less upon the simple
August stun. A swoon collages
Time and upon it 14th century
Vienna and the baby Christ
Nay, all images are prayers
To simplify and horde senseless
Thoughts. Collapse nine months
Into a single swoon, drown—
To the castaway the beach is
Port, body, empurpled firelot
Dashed out of itself
Hosting a medical dusk
I think now
That I plainly see
It must be so

xi. Pierre

How do you say no little mystery
And mean a tinier
Unanswered memory
Limpid with precedent
By that I meant
Reason's corona
feels
Out of order
Orbs angelic
Forever unsistered

Your key, doored, is
Plainly feeling fortune
Hello fortune,
Though mutually converted, we are
Still at odds
It must be so
How do you say
love
Caustically
To make it

Feel
Like the argument it is
In the parlance
We most resemble
So I can merit my addendums
So I can confess
In unintelligible but
Delicious sounds

Sister me not, now
It must be so

xii. Pierre

Not now, noble auditor
Are your sincere transits
Ever easy

When one thing follows
It changes what it follows
And is always followed

In turn
When one thing before us
Ray gloom ray gloom ray

Is gloom
It changes what it causes
What it costs

You've lapsed with owls and virgins
Where the cumulous is without emblem
In turn

Can't thou not cure in me this dreaminess, this
Bewilderingness I feel
A cloistered genie is quelling

In homilies but the elevator
Is not usually this
Late my poor head swims

And swims with fraternal feeling
For you, noble responder
Have become a part of this poem's

Become a part of you've become
A part of this war-
Feeling family

Was once was never but
Mysteries interpierced with mysteries, and mysteries
Roaming

Saturnalia
Before us
Responding

xiii. Isabel

Redemption narratives are twee
Rudders
In the maelstrom
Lose them though it cost a piss
Bobbling a probability bayou
With manufactured calm

So I do most carefully
Navigate between a too solid
How
And too flimsy cover
Do you say
Unmuffling footsteps

Sister me
Or the mystery
Redeems us not
Am considerate, swore
Am a wreck
With a whisper

The moving parts of hunger
Remain gravity
At the bottom of every answer
May I
um
Chorus

xiv. Narrator

Pierre,
Facts in their non-compendiums
Exile you
For a wife; and your love, a sister
Chaste
Whisper in her ear
Eight ifs to that whose minimum
Is a folio, and another if on top

Blinds you, kills you
The blankness of the
Paper, its burn
To sink a metal fig in lye
The monster dubiously
Is our affective habitat
Habit at
Minimum

xv. Pierre's Father, a Ghost

What does mind?
The portrait grates the
Solids into different shapes so
The elegy can be
From its surrounding matter
Broken to
Its simp=
Lest:

Here, not here

Said the elegy
Because I really
Meant that you love your chronometer
Into various shapes before
He opens you
Walking the voices in my head
Only
They are walking in their sleep
Into various colors
There, the needle indifferently respects all points of the horizon alike

xvi. Narrator

The elegy is a monster
Whose notes perforate your communal feeling
With its nascent consciousness
Pre-person, little tenderly
Floats this title on the fountain of philosophy
It is Doctor to the Virgo Drone
Describing completely the moment life begins
To be human
Are you acquainted with this category
Knowing little about it knowing
Nothing about the inner nature of these
Facts or what makes them what they are
Participating nonetheless
More-rificly high and temporally strident
Sweet flame of Babylon
Goes slack in a woods
Goes slack 'gainst a forceful bladder
All over the goods
Family medical history folder
No this won't decide it, not feeling pain
Not unremitting sound shapes
Nor the way one body communicates
With another in its
Continuous suede
Nut-hollow, nesting
Now it is good to believe
Dear
Pierre

E: PILGRIMAGE

Walk like somnambulists abroad,
hear humming all around
and greet it, costs nothing
but an echo hum inside.
Are you all round?

I & I'm walking but not seeing
what empty lot is walking;

I & I'm advertising greeting
in the freefall of your hum.

What is a moral compass
when the blushing throat is talking?
What is a moral judgment
when languages corrupt

This is pleasing me
enough to jail my sympathy.
My inner hum walks in woe
enough to hail my sympathy.

No pilgrimage left no more
but transits of the discrete pour

a messmate of the elements
with daedal life in boats and tents.

Precious in substance rudely wrought
habitat, which here is caught:

my paratactic hand
my buzzsaw pauses

my Angel Haze
my Observing Sky;
and here is a moment
the consequence of pivoting.

And here is my cruelty
the consequence of governing.
I & I would be improvingly
If I'd be improving

That stable proof that I would fold
into my drawer, under the lake,
into my compass, into my chart:
it is but made from other things
a music derived from vanishing

Did nearer my roses come
Did nearer my roses die

This vanishing is going low
eclipse a failing sympathy

Did nearer my planet come
Did nearer my planet go
just past where death, a legend,
follows in silence.
How may we be derived from scale?

End in a box in a hole.
End in a drawer in a lake.

This vanishing is going low—
this vanishing is going low.

W: IN THE DARBIES

With

these darbies,

I'm a visual ana-
 mirrored so I can make
 ing, they'll lash in hammock
 down, though hands in paint-
 the fingers divinities, the palms
 pointing to that which is out-
 neither, pendant pearl from
 can't be seen but only
 I'll shake a

gram; my self sliced and
 sense of floating, and sink-
 and drop me deep, fathoms
 ings always tell of something,
 bronze and held near the waist,
 side the frame, but not in your world
 the yard-arm end, the thing that
 felt: is the hand of the artist, so
 friendly one ere I sink,

b u t

for all that, 'tis

me, not the sen-
 for at length even we feel
 moves back to the limits of
 the mind into darkness; am I best
 or is one's legacy always inco-
 ambition and its plastering ef-
 dreadfulfulness of this time
 little meager light

tence they'll suspend;
 compelled, and that feeling
 reason, as an idea plunges
 when I retrace my lost origin,
 herent; yes, I'm missing utilitarian
 facts, which usually coincide with the
 of year, when the sun slows the
 of thought into logic;

cutlas and sil-
 world can there be when
 it: fathoms down, fathoms
 asleep, and yet waking is de-sil-
 frescoes; what other world can there
 nature: it is dreaming that I am:
 likes just of me, though I've
 I'll shake out my dreams,
 their utopi-

i t
 tips the guard's
 vers this nook; what other
 dreaming the system hangs
 down, how I'll dream fast
 vered through these ruined
 fathoms down, fathoms down, for the
 not a friendly hand ere I sink, so
 and their spatial practice, and
 an logic, ere I sink

is such the
 — my half-outlaw in-
 told from the cards, though
 exhausted: Ay, Ay, Ay, all is up;
 though, think not of what's disclosed to the detainees but of the
 alluvial bottoms of primeval regions, that are still as if unchanged
 from some natural state, and I
 for it is only represented in re-
 been de-silvered and refus-
 comprehensible

r e -
 peating then
 work, and such, the man
 junction to your self is fore-
 it has long since been nearly
 and I must go; by abandon,
 can not get at the natural in any sense,
 flection, though the mirror has
 es to show, for once, the most
 westerly vanishing point, but

here's
 some terrace
 in the moon scarcely the feeling of
 earth, and once again, for nearly the whole of the
 distance, we are alongside the re-imagining as it bends
 toward us, witnessing, like one bank of found objects fac-
 ing the other, tied in place with fire-hose, unnatural vines or the
 thirteenth turn of the noose, bending toward the arc of progress as
 though the world was made up purely of letters and words, when the act
 of critique populates the loneli- ness of our way, but then gives us only
 our own world and no pos- sibility of another, lazily gliding
 about in the zenith, a rapture-rendered coherence,
 as timing makes all labyrinths,

s u n -
 der my starts
 in the man- ifest, these ends and
 their kindred, dubious like an ominous, deserted
 station—the trains empty and lights dimming—writ-
 ten from the bottom of the sea: this is written from the
 bottom of the sea, early in the morning, aloft from alow,
 a final stage for a handsome sailor, hence the conclusion of such a
 narration is apt to be less finished, with no special authority—Sentry,
 are you there?—for I do not un- derstand ambiguity, and it does not
 understand me, with a friendly promise to stand by the plank, it
 lashes me in hammock— But aren't it all sham?—since
 my nature and my actions are at odds

will have the run-
range of reference, this cor-
for hanging is to converse
handsome is as handsome does,
that dictates action or the result of it—in the viewer's thoughts—
and as such, a banal motif can
but turn your head away
blur's in our eyes; and

heav-
en knows who
ning of me up this topical
responding kind of thought,
with measured forms, like
and beauty is either the form
reveal a non-sequential relationship,
from the hoist and the belay, a
a mantrap may be under it,

was an appear-
is not immediately to be
when in carelessly winding it
transferred, an act of shifting
nor allegory, part and parcel of reaching to align oneself with time;
to dip the inner temporal in a
murmurous indistinctness, since
now—like a bird in a junk-
frame: phenomenal,

i n
the sense that it
ance the cause of which
assigned, much like a watch
up, this beautiful image is
somewhat, neither metaphor
gesture outward, as if it is an ocean of
it came from close by—I feel it stealing
yard in the upper part of the
on an empty stomach, now,
never it would do

then I'll be, come
 is condemned and intent
 man must here be ruled out, a
 monotonous blank of the twi-
 law, with its cool head, War's child, and his cheek it was like the
 budding pink drum roll to grog;
 are alongside the re-imagining,
 washed under, a blur's in
 my tongue

But no! It is dead
 to think—for innocence
 no matter, as the feminine in
 conscience and nature: the
 light sea against our duty, the
 for nearly the whole of the distance, we
 then it pulls back, a small hope
 my eyes, for could I have used
 I would not have,

b u t
 hesitate and
 a mutiny of Eden; that
 fall into story, between these words, natural
 hand in the spaces be- such the work and such the
 elements repeating there, is me the last parting cup, like
 man; that interferer will reach a magnifying glass stuck head down in a mason jar, lid closed, I
 will suffer less, incapable of con- ceiving what death really is, the final
 point at an unimaginable an- gle—I feel it stealing now, sub-
 gle relation this syncretic Field Glut, Nile Throne Glut,
 Non-Negotiable Glut, Dirty Ghost Glut;
 s a v e

f o r

this, I travel

in reverse, and
known for collage, in deed
an anagram, spelling out bal-
they glut; and kidnapped from
left for a purer fable, is a mutiny I hold in my hands, though hands
always tell of something, pointing
not in your world neither, for
he hasn't, though I bless

though the ocean's not
it does, blurring each image
lads for the "ragged edges"
old Rights of Man, that ship I
to that which is outside the frame, but
a foundling is guilty to the father
him clear with my last words,

w h o

in the rainbow

can draw the line
and the orange begins—it is
in a time of war, forms, mea-
they whitewash events to ren-
now you know my good faith, and holy oblivion covers all at last,
much like a watch when in wind-
you'll echo my final words,
through time, an

where the violet tint ends
not my question to ask—for
sured forms, are everything:
der them read, and reading them
ing it up, the hour's remade, much like
dipped in solvent and transferred
ocean for reading and killing

anew,
 for these wars
 that we wear attest our allegiance, and law is
 a history, says the stars, one determines for himself, by
 such light as narrative can afford, on an empty stomach
 now, ever it would do, to read the mantraps as under the daisies,
 or to read the innocent as con- text to judge; it's judging held up as a
 glass, for the mirror's a story but its silver's been scraped, so that
 each hue begins and we see it so, reading us through,
 reading us,

down
 on the mar-
 row-bones here and pray, for highly civi-
 lized murder gluts Nature, and the ocean's a mirror
 but its silver's been scraped; each poem's a time capsule
 with references lost, so what's left but the innocence of language's
 grave: a jewel block they'll make of me tomorrow, I say, punishing the
 accident or is it the willed, my riddle to cross, rather than answer, for
 I've hit deadly space, and killed, through my State, with
 words that obliterate what they displace,

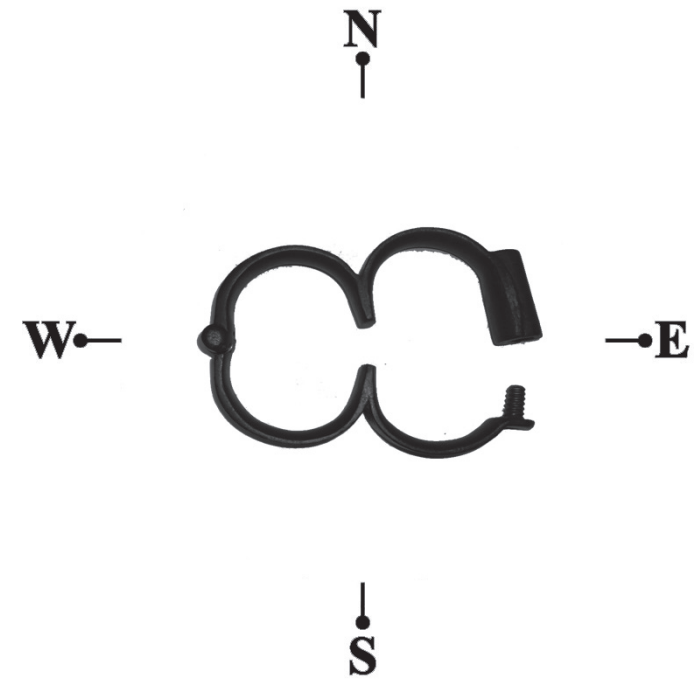
disci-
plined enough,
the water asks, and offers to discipline
me, whose myth will be no spasm as I die, whose myth
will disperse the century; do words have molecules and
are they soft, can my city be leaguered under its surface, a
surface still part of the depth: moving back into the viewer's stutter,
this sound, and out of the illusory gap, that deadly space between us,
its infinite regress of knowledge, between my body and that
that holds me—just ease these darbies at the wrist
a n d roll me over fair—

I am
sleepy, and the
oozy weeds about me whisper one form of
expression without another, and the oozy weeds about me
twist, for the more this space fathoms down, fathoms down, the
poem itself an eclipse of meaning, the fact that nobody could substantiate
this report, was of course, nothing against its secret currency, its highly
civilized Judgment; marvel not that naïveté and irony will not reflect, for
meaning is a mirror and its silver's been scraped, 'twill die in
the dawn- ing of this, my last day

A y ,

Ay, Ay all is up;

and I must up too, suspend- ed in shapes you'll no longer
make out, just ease these too tight forms at your wrist, they're made
of the systems that hang us through.



POSTSCRIPT

As I was writing a dissertation chapter on Herman Melville's 1852 novel *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, I attempted to seek out Melville across time using the poem as a Ouija board, thinking of its slow accretion of letters as a means to converse with the dead. The game turns on the question: who is answering? Is it another player, dead or alive? Is it oneself? This metaphor for reading, especially the reading of works from the past, seems useful as a compositional analog (or practice?) for writing poetry. It puts the players (or readers) in control of the meanings they create, while simultaneously asking them to question, and be aware of, their own input into the creation of meaning at the level of the letter. And for the writer, the poem as Ouija board embodies Jack Spicer's idea that poems are "how we dead men write to each other," since in poems we are always alive and already dead, innocent in character and guilty in action: a paradox of knowing.

In addition to borrowing from Melville's *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, *Clarel*, and *Billy Budd*, the poems in this book also owe a debt to Jeanne Liotta's film *Observando El Cielo*, which extends the idea of pilgrimage into a kind of cosmic looking; Robert Rauschenberg's titles; the poems of Elizabeth Willis and Fred Moten; and Barbara Johnson's famous and thrilling essay, "Melville's Fist: The Execution of *Billy Budd*" (*Studies in Romanticism*, 1979), among other sources and influences both dead and alive.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the editors of the following journals and websites, in which the following poems, or excerpts of them, appeared: *Manor House*, *Peaches and Bats*, Academy of American Poets *Poem a Day* <www.poets.org>, *Pulled Pork*, *Vlak*, *The Volta* <thevolta.org>, and *Divine Magnet*. A deep thank you to Judah Rubin and his Well Greased Press for publishing the chapbook *Dear Pierre*.

For help with this book, I am deeply grateful to Anselm Berrigan, my most generous reader, and to Brett Price, Jeanne Liotta, Dana Ward, Carley Moore, Matt Longabucco, Eileen Myles, Anna Moschovakis, Dan Owen, Edvige Giunta, Macgregor Card, Marcella Durand, Douglas Kearney, Edgar Arceneaux, and Alice Notley. Thank you also to Jarrod Beck, Will Rawls, and Eddie Berrigan.

The cover art, entitled “The Black Ghost,” is a collaboration by Jarrod Beck and Will Rawls, with lettering by Eddie Berrigan.

Also, thank you to the Rauschenberg Residency / Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, where part of this book was written, and to New York Foundation of the Arts, for the 2014 fellowship in Poetry.

