THE NIGHT SKY III

1. Peace

on earth, good will toward all. Surprised to find peace lurking within penance, along with the enclosing, confining pen and its liberating twin, my favorite, a dark

2. green

one, lost now. It was sent to me from Paris by a French poet. Now I have the option of telling you a long anecdote about how it came to pass that this person sent me a beautiful Waterman green pen. I could then also tell you how I lost it (not at the movies). You know how it is: you find yourself divulging or relating something, an incident, to a person or persons, you have their attention, they appear to be listening, and you suddenly pause and ask yourself, "Is this at all interesting to anyone but me?"

"But when I imagine something, something certainly happens!" Well, something happens—and then I make a noise. What for? Presumably in order to tell what happens.—But how is telling done? When are we said to tell anything?—What is the language-game of telling?1

The undeniable privilege of an empty space proffered, even if it exists merely to give support to adjacent sales pitches, which are not in the margins except by visual convention. The text penned in.
The as yet unforeclosed.
The "open" invitation, the "blank" before "blanket."
(The bank before banquet.)

The tablet erased of residue, the mind's field without inhibition, not a fence in sight. But watch where you step or you might set off an event:

"hitting and killing the driver"
"in hope of maintaining calm"
"one crew member was killed"
"weather conditions were good"
"assigned to the carrier Enterprise"
"engineers investigating five cases of . . . "
"if an airbag should expand"
"if there was a defect"
"the Dow Jones is up more than . . . "
"and skies are sunny"

You have a sense that the mindscreen is violent, an obstruction, possibly a violent obstruction. Not so much filter as hindrance, letting too little through. Mallarmé claimed to have seen, to have been, Nothingness. This absence he vowed to make into presence, an Absolute stripped of its Figuration. Michel Leiris (in an essay on painter Joan Miró) writes:

Today it certainly seems that before writing, painting, sculpting, or composing anything worthwhile, one has to have accustomed oneself to an exercise analogous to that performed by certain Tibetan ascetics for the purpose of acquiring what they call, more or less (I say "more or less" because the language of the West, which presents everything in a dramatic form, must very probably turn out to be inadequate), the understanding of emptiness.2

The stories I could tell, if only this were another century and we were writing to each other over distances to tell ourselves this or that anecdote, this or that notion, not yet polished to certitude. Exchanging mere hunches; nothing like testimony or even so much as intention's attention, just a murmuring up from the other side—a butterfly flits from flower to flower, anointing each with its secrets—

(The cursor pulses, pumped by an artificial heart.)
In the morning, I stare. Otherwise, the day is a rattled cage.

With a glance I shall gather up the virginal absence scattered through this solitude and steal away with it; just as, in memory of
a special site, we pick one of those magical, still unopened water-lilies which suddenly spring up there and enclose, in their deep white, a nameless nothingness made of unbroken reveries, of happiness never to be—made of my breathing, now, as it stops for fear that she may show herself. Steal silently away, rowing bit by bit, so that the illusion may not be shattered by the stroke of oars, nor the plashing of the visible foam, unwinding behind me as I flee, reach the feet of any chance walker on the bank, nor bring with it the transparent resemblance of the theft I made of the flower of my mind.¹

There are times, this being one, late November, everything, from air to hair, turning gray, when a person wants to withdraw into a steady-state of receptiveness, to become as mutely supple as a telescope scanning the night sky. Time darkens and opens simultaneously as if it were a large inhaling mouth whose throat is a tunnel into which all the tidings of life incessantly spill. In this mode or mood, writing seems antithetical, an outgoing against an incoming tide. Murmur murmur, references ebbing, tears of the saints staining a chipped cup, the night’s dream pulled away on morning’s pale scarf. Lifting the voice up over vacancy, wondering at the naked eaves. The cud, the smoldering detritus. I bought a new television yesterday. I looted it home, a heavy box, black object within, ugly, inert. Once turned on, an upheaval—cars, so many cars, and bright smiling women, and persons talking about stories in Genesis, about Jacob wrestling with the Angel, and these stories underwritten. Fund upon fund. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Outside the frame, a silence. Inside the frame, the churning organs of America.

Remote control.

Another morning with a pull cast over it, sky lowered with cloud, radiance concealed. Weather tells the day’s time, unfurling aimless plots that mime our goings on. And then, and then. What was it like when the day opened with only one plot cast up instead of the braids we now confront—multiplicities of facts and instances which accompany our own narrow course? Writing is a way of steadying this? Of ferreting one strand from so many? There is no way the linearity of language can possibly accommodate this—the radio, on now, Steve Post on WNYC reading this mornings news: “As a civil rights leader, he apparently offered information...” “The state reimburses the state for each inmate...” “New York City Hall was a place for protests yesterday... the high cost of AIDS drugs...” “Campaign war chest totaled six point two million dollars...” Writing into or against these renditions of the day demands a kind of tenacious hubris, as if to claim that what you have to say can compete with those others, that those of you who may be reading this now (weeks or even years later, an infinite number of stories later) have chosen to do so, thinking that I might tell you, tell you what?

What is the language-game of telling?

What do I want to be telling you—you” in the plural, that is? How to span the infinite gap between the personal and the public, if you in fact constitute the public. This could be the subject, this could be the topic sentence. We, I mean I, have been searching for. If I were to isolate a single perplexity for “us,” poets as well as presidents, it would address this disturbed sphere where the distinction between the private (personal) and public (political) has all but vanished, and in its vanishing our language-games of telling have become hopelessly tangled. If our current technologies have now made communications between and among each other virtually instantaneous, they have also all but eliminated our sense of physical presence; even our voices are mediated by screens and machines. Disembodied, we float on a sea of words and images. We have endless exposure to every conceivable visual and verbal permutation of human emotion—passions of love and hate, crimes of head and heart, images of the sick, the dying, the dead, the grief-stricken—but they all take place in a place which displaces response—compassion or empathy or disgust or praise or blame (although representations of these are ceaselessly grimly available). In cities, we move through the streets clinging to cell phones, talking aloud, so one walks along eavesdropping on half a conversation in deaf-eyed anonymity; the only persons who ever speak now to others are either homeless or tourists.

To appropriate the historic transformations of human nature that capitalism wants to limit to the spectacle, to link together image and body in a space where they can no longer be separated, and thus to forge the whatever body, whose physis is resemblance—this is the good that humanity must learn how to wrest from commodities in their decline. Advertising and pornography, which escort the commodity to the grave like hired mourners, are the unknowing midwives of this new body of humanity.²

The relation of poetry to the human body to the body politic. Can a poetics based on personal commentary and description compete with the
disembodied idealizations and logos infesting (investing) the world? What difference is there between the voice recorded and the actual person standing before you, live, reciting or reading her or his work? What are the poetic structures that might wrest from these isolations a sense of presence, and is it important or necessary to do so? Are the text, the page, the book, vestiges of corporeal presence, talismanic remnants of a specific intimacy, a nearness, which involves each reader in physical sensation—touching, turning, receiving, establishing a rhythm of contact with an other through the most complexly attuned of our organs, the eye?

The reader's position has been specified as that of the stranger. To write to him is to acknowledge that he is outside the words, at a bent arm's length, and alone with the book; that his presence to these words is perfectly contingent, and the choice to stay with them continuously his own; that they are his points of departure and origin. The conditions of meeting upon the word are that we—writer and reader—learn how to depart from them, leave them where they are; and then return to them, find ourselves there again. We have to learn to admit the successiveness of words, their occurrence one after the other, and their permanence in the face of our successions.³

Is one of our jobs to try to span, or notice, or illuminate, or articulate, the gap between private and public discourse and the activities associated with each? What is the nature of this gap? Where does it exist? In time? In space? Is it a gap at all, or is it rather a sequence of interleaving and overlapping contingencies? Is there a sense that, in the onrush, we find ourselves feeling increasingly both confined and outside, invaded and remote, active and static, isolated and surrounded? So close, and yet so far away. What can we (you and I) prevent from happening? What can we (you and I) cause to happen? For what or for whom are we responsible?⁶

Ideology is a suprascopic way of relating to the world. It offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier for them to part with them. As the repository of something suprapersonal and objective, it enables people to deceive their conscience and conceal their true position and their inglorious modus vivendi, both from the world and from themselves. It is a very pragmatic but, at the same time, an ap-

parently dignified way of legitimizing what is above, below, and on either side. It is directed toward people and toward God. It is a veil behind which human beings can hide their own fallen existence, their trivialization, and their adaptation to the status quo.⁷

To engage in an imaginative project of rethinking our selves involves a particular way of understanding some of the connections that might be made-between space and the practice of being free and the expressions of their various relationships in aesthetics and ethics. It involves as well a willingness to lose a kind of certainty associated with the solidity of one’s own habitation of voice, one’s ownership, if you will, of the language through which one enunciates one’s self, presenting one’s self to the world in the effort to be free. It also entails an element of old-fashioned liberal tolerance, made fresh through an admission of the instabilities of the truths one might admit or reject from serious consideration.⁸

3. Not Here

I don’t really understand corporations, unless fear is a form of understanding. Then again I don’t understand many things. But there is a sense that the world is steadily and increasingly glued together by or through them, their strategies and lingo, their mergers and downsizings and profits. Top down, bottom line. An invisible ubiquitous they has haunted the whole twentieth century, coiling around places of decision and power, colliding or colluding with authority with autonomy, pulling action and consequence further and further apart into an aporia of unimaginable size. I do not mean to imply that corporations are the new enemy, like the military-industrial complex, or terrorism, abstract entities evoked to threaten and instill insecurity and fear. Nonetheless, one does have a sense of growing monster enterprises wielding immense influence over our institutions: universities, publishing houses, magazines, museums, libraries, cinemas, film, radio and television stations, each more and more dependent on, beholden to, and "managed" by corporations whose purposes and goals are severed from those of the institutions they own and their individual employees.

On the radio yesterday, a commentator used the phrase "the chaotic garden of private enterprise." The old word "wild" is replaced by the new word "chaos," thus creating an oxymoronic object, a chaotic garden, that
calls up the ungardenied, urban, multiplex landscape in which we actually live; the "garden" wholly metaphor, invoking no rural images; we have no mental pictures to accommodate ideas of chaos with ideas of gardens. A cultivated chaos.

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild,
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

Corporation. Core, cœur, corps, cop, co-opt, poor.
There was a time when institutions had distinct personalities, recognizable ways of behaving that reflected their interests; sometimes the personality was a reflection of the person who founded them. For example, Time Inc., now Time Warner. I worked for Time Inc. a long time ago, when it was essentially still part of Henry Luce's empire, adding a new publication from time to time, slowly branching out into books and television. I worked for Sports Illustrated magazine. The best thing that happened to me there was meeting Cassius Clay, aka Muhammad Ali. I was delivering mail from the mail room to the various editors' offices and suddenly there he was in a pale yellow angora sweater. As it happens, I was wearing a pale yellow sleeveless cotton dress (this was before the hegemony of the black dress) and so Cassius/Muhammad and I briefly bonded over the coincidence. I believe there was some banter about which of us looked prettier (he did). At that moment in time (are there moments not in time?) Cassius Clay was as famous as Michael Jordan is now, not only for his extraordinary grace and prowess as a boxer, but for his brilliant linguistic antics (which he used not only to amuse but to persuade). At that time, high-profile athletes did not sign huge contracts with corporations to promote their wares, at least as far as I know. At that time, there were only a few brands of white shoes, called sneakers or, maybe, tennis shoes.

What is the language-game of telling?
Time Inc. had a personality. Those who worked for it were quickly acquainted with this. It modeled itself on the Patriarchal Family and, in fact, often hired persons whose immediate family had worked there, so as to carry on the tradition. Women were never editors, rarely writers. They did research, worked in the photo library and the newsroom, handmaidsens to male writers and editors.

To say "This combination of words makes no sense" excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason. If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary; or it may show where the property of one man ends and that of another begins, and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.

Divisible day, what vocabulary?

4. tenses

I have been asking myself about the nature of memory again. Rememory. It has occurred to me that when we are writing we are remembering not the past or an event in the past, not a thing or a person or a flower, a place or a meal, a painting or a song, but first and foremost we are remembering words. This is the primal quarry that sits under whatever specific sites we elaborate into what we write (about). When we write we are trying to remember the right word. But what constitutes "right"? Accuracy? The word that will carry most clearly the sense, or senses, we intend? In a poem, if the words remembered are the same words that have always been used to carry that sense, the result is a cliché, isn't it, that is, a phrase which places us in an all too familiar space so that it fails to bring the reader into his present? But let's say that the problem for the poet is not essentially one of vocabulary. The problem is how to take the old vocabulary and put it in new settings,
new structures, which revivify it. So the function of memory is not simple: one needs to know the words and what they mean, but one needs to forget the settings in which they are habitually found.

On his little book on Proust, Samuel Beckett comments, "Proust had a bad memory—because he had an inefficient habit. The man with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. His memory is uniform, a creature of routine, at once a condition and function of his impeccable habit, an instrument of reference instead of an instrument of discovery."

To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life.11

Joan Retallack writes:

It may seem that our uses of language have always been overwhelmingly occupied with memory, with telling ourselves more and more stories, gathering more and more facts for our collective consciousness—of late, culturally mutated into microchip archive. So much so that we may forget the zero-sum fact that knowing is itself a kind of forgetting. Forgetting the other sides of structures, for instance, forgetting to surprise ourselves into entertaining the currently inconceivable; forgetting to pass from one world to the next, not as sci-fi adventure but in order to envision things better than what we have resigned and habituated ourselves to. This is enormously difficult. It sometimes takes what at first glance may seem to be cruel and unusual artifice.12

There are a number of contemporary poets, Retallack among them, for whom the act of writing poems, the taking up of the social role "poet," is specifically linked to a desire to reconstruct, or reimagine, contemporary ways of (thinking about) life, what Retallack herself has called a "poetics." This reimagining is understood, I think, as a rigorous re-evaluation of the various ways in which language constructs both who and how we are (in) the world.

The attention of these poets is to linguistic structures. The old word "form" has been replaced by the new word "structure," to foreground the architectonic nature of language, the ways in which language acts construct our understanding of the world. What constitutes the "real world" is a kind of momentary consensus of different subjective responses; history is the archive of such responses, and as such is open to endless renovation as different subjectivities come to animate their versions. To tolerate these different visions and versions might mean a renovation of what we mean by individual (the one) and what we mean by community (the many).

The poet Kathleen Fraser, in a marvelously talk she gave at a (1996) translation conference at Barnard College,13 spoke persuasively about the many contemporary women poets who have extended Charles Olson's poetics, articulated in his seminal essay "Projective Verse" as well as in many of his essays, letters, and poems. Olson brought a new emphasis to the poem's physical, visual presence, its location in the world not as "the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the 'subject' and his soul," suggesting that the poem, like the poet, is "an object among objects."14 Olson's notion of composition by field, most fully realized in the later Maximus poems, frees the poem's body from the left margin, the spine of the book, and relocates it in the field of the page, foregrounding its spatial/material/visual aspects. This visual deployment of the poem shifts the reader's attention away from temporality and narrativity toward a metonymic mapping, an embodiment. Fraser shows how many women poets, including Susan Howe, Barbara Guest, Myung Mi Kim, Laura Moriarty, Hannah Weiner, Norma Cole, Rachel Blau du Plessis, and herself (among others) have variously explored the visual/physical properties of language, the physical relation of word to word and word to page, as a way to, as Fraser has it, "em/body space and its terrae or human utterance."

Here we find a radical development of the long tradition of women writing through a sense of limitation and boundary, both within their bodies and within their dwellings, out into the uncertain shifting planes/plains of multi-perspective, layered inclusions, which characterize and reflect their (feminine/feminist) perceptions. The text, embodied, becomes a matrix for gestating/generating a new poetic topos, free from dominant modes of narrating which pen the poet and the poem in a single alignment of self/language/world. You might say that the work of these poets is partly recuperative, a desire to retrieve the lost space of the body, an effort to bring us, by analogy, into a relation to physical contingencies of human contact.

Michel Foucault, pressed in an interview to explain his apparent inattention to the various tropes for space in his own writing, commented, "A critique could be carried out of this devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations. Did it start with Bergson, or before? Space was treated as dead, fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic."

In America, you might want to assert the opposite: that space is the
prevailing animating trope, that our narratives have been drawn from it, from a constant "dialogue" with boundaries, locales, maps, crossings, discoveries, movements (and their realization in ownership, land use, and so forth) in which the perceiving eye is privileged over the receiving ear. So Olson, writing about Herman Melville, comments:

Congruence was spatial intuition to Kant, and if I am right that Melville did possess its powers, he had them by his birth, from his time of the world, locally America. As it developed in his century, congruence, which had been the measure of the space a solid fills in two of its positions, became a point-by-point mapping power of such flexibility that anything which stays the same, no matter where it goes and into whatever varying conditions (it can suffer deformation), it can be followed, and, if it is art, led, including, what is so important to prose, such physical quantities as velocity, force and field strength.15

Olson, I think, wanted to claim for poetry a terrain, a mental geography, that would collapse the separation between, and privileging of, sight over sound, giving each equal status on the linguistic field of the poem. And, like the contemporaneous Abstract Expressionist painters, he was interested in the relationship between the discrete (the one, the particular, the gesture) and the continuous (many, the abstract, ground); and, like them, he understood that a unique American aesthetic vocabulary came from relation, scale, and measure, rather than through narrativity or substitution (metaphor, analogy, symbol). The structures that would come from such a vocabulary would move laterally, horizontally, rather than vertically, suggesting American ideals of democratic mobility.

5. Returns

The day after Charles Olson died, I gave my first poetry reading, in Plymouth, England. I read with an English poet named John Keyes, who, in a state of anguish over Olson's death, read Olson, drunkenly, to the assembled ladies of Plymouth. It may seem strange, but in certain literary circles in London (where I then lived), the poets and artists around Black Mountain were viewed as avatars. The reasons for this are too numerous and complex to go into here. There were, however, a number of persons then in London who had direct contact with these figures, including the cultural critic Suzi Gablik (who had been at Black Mountain) and the expatriate American painter RB Kitaj, who was a great reader of poetry (I met Robert Duncan at his house). Eric Mottram, a teacher, poet, critic, and editor, was an astute and enthusiastic supporter of American poetic departures from classic Anglo traditions. In Cold Hell, in Thicket: My copy, now dog-eared and discolored, easily flips open to the title poem—

In cold hell, in thicket, how
abstract (as high mind, as not lust, as love is) how
strong (as strut or wing, as polynote, as things are
constellated) how
strung, how cold
can a man stay (can men) confronted
thus?

All things are made bitter, words even
are made to taste like paper, wars get tossed up
like lead soldiers used to be
(in a child's attic) lined up
to be knocked down, as I am,
by firings from a spit-hardened for, fronted
as we are, here, from where we must go

God, that man, as his acts must, as there is always
a thing he can do, can raise himself, he raises
on a reed he raises his

Or, if it is me, what
he has to say16

For cadence alone it is spellbinding; the turns from line to line demonstrate Olson's use of the left margin to at once animate and anchor the semantic field of the poem. I remember feeling that the subject of the poem was overwhelmingly masculine, that I had almost no point of direct identification with it, but that the peculiar uneven shaping and interleaving, pauses, breathings—all those parentheses—seemed a possibility for a poetics free from the singularity of tone/voice which was so prized as proof of a poet's validity.
When I lived in London, I worked for a time at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, where I wangled myself into a position in which I could plan poetry readings. I planned a series, called Poetry In/formation, on contemporary Eastern European, French, and American poetry. We raised enough money from various sources to invite one American poet. The poet was John Ashbery, who was not yet well known on either side of the Atlantic (the year was 1971). Ashbery's presence in London had the effect of a mild tornado. He read his poems on more than one occasion, poems as if written on the air itself, filling the atmosphere with a peculiar, vital vocal wind that seemed to catch everything up in its wake. One of the poems from that period that astonished me is a short lyric, "A Blessing in Disguise," which stages a dazzling spatial-temporal slippage, a vertiginous cinematic fluidity within the confines of its seven quatrains, showing, as Ashbery so often has, how so-called traditional forms can liberate semantic boundaries. Here are the last four stanzas:

I cannot ever think of me, I desire you
For a room in which the chairs ever
Have their backs turned to the light
Inflicted on the stone and paths, the real trees

That seem to shine at me through a lattice toward you.
If the wild light of this January day is true
I pledge me to be truthful unto you
Whom I cannot ever stop remembering.

Remembering to forgive. Remember to pass beyond you into the day
On the wings of the secret you will never know
Taking me from myself, in the path
Which the pastel girth of the day has assigned to me.

I prefer "you" in the plural. I want "you,"
You must come to me, all golden and pale
Like the dew and the air.
And then I start getting this feeling of exaltation."

6. "And

then I start" . . . A poem that ends with the beginning of an exaltation, caused by the subsuming of the individual "you" (the beloved) into the plural "you" (audience). The space of the poem breaks open; the confines of its own stanzas (Italian stanza: standing, stopping-place, dwelling, room, strophe) are transgressed. The "room" we are in is not quite indoors and not quite out; it is neither a domestic sitting room, a church, nor a public auditorium. This transforming agility is achieved by the poem's syntax, which blurs directionality and perspective in order to create rooms (stanzas) without walls, what Giorgio Agamben has called a "topos outopos" (placeless place, no-place place) in which our experience of being-in-the-world is situated.18

Closer here to Dickinson than to Whitman, Ashbery gracefully configures an intimate, personal voicing onto a public ground, the ground that is "plural" in its potential expansion among the individual yous that make us.

7. Abstraction

I saw the film The English Patient the same afternoon as I saw a Jasper Johns exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Some of the delicacy and nuance of the Michael Ondaatje novel found its way onto the screen, his brilliant threading of a thematics of boundaries, between cultures and persons, between personal (love) and historical (war), violence and obsession. Jasper Johns also found an iconography to attach an inward, almost hermetic sensibility to "public" images—the flag, the map, so forth. In each case, our attention is drawn away from conventional modes of telling and showing (the novel's plot; the picture's subject) to the material itself. In each case, the result is not an arid game, but an elucidation of the continuum between private vision and public (common) knowledge. The consequences of this knowledge are experienced as aesthetic pleasure.

Lateral, permuting, reiterating surfaces are evident, differently, in the work of Gertrude Stein and John Cage, in the paintings of Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol and, to some degree, of Willem de Kooning, in the works of more contemporary artists such as Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman, Carl Andre, Brice Marden, Donald Judd, and, more recently still, Ann Hamilton.
(although she has radically reimagined the idea of repetition through her interest in language); in composers such as Steve Reich, John Adams, and Terry Riley. In each case the distinction between figure and ground is muted; the "figure" is extended over an entire field in a sequence of unique but similar marks/gestures or placements: a rhythm of contingency; or else is rearranged to emphasize scale and relation, as in the work of Philip Guston and Elizabeth Murray. The relation of part to part, rather than part to whole, the internal syntax, is the point of interest; the construction of the work revealed, on its surface, is, in some sense, the content of the work. There is perhaps in our initial iconography a contracting conjugation space/place/locale/local, a peculiar span from abstract to particular ("radiant details") which privileges neither. This system of relations is spatial rather than temporal—it resists the implied narrativity of figure/ground and promotes instead an uninflected parameter in which incidents (proximities) occur. Both Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, in entirely different ways, announce a poetics of (American) space: Whitman by his insistence on a Self as Representative and Inclusive (a specific instance or example, an incident, one among many, leaf among leaves), and Dickinson by releasing narrative into prismatic structures, so her poems do not so much move forward in time (tell stories) as turn in space: they are aspectual, perspectival: mobiles, constellations.19

Space in many of these works is neither secular nor sacred, the landscape neither urban nor rural, domestic nor wild. It is the space in which a body might be found telling. Perhaps the language-game of telling is a game played on a board, a field. What are the rules? Who makes them? Who moves first? Monopoly? Baseball? Chess, anyone?

Inheritance is never a given, it is always a task.
—Jacques Derrida

1. Action

Victory and Doubt dance at a masked ball; together they form a single figure, a gorgeous Thing, its many petals floating in perfumed air, the spectral filmy effulgence of costume: Vienna's charade. Their embrace moves across the boundary-less floor, a fluid duet in which there is no dominant gesture, only permutation and extension. In the ballroom, all mirrors have been removed and with them the dissonance between real and fictive, ideal and true, vanished. Neither male nor female, neither soul nor body: these distinctions also have been erased by the equivocations and valences of the spectral conversation.

Under this music:
flags of memory

logged
streaming

unquelled at the root of news
its signature ode

house rescaled above the river
road altered

and such details as if hinges
particular war, particular lie