



INVESTIGATIVE  
POETRY

ED SANDERS

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CITY LIGHTS

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Investigative Poetry: that poetry  
should again assume responsibility  
for the description of history

## Sections

1. The content of history  
will be poetry
2. Techniques of investigative poetry
3. Presenting data on the page  
--the page is the history
4. Some observations on the public performances  
of investigative poets

Lecture Prepared  
For the Visiting Spontaneous Poetics  
Academy,  
The Naropa Institute  
Boulder, Colorado  
July 8, 1975 --and revised in the  
fall of '75 and winter of '76

*Ed Sanders*

A note of thanks to Rick Fields and Larry Mermelstein of the Naropa Institute; to Allen Ginsberg who sets for all time the example that rebel poets not allow themselves to be driven into isolation; to ace private investigator Larry Larsen for much quiet counseling re: concepts of data-forage; to Thorpe Menn who graciously allowed the use of his desk at the *Kansas City Star* for preliminary typing; and to the Woodstock Library for its fine collection of Coleridge, Shelley and other bards.

And to the memory of Charles Olson  
Read his books.

move over Herodotus  
move over Thuc'  
move over Arthur Schlesinger  
move over logographers and chroniclers  
and compulsive investigators

for the poets are  
marching again  
upon the hills  
of history

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SECTION 1

**The Content of History  
Will be Poetry**

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There is no end  
to *Gnosis*:

The hunger  
for *DATA*

A

The Goal: an era of investigative poesy wherein one can be controversial, radical, and not have the civilization rise up to smite down the bard. To establish and to maintain it. POETS MAY REMAIN IN THE RADIX, UNCOMPROMISING, REVOLUTIONARY, SEDITIOUS, ABSOLUTE.

POET as Investigator  
Interpreter of Sky Froth  
Researcher of the Abyss  
Human Universer  
Prophet  
Prophet without death  
as a consequence.

My statement is this: that poetry, to go forward, in my view, has to begin a voyage into the description of *historical reality*.

Last winter I was examining the text, and the history of the composition, of Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, and I was struck by the historical scholarship the poet had undertaken in the five or so years he labored in its composition. Crane consulted numerous books on American history, building a ziggurat of scholarship with which, as the poet intended, *The Bridge* might confront the dry neo-Pindarian puri-

---

tan sonorities of the *Wasteland*, which much of *The Bridge* was intended to confront.

In addition, for 15 years I had followed the work and career of Charles Olson, particularly the *Maximus Poems*, and the poems contained in that Grove Press book, *The Distances*, and was always amazed how Charles, with his enormous intellect and energy, was able, by consulting old city files-- that is, books and documents relating to a formerly obscure New England fishing settlement, Gloucester, Massachusetts-- to transform these researches into high-order poetry, using his principles of *composition by field* as enumerated in his projective verse manifesto, the result being poetry as history, or history-poesy, or Clio come down to Gloucester in a breeze of High Energy Verse Grids, or Data Clusters, a form of poetic presentation I will discuss in greater detail later.

And then there is the matter of *Howl*. When *Howl* was published in the '50's, it was accepted for what it was, a religious document of great beauty and awesome threnodic power, and a work, we were rightly certain, destined to change American history. Its IMPLICATIONS were historical. As years went by, and the analysis of the poem continued, I time-tracked the poem's implications as they oozed into the historical life-style plexus. So doing, I came to greater and greater awareness of the poet's investigative techniques.

That is, *Howl*, with its wonderful fresh combinations of ancient Greek metres combined with long held-breath lines lasting, in some cases, 5 to 10 seconds, is a work of American history. I remember this spring reading a book called *The Beat Book*, published by Arthur and Glee Knight; particularly the interview with Carl Solomon, who relates in that great Solomonian mode, how Ginsberg was always, in the classic gum-shoe, or muse-sandal, manner, asking oodles of questions of his friends, clarifying anecdotes, keeping files on all his friends, many of which anecdotes and data-files turning up later on in *Howl*. In fact, from an examination of the anecdotes in *Howl*, we may devolve one of the first rules of Investigative Poetry: Do not hesitate to open up a case file on a friend.

A good example is the famous Mallarmé potato salad toss, immortalized by the bard on page 15 of the City Lights edition of *Howl and other Poems*:

who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadadism and  
subsequently presented themselves on the granite steps  
of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech  
of suicide, demanding instant lobotomy...

In the interview in *The Beat Book*, Solomon confirms the historicity of such a 'tato-toss, but corrects the poetic license of the poem by pointing out that the salad hurling, performed by Solomon and several

friends, rather than occurring during a lecture on dadaism, occurred in the course of a lecture on Mallarmé given by Wallace Markfield.

#### B. Investigative Eleutherarchs

Lawyers have a term: "to make law." You "make law" when you're involved in a case or an appeal which, as in Supreme Court decisions which have expanded the scope of personal freedom, opens up new human avenues.

You make law.

Bards, in a similar way, "make reality," or, really, they "make freedom" or they create new modes of what we might term Eleutherarchy, or the dance of freedom.

#### C. The Legacy of Ezra Pound

Purest Distillations from the Data-Midden: the essence of Investigative Poetry: Lines of lyric beauty descend from the data clusters.

*The Cantos* of Ezra Pound first gave us melodic blizzards of data-fragments. History as slime-sift for morality; Olson grew out of that Poundian concern. I don't personally believe an Investigative Poet has to research *The Cantos* for clues to the future. More of the mode of futurity might be learned by studying Pound's *Confucian Odes*, certainly some of the most beautiful and varied melodies anyone has written. On the other hand, who can deny the didactically overpowering drill-job that Canto 45, or 81, performed upon our unsuspecting brows. I remember hitchhiking around the country in the late '50's, the only books in my pack, besides *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, being *Howl*, D. Thomas's *Collected Poems*, Kant's *Prolegomenon to Any Future Metaphysics*, and *The Cantos*. And it was *The Cantos* that trapped one forever in its warp.

Pound gave us shaped texts: some of his pages, such as 81, and, say 75 (Out of Phlegethon!), and many to be found even by a quick spiffle through the pages: THESE PAGES, IN CONSIDERATION OF THEIR SHAPE AND ARRANGEMENTS OF DATA-GRIDS, ARE OF BEAUTY. That is, Pound helped verse escape the dungeon of the column inch.

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And Pound was a skilled collagist: and the lesson is this: that an Investigative Poet of any worth at all will have to become as skilled a collagist as the early Braque.

The poetry of *The Cantos* would emerge, as it were, from a plexus of memories, quote-torrents from the Greek, Latin, Italian, Chinese, French, Arabic, Egyptian, *et al.*, from quick historical vignettes, even, like, newspaper headlines, whereupon, on a sudden, flash! the essence appears; an exquisite line begins and a cadence of purest verse thrills the eye-brain.

Thus Olson, thus Ginsberg, thus Investigative Poetry.

The fault of Pound's epic, in my opinion, is that it races too near the course of Achilles, of war lords, of patriarchial death-breaths. And it speaks, in my opinion, too strongly in favor of a society run by austere whip-freaks and fascists, and it condones Hitlerism and anti-Semitism.

On the other hand, Pound's insight into the money-hallucinated-out-of-nothing nature of the banking system, where sleazisms like David Rockefeller can create money by whim, has been an inspiration to many a poor poet trying to scrounge up even a quarter to buy an egg-cream at Gem Spa's.

And the important lesson we can learn from Pound, in the matter of writing investigative poetry, or history-poetry, is never to allow hatred of a data-target, or the heat of a case, to arouse one, or to wire one up, to the point of insanity, or violence, or to the condoning of racism, or killing. Treason against gentleness.

D.

It is therefore my belief that virtually every major poet's work in France and America for the past 100 years has prepared the civilization for the rebirth of history poesy. *The Wasteland*, *The Bridge*, *The Cantos*, W. C. Williams' *Paterson*, *The Maximus Poems*, Ginsberg's *Ankor Wat*, *Howl* and *Wichita Vortex Sutra*, the work of Snyder, in, say, *Turtle Island*, and Jerome Rothenberg in *Poland 1931*, all betoken an era of investigative poesy, a form of historical writing-- this is as potentially dangerous to the poet as a minefield or those small foot-snuffing blow-up devices the defense dept. used in Vietnam; but it is a danger thrillsomey magnetic to a bard wandering through the electromagnetic aeon.

History-poesy, or investigative poetry, can thrive in our era because of the implications of a certain poetic insight, that is, in the implications of the line, "Now is the time for prophecy without death as a consequence," from *Death to Van Gogh's Ear*, a Ginsberg poem from 1958.

Investigative poesy is freed from capitalism, churchism, and other totalitarianisms; free from racisms, free from allegiance to napalm-dropping military police states---a poetry adequate to discharge from its verse-grids the undefiled high energy purely-distilled verse-frags, using *every* bardic skill and meter and method of the last 5 or 6 generations, in order to describe *every* aspect (no more secret governments!) of the historical present, while aiding the future, even placing bard-babble once again into a role as shaper of the future.

For this is the era of the description of *the All*; the age wherein a Socrates would have told the judges to take a walk down vomit alley, and could have lived as an active vehement leader of the Diogenes Liberation Squadron of Strolling Troubadors and Muckrakers, till the microbes 'whelmed him. The era of police-statists punishing citizens for secret proclivities is over. Blackmail, in other words, is going to go bye-bye. One will not in any way have to assure one's readers (to quote, is it Martial, or Catullus?) that *"pagina lasciva, vita proba,"* but rather it is now most definitely the age of *"pagina lasciva, vita lascivior."* And we are here speaking of uncompunctious conjugation, not of richies cutting up cattle from silent helicopters, or of bankers whipping each other on yachts.

Thrills course upward from the typewriter keys as my fingers type the words that say that poets are free from the nets of any *particular* verse-form or verse-mind. Keats would have grown old in such a freedom. The days of bards chanting dactylic hexameters while strumming the phormingx, or lyre, trying to please some drooly-lipped warlord are over, o triumphant beatnik spores! It's over! And the days of bards trying to please some CIA-worshipping cold war tough-liberal professor are done! done! done!

But the way of Historical Poesy, as I said earlier, is mined with danger, especially to those bards who would seek to drag the corpses of J.P. Morgan's neo-confederates through the amphetamine piranha tank.

For let us not forget for one microsecond that the government throughout history has tried to suppress, stomp down, hinder, or buy off dissident or left-wing poets.<sup>1</sup>

One has only to recall that Coleridge and Wordsworth one day were lounging by the sea shore, while nearby sat an English police agent on snitch patrol prepared to rush to headquarters to quill a report about the conversation.<sup>2</sup>

Or one can read that remarkable book, *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* by J. Bronowski, which Harper & Row printed in 1965, to see how reactionary English creeps, with their threats of jail, or worse, for accurately depicting the nature of the early parts of the French Revolution, --how these reactionary creeps caused, in a significant way, poets like William Blake, who after all was a friend of Thomas Paine, to back away from historical poetry, and to retreat, if that is the word, into a poetry of symbols, where people like King George and William Pitt and others were known by code names such as Palamabron and Rintrah.<sup>3</sup>

Nor let us forget that the federal government tried to seize the first printing of *Howl and Other Poems* (it was printed abroad by City Lights) as it was coming into San Francisco bay.

Nor shall we forget the repressive corona of puke-vectors that I believe drove Shelley --censored, hounded by police statist, fearful of arrest-- to take upon himself a self-destruction (rest in peace, o d.a. levy) and to set sail into a mad air; nor forget ever the corona of puke-vectors that sent the empty carriages of the rich shuttling along behind the cortege bearing the body of Byron.<sup>4</sup>

Nor shall we forget the fate of Ovid, who because that calmed-down murderer, Augustus, didn't like his book and the implications of his book *Ars Amatoria*, was sent away the literary scene to die in exile.<sup>5</sup>

Nor shall we forget that Dostoevsky was standing ready to die in front of the firing squad when the reprieve arrived enabling him later on to "objectify" his stance into that of a jealous rightwing nut.<sup>6</sup>

Nor shall we forget how the Chilean poet-singer Victor Jara was leading a group of singers while imprisoned in the soccer stadium following the 1973 CIA-coup in Chile, and the killers chopped off his fingers to silence his guitar, and still he lead the singing--til they killed him, another bard butchered because of the U.S. secret police.

Nor shall we forget how the Czar's secret police hounded Alexandr Pushkin with a nightmare of surveillance and exile. In fact, a brief look at certain aspects of Pushkin's life is here appropriate, in order to guage some of the pressures that can force a poet "to become more objective," or, as the English professor who writes for a CIA-funded magazine might giggle, "to come to terms with the harsh facts of life." Or to escape into the forgetful symbols.

FOOTNOTES: Section I

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1. *The Secret Police Sell-out Rule: time after time as we read the biographies of writers, our hearts are broken as we monitor a hideous drift, passing, say, the 33rd year, to the cautious right. Sometimes I think that the secret police of the world developed a procedure at least 300 years ago to deal with the potential of the brilliant young to create quick change. And the Secret Police Sell-out Rule would go something like this: "If you can stomp them and punish them enough in their youth and middle age, then they'll calm down, the punks, and silently assent to the Corrupting It." Energy bio-dwindle also adds to the sell-out rule. And, if I go to prison, what will happen to my 15,000 books?*

---

2. *Someone should write well the story of Citizen Thelwall. If we all do not have the free chance to enact our own Thelwallean maneuvers, then we are still slaves. The point is that a visit by Thelwall was enough to cause you (Wordsworth) to lose your house and for the fuzz to slap a surveillance on you.*

---

3. *We are not here saying that Blake's The French Revolution is the world's greatest poem. And obviously Rintrah is a much more groovy name than Henry Kissinger (one way to deal with baleful names such as Kissinger's, in poems, would be, as the language gets more "glyphic" again, to conceive of a cacoglyph --a drawing or symbol (cacoglyph being the opposite of the sacred-or hieroglyph) depicting, say, Kissinger. But we must, on the other hand, be wary of polishing such specks of evil til they become our shiniest art, if you can scan my zone.*

*John Clarke, certainly one of the finest scholars of Blake, responded to the manuscript of Investigative Poetry with a poem, which speaks right to the essence of the Blake problem:*

AS TO THE DISSIMULATION

*It is true certainly Blake suffered from Nervous Fear & because of it retreated into a poetry of symbols, but, ironically, this retreat was truer to his Good Angel than*

had he quickly & easily, like Oedipus solved,  
being a Mental Prince, the case of history  
under investigation, for, lo & behold, he found  
something deeper behind, going on, States  
which only Individuals were in, not fused with  
Eternally, but retrievable, a true cosmological  
narrative to be written as distinct from its  
Generated denominations, whose accomplishment  
is only what allows us today to be political,  
his system gave us the tools of our profession.

Sept 17, 1975

Yes. And Blake's stance is Absolute Integrity, without  
which Investigative Poetry is immoral gibberish ---and  
his drive toward the hieratic poem-glyph is ever our  
investigative grail.

And I have no quarrel with Blake's vision of a whole  
system of Self-- a Self that paints, designs and sings  
the liminations of God or Godot or Gododd. What I  
quarrel with is the withdrawal from the polis-- and  
into the polis thus neglected will march totalitarian  
apostles: nixon, hitler, stalin, haldeman, helms --  
abetted by the kings and queens of satan (the lovers  
of violence).

About 1789  
William Blake moved to small house  
on south side of Thames

got cooking there  
on Prophetic Books

decided through visits and advice of the  
received ghost of his brother Robert

to design in reverse relief on etched  
copper plates, both poem and design--

and then to adorn the printed-  
poem with individual paintings

thank you, o ghost.

Hand-held press  
Hand-etched copper plates  
Hand-pigmented poem-glyphs

The hand! The hand!

*And as he fashioned and painted more and more of his  
books*

He moved  
Toward  
Soul-Scroll.

*And Blake's techniques in preparing and producing say,  
The Songs of Innocence and Experience, the move toward  
poem-glyph, should ever be an archetype for the Inves-  
tigative Poet. Print it yrself, adorn it yrself, send  
it out yrself, and make it sacred.*

---

*4. Shelley and government spy-scum: "At last he gave up,  
sent forward a box filled with his books, which was in-  
spected by the government and reported as seditious, and  
on April 4 left Ireland (1812). He settled ten days  
later at Nantgwilt, near Cwm Elan, the seat of his  
cousins, the Groves, and there remained until June. In  
this period he appears to have met Peacock, through whom  
he was probably introduced to his London Publisher,  
Hookham. In June he again migrated to Lymmouth in Devon.  
Here he wrote his 'Letter to Lord Ellenborough,' de-  
fending Eaton, who had been sentenced for publishing  
Paine's Age of Reason in a periodical. He amused him-  
self by putting copies of the Declaration of Rights,  
(Shelley's revolutionary pamphlet from French sources)  
and a new satirical poem, The Devil's Walk, in bottles  
and fire balloons, and setting them adrift by sea and  
air; but a more mundane attempt to circulate the Dec-  
laration of Rights resulted unfortunately for his  
servant (I guess we have to forgive Shelley for having  
servants), who had become attached to him and followed  
him from Ireland, and was punished by a fine of 200  
pounds or eight month's imprisonment for posting it on  
the walls of Barnstable. Shelley could not pay the fine,  
but he provided fifteen shillings a week to make the  
prisoner's confinement more comfortable. The govern-  
ment now put Shelley under surveillance, and he was  
watched by Leeson, a spy....and it is known that Shelley  
was dogged by Leeson, whom he feared long afterwards."*

*from the biographical sketch in  
Complete Poetical Works of  
Percy Bysshe Shelley  
Cambridge Edition, 1901*

*There is nothing like having a hateful person, paid by a government agency, company or private party, enter your life spewing nodules of mix-up, dissension, hate, violence, fear.*

*(take a quick check into the specifics for instance, of the FBI cointelpro fear-and-death ruinations.)*

---

*5. Every time I get out my 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (vol. 20, ODE to PAY), I suffer the frothing anger-electrics reading about the injustices suffered by Ovid, driven to the Black Sea by a punk turkey tyrant snuffer. And it could well happen again-- the androids with book-burning lasers to knock at a poet's door with a computerized printout of the plot of her latest poem.*

---

*6. One can understand how Dostoevesky drifted to the right, being a heavy Russian nationalist at heart-- but o lord how could he have ever accepted inside himself, first that he deserved a sentence of death, or deserved a commutation that gave him 5 hideous years in the slams, and for what? For conspiring to print copies of Belinsky's revolutionary letter of response to the late life god-grovels of Gogol.*

Alexandr Pushkin

*d.o.b. 5-26-1799*

*d. 1-29-1837*

shot in stomach

friends  
with pre-Decembrists  
secret societies, but never trusted with

plot-plans. They never trust poets.

belonged to Green Lamp which may have  
been a branch of the Union of Welfare, freethinking  
orgiasts and partisans of Liberty.

Pushkin's cry of "Tremble, o tyrants of the world  
And you... o fallen slaves, arise!"  
*(Ode to Freedom, 1817)*

may not have been so loudly heard in the casinos of Petrograd  
but it is said that the revolutionary poems of his youth were so  
sung in the mind that the soldiers in the barracks knew them  
by heart

---9 of 10, it is said, of the young in Russia then  
received their revolutionary input from Pushkin

His political poems, like the secret Russian tracts of  
today, were passed from hand to hand in manuscript.

The fuzz were hip to the trip, and harassed Pushkin. In 1820, he  
nearly was bricked into prison, so chose a period of exile in the  
south.

During these years of police surveillance, Pushkin gradually began to  
soften under the pressure, becoming "more objective" --that is,  
secreting his revolutionary politics in narrative.

6 years of police harassment, til Sept of 1826, the new Czar, Nico-  
las I, summoned him to Moscow, and announced that he, the Czar,  
henceforth would be the poet's "censor." And although the poet's  
formal exile was over, the chief of the Russian Secret Police kept  
him under the shackles of surveillance. Pushkin had to submit all  
his writings to the Czar for approval.

In March of 1826, he was to write in a letter, "I do not intend foolishly to oppose the generally accepted order." (As, and probably under similar fearful pressure, William Blake in 1791 had decided not to print *The French Revolution*.)

Three years

Pushkin in Moscow and Petrograd, a dissipated period of surveillance, drinking, gambling, fucking-- wrote very little-- a right-winger's vision of paradise for a poet.

1927/8/9

And in the 1830's Pushkin studied in the Russian State Archives going back to the texts and documents.

Pressure

force the poets

pressure

to weaken

pressure

the force

of their beliefs.

*Never Again.*

E.

At the great religious  
festivals of antiquity  
the poets sang/chanted  
for prizes--

and in the era of the Investigative Poet  
the Diogenes Troubador Data Squads  
will chew their way into the  
gory dressing room of Richard Helms

But what is the prize?  
The prize is for the poets  
to assume their rightful  
positions as chroniclers  
of the Time Track,  
of the historical moment  
whether century, aeon, hour  
or microsecond

As Olson said: "I would be an historian as Herodotus Was, looking for  
oneself for the evidence of what is said."

But what is the prize?  
the prize is for Diogenes Eleutherarchs  
waving the banner of  
enforced economic equality  
to weaken, to lessen,  
and to bring down into the vale of Ha Ha Hee  
the North American CIA Police State,

and for poets  
never again  
to internalize grovelness.

SECTION 2

Techniques of Investigative Poetry

A. Projective Verse

Charles Olson's elucidation in his essay manifesto *Projective Verse* of the principle of COMPOSITION BY FIELD has opened up the way for poets to get back into such historical description in an important way.

The verse of the investigative poet of  
genius will discharge data as if scanning  
eye-brains were passing across a high-energy grid,  
the vectors of verse-froth leaping up from  
the verse-grids at every point. High Energy  
Verse History Grids!

"A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it, by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader."

and

"Then the poem must, at all points, be a high energy-construct and, at all points, an energy-discharge."

Olson, *Projective Verse*

and

"We now enter...the large area of the whole poem, into the FIELD... where all the syllables and all the lines must be managed in their relation to each other."

and

"the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE  
the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE"

I can't tell you how excited I am, personally, about the concept of history-verse, of high energy data grids--

"ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY  
AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER  
PERCEPTION"

Olson, quoting Edward Dahlberg  
again from *Projective Verse*

---

The Illumination-sparks flood into  
the mind all along  
and at every point  
of the Data Grid!

"It is a matter, finally of OBJECTS," Olson says,

"of OBJECTS, what they are, what they are inside  
a poem, how they got there, and, once there,  
how they are to be used."

B. Concerning  
The Opening of case files

Files age  
Files wax rusty  
The data corrodes  
by the tendency of  
poets to escape into  
the symbols.

And this: that ne'er too 'plete nor pullulated w/  
plies are your cases. Nor is it ever done:

One's file, you know, is never quite complete; a case  
is never really closed, even after a century, when all  
the participants are dead," the British intelligence officer  
who narrates Graham Greene's *The Third Man* tells us,  
eyeballing our fast corroding files with a baleful glance  
that seems to say: even in the midst of an investigation,  
keep it unchaotic, neat, orderly, perfectly proportioned  
and terminal. Neat Grids shape the future.

And as for the symbols:

we have already mentioned Blake's work on the French Revolution which  
he decided not to print; and the later work of Pushkin; how all this  
talk how poets calm down, how they "come to terms with it," how they  
become "more objective" is bunk from a punk; and is, in my opinion, a  
result of repression from governments, and the repression is due, in  
great part, to the efforts of secret domestic intelligence police.  
This is true from ancient Egypt, to modern America, France, The Soviet  
Union; you name the country. Hitler, after World I, led domestic

---

intelligence assassination operations against leftists and intellectuals. Nixon and Haldeman and the FBI-CIA-Surrealistic-Complex were headed the same direction. Case files pulled down the death's-head fluttering above the White House.

Dostoevsky wrote *The Possessed* because of his revulsion at Nechayev, a far left slasher who had set up a network of terror cells each unaware of the other, like bricks in a pyramid, to perform terrorist chop-up capers. He netted some marks for the scam, except the system of 5-unit cells seems to have been mostly in his mind. Dostoevsky over-dubbed his own story, including some of his own personal problems, atop the facts of the case, and changed the names. Maybe, however, he should have raced after a few data-targets in the Russian abyss--like visiting Nechayev a few times in Peter and Paul fortress, where Nechayev was being held for the murder of a hesitant cell member. The history of later terrorism might have been changed by it.

Eleutherarchy has taken to the airwaves since the days of Dostoevsky, however, and the freedom is there

Therefore, NEVER HESITATE TO OPEN  
UP A CASE FILE

EVEN UPON THE BLOODIEST OF BEASTS OR PLOTS

C. We will see the day of

RELENTLESS  
PURSUIT OF DATA!

Interrogate the Abyss!

To go after an item of time,

(as Olson says: p. 134 of  
*The Human Universe and Other Essays,*

the essence is to  
"KNOW THE NEW FACTS EARLY.")

---

(After all, wasn't one of the shrieks of our generation to suck eternity from The NOW, to hear in Sonny Rollins' saxophone, to hear in Snyder and Burroughs, to hear in meditation and mountain caves, the beauty of the present, of instant gratification, of word-wheel and world-wheel.)

Therefore how in tune with our era it is  
to open up a case file on an item of current time,

and, to quote Olson, this time  
to say that history is "Whatever happens,  
and if it is significant enough to be recorded  
the amount of time of the event can be minute."

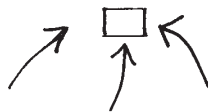
minute!!!!

To surround an item of time  
with thick vector-clusters of  
Gnosis,

to weave a corona  
of perception through verse  
and through those *high*  
*energy verse grids* which  
we mentioned earlier.

#### D. Investigative Glyphs

Draw a graph or glyph  
of your investigation target



surround the glyph  
with gnosis-vectors

pointing to the target

and never surrender!

robot targeting  
knocked away  
get on feet  
prepare new question lists

approach the target  
again again again

The Item of Time  
forever caught & exposed  
& explicated

in the thews & thongs &  
melodies of bard-babble.

ahhh sweet nets  
of bard-babble.

E. Concerning Shyness  
and Investigative Poetry

data  
data cluster  
data cluster data cluster data cluster  
data cluster DATA CLUSTER data cluster  
data cluster The Big D data cluster  
data cluster DATA CLUSTER data cluster  
data cluster data cluster data cluster  
data cluster  
data

To *unpeel* the data clusters (to get to the Big D) as well as to  
fashion them into skeins of syllables and vowel-melodies and poesy.

People with shyness problems  
who want to  
get into investigations  
have a great obstacle  
to overcome.

Do not be afraid  
to one-on-one  
your Data Target  
in the Abyss.

And do not hesitate  
to open up a case file  
on anything or anybody!

When in doubt,  
interrogate, rhapsodize a weave,  
or q-quilt or question quilt,  
type up a question list.

"If a man or woman does not live  
in the thought that he or she  
is a history, he or she  
is not capable of  
himself or herself"

saith Olson  
p. 28, of *The  
Special View Of History*

#### F. The Catalogue of Ships Problem

One of the greatest practical problems, both for the poet and for the reader, in Investigative Poesy, is data-midden boredom --a problem which might be called "The Catalogue of Ships Problem." That is, the boredom a reader often encounters when wading through book two of the *Iliad*, which cloy-gluts even the most eager minds with an endless dactylic dah-da-da dah-da-da parade of description, of the names of the captains & chieftains & gore-goons, and the number of ships in their commands, of the Achaeon military array that sailed upon Troy.

As of the catalogue of ships problem, Allen G. suggested (April 1975, Gobelet Rest. in Montreal) that at the "top and bottom of each page, sort of a ticker tape to run to tell what significant info is in the sandwiched page."

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The art of the excellent footnote is ever to be practiced. The long poems of Shelley, and particularly Byron, hold excellent models of the brilliant footnote. A foot note is a satellite data-cluster in whose gnarls the poet can skip centuries literally to utter satellite comments upon current events, upon her/his love life, upon any refreshing spark that thrills the eye.

Other aspects of the catalogue of ships problem will be discussed in Section III (the poem on the page), and Section IV (some notes on the public performance of Investigative Poets.)

#### G. Flashlights to Find the Flashlights

Ezra Pound said, in effect, that historians should leave well-defined gaps in the text or in the presentation equal to the circumstances concerning which they have no knowledge:

that is, their AREAS OF DARKNESS.

When you open a file, the first concern is to define  
the AREA OF DARKNESS---

and to bring the Darkness  
the "hard Sophoclean light."

#### FILES

- a) alphabetical --human
- b) alphabetical --subject narratives
- c) chrono-ooze files, that is, chronological Time Trackings--  
--relentlessly to pack polished data-gnarls  
all along the points of a Time Track where the  
data fits. Chrono-ooze files, when brilliantly  
engendered, are the most difficult, since it is in  
time-tracking that epic Investigative Poesy is  
born.
- d) subject-clusters  
--files relating to a subject that are clustered in  
vertical shafts upon the same locality, or time  
period, or upon the same theme.

Subject clusters drive vertical pylons or data-posts  
here and there in the same time and in the  
same culture.

(e) system of easily retrievable photos, tape recordings, videotapes, microfilm, etc. Always write the date, the place, the time, and a written description of the contents of material on tapes, photos, etc. You can guess the time that will save you later on. An obscure note, noted only because a crazed-with-data discipline caused you to write everything down, many times will assume great importances six months, or a year even, from the time of its jotting.

(f) index cross-file, if you have the time.

--a way out of the enormous tedium of cross index filing, is CONSTANTLY TO REVIEW every single one of your files on the cases at hand,

so that each file has a list of questions to be asked (if you have a typed list of questions ready 24 yours a day, should a data-source be encountered, say, at 3 A.M. at a party, then even if your mind is dialed out into a mode of wastage, the questions are there on the page in grey formality) regarding each file's AREA OF DARKNESS.

(g) a single file of questions, culled from all your files, for the entire case. This is useful when encountering unexpected information sources. Often when you interview someone on one matter, they will have data on other matters as well---so if you have a huge, organized list of questions on your whole study, then...

(h) Cynicism analysis. This is useful when encountering fresh or shocking or incongruous information. Compare the new information with known data, then make a point by point list to specify exactly where the data is at variance with what you know or believe to be correct---then go back to the original texts, to the tapes, to the living sources, for elucidation. It also helps to have a few trusted highly cynical friends upon whose minds you can unleash your goat-pen of files and your gnarls of investigation, in order to receive the Cynicism Spew, which often may involve guffaws, sneers, snorts of derision, anger, putdowns, abuse, in addition to gentle and very useful location of bullshit nodules within your research.

H. Morality Lists, Event Grids,  
& Garbage Grids ---exhaustive lists w/which to  
focus in on a person or event.

In Gilbert Sorrentino's novel, *The Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things* (Pantheon 1971), we encounter a literary phenomenon which I have

---

called The Sorrentino Morality List, that is, the numbered descriptive lists he places within the narrative to describe the character or proclivities of a subject. The Morality Lists explain in often humorous detail a person's tendencies, without the encumbrances of paragraphing and excess pronouncing and connectives. In other words a Morality List is facets and facts positioned on a naked fork of numbers. For examples, see pages 15, 16, 194, 195 of *The Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things*. In a recent conversation, Sorrentino told us that in his just-completed book, there is a list some 400 numbered units long. A Morality List does not have to be ha ha handpuppets. It can be in an extremely serious mode, or it can be a mix of serio-ha ha, tragi-ha ha, metaphysical ha ha, and even Wm Blake Laughing Song ha ha.

In addition to Morality Lists, you could present a numbered list relative to a specific event: an event grid---thus escaping the problem of newspaper reportage, i.e., one grape in a paragraph of sawdust (of ands, ofs, fors, and repetitives). An event Grid can drape or adorn a moment of time with an exhaustive series of numbered clusters.

As of coming to terms with Character. That is, a Morality List, say of Henry Kissinger, who apparently belches and is seized with violence spasms in the planning of bombings such as against Cambodia; such a Morality List, by the depiction of evilness spasms, would turn into a Garbage Grid.

Olson said, "I wd be an historian  
as Herodotus was."

Which is fine indeed, since Herodotus set  
the parameters of personal investigation.

One has, however, ever to be reminded that a historian, especially a brilliant one, has to be wary of his or her own garbage grids. The Scythians, and Scythian civilization -- *οἱ Σκυθοι* -- are forever garbaged by the way Herodotus treated them in his history---so that when museums have exhibitions of Scythian art and artifacts, the catalogue has to encounter and to hurl back a little garbage upon Herodotus himself. Ahh how history loves to garbage the garbagers.

One useful method, if you find yourself preparing garbage grids, and you want to MAINTAIN ACCURACY, is to prepare some garbage grids on YOURSELF

self-garbage  
see how you like  
it--

Garbage Grid  
on Self,

that in the end that justice pulse along your grids of others.

---

I. The Ha Ha Ha Problem

To be Stubborn in your pursuit of truth  
even if it is as if  
everyone has ha ha's for your work (whether derision  
ha ha's or the ha ha hee of Blake's Laughing Song).

Concerning Derision:

(at a new generation of Investigative Poets)

People might laugh.  
And laugh they will.  
And laugh they should.  
But their laughter may well  
be the laughter  
of  
The Rasp/Hasp/Asp

(On the other hand we should never forget  
how valuable a tool in the tides of social transformation  
the subtle use of the Ha Ha He of William  
Blake's Laughing Song *IS!*)

as of: the mystery of joy in adversity--

"Come live & be merry and Join with me,  
To sing the sweet chorus of Ha, Ha He."

J. Did not Wm Blake urge poets  
to practice practice practice?

Billions of notebooks  
Practice writing up  
your interview notes  
into spontaneous  
verse-grids.

Type up  
correlative  
verse-grids  
after the interview.

Even as, say, you talk  
to someone over the phone,  
as you talk, write down  
the data into verse-grids:  
TRANSLATE it into  
breath-units & poem-lines  
With practice, you  
can do it automatically.

Write everything down:

---

You will feel, as a case expands,  
filing cabinet into filing cabinet,  
like a N.Y. subway shopping bag  
roamer

When practicing  
writing up Morality Lists or data-grids  
you will feel  
the lines break--  
you will automatically break  
your data torrent on  
the lines.

---

In order to depict action in its own time; that is, to capture a real, even a dangerous or frenzied event, in a lattice of poem-lines "as it occurs" is a skill not immediately available.

There is something paralyzing about a powerful event, and observers can often come away with a notepad full of nothing--- or full of inapplicable gibberish.

So it is useful to practice time-tracking. William Burroughs published an essay on this subject in the mid-60's in the *London Sunday Times*, I believe.

The suggestion was, say, to board a bus, and to dial the mind to Total Data, or Total Enternoia, and to widen the peripheral vision, like a basketball player about to make a back-pass. Then to sit: watch for connections; note down the layout; describe the movements of the face muscles of those in your sight---noting the *differences*. Observe what people are reading. Take a 15 minute trip, write a 20 page report.

Try the Total Data mind-dial technique at murder trials, in street riots, at your parents' bridge club, at the intermissions of poetry readings, during bliss, during anger, etc.

In facing hostile data-sources, the main rule is persistent politeness. A persistent politeness that refuses to wax deflected in any way from the data-target.

So many investigative reporters live in alcoholic upper-downer unmeditative total chaos, bouncing from bad news to bad news (which is one of the reasons---in order to strike a balance of peace--to open up "friendship files," that is, files on benevolent and thrilling subjects, such as your best friend), that their view of the universe is correspondingly dour and chaotic.

And just as in certain detective stories, the detective sometimes sits in one spot, perhaps for hours, sifting the data of a case at great meditative length upon their mind-screen, looking for a "solution" to the case, or for patterns to form in the data-gnarls, so too, in my opinion, investigative poets will want to set up a system of personal meditation, both to keep down the tides of investigative paranoia, and to paint mental data-wheels, and to bring the Chaos to quietude.

Such meditation would certainly help to center the poet, who, say just last night had gotten roughed up trying to walk past Frank Sinatra's body-guards in Las Vegas to try to ask him a few questions about his buddy Sam Giancana and CIA assassination squads.

When facing or working gingerly around a hostile data-source, always remember to let a close friend, or even the police, know where you are going, and when you will be finished, and the approximate geographical location of the facing. Never sally forth into the turf of a hostile data-target with any files or sensitive documents that you would not want the target to see or to steal. Another good idea, as of getting your files ripped off by the hostiles, is always to keep a hidden stash of duplicate copies of all materials relating to the case (or in the case of photos, and tapes, hide the originals.

Which brings me forward to a worshipful proskynesis at the altar of Love-zap, that term of combative ahimsa or nonviolence, developed by Judith Malina and Julian Beck and the members of the Living Theater, to describe the love energy engendered by highly unified nonviolent direct action. The road of love-zap is ever more productive of good, accurate data than is the road of the pushy investigative goon. And the love-zap path is certainly a great aid in preventing that bane of investigation, the internalization of grouchiness. That is, beware of conducting a personal life as if you were sliding down one of the striations of a garbage grid.

ahhh sweet love-zap  
fierce love-zap  
braced-for-anything love-zap

SECTION III

**Presenting Data on the Page  
the page is the history  
the poem on the page**

chant-modes, anapestic/dactylic/choriambic/beowulfian-motorized-alliterative narratives should be as diverse, in their specific techniques, as the gene pool o'er which they sing

and the same is true of the poetic adornments of the page

that is, a page is not a four-sided white void in which to practice zeroness.

It seems obvious that the language of poetry may well evolve into a 1000 color hieroglyphics utilizing a near infinity of typographies. The availability of colors & photographic images and the 100's of type faces, even in a good art supply store, foretell the birth of an international hieroglyphics. The upcoming laser hologram revolution-- that is, of 3-dimensional words & images, speaks and shrieks of a future where poetry and collage and perspective join to thrill the eye-brain with glowing, animated ("poetry in motion," the rock-and-roll song so prophetically sang), multi-color, 3-d "memory gardens" or verse-grids. This new hieroglyphic language may well use letterless symbols, emotion-glyphs say, 3-d soundless glyphs or tiny photographs depicting complex emotional states, inserted in the hieroglyphic grids, to augment the poet's inherited word-horde.

Initially, one can foresee, in a narrative poem say, the use of the protagonists' "faces" --i.e., small photo-cuts of their faces used in the text in place of or in association with the names. Picture a poem about the relationship of CIA-director Richard Helms and Robert Kennedy.

In this way, the face-image, by its repetitive appearance in the text, could assume emotional and philosophical qualities; in a Kennedy-Helms poem, the images might emerge as archetypes (and therefore used in other contexts) for baleful secret policeman and for liberal senator.

A list of possible ideas for presentation of  
verse grids:

- a. flow charts---the use of arrows, vector and tensor signs, and specific pictographs to denote relationships, or transformations, or ooze patterns.
- b. the use of those headline-making machines one sees in offices of the underground newspapers. A THOUSAND TYPOGRAPHIES for a thousand lines: spatially arranged in beautiful forms --what a shame that bards have not brought onward the implications of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*.
- c. the use of mandala-like lyric-wheels, data-wheels, story-wheels as "memory gardens" or as collage/frottage/assemblage thrill farms.
- d. One can well study the 1911 collages of Georges Braque, which combined newsprint, paint, wood grains and stone grains, line drawings: giving a sense of equal but multilevel surfaces.

Poets could easily borrow some ideas re positioning of verse-grids by studying the prints, say, of Robert Rauschenberg.

- e. the Egyptian Soul-Scrolls. These were the long (some as long as three feet) thin rectangular rolls of papyrus placed in the coffin or in the mummy linen of the deceased. The soul-scrolls described in beautifully painted vignettes the arrival and judgement (the weighing of the heart to detect any sin-grime) in the underworld followed by the purification in the lake of fire and then a nice eternity spent picking huge-headed wheat in the Yaru Fields. You can take a look at them in *Mythological Papyri*, Bollingen Series, published by Pantheon, especially vol. 1, facsimiles of the actual soul-scrolls printed on long narrow paper rectangles. They are full of clues regarding the presentation of compressed hieroglyphic poem stories with happy endings.
- f. Burroughsian cut-up grids. For information on this read *The Soft Machine*, of any and all of Burroughs' writing on the subject of cut-up techniques.
- g. Four or five vertical lines dividing the page, with long narrow verse-columns backed against the lines, in the manner of some of the writing in John Cage's *Silence* (a method of composition used in my own poem, *Cemetery Hill*, which was composed on a page with pre-drawn vertical lines, and the poesy sprayed from my pen up against the lines.)

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Poetry books have seemed to diminish in size of page merely to fit the shelf-whims of bookstores. The new hieroglyphic verse-grid page will, it seems to me, have to be ENLARGED CONSIDERABLY.

That is, the peripheral space of image presentation will have to be enlarged whether on larger sheets of paper or by using, in not so many years, full-color laser verse-fields triggered off by donning the latest City Lights Pocket Poets eye-piece.

#### SECTION IV

### Some Observations on the Public Performance of Investigative Poets

It is not an untoward spew of gibberish to predict a "golden age" for the public presentation of verse.

For the same advances that have occurred in meter and method and in hieroglyphic visuality, have also occurred on the electromagnetic front.

Poets will, in the new few years, be able to affix "tone rows" or tangible tone triggers on, say, their forearms, or knees, or thrill-nodes, so that during a poem, merely by touching themselves, they can produce, by beaming signals to a noise-source, concomitant chords, noises, heart-beats, animal songs, percussion, friendly wafts of negative ions, or even projected images that speak in exact harmony (as an overdub in a sound studio, but instanter) with the flow of bard-babble. All parts of a bard's body can be tone-triggers, Patti Smith.

- a. The next music: long chanted-or-sung epics or *poem*-songs (not *song*-poems) dealing with current or recent historical events.
- b. There will arise the Diogenes Liberation Squadron of Strolling Troubadors & Muckrakers. The likes of Henry Kissinger will tremble before the contrapuntal 50-person chorus of elucidation on the Saturday night Diogenes Strolling Troubador productions across the country in every natural canyon amphitheatre. Not since the days of Pindar and Sappho, when poems were sung by standing choruses, will such beauty have been heard.
- c. The rhabdians-- (from *wand*, *ῥάβδος*, as mentioned in Olson's *Notes on Language Theatre*: "or single actors w/ a stick beating out verse and acting out narrative situations in said verse, 500 hexameters at a performance, the text the Epics."

Apply this to the era of broadcast microphones, tone-triggers, tape loops, etc. and you can guess how some new group of rhabdians might well arise.

- d. Tristan Tzara/  
dadaist  
Cafe Voltaire  
poem-operas  
Zurich 1916.

I once observed a "scored sound-opera" for maybe 30 voices, with very professional looking scores written by the composer and performed at the Essen Song Festival in Germany, 1968.

An electromagnetic role: Poet as Conductor, or orchestrator of larynxes (of chanting dancers).

(regarding orchestration, a good idea might be to memorize and to internalize various ancient meters, so that, should the occasion occur, you can mix these meters into your natural prosody to produce, say, great pulsing Pindaric choral odes.

- e. Investigative Poets to bring about rebirth of the *Ballad Opera*. Motorized Beowulfian recitation of Morality Lists. Rhymed left-wing epics with characterizations played by five-unit choruses.

The tendency of many modern poets also to write songs can come to full fructification in the Ballad Opera.

That is, the ancient image of the Poet as singer: aoidos (ᾄδός) who carries a lyre

φόρμιγξ

Achilles in the Iliad  
sang the κλέα ἀνδρῶν  
(the tunes of men,  
of heroes) (ha ha)  
in the tent

& Patrocles  
is prepared  
to sing too  
when his  
turn is come.

Sort of  
open poetry  
readings  
after/before

the gore.

---

But those days of gore-song are done. And we are here to quell the violence, and to return to the ACTUAL TEXTS and MAPS and original languages and modes of culture to find the materials to weave into our public performances.

- f. *Howl* as a model for a genre of Indictment Verse. Once again we reiterate how *Howl*, with its long-line iambo-anapestic, bacchic and beat dactylic structure, could easily serve as model for blistering indictments and descriptions of your investigations. Read it a few times and see how it fits: invent melodies for sections of it. Chant it with the percussive, say, of a tambourine as background; practice singing your investigation grids with its long-breath rhythms. If Sappho's unique metre could serve as the basis for a whole school of endeavor, why cannot certain modern poems serve in the same way?
- g. Finally, it is probably time for poets to memorize all their poems, especially the partisans of Investigative Poesy, so as to free their arms and hands and bodies to HELP THE PRESENTATION. The triad is this: the spoken text/ the text as beautifully presented on the page/ the text as *performed*. Perfection is in the triad.

Do not hesitate to write investigative *songs* (as in Ginsberg's smash CIA-Calypso song detailing CIA dope-dealing in SE Asia). No one owns the modes. Ahh the modes. Do not hesitate to use every mode that anyone ever devised. The modes of poetry are more powerful than any so-called magic, for they are a proven input. Do not hesitate. Thank you for listening.

CLUE LIST

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5. Herodotus-- The Histories.
6. The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane. Edited by Brom Weber. Anchor Books, 1966.
- Also, check that fine original edition of "The Bridge," Horace Liveright, N.Y., 1930.
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8. Dostoevsky, A Human Portrait; Robert Payne, N.Y., Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.
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