

## ALMOST AS IF

The if-feeling is not a feeling which accompanies the word "if."

—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Here is a word  
with a corona of uses  
ghostly intentions  
shady senses  
nevertheless when pressed  
a (mostly) single physiognomy  
*if* (fr. OE *gif*)

what if  
if/then  
if and only if (iff)  
although  
whether it were  
an either/or  
it wouldn't matter

but one can feel *if*  
differently  
imagine Iphigeneia  
(called Iphimedeia by Hesiod)  
her fate set to music  
a symphony  
in *f*-sharp major

among suppositions  
subjunctives  
systems  
of suspicion  
as if  
our future  
were junking its alternatives  
into a past that never was

Hence *almost*  
more or less  
incompletely  
*l'entretemps*  
ellipses  
deferring interminably  
the messianic decision

"if one were  
to take these words  
seriously  
they would lead  
to the madhouse" (Blanchot)  
so I take them foolishly  
stopping as I go

our time is nearly up  
our present  
not quite closed  
made of  
nomadic terms  
falling just short  
of arrival anywhere

fruitless conditions  
refractory facts  
useless attention  
qualifications  
scrolling pointlessly  
pale singularities  
defeating the sequence  
of what happens

IF A POET COULD TALK  
WE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HIM

*for Charles Bernstein*

This is a found text  
useless words  
talking sounds  
a stone taking shape by itself  
unlike the divine clock  
clicking your cobblestones  
*hosteron proteron*  
contradictions interdicted  
silent intentions  
bestial thoughts  
a gravity of stones  
filling your pockets  
so many groans  
applying their pleasure  
lidless eyes impinging  
as if to see better not to look  
rattle (pause) rattle  
old bones cluster  
and start their run  
ten toes steadfast  
faster still if possible  
a stone's throw alone  
trips the trope  
musters your mustard  
one pebble two  
two pebbles three  
failing to pass

a lonely aesthete  
sounding his symbols  
category mistakes  
versified fakes  
a transcendental appetite  
forging its experience  
lines of dead argument  
dissymmetrical forms  
chance operations  
*Geistesgeschichte* biting its tail  
sarcophagia  
encyclopedic memories  
housed in small letters  
insufficiency of reasons  
Leibniz his alphabet  
sees the goddess naked  
sounds the key  
freezing fingers  
speedy metricals  
early terminals  
(anacoluthoniclone)  
just call him Charles  
*magister ars inveniendi*  
accidentally unearthing  
a large loose locution  
whose grammar  
held us captive

## ALARMS & CONFUSIONS

*In memory of Jackson Mac Low*

Please go through this early phase  
inarticulate sounds good to me  
warm water washing my winter  
ten propositions without a copula  
librarians of truth stealing books  
narrative signals whenever ready  
kleptomaniac when it comes to words  
stands on the hither side of rules  
technically a counterfeit language  
Hegel spent his concepts foolishly  
small collection of objects that talk  
geometry says nothing of its girth  
some old bones wearing his first flesh  
celebrated author of phonographic verse  
lessons exceeding the speed of sight  
have you seen his exhibit of props  
twirl the device twice before switching  
yes a postmodern price list please  
cooking a poem to make it come out right  
gather directions before releasing air  
in the market for a real apostrophe  
local poet rules a new phrase regime  
rising columns of newshungry nouns  
go for a start and be the first to last  
this sentence is not so insensible  
an obsessive punster seeking unrest  
handbook of pretexts excuses reasons  
don't go near him he's altogether proleptic  
so many bass notes abandoned to the past  
please enter the prosody assigned to you  
we're sorry please try again later

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