

*Ianthe Poems*

*Also by Peter Philpott*

**The Bishops Stortford Variations**

**What Was Shown**

**Some Action Upon the World**

**Textual Possessions**

**Are We Not Drawn. . .**

**To the Union**

Peter Philpott

*Ianthe*  
*Poems*

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*for Ianthe Judith Smith-Spark*  
(b. September 16, 2009)





The desire to tell within the conditions of a discontinuous consciousness seems to constitute the original situation of the poem. The discontinuity of consciousness is interwoven through the continuity of reality – a reality whose independence of our experience and descriptions must be recognized. In response, the poetic impulse, attempting (never successfully) to achieve the condition that the phrase “language and ‘paradise’” names, seeks to extend the scope and temporal continuity of consciousness.

—Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Enquiry*  
(University of California Press, 2000), p 77



## Speculations

*Bertan jaio naizen arren,  
Ez dut ezagutzen nire herria.  
Nire hizkuitza bera duen arren,  
Ez dut ulertzen nire herria.*

Felipe Juaristi, "Geografia"



# I

What you read is here  
open at its jaws  
like a really killer simile  
can you believe? the facts  
are the things made  
and make us oh like words  
uncoiling and beginning to glisten  
I love this world for appearances  
shining shining shining  
and sometimes sounding  
a far off deep hum  
or the lilt of actual voices  
can you hear it?  
oh, do not fear this caress

what you read here is  
what wisdom in these words  
uncountable but singable not  
what is said but how  
each word points at this world!  
here is what you read in fact  
oh what a big and complicated text  
who made it?  
we did, then, every bit  
I love its punctuation marks  
we can only do it once  
oh beautiful world  
utterance must quietly end  
brief as the shining sun

## 2

Be careful of the poets  
they can't always know  
just the clumsy algorithms for perception  
what did you expect then?  
I can't tell you what is at the centre  
something is very circumscribed  
here is metaphysics and history  
words like days and bodies  
unrepeatable and separate

be careful of the poetry  
it lies  
in lines and verses  
a sort of unprogressive dialectic  
nothing at its centre  
but an influx suddenly of meaning  
sometimes of its lack  
a great shadow  
turns off the light

### 3

Who turned this line around  
setting its repetitive trudge here  
to open at the ragged headlands  
like a hand of nine fingers  
all the more for solace  
the question drops ungrudging into evening  
a dear clear light  
transparent and remorseless as your gaze  
unconvinced of causation

back like a little patient ox  
I am harnessed to good labour  
up here above the town  
little and bright like a toy  
this sight will give solace  
as the night grows into the unquestioning  
of course you must play  
this game is serious  
it must convince you of causation

But be still and sleep now  
growth comes in the night  
something here is very quick  
and the heavens mean nothing to us  
rumours of colossal machines  
that vast space you will grow into  
at its edge where we were born  
your sleeping eyes track the body inside  
oh let the lights swing crazily around

and now still sleep but be  
resting unpredicated  
wordless

like a missed beat an  
influx of that joke  
bursting at our hearts  
uncertain and miscounting  
some fine shadow games



5

The pressure to think and sing  
who said that?  
not really a manichee but  
these unsubtle dialectics will suffice  
bursting out in farts and hiccups  
diverse encounters with the uncontrollable  
we are placed within all this  
like in night and day  
the problems are all the night

all night that pressure then?  
an hysteria in the dark  
you live within these intensities  
the secular shifts ignored  
each beat counts  
the world crystallises around  
like ice on our windows  
sign that cold queen has visited  
our problem within our night

## 6

This is where the old lines  
playing in the darkness with  
a deep full-bodied song  
thrums and redoubling it will ascend  
the green lanes  
what ought to be shining here?  
all our quick voices  
running like wild animals  
some exercise in hydrostatics

following the pistons  
off into the darkness  
where song ranges through its gamut  
ascending like the sun  
shining above the green lanes  
out into some utopian fantasy  
buy into this or perish!  
corralled with psychographic isoclines  
plunge into the masses now