

Giant Steps: Collage and Process in Two of Ken Bolton's Early Poems

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ABSTRACT: This article provides an introduction to the early poetry of Ken Bolton through the broad theme of temporality. Bolton's early, avowedly modernist, poetics is explored through close readings of two long poems written and published in the 1970s, "The Terrific Days of Summer," and "Serial Treatise." "Terrific Days" is, firstly, a poem of and about plurality—a resounding ethos of the 1970s—and is a poem made tense with its many oppositions. For its speed and its high-key immediacy, the poem appears to refute any need for explicatory criticism. And yet, when read in terms of temporality, several "times" of the work soon emerge: diurnal (of "days"), seasonal (of summer), and historical or epochal (the mid-seventies and the Dismissal of November 11, 1975). The poem's use of a repetition-with-variation structure proffers a kind of mock-empiricism, drawing on the poetry of Kenneth Koch and work by the artist Noel Sheridan. Yet the poem also, importantly, adopts simultaneist and lyrical guises; particular durations are collapsed and collaged into one: a historical moment of rupture whose explosive import is signalled in the opposing senses of the title's adjective. This reading of "Terrific Days" is contrasted with a reading of the long poem "Serial Treatise," published in Bolton's own magazine, *Magic Sam*, and written, in part, as a critical response to earlier poems, including "Terrific Days." The poem is, by Bolton's estimation, his most sustained example of a process poem, that is to say a poem which writes the process—the time—of its own composition. Contrasting the modes of simultaneist collage and process in the two poems, the article teases out some of the connections between the epochal moment of the mid-1970s and the differing time senses the two poems evoke, and in which they participate.

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There seems so much to say
about the early poems. I cared
about them at the time. But what
they didn't do
meant so much more
than what they did: a series —
or simple instances of —
exemplary avoidances

– Ken Bolton, “The Duck At The Top Of The Stairs—or How I
Remember Writing Some Of My Poems—Why, Even”¹

& isn't it
better here the poems
sliding down the page ,rivery
& delightful, living
now ? after Modigliani, Picasso,
the poetry of Surrealism ? after
Frank O'Hara. living now ?

– Ken Bolton, “nude descending a staircase”²

This article forms part of a larger study which asks how the work of Ken Bolton and two other contemporary poets—Pam Brown and Laurie Duggan—considers time, and the temporal nature of writing and thinking more broadly. Bolton's poetry is highly sensitive to the texture of time and thought. His early work can be characterised by a movement between a simultaneist approach—understood here as closely related to the compositional technique of collage—and one that takes a greater interest in “process,” which is here affiliated with continuity, lived durations, and the time of the composition itself. Where process draws attention to the relation between experience and the moment of inscription—sketching in the context of the occasion of writing—simultaneist collage switches contexts, permitting discrete, discontinuous times to collide with and jostle against each other on the space of the page, heightening the contingency of each part in relation to the others. In his essay “Collage,” Clement

Greenberg describes this effect occurring in both Braque's and Picasso's first collage works, whereby,

every part and plane of the picture keeps changing place in relative depth with every other part and plane; and it is as if the only stable relation left among the different parts of the picture is the ambivalent and ambiguous one that each has with the surface.³

The first poem discussed, "The Terrific Days of Summer,"⁴ operates mostly as a collage, but contains elements of process also, gaining a kind of double contingency from the employment of both methods. "Serial Treatise," the second poem discussed, is much more consciously a poem of process, an extended example of critical thinking within time.

One of Bolton's earliest published poems, "fragment," which appeared in an occasional poetry newsletter in the mid-1970s, provides an example of Bolton's early interest in temporal perception. The poem is presented as a psychological/conceptual exercise, a set of instructions for defining "an event"; it reads in full:

An event: is it -think of one
no matter how small. choose one
from the last few seconds the smallest
that seems to you discrete- . . .examine first
what constitutes for you its boundaries.
are these ?⁵

The poem indicates that a phenomenological apprehension of the passing present, in thinking as a temporal activity, and in how thinking might be represented in writing, are evident from Bolton's earliest published work. The reference to "the last few seconds" corresponds to William James' determination that roughly twelve seconds constitutes the "specious present," which, as James defines it, is "the *maximum filled duration* of which we can be both *distinctly and immediately* aware."⁶ While James's conception of the specious present has been critiqued by subsequent phenomenologists from Edmund Husserl onwards,⁷ it demonstrates a significant stage in the conceptualisation of the temporality of mind and perception.

The influence of phenomenological language, and reflection upon visual and aural perception, is evident more widely in Bolton's early poetry. The following lines, written in Redfern in the late 1970s, register the apparent retention of auditory perception in the "air" of the experienced present:

. . . Otis
 Rush is
 no longer
 on the record player
 has not been
 for hours
 though the light on the record player glows.
 but the
 intense sad notes
 still 'haunt' the air, & affect the view⁸

A sense of the present understood at a historical level also informs Bolton's poetry. This can in part be attributed to Bolton's training in art history, affording him an understanding of the latter as a dialectical progression, at the heart of which lies conflict over aesthetic forms—as well an understanding of contemporary art in social terms.⁹ Bolton describes this education as “my own rather old-fashioned / avant-gardist reading of modernist art history / which I generalized and transposed to literary history / automatically. . .”.¹⁰ Naturally, this perspective on literary history, one rendered through art history, also influenced his views on the poetry of his contemporary moment. Bolton's poetry is for this reason highly alert to the present moment of writing, and to the broader historical contingency of that present moment.

Bolton's first book, *Four Poems* (1977), is characterised by an all-over-the-page style that takes permission from the largely North American models of abstract expressionism (and of cubism preceding it), and of 1950s and 1960s jazz. Its poems, and those that followed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, demonstrate a hyper-attention to the poem's status as a rhetorical and temporal object, drawing also on related impulses within 1960s minimalist/literalist art, and the degree zero style of the French *nouveau roman* writers. Bolton writes of his poems of this period as driven by additional aesthetic influences, predominantly contemporary, and (mostly abstract) painting:

I guess early poems like “Terrific Days” and “Four Poems” emulated in some degree an idea I had of what Rauschenberg and Stella and Larry Rivers and Joan Snyder—and John Firth-Smith and Tony Tuckson—might do if they were all rolled up into one person, who liked the same jokes as me and thought John Coltrane's “Giant Steps” was pretty amazing.¹¹

Along with this preference for the “big canvas”—the expansiveness and sense of immediacy indicated by the above examples—is his poetry’s argumentative quality, in form and attitude opposed to the idea of the discrete poem as the polite object delivering a message to a reader—regardless of whether this took the form of quietist suburbanism or the “well-behaved writing of revolutionaries,” as Roland Barthes describes social realism.¹² Robert Harris captures this “impolite” quality of Bolton’s poetry in a review of his book, *Two Poems/A Drawing of the Sky* (1990), noting that Bolton “. . . barges in and moves around,”¹³ a comment that would pertain both to the poetry’s expansiveness on the page (and an attendant willingness to annex forms and subject matter considered non-poetic), as well as to its rhetoric.

One of the most potent (and most frequently cited) literary lines of influence for Bolton is the new poetry and poetics of post-World War Two North America; principally, these are the New York School poets: Kenneth Koch, Frank O’Hara, John Ashbery, and Ted Berrigan, and, taken on slightly later, James Schuyler and Tony Towle. Specific qualities of the work of each of these poets can be seen in Bolton’s own. A limited synopsis would include: the repetition-with-variation structures in several of Koch’s long poems; Berrigan’s experiments with what Alice Notley describes as “‘tone of voice’ and ‘stance,’ the range of attitudinal play in human discourse as the projection of character”¹⁴; Schuyler’s rendering of ordinary, daily experience in expanded, time-inclusive forms; Ashbery’s modes of drift and distracted attentiveness; and O’Hara’s demonstrations of Apollinairean simultaneism, and we might include his unabashed love of modernism more generally. Other than, perhaps, Koch, each of the above poets is named frequently enough in Bolton’s oeuvre; their influence is neither concealed nor admitted, but simply there. Somewhat reluctantly, Bolton also cites the Black Mountain School-associated poets Charles Olson and Robert Creeley as having an early influence:

I hardly
 want to talk about Olson and Creeley—
 though for a while they were in there,
 furnishing the back of my mind,
 urging a poetry of intuitive discursive
 nerve and an emphasis, therefore, on phrase,
 on expressive rhetoric rather than
 on metaphor and older kinds of formal unity.¹⁵

Bolton also cites the English poet and critic, Donald Davie, who, in addition to the examples of Creeley and Olson, encouraged a way of writing based on “phrasing,

diction, rather than tropes.”¹⁶ The significance placed on phrasing and diction here corresponds with the claim, in this article’s first epigraph, that Bolton’s early poetry was consciously shaped by its avoidances, that it demonstrated “a style of subtractions.”¹⁷ In his study on the subject, diction is defined by Davie as that sense, in the work of most English poets,

that a selection has been made and is continually being made, that words are thrusting at the poem and being fended off from it, that however many poems these poets wrote certain words would never be allowed into the poems, except as a disastrous oversight.¹⁸

Diction, understood in this sense, is rendered visible on the surface of Bolton’s early poetry, partly manifested in his heavy use of quotation marks and parentheses, with their ability to both permit a word into a text, and to hold it at a distance, to mark it as both “here” and “not here.”

As has been suggested, Bolton’s aesthetic from the mid-1970s is an avowedly modernist one. This position is announced (with some sarcasm) in the rationale printed in the first issue of *Magic Sam*, the magazine he edited throughout the second-half of the 1970s:

. . . it was intended
that *Magic Sam* contain work that was “modern”
in the sense of its being formally self-conscious,
aware of its method of working, even exhibiting
or drawing attention to its method(s).¹⁹

The critics Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss also cite formal self-awareness as a primary element of modernism, arguing that a modernist work of art is one:

That takes its own conditions of possibility for its subject matter, that tests a certain number of the conventions of the practice it belongs to by modifying them, by jettisoning or destroying them, and in so doing, rendering the conventions or conditions thus tested explicit, revealing them as nothing but conventions, which is to say a social pact relative to a given culture or a given moment of history.²⁰

This describes well the impulse behind Bolton’s testing, exploratory poetics. From an early stage, he has favoured a literalist style and, concomitantly, sought to displace metaphor from its position as the defining element of poetic expression. His early poems wish to test the forms and rhetorical stances it is possible to take in poetry,

seeking forms of writing able to present the Barthesian “healthy sign”: that sign which, as Terry Eagleton explains, “draws attention to its own arbitrariness—which does not try to pass itself off as ‘natural’ but which, in the very moment of conveying a meaning, communicates something of its own relative, artificial status as well.”²¹ Coming after the major North American art and poetic movements of the 1950s and 1960s, Bolton is able to draw at his leisure from the various strands concerned with process and with collage—from the New York School poets, abstract expressionism, and minimalism/literalism, to a number of those poets associated with the Bolinas scene in California, such as Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh, to the poetry of Philip Whalen. Bolton’s poems of the 1970s and 1980s demonstrate a non-heroic version of the process ethos and aesthetic, adding to those earlier exemplars an overtly critical temperament.

Of Bolton’s collection *Talking to You* (1983), John Forbes writes that none of the poems therein “escape his preoccupation with the impossibility of practically every verbal gesture or rhetorical strategy that the idea of ‘Poetry’ (big p) implies.”²² That is to say, assertions in Bolton’s poems are very often marked as provisional, their “impossibility” thereby declared as part of their freight. Rather than attempting to render his diction more pure or restricted, or, on the other hand, inverting the model and re-valuing “impurity,” Bolton *includes* that which he is then able to “mark as alien and not-same”²³ through the act of quotation. However, rather than thereby supporting belief in the problematic opposite that this implies, a “purely self-same,”²⁴ as a more conventional use of quotation might, Bolton employs a kind of hyper-quotation, which has the effect of throwing into relief—indeed *quoting*—the operation of quotation itself. What one notices, reading his poetry, Lyn McCredden points out, is that “all the debunked terms remain standing.”²⁵ A significant element of Bolton’s style emerges from a near-obsessive attention to the productive threshold between notions of the “poetic” and “non poetic,” and it is partly for this reason also that the quotation mark appears so often in his work, signifying a “between space” of conditional inclusion.

Bolton’s early style is one that approaches the poem as an ethical and aesthetic test: a site of writing, in time, made with what is “to hand” and which thereby troubles the idea of the (capital “p”) poem, as characterised by the utterance posited as gnomic or *timeless*. Aesthetic conceptions of process, and likewise collage, were prominent in the work of younger Australian poets during the 1970s and early 1980s. However, Bolton’s poetry differs from his contemporaries both in the degree to which he brings

into question the possibility of the poem—of “every verbal gesture”—and the lasting nature of that preoccupation, that is, its continuing into his later work.

In sharp contrast to the poet as agent of truth, the reader of a Ken Bolton poem is often reminded they ought not to take him at his word. This temperament is evident, negatively, in a critique made of the poetry of Les Murray, in a detailed appraisal of that poet’s work:

Even in the better poems, Murray’s need to be always telling one the exact (real) nature of things can be distinctly wearying. It is the other side of Murray’s paranoia—a megalomaniacal assertion of control of the world, of what “is.”²⁶

The form of poetic expression Bolton would value is one which does not deny or obscure that it knows what the poet writing it is “up to,” one which is aware of any agenda of the poem’s rhetoric at each stage, and wants the reader to know this too. The jokey aside, mid-poem, in the long poem-as-lecture “Untimely Meditations”—“I wonder if the bottle shop’s still open / *I’m beginning something major*”²⁷—is merely one example of the reflex to interrupt and deflate his own and the poem’s rhetoric.

As the introductory material thus far has demonstrated, Bolton’s early and later poetry is interested in the poem as a space of ideas:

As well as this late-modernist love of abstraction and the disparateness possible, the disjunction possible through “collage”—I also was drawn to ideas of the discursive as a thing poetry should (once again) “do”: that is, talk, think, carry information and opinion (carry them *as such*, not just as poetic content or lyrical assertion, say).²⁸

This promotion of thinking is not to the exclusion of emotion—“Terrific Days” very much demonstrates this—though it is critical of what Bolton believes to have been its prioritisation in Australian poetry to the detriment of a poetry more attuned to thinking *as such*. That theory ought to be coeval with poetry is an idea that runs through Bolton’s work, fully realised, again, in “Untimely Meditations,” which asserts conclusively that “Poetry must make its own. Theory / Has no monopoly on theory.”²⁹

TERRIFIC DAYS

George Alexander describes “The Terrific Days of Summer” as a poem of rapture. It is, he adds, not an emotion encountered often in Australian literature.³⁰ “Terrific Days” is, most straightforwardly, a present-tense celebration of inner-city Australian life, of being young and unemployed, and among friends, in the 1970s. Importantly,

the poem is not retrospective but written in the historical moment which, for one generation, would represent that life's passing away: the dismissal of the Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, by the Governor-General Sir John Kerr, on November 11, 1975:

Whitlam got thrown out while I was writing "Terrific Days", hence the slightly tremulous, desperate tone of much of that poem. I still remember walking down Glebe Point Road when a VW bug went by with a loudspeaker crying "The government's been sacked! The government's been sacked!"³¹

The event goes unmentioned in the poem, though its historical coincidence with the poem's composition leads to the proposition that "Terrific Days" brims with nostalgia for the present tense. It is a poem that knows it is at the end of an age—one that has been authoritatively ordered out—ushering in a period, in the following decades, that has been termed neoliberalism.³² Much of the resulting emotion is cathected into the word "days," which is a refrain throughout the poem. As Bryony Randall has argued, for its resonance with two oppositional times—the familiar time of the everyday, and the time of Christian eschatology (the Day of Judgement and thus "the overthrow of human temporality")—the word "day" holds an "uncanny status."³³ It is the poem's "tremulous" tone, both melancholic and anticipatory, combined with its inclusion of lived durations ("John's flipping through / Bean Spasms, getting ideas for poems & Anna's here too / doing a drawing," "already the sun is making the pool rooms / in the British Lion too hot in the afternoon or soon will"³⁴)—which are themselves continually disrupted through simultaneist collage—that makes it so emblematic of the mid-1970s, presenting something of the hectic activity, and sense of possibility associated with that period.

The poem's time sense lies in its simultaneist form, whereby various times are collapsed into the various kinds of "days" that are distributed across the poem's all-over surface. "Terrific Days" is in this sense a poem of plurality as well as one of simultaneity. Rather than any particular day, the poem's running thread is its ecstatic catalogue of *days*, through which the single "day" (while always appearing in the plural) becomes a discrete container for potential and actual aesthetic experience. The poem is plural also in its sociality; the first person "I" appears only incidentally rather than as an organising principle, and in its place is an abundance of names, mostly those of Bolton's fellow poets and friends. Within this loose framework of "days," the poem brings otherwise discrete days, bodies and affects into relation. In this latter sense, the poem's key element might be said to be "air," that element which wants to be everywhere simultaneously, to infiltrate everything: air in the poem is "aroused"; it

is the medium of transmission of desires, affects, music. Alexander describes the poem's effect as a kind of "contact high," bypassing interpretation, able to transmit its excited state directly onto the reader.³⁵ Towards the end of the poem this sense of the ecstatic possibility within the atmospheric has not diminished:

we go to sleep & wake up
 & spend the night,
 which is not hot & clear, doing
 'nothing' -listening
 to the Rolling Stones come from blocks away
 (through the air !!)³⁶

The sensate world provokes astonishment; air is both excited and exciting.

The early 1970s conceptual work "Everybody Should Get Stones" by the artist Noel Sheridan (1936-2006), provides a useful, and roughly contemporary, point of comparison with "Terrific Days." Bolton was very familiar with "Stones": Sheridan's nineteen-page work is published near the front of the first issue of *Magic Sam*; Bolton also mentions "Stones," more than three decades later, in the Introduction to his collection of art criticism, calling it "one of the major pieces of art to come from Adelaide, major both as art and literature."³⁷ "Stones" presents itself as an instructional guide, self-described on its first page as "procedures. . . intended to bring a greater precision to your quality ascriptions."³⁸ The reader of the work is instructed to go to a beach and to select rocks according to several lists, each comprised of twenty-six superlative categories. The first list consists of numbered adjectival categories ("the smallest," "the flattest," "the most circular," "the most striped"); the second of various similes ("most like a token," "most like a parrot"); the third of varieties of technical suitability ("most apt as a rosary bead," "most apt as a false eye"); and the fourth, heightening the specificity of the preceding criteria, asks the reader to select stones based on increasingly complex algorithms derived from combinations of categories drawn from the previous three lists. The second section of the work shifts into a mode of more abstract resemblances ("most odd," "most ludicrous," "most cute"), and subsequently to a personalised version of the latter ("most like your father," "most like your gross salary"). The third section is further abstracted, with one exercise proposing that the reader select stones based on the meaning suggested by the stone's shadow, followed by a list of "meanings" ("echo," "pursue," "close friend," "blind"). Thus, "Stones" subjects resemblance and likeness to a rigorous series of conceptual procedures. Its influence on Bolton appears to be in its provocation to the reader to imaginatively (or actually) enter into the *process* of comparison—

proceeding from more straightforward tests of visual resemblance, to propositions of highly abstract metaphorical relations—rather than having comparison provided to them by the poem, that is, accepting likeness as the realm of the striking metaphor or simile understood to be presented, at least in part, as evidence of the writer’s skill or depth of feeling.

Certain elements of Bolton’s early work can be seen to correspond with “Stones,” most importantly the emphasis on processes of thinking and perception and the desire to explore rhetorical conventions, but also his use of the instructional mode (as seen in the early poem “fragment”), and the list form. In “Terrific Days,” like “Stones,” there is a desire to have qualities—the term in “Terrific Days” is “effects”—proliferate, such that flux and contingency are brought to the fore of the poem:

the effect of Donald Brook
 the effect of Nigel Roberts.
 the effect of Forbes, (the effect
of taking all their personal effects &
 nailing them to a board & comparing them
 & of thinking how that, in effect,
was like summer;³⁹

The momentum of repetition has these admired persons’ “effects” modulate into the material “personal effects”; these are then nailed to a board and “compared,” first to each other, then to the signifier at the heart of the poem, “summer”—that elastic container of “days,” and culmination of the seasonal cycle, which the poem simultaneously anticipates and elegises. Amid the continual flux and multiple, shifting perspectives of the poem, the action of nailing a pile of “personal effects” to a board appears a pointedly useless one.⁴⁰ This could be interpreted as a description of the collage technique which the poem employs, or, more convincingly, as a parody of comparative criticism and its search for fixed meanings (note the apparently conclusive “that”). From this, however, the poem has already moved on to the next “effect”: “the effect / of looking at the city / & knowing / you could / be there,” and so on.

While the tone and appearance of “Terrific Days” and “Stones” clearly differ—where “Stones” is precise, restrained, and conceptual, “Terrific Days” is full of lyric enthusiasm—there is a correspondence in this desire for plurality, for the proliferation of qualities. This is most immediately apparent, in “Terrific Days,” in the list of qualities appearing on the third page of the poem, buoyed along by a playful assonance:

lists of adjectives for days:

-
terrific days,
inelegant days,
eloquent days, days
like spring & days
like summer,
impenetrable days
literal days
the saddest days,
days that are stoical, classical or cool⁴¹

As with “Stones,” at this point, the form shifts from the adjectival to more specific kinds of likeness, so we read:

days
which the art
in our mind makes.

days like paintings
-like The Piano Lesson,
like Braque! & terrific days
 like Jackson Pollock

*

‘hermetic’ days .
New photo-realist days

the sort of thing that for some people, presumably,
is conjured by a lawnmower ad on television⁴²

The first three lines indicate the precedence of art and art history in relation to direct experience: days are made *by* “the art in our mind”—and it is not insignificant that “our mind” here is in the singular, expressing a form of experience that is collective. The points of comparison become the heroic modernist examples of Braque, Pollock, and Matisse’s painting “The Piano Lesson,” and, somewhat less enthusiastically, photo-realism.

The formal qualities of “Terrific Days” are illuminated by Bolton’s description of the poem’s composition:

I merely marked up stuff in my 400 page “notebook” of the time—on the basis of their being linked or “consonant” or interestingly or amusingly discordant? ... I scribbled stuff in a school exercise book, opening it wherever it opened to add stuff: bits of poems, quotes from others (art criticism, old poetry, philosophy, overheard conversation, drafts of letters, writes and re-writes of poems, lots of failed or incomplete poems) ... when the book began to open up less often on a blank page I turned it upside down and began again. Finally about every third page had something on it and I was beginning to think of it as filled for my purposes. I used to re-read the stuff in it. Of course it was not sequential—which I liked—and the random entry system meant I re-read stuff in it over and over again, in different combinations: so I was quite familiar with most of it.⁴³

The notebook is attended to over time, but rather than being used in a linear manner, or as a docile repository, it is re-purposed as a compositional instrument. This instrument allows for the randomising of material which then becomes the poem’s various component parts, those “bits of writing that were themselves years apart,”⁴⁴ these collide in the poem, producing the effect of different times occurring simultaneously.

“Terrific Days” appears to be always searching for new ways to indicate greater “terrific-ness,” employing exclamation marks, quotation marks, underlining (replaced with bold type in later editions), doubled brackets, capitalisation, ampersands and forward slashes. The exclamation mark appears twenty-eight times in the poem. Its first two lines—which render the daily through an image of writing—provide an illustration of its use:

the fabulous limp calligraphy of the afternoons
(the terrific mornings !)⁴⁵

The fourteen-syllable opening line is surpassed by the second, stretching out past the already long line that precedes it; correspondingly the “terrific” of the second line exceeds the “fabulous” of the first, establishing the powerful charm this word will have within the poem. The combination of parentheses and exclamation throws into relief the oppositional functions of both: the containment of the former, and the amplitude of the latter. It is an opposition played throughout the piece, and one mirrored in the contradictory-seeming states which appear: “the fabulous limp,” “limp calligraphy,” “fast / but ‘soporific,’” “a contained relaxed / restlessness,” and a number of “meaningful” and “meaningless” clouds which appear at different points throughout

the poem. An opposition inheres also in the title word and theme—“terrific”—denoting both the aesthetically “correct” and that which produces terror. Following the opening lines are several apparent false starts, or attempts to shock the poem into life:

zorro !

*

little rictus ,& the mystique of normalcy

*

spiritual miles distant from the thought of you

*

intricate days

terrific, the way Elvin Bishop can make you feel (his guitar) ex-

pansive, & rolling,

with a fabulous ‘well being’ type of swagger

in (it)

(him) !!⁴⁶

Represented here is the interaction of two formal qualities Bolton has named as significant to his early style—the arbitrary and collage. Several fragments of collaged notebook material are presented, beginning with the isolated “zorro” and its delayed exclamation, evoking something of the announcement of the drum-roll, to the nuggetty compact of “little rictus” (followed by a comma seemingly pulled away from the text it punctuates), to the more personal address of the third line. As Bolton’s explanation of his process makes evident, these fragments of language are collected over time, but composed in time. Two times can thus be identified in the compositional process: the extended work of collection or gathering, and the briefer process of composition or arrangement. Through this process, the plurality of the times and occasions inscribed are collapsed. “Terrific Days” can be seen as both a swan song for an age and a real time indication of its presence, and in this way a sustained example of the contradictory state of present tense nostalgia. As Bolton comments on “Terrific Days” in “Serial Treatise” (which is discussed next):

- A poem I wrote, the last long one, doesn’t mention politics. yet it is very much about the climate of the Labor Defeat, our desperation, of how it felt. Admittedly the panic & hysteria were due to our powerlessness before what was impending & were themselves

exciting the 'cause' was too terrible to speak about. So it was about
the last summer but it never said.⁴⁷

In the last third of the poem, a final catalogue of "days" appears, and therein the poem and the poet's amazed awareness of the presentness of the present and the facticity of the world is sustained. However, this section carries with it also the clear sense of a collective possibility, one both forestalled, and not yet realised:

days
 as if there is something 'prodigious' that is 'possible'.
& of
 walking through Glebe
 like an oceanographer. days
 that seem as though meant for disaster & we don't care
about it
 - all of us race around
 doing something together while real 'meaningless' clouds
gather⁴⁸

SERIAL TREATISE

A poem of process (alternatively poem *as* process) can be defined as one which closely attends to the circumstances of its own composition. An ethos of process is evident throughout Bolton's poetry, even if few poems would conform to it strictly or in their entirety. A further definition, provided by Bolton's contemporary Kris Hemensley, makes the link with Philip Whalen's image of the poem as a "graph of a mind moving,"⁴⁹ and to George Oppen's statement (cited by Hemensley), "You don't bother to write something you already know." Thus Hemensley speaks of the "the pictorialisation of a language at work—the poem as an in-progress organism, an organism aware as it works of the processes by which it is working, a poem as something discovering itself."⁵⁰ For Bolton, the term names "a poem that documents the real time of its writing. Typically such poems refer to passing time, the place of the writing/thinking situation and its self-reflexivity. These poems tend to run to some length."⁵¹ In an interview, Bolton elaborates on the motivations behind this emphasis on process:

The thing I was drawn to was that thinking should come with its context and provisionality evident and attached. Cards on the table. I was interested in a poetry that could think and employ the language of thought, but not the

bullying certainty of discursive prose, nor the bardic insistence of “poetic” language with its intimation of heightened perception, stronger and finer feeling.⁵²

Each of these descriptions have in common their sense of an engaged present tense, a time-inclusive understanding of composition, and the recognition of a split attention that process writing brings about, one “aware as it works of the processes by which it is working.” The two poets emphasise different aspects of process: for Hemensley, process is described primarily in epistemological terms; for Bolton it is described in terms of form and theme. For the Olson-influenced Hemensley, process is linked to an organic aesthetic (that is, one involving the body and its rhythms, particularly breath), which is less significant for Bolton with his more sceptical, more “mental” mode. Process for Bolton remains a way of showing thinking as movement, and provides a way of critiquing conventional rhetorical and lyrical modes of expression.

Emphasis on process is not restricted to Bolton’s poetry. In issue four of *Magic Sam*, Bolton (as “Neville Shelley”) publishes what might be called a “process review,” apparently written over several sessions, of a number of contemporary titles. The review notes, at its end, the duration of writing, and the names of the pubs and restaurants in which it was written (Diethnes, The Balkan, The British Lion, The Pompadour Room in Centrepoint Tavern, the Bega Hotel). This processual character carries on into Bolton’s later prose. Robert Cook comments:

His art writing is similarly open [to his poetry]. It sprawls, lurches. It doesn’t seem to know the destination. And to me at least, there’s a resulting refusal to polish. I do not get the sense that once he’s found where he is wanting to go with a piece that he starts again and sets up the flagposts, makes it all coherent as a whole. ... I get the sense that he leaves it alone because the steps are essential to conveying the activity of finding an idea.⁵³

Further to the definitions above, a process poem may be understood as an attempt to extend a single line of thought, to represent continuing momentariness, the desired result, Bolton writes in the poem “Talking to You,” being “a continuous ‘prolongation’ / of a single mood.”⁵⁴ Bolton’s decision to abstain from metaphor—where it would intimate “heightened perception, stronger and finer feeling”—suggests that he must make the most of the remaining modes and language effects available to him. The mental processes involved in “attention” are pushed to the surface in Bolton’s version of the process poem. At its most strictly applied, the poem would become a battle between attention and inscription, essentially a performance, both

comic and serious, at the limits of writing's ability to plot the temporal continuity of a mind moving—or to use the terms Robert Sheppard borrows from Emmanuel Levinas, to remain as close as possible to “saying” while recognising the inevitability of its becoming “said.”⁵⁵ Writing of Whalen's combination of collage and process methods, Leslie Scalapino makes the general claim that, in his poetry, “writing is the mind's operations *per se and* imitation of it at the same time.”⁵⁶ Bolton was hardly alone, among Australian poets, in his loyalty to a process ethos, broadly understood (Bolton's friends Pam Brown and Laurie Duggan come to mind). However, in “Serial Treatise,” he extends the psychological realism of the form, that is, the imitation and exploration of the mind's operations, with the poem itself extending over twenty-eight pages. Allowing the text to be shaped by time, thinking, and reconsideration, would resist what Whalen refers to in one poem as the imposition of “psychic imperialism” upon the written text.⁵⁷ On the other hand, a similar resistance can be seen in Bolton's desire to avoid “the bullying certainty of discursive prose.”

Bolton names “Serial Treatise”—which was published in issue five of *Magic Sam* (circa 1979) and has not been re-printed—as the poem of his in which process is most fully in operation.⁵⁸ The poem examines Bolton's poetics up to and during the time of composition, and attempts to tease out an aesthetics and a politics that the poet would be able to live with.⁵⁹ It is an *ars poetica* of an unusual kind, a process poem and a serial work in six parts. “Serial Treatise” can be seen as the first of a kind of “big statement” poem to which Bolton returns at different points in his career—two later examples being the poem-as-lecture “Untimely Meditations”, and a significantly longer poem which surveys all of his published poetry to that point, and whose title adapts one of Raymond Roussel's, *How I Remember Writing Some of My Poems — Why, Even*. The text of the first page of “Serial Treatise” reads as follows:

an excerpt: the first half of SERIAL TREATISE
section one

(prelude)

I spend some time
looking out the window.

I wonder how to end the poem.

I even think

of a terrific ploy

: "suddenly! something reminds me

of

"Rosenquist"

& I am saved."

but do not use it.

Was this

the end of a poem? or have we just begun?

staring out the window

I 'look' at the poem

I forget myself

it is like a memory

of who you are

slowly

fading away⁶⁰

What to make of these mental reports, so clearly postmarked from within the time of the composition? The first thing that might be noted is the distinctly staggered, hesitant beginning, of a kind seen in a number of Bolton's poems (recall the similarly staggered—though *not* hesitant—opening to "Terrific Days"). Where "Terrific Days" announces its opening unambiguously, Bolton purports to delay the beginning of the poem with a number of paratexts, marking it as "an excerpt," "the first half," "section one" and a "prelude." In addition, the words on the first page are enclosed within a hand-drawn bubble, which appears to indicate the boundaries of the "prelude" section graphically (as the end of the prelude—and the beginning of the poem "proper"—is otherwise not stated), thus adding a further marker of hesitancy to the poem's beginning. These indications that the work is an excerpt from the first half of a longer poem can be taken as rhetorical devices, intended both to amuse and as one of a number of ways of rendering the poem's discourse flexible and contingent—that is, "unfinished," part of a larger work.⁶¹ The admission, "I wonder how to end the poem" appears to act as a kind of proof (one of many throughout) of the poem's being through-composed, that is, written sequentially and continuously, from beginning to end.

Of the poem's first lines, one renders the poem in the present tense ("I spend some time / looking out the window"), the other admits a comically premature anxiety over how the poem—which these statements have, of course, set in motion—will “end.” Nonetheless, the poem, by this point, is underway, its generous spacings marking the lapses in time coextensive with its highly self-reflexive thinking. The rhythm of statement followed by rejoinder is repeated three more times: the poet thinks of a “ploy” (to begin the poem, which has of course already begun), decides not to use it, asks, in mock-apostrophe, whether it is the beginning or the end of the poem, then, confusingly, stares out the window while “looking” (the activity put into question by its inverted commas) at a poem, presumably the one being written. The prelude, title, and paratexts indicate Bolton's method of creating a highly temporalised space on the page, one of productive provisionality. The reader is made aware that the poem will contain various claims (in the manner of a treatise) but that these will be shown to be knowingly partial and contingent upon the time of the poet's thinking. The work's contingency is also heightened by its serial form, whereby each section both extends and reconsiders the previous sections, such that the shape of the poem's movement emerges as a spiral one.

The delay between thought and inscription becomes the poem's rhythm. Part three of the poem begins with an attempt to present the experience of thought observing itself, mediated by the page, which is in turn considered as a temporalised field:

“Taxi Driver”

(This is the thought

that came into my mind next.

I put it right down the page because it seemed

like a long while before it came.

At any rate, it is

a long while after now. Actually

it was a thought

that came almost immediately,

-I just had it, or different

feelings about it

for a long while, /before I wrote it down.

The film

was Taxi Driver,

-all about New York.

Which is why
the thought came up
or was it vice versa? I was
thinking of America anyway. Well, I do these things.⁶²

A loose constellation of topics recur: the films *Last Year at Marienbad* and *Taxi Driver*, and the idea of New York the latter provokes; Bolton's feelings towards his previous poems, notably "Terrific Days"; John Coltrane; the early New York School poet and dance critic Edwin Denby; Sydney as an idea and as a reality. Part five makes up more than half of the poem's length, and constitutes a critique of poetry in the contemporary. We read a lament about the failure of a mimetic approach to writing, and, related to this, Bolton's further failure to write like Denby. He goes on to identify two tendencies in his own work, both, as he writes, "formal": the first, to draw attention to the medium by way of placing "vastly heterogeneous formal experiences together," the second, to "force the unpoetic into poetry":

As well, the unpoetic things did not find their way into my poetry because
I had such un-poetic things to say. I had nothing to say, only poetry.

I knew this, & then I found it out⁶³

The echo is heard here of John Cage's well-known contradictory statement on poetics: "I have nothing to say / and I am saying it / and that is poetry."⁶⁴ "Serial Treatise" moves between these observations advancing a notion of anti-poetry, and a more hortatory tone, again performing the relationship between thinking and inscription:

Your writing has got to be what
you think / about.

The less you have to leave out
the better
It can end up you don't even think
about what you can't
write about.⁶⁵

At a different stage in the poem, Bolton asserts the continuous "thinking" over the comparatively static "thought," a shift in tense central to his poetics of process:

To maintain fidelity
to the quality of the
thought, of the thinking, in a seismographic way
rather than to the worth
of the logic, insights etc
is self portraiture⁶⁶

The seismograph image offers a logic of active awareness, corresponding with Whalen's image of the mind as a graph.

A technique commonly employed by Bolton is to incorporate other poems, or parts of poems, into the one being written. This occurs in "Serial Treatise" (with the poem "Coffee"), in the 1990s poem "August 6th" (with the poem "A Picture"), and, in a different way, with the recently published long poems "Footprints" and "Some Days", which assemble fragments from many of his early poems to create new works of collage.⁶⁷ At a formal level, "Serial Treatise" makes an argument for the importance of attending to the transactions between speaking, thinking and writing, and certainly a "stoned" quality to the thinking is evident (and clearly named at points), wherein the various delays experienced between perception and thought, and thought and writing, are heightened. At a more thematic level, the poem attempts to re-work Bolton's modernist aesthetic principles to the particularities of his situation in Australia, and within the Sydney-Melbourne nexus of the Australian poetry scene, without (or without principally) drawing from pre-existing examples of from Australian poetic traditions. In the following section, an otherwise discrete poem is folded into the ongoing treatise, as it performs the stages of a percept draining into a signifier:

the poem that starts with "boing" goes:

boing (!!)

- the blue of the sky.

(bonk!:) stunned,

mullet-fashion,

I stare at the floor, my head

lowered,

while the blue of the sky

slowly fades on my retina

& I savour it / & my mind says

'blue'⁶⁸

“Serial Treatise” is expansive in its hesitations and in its scepticism towards Australian poetry, but is finally (hesitantly) affirmative. A corollary to this affirmation is the argument that, by being so important, poetry must be protected from its own “poeticness.” Bolton’s desires for his own work in relation to the political are plainly stated:

literary politics

is so bloodless. & so circumscribed. – I want my poems to mention
 politics to be able to talk of it in the same breath as anything else
 I want the poems to open out but, literary politics?!! perhaps
 it is a first step.⁶⁹

The self-reflexive tone of much of the poem contrasts sharply to the exuberant long lines of “Terrific Days.” One of the topics “Serial Treatise” considers, as we have seen, is that earlier poem, and what it was possible to write *next*. Its highly self-questioning mode is continued in the later work *Notes for Poems* (1982), and indeed throughout the oeuvre. In its comprehensively processual mode, “Serial Treatise” marks the change to a slower, more meditative style of thinking in time, and the preference for sustaining an extended present tense throughout the poem, over the temporal collisions of simultaneity.

CONCLUSION

Through his editing of *Magic Sam*, Bolton strategically annexed an aesthetic space, one that lay outside established institutions of Australian literature—both the uncontroversially “old” and the self-styled “new.”⁷⁰ It allowed him both to foster an experimental, late-modernist aesthetic via the Australian and international writers he published, and to create a space for his own long, discursive poems, whose length and use of the page prevented them from appearing in most journals in existence at the time (and since). In “Terrific Days” (and the other poems in his first collection such as “Four Poems” and “Water, with interludes”) Bolton developed a mode and a style that was confident and expansive, alternately lyrical and discursive, and in form and attitude entirely uninterested in assuming either the innocuous role of the quiet lyricist, or that of the bard. Techniques of collage drawn from visual art, and Bolton’s aleatory notebook method, brought to his early poems a simultaneist effect, permitting heterogeneous moments and durations to appear on the single “canvas” of the poem on the page. The tremendous—indeed, *terrific*—volition of the poem “Terrific Days” set down a record of the immediacy of its time of composition precisely as it was passing away, and this sense of doubleness—of simultaneous elegy and nervous anticipation—pervades the poem from its opening line. In the volumes

that follow, the example of these poems is worried over and questioned. The process poem “Serial Treatise,” in particular, is throughout concerned with what can be written “next,” a concern which would apply both to Bolton’s personal stylistic impasse, and to the disappointment and trauma for the left that followed the brief period of progressivism in Australia in the first half of the 1970s. The poem itself provides one response. In it, processual, meditative, and at times essayistic modes become more prominent. The spatialised field or canvas (two equally applicable metaphors) of “Terrific Days” gives way to the more temporal (though still spatial) metaphor of the graph. What comes to figure consistently in Bolton’s poetry that follows, up to his most recent work, is the attempt to exploit the potential of the “now”-moment of writing, understanding the poem as a “continuous prolongation” of a mood or a thought.

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NOTES

¹ Ken Bolton, “The Duck At The Top Of The Stairs—or How I Remember Writing Some Of My Poems—Why, Even” in *At the Flash & At The Baci* (PhD diss. University of Adelaide, 2003), 22. Also published as: Ken Bolton, “The Duck At The Top Of The Stairs—or How I Remember Writing Some Of My Poems—Why, Even,” *New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre*, September 2007, http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/kmko/04/ka_mate04_bolton.asp.

² Ken Bolton, “nude descending a staircase,” in *Blonde & French* (Bundeena: Island Press, 1978), 8.

³ Clement Greenberg, “Collage,” in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 76.

⁴ The poem’s full title as it appears in *Four Poems* (1977) is “poem, the terrific days of summer.” Herein it is mainly referred to as “Terrific Days.” See: Ken Bolton, “poem, the terrific days of summer,” *Four Poems*, (Sydney: Sea Cruise, 1977) n.p. The poem also appears: in *Blonde & French*; in Bolton’s *Selected Poems 1975–1990* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1992); as an illustrated folio edition (Katoomba: Wayzgoose, 1998); in *Selected Poems 1975–2010* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2012); and in a reprint of *Four Poems* (Adelaide: Little Esther, 2012).

⁵ Ken Bolton, “fragment,” in *Underwear Prediction: The Australian Women’s Weekly*, eds. Ken Bolton and Carol Novack (Sydney: Gary Oliver, 1974): n.p.

⁶ William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume 1* (New York: Dover, 1950), 613.

⁷ See Charles, M. Tung, “Modernism’s News,” *Symplokē* 16, no. 1/2 (2008): 164–168.

⁸ Ken Bolton, “Talking to You,” in *Talking to You: Poems 1978–1981* (Clifton Hill: Rigmarole

Books, 1983) 7–8.

⁹ Bolton's teachers included the artist, critic and philosopher Donald Brook, and the art theorist and critic Terry Smith. A number of quotations could be drawn from their writing to demonstrate their understanding of art as a social practice. To take one example, in his 1975 essay, "The Provincialism Problem," Smith defines art-making as "a thoroughly context-dependent activity, in which most of the contexts are socially specific and resonant throughout the cultural settings in which they occur and to which they travel." See: Terry Smith, "The Provincialism Problem," *Artforum* 13, no. 1, (1974): 59.

¹⁰ Bolton, "The Duck At The Top Of The Stairs," 27.

¹¹ Ken Bolton "John Kinsella Interviews Ken Bolton," interview by John Kinsella, accessed December 9, 2016, <http://www.johnkinsella.org/interviews/bolton.html>.

¹² Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), 73.

¹³ Robert Harris, "The Expulsion of Motive from the Poetic Garden," *Overland* no. 125, (1991): 92.

¹⁴ Alice Notley, "Introduction," in *The Collected Poems of Ted Berrigan*, eds. Alice Notley, Anselm Berrigan, and Edmund Berrigan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 16.

¹⁵ Bolton, "The Duck At The Top Of The Stairs," 39.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸ Donald Davie, *The Purity of Diction in English Verse and Articulate Energy* (London: Penguin, 1992), 6.

¹⁹ Ken Bolton, ed. *Magic Sam*, no. 1 (n.d., ca. 1975): n.p.

²⁰ Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss, "Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism," *October*, 70 (1994): 62.

²¹ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 117.

²² John Forbes, "Language and Landscape," *Meanjin* 43, no. 3 (1984): 455.

²³ Ross Chambers, "Isn't there a poem about this, Mr. de Mille? On Quotation, Camp and Colonial Distancing," *Australian Literary Studies* 23, no. 4, (2008): 378.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Lyn McCredden, "(un)belonging in Australia: Poetry and Nation," *Southerly* 73, no. 1 (2013): 48.

²⁶ Ken Bolton, "Requiem for a Heavyweight: Les Murray Considered," *Australian Poetry Resources Internet Library*, accessed April 4, 2010, <http://april.edu.au/bolton-k/murray.shtml>, (site no longer online: a shorter version of the same essay appears in *Heat* 1, no. 5, (1997): 184–195).

²⁷ Ken Bolton, *'Untimely Meditations' & Other Poems* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 1997), 42.

²⁸ Author interview with Ken Bolton via email, June–August 2011.

²⁹ Bolton, ‘*Untimely Meditations*,’ 71.

³⁰ George Alexander, “An Introduction,” in *The Terrific Days of Summer*, by Ken Bolton, designed by Mike Hudson and set by Jadwiga Jarvis, (Katoomba, NSW: The Wayzgoose Press, 1998), n.p.

³¹ Ken Bolton and Peter Minter, “Ken Bolton, in Conversation with Peter Minter,” *Jacket*, no. 27 (2005), accessed December 9, 2016, <http://jacketmagazine.com/27/bolton-mint.html>.

³² In the North American context, Ron Silliman argues for a direct connection between the economic downturn of the mid-1970s and the new poetry and poetics of that period (referring here to Language Poetry): “From the perspective of capital, the war in Indochina was lost, a critical blow to military prestige. More importantly, 1974 marked the end of capital’s longest ‘boom,’ the expansionist years following the Second World War (on top of which the essential optimism of every variety of ‘New American’ poetry had been constructed).” See: Ron Silliman, “For *Change*,” in *In the American Tree: Language, Realism, Poetry*, ed., Ron Silliman (Orono, Maine: The National Poetry Foundation, 2007), 468. Similarly, Barrett Watten, quoting an earlier essay of his own, describes 1975 as an “epochal fault line,” citing as evidence, also, the end of the war in Vietnam. See: Barrett Watten, “Presentism and Periodization in Language Writing, Conceptual Art, and Conceptual Writing,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 41, no. 1 (2011): 153.

³³ Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35.

³⁴ Bolton, “terrific days,” In 293–295, 57–58, n.p.

³⁵ Alexander, “An Introduction,” n.p.

³⁶ Bolton, “terrific days,” In 241–246, n.p.

³⁷ Ken Bolton, *Art Writing: Art in Adelaide in the 1990s and 2000s* (Adelaide: The Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia Inc., 2009), 10.

³⁸ Noel Sheridan, “Everybody Should Get Stones,” *Magic Sam*, no. 1 (n.d. circa 1975): n.p.

³⁹ Bolton, “terrific days,” In 164–170, n.p.

⁴⁰ The three names in this section of the poem seem to suggest, respectively, intellectual rigour, hedonistic abandon, and a judicious combination of the two. Donald Brook is an influential art critic and art historian. He was a lecturer in Fine Arts at Sydney University in the late 1960s and 1970s, and a teacher of both Ken Bolton and John Forbes. The latter once described him memorably as “a sort of logical positivist aesthete.” See: John Forbes and Martin Duwell, “John Forbes,” in *A Possible Contemporary Poetry*, (St. Lucia: Makar, 1982), 80. Nigel Roberts is one of the central figures of the New Australian Poetry. John Forbes (1950–1998), likewise one of the central figures of the New Australian Poetry, was a highly influential Australian poet, and a friend, colleague, and contemporary of Bolton and many others of his generation.

⁴¹ Bolton, “terrific days,” In 62–71, n.p.

⁴² Ibid., ln 72–82, n.p.

⁴³ Author interview with Ken Bolton via email, June–August 2011.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Bolton, “terrific days,” ln 1–2, n.p.

⁴⁶ Ibid., ln 3–11.

⁴⁷ Ken Bolton, “Serial Treatise,” ed. Ken Bolton, *Magic Sam*, no. 5 (n.d., ca. 1979): ln 222–227, n.p.

⁴⁸ Bolton, “terrific days,” ln 209–218, n.p.

⁴⁹ A fuller quote reads: “This poetry is a picture or graph of a mind moving, which is a world body being here and now which is history . . . and you.” Philip Whalen, “Since You Ask Me (A Press Release, October 1959),” *The Collected Poems of Philip Whalen*, ed. Michael Rothenberg (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2007), 153.

⁵⁰ Kris Hemensley and Martin Duwell, “Kris Hemensley,” *A Possible Contemporary Poetry* (St. Lucia: Makar, 1982), 59.

⁵¹ Bolton, “The Duck At The Top Of The Stairs,” 169.

⁵² Bolton, “Ken Bolton in Conversation with Peter Minter.”

⁵³ Ken Bolton, and Robert Cook, “under the counter interview: ken bolton,” *Contemporary Visual Art + Culture Broadsheet* 39, no. 1 (2010): 53.

⁵⁴ Ken Bolton, “Talking to You,” in *Talking to You: Poems 1978–1981* (Clifton Hill, Vic: Rigmarole Books, 1983), 9.

⁵⁵ Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents: 1950–2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 11–16.

⁵⁶ Leslie Scalapino, “The Radical Nature of Experience [on Philip Whalen, Lyn Hejinian, Susan Howe and Leslie Scalapino],” in *How Phenomena Appear to Unfold* (Brooklyn, New York: Litmus Press, 2011), 194.

⁵⁷ Quoted *ibid.*, 194.

⁵⁸ Bolton, “Ken Bolton in Conversation with Peter Minter.”

⁵⁹ Bolton, however, remains equivocal about the poem’s worth, stating that it “isn’t actually able to do much of the thinking it sets itself up to do” (Email message to author, June 12, 2012).

⁶⁰ Bolton, “Serial Treatise,” ln 1–20, n.p.

⁶¹ One which, incidentally, was not completed (which is to say there was no Part Two, as proposed).

⁶² Bolton, “Serial Treatise,” ln 117–135, n.p.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, ln 426–427, n.p.

⁶⁴ John Cage, “Lecture on Nothing,” in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (London: Calder and Boyarb, 1971), 109.

⁶⁵ Bolton, “Serial Treatise,” ln 215–221, n.p.

⁶⁶ Ibid., ln 368–373, n.p.

⁶⁷ The poems, both published in the collection *Threefer*, are good examples of the ongoing exchange, at a formal and a thematic level, between Bolton's early poetry and his more recent work. See: Ken Bolton, *Threefer* (Glebe: Puncher & Wattmann, 2013).

⁶⁸ Bolton, "Serial Treatise," ln 273–283, n.p.

⁶⁹ Ibid., ln 210–214, n.p.

⁷⁰ Bolton's editorial ventures also included the imprint Magic Sam Books and the still-running imprint that succeeded it, Little Esther, as well as the later poetry and art magazine, *Otis Rush* (1987–1996).