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Sophie Seita

Tom Raworth's Little Magazines: *Outburst*, *Before Your Very Eyes!*, and *Infolio*

Opening almost any book by Tom Raworth and turning to the acknowledgements, one is immediately struck by how deeply his work is integrated into a little magazine network. From the British magazines *fragmente* and *Grosseteste Review* to the American *Acts*, *Io*, *Doones*, and *This*, to other international magazines like *Blue Pig* (Paris), *Der Gummibaum* (Cologne), *The Ant's Forefoot* (Toronto), *Das Kunstwerk* (Baden-Baden), *Canards du siècle present* (Denmark), *Mandala* (Netherlands), *DOC(K)S* (Corsica), *PÁGINAS* (Tenerife), and *Il Verri* (Italy), Raworth's publishing networks range widely. Although a favoured avant-garde poet among fellow poets and a few critics, Raworth's editorial work has received hardly any scholarly attention. But any discussion of Raworth's work will benefit from a closer look at the vast publication landscape of independent and university-sponsored periodicals and small presses, in which his work first appeared and continued to appear until his recent death (as in, for example, *No Prizes 4* (Winter 2015/2016)). His work as a publisher and printer, in turn, offers insights into the variety of his own writing and demonstrates the porousness of the avant-garde groups with which he was involved. My essay focuses on the little-discussed but significant contribution of Raworth's three little magazines—*Outburst* (1961-1963), *Before Your Very Eyes!* (1967), and *Infolio* (1986-1991)—to the international network of writers, artists, and editors that emerged during or after the “mimeograph revolution” in the 1960s, often considered a period of extensive countercultural small-press activity made possible by the availability of cheap printing equipment, from mimeograph machines to old hand presses.

Writing about little magazines is often, if not always, a project of recovering them. My essay complements recent work in periodical studies that extends beyond the conventional “period” of modernism, such as Daniel Kane's work on magazines attached to The Poetry Project, Alex Latter's book on *The English Intelligencer*, Louis Goddard's essay on the late-modernist British magazines *Migrant*, *Mica*, and *Satis*, Peter Middleton's chapter on *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, Matthew Chambers on late-modernist and surrealist British magazines, Richard Price and David Miller's *British Literary Magazines: A History and Bibliography of “Little Magazines,”*

(2006), and Peter Brooker's and Andrew Thacker's *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* volume on the UK and Ireland (which ends around 1955).¹ The relative paucity of studies on magazines published after 1960, compared to the numerous studies on modernist magazines, means that there is much more work to be done. Of course, there is also a practical reason for this scarcity: modernist magazines are largely in the public domain (prior to 1923 in the U.S.), spurring digitisation projects such as the Modernist Journals Project and Blue Mountain Project which have made these magazines more easily available for study. While many mimeo-era magazines showed a certain countercultural disdain of copyright, digitisation remains rather uncommon and more complicated, and the majority of magazines Raworth published or published in can only be accessed in special collections.

Precisely because of their unavailability and often unacknowledged significance within literary history, little magazines also ought to be studied as material objects in their own right—for their inventive experiments with typography, design, and print technology—rather than as mere conveyors for the textual content within. Geoff Ward and Alistair Johnston both take note of the materiality of Raworth's books; Johnston in particular discusses the bibliographical richness of Raworth's work as a printer for Matrix and Goliard Press.² While Ward calls Raworth's early books *The Big Green Day* (1968) and *The Relation Ship* (1969) "high points of British book design of the period,"³ I want to propose that his magazines merit equally high praise. Raworth's books and magazines alike draw attention to the materiality of the printed page, its paper, colour, ink, dimensions, and typography, thus inviting new ways of reading. Ward acknowledges that "what the publishing trade calls the 'invisibles' of a book, in fact its most visible design characteristics, are an important feature of Raworth's poetry,"⁴ and, as I will show in the next section, were already a characteristic of his first venture into magazine publishing.

OUTBURST: 1961-1963

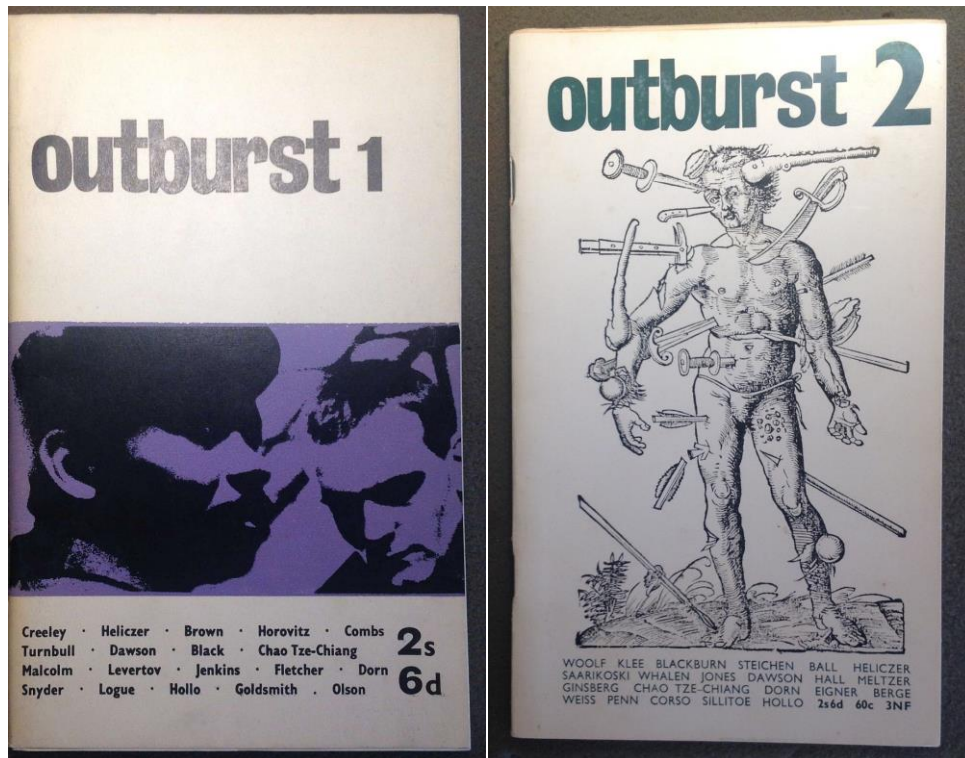


Figure 1. *Outburst 1* and *2*, front covers, reproduced with permission of Tom Raworth

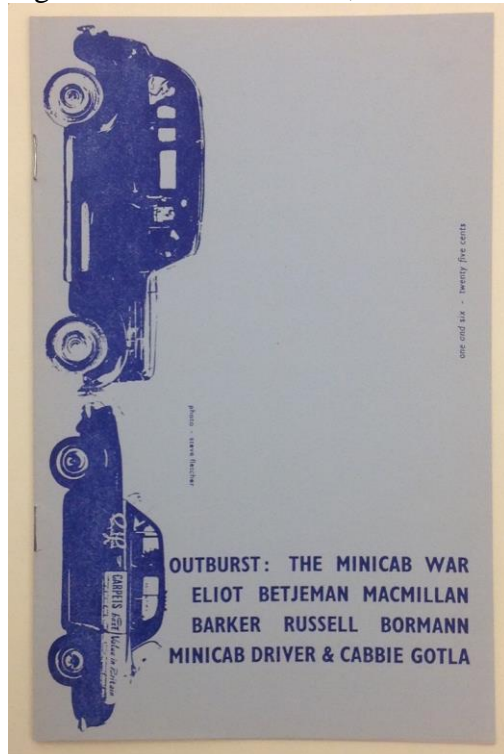


Figure 2. *The Minicab War*, front cover, reproduced with permission of Tom Raworth

In his own account, Raworth began *Outburst* after a period of not reading and writing poetry. It was his interest in jazz that initially drew him to a copy of *The Evergreen Review* (no. 2, 1957) because it featured an article on the San Francisco jazz scene by Ralph Gleason. In the issue, Raworth then discovered Allen Ginsberg, Jack Spicer, Philip Whalen, and Jack Kerouac.⁵ This is a familiar poetry magazine story in the twentieth century: a magazine inspires readers to start their own. Simultaneously with the discovery of poetry that did not “bore” him, Raworth met Anselm Hollo and Piero Heliczer in London, and established a correspondence with Ed Dorn, all of whom would help shape Raworth’s publishing projects.⁶ *Outburst* ran for two regular issues, and one unnumbered and differently-named issue—*The Minicab War* (fig. 2)—which Raworth described as “a thing of fake interviews that Anselm, Gregory Corso and I wrote about something that was happening in London then: there was a battle between two taxi-cab companies—the old established taxis and the new, light little mini cabs.”⁷ *The Minicab* issue, although undated, was likely published in 1961, the year of London’s introduction of said minicabs. The “interviews” featured T. S. Eliot, John Betjeman, Harold MacMillan, George Barker, Bertrand Russell, Martin Bormann, and two cab drivers, while the back cover concluded with mock-solemnity: “This issue was done with the hope that it might give a benevolent lift to the satirists of the Establishment, who want very much to destroy a possibly REAL revolution by making entertainment of it, and England’s future darker—The Minicab War is the Synthesis of the Class War. The mini cabs are less and louder; the established cabs more and refined—films like *THE KITCHEN*, *ROOM AT THE TOP*, *LOOK BACK IN ANGER* are minicabs.” In its satirical commentary, the *Minicab* issue was more explicitly political than the other two *Outburst* issues, and in this way already anticipated Raworth’s later, similarly satirical, editorial work in *Infolio*.

While *The Minicab War* had all the features of a spoof for the initiated (and predates Raworth and Hollo’s infamous spoof issue of *The English Intelligencer* in May 1967), *Outburst* 1 and 2 were serious in their promotion of contemporary poetry beyond a friendship circle.⁸ One way to show its seriousness was through its design. The beautifully letterpressed *Outburst* 1 (8 x 5,” 52 pp.) was handset by Raworth in Gill Sans, Perpetua, Times Bold, Ultra Bodoni (as Johnston expertly details),⁹ and printed by Richard Moore and Sons. The cover for *Outburst* 2 (8 x 5”, 48 pp.) reproduced Hans von Gersdorff’s *Fieldbook of Wound Surgery* (1519) (Fig. 1),

usually referred to as “Wound Man,” which Raworth re-used two years later in his first broadside *Weapon Man* (1965), published by his own Goliard Press. The ink colour for both issues changed between black, red, and blue, giving the impression of an artist’s book. However, as Raworth recounted in an interview with Kyle Schlesinger, this vivid feature of the magazine was in fact of chance origin. Raworth had left his treadle press with a befriended printer to print after work with whatever ink was still on it.¹⁰ Though the beautiful design was thus not entirely calculated, it was absolutely indebted to the resourcefulness and flexibility in Raworth’s print aesthetic. As Helmut Bonheim, then an English professor at UC Santa Barbara and co-editor of the contemporaneous little magazine *Mica*, noted in a letter to Raworth: “You do seem to put a lot of effort into the external get-up, though, and I wonder if it’s worth it to the reader.”¹¹ Another correspondent, the poet and illustrator Fielding Dawson, certainly thought so when he exclaimed, “I like *Outburst*, I like the paper, the typeface and particularly the size, it goes in the pocket.”¹² Similarly, Anselm Hollo praised Raworth’s publishing aesthetic: “what bugs me abt all the ‘modest’ mimeo etc. pamphlets around (here)—‘the only viable form’ of publishing poetry these days acc. to Eric M[ottram].—is that they’re just not attractive enuf.”¹³ In concert with material constraints and without self-conscious fine printing intentions, the combination of “attractive” design and new poetry would soon find another outlet in Raworth’s own collage practice and in the books he published for Matrix Press, under which imprint the second issue of *Outburst* appeared.¹⁴

The poet and publisher Ken Edwards applauded *Outburst* in his own magazine *Reality Studios* almost twenty years later as “the influential magazine [...] which made available the work of the American avant-garde.”¹⁵ Indeed, the magazine featured a range of practitioners previously unpublished or rarely published in the UK. The magazine’s first issue opened with a poem by Anselm Hollo, titled “To Black Mountain,” an homage that inflected the whole magazine, and invited readers to follow a Black Mountain *ars poetica*: “To restore it | the task, | the consummation of | word’s impact on eye | & ear” (p. [1]). Appropriately, the issue featured Charles Olson, Ed Dorn, Denise Levertov, but also Gary Snyder, a linocut by Jean Goldsmith, two humorous rhyming poems by Christopher Logue, who was associated with the British Poetry Revival and a friend of Alexander Trocchi’s, and poems by the gay Bay Area writer Tram Combs. In 1961, Raworth had asked Creeley for a note on Black Mountain College, which never materialised.¹⁶ If it had, the magazine would

have appeared even more like a British outlet for the Black Mountain School. As it was, however, Creeley apologised three years later: “I never did write that note re BMC—but suppose it passed in any case qua “subject”. i.e. once it’s in the universities [...], it’s time to move on.”¹⁷

The magazine certainly cannot easily be categorised as belonging to one group; its contributors shared many affiliations and interests: Gary Snyder (San Francisco Renaissance), Paul Blackburn (Black Mountain), LeRoi Jones (Black Arts, editor of *Yugen*, *Kulchur*, *The Floating Bear*), Fielding Dawson (Black Mountain), Allen Ginsberg (Beats), Gregory Corso (Beats), Larry Eigner (Black Mountain, Language Writing), Ruth Weiss (Beats/jazz poetry), Ed Dorn (Black Mountain), David Meltzer (Beat, San Francisco Renaissance), the English writer Alan Sillitoe, Carol Bergé (active in the Lower East side reading series at Le Metro and Les Deux Magot; who submitted to *Outburst* on the recommendation of Ed Dorn),¹⁸ Philip Whalen (Beat, San Francisco Renaissance), and Piero Heliczer (New American Cinema). The magazine also published translations: poems by Paul Klee and Pentti Saarikoski translated from the German and Finnish by Anselm Hollo, and “Four Poems of Tu Fu” translated by Chao Tze-Chiang. Raworth’s regular collaborator Barry Hall contributed artwork and the second issue reproduced photographs by the modernists Irving Penn and Edward Steichen; the latter a photographer associated with Alfred Stieglitz’s group in the 1910s and himself a contributor to magazines, such as *Camera Work* and *291*. *Outburst* may have begun out of a desire to publish writers Raworth admired, several of whom quickly became correspondents and friends, but the finished magazine significantly extended beyond a local and even beyond a contemporary community.

That the magazine was outward-looking is also evident in Raworth’s request to his correspondents to recommend new writers to him, and in his attempt to widen the magazine’s audience and ensure international availability in seeking out possible U.S. distributors. Creeley, for instance, gave Raworth the names and addresses of poets he considered “sympathetic to such a magazine as you propose,” such as Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Louis Zukofsky, Michael Rumaker, William Eastlake, Douglas Woolf, Edward Dahlberg, Hugh Kenner, Gael Turnbull, Irving Layton, Jack Hirschman, Larry Eigner, Paul Blackburn, Allen Ginsberg, LeRoi Jones, Gary Snyder, and Michael McClure.¹⁹ It is worth speculating how different the magazine could have turned out if some of the writers Raworth solicited had indeed

contributed. Had Robbe-Grillet sent a piece (who, “hélas,” did not have any new text in English), the magazine might have been given a nouveau roman twist.²⁰ Had Louis Zukofsky contributed, the influence of Objectivism would have been more visible, a connection made explicit in the French magazine *Zuk* and the anthology *Louis Zukofsky Or Whoever Someone Else Thought He Was*, in both of which Raworth appeared.

In addition to new poetry, *Outburst* published reviews, which, beside editorials, are among the most visible paratexts of magazine self-fashioning and the promotion of aesthetic taste. Robert Creeley wrote on William Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* (*Outburst* 1) and Anselm Hollo reviewed two recent and soon-to-be influential poetry anthologies—Donald Allen’s *The New American Poetry* and A. Alvarez’s *The New Poetry*—as well as new books by Mimi Goldberg and Norman Mailer (*Outburst* 2). The reviews were mostly pithy, funny, subjective, non-academic, eclectic, and—unlike our contemporary largely cautious and favourable review culture—unafraid to offend. Raworth began his review of Ian Hamilton Finlay’s Migrant book *The Dancers Inherit the Party* by questioning the very use and format of such a review: “How to review this book? To say ‘Here are forty or so poems, plus two woodcuts, for two shillings: the poet lives in the Orkneys?’”²¹ The disinterest in summarising a book of poems into consumable portions or the postulation of a poetics or overt group-formation aligned Raworth with other 1960s magazines such as the American journals *C* and *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, among many others. Raworth, like many of his contemporaries, disdained the commercial book industry and its concern with marketability, and was unwilling to sell poetry as a product, or his magazine as the outlet of an avant-garde movement.

That said, the magazine participated in group-formation in other ways. *Outburst* advertised *Migrant* (edited by Gael Turnbull), *Mica* (edited by Helmut Bonheim and Raymond Federman, both out of California), and the British magazines *Satis* (edited by Matthew Mead and published by Malcolm Rutherford out of Newcastle), *BIM*, described as “the literary magazine of the South Caribbean” (founded by Frank Collymore), and *New Departures* (published by two Oxford students Michael Horovitz and Pete Brown), and lastly the New York-based *Yugen* (edited by Hettie and LeRoi Jones), listing where it was available in the UK, namely at Better Books, managed by Bob Cobbing and Lee Harwood, and at the anarchist publisher and bookshop Freedom Press, both in London. Alex Latter considers

Outburst and Goliard Press, alongside *The English Intelligencer*, *The Resuscitator*, and *The Wivenhoe Park Review*, among others, important promoters of late-modernist poetic practice.²² Robert Sheppard groups *Outburst* among other “fugitive magazines” like Lee Harwood’s *Tzarad* or Jeff Nuttall’s *My Own Mag*.²³ Also part of this network, though less fugitive, was Fulcrum Press, founded in 1965 by Deirdre and Stuart Montgomery, which published high-quality hardbacks and paperbacks of (late) modernists like Basil Bunting and David Jones, as well as contemporary British and American poets. Other contemporaneous presses with overlapping contributor lists were Trigram Press, edited by Asa and Penelope (Pip) Benveniste, and Ferry Press, edited by Andrew Crozier. For Fulcrum and Trigram, Raworth occasionally did professional job printing. To encourage his own readers to submit or engage in correspondence, Raworth even included the mailing addresses of the presses listed in *Outburst*. A note on the back of *Outburst 2*, for example, urges readers to write to Jargon Books (North Carolina), Birth Press (New York), Auerhahn Press (San Francisco), New Departures (London), Wild Hawthorn Press (Edinburgh), and Migrant Press (London), thus establishing a community of print. Advertisements like these often showcase a magazine’s existing or aspirational network in its approving nod towards other magazines. In more mainstream magazines with a wider readership, advertisements are often a source of revenue; in little magazines of the non-commercial type, by contrast, the purpose is to trade favours and signal affiliations.

In a letter to Raworth, Bonheim praised *Outburst* as one of a few good magazines “com[ing] out of the British isles [*sic*] these days”:

Maybe you too, though, are a little on the conventional side compared to the people you chose to print, for what I saw of yours was syntactically and logically much more the regular thing. And of the people you have in no. 1, you seem to have picked the more extremist pieces. Only Christopher Logue and chao tze-chiang [*sic*] [...] are old-time poetic in my sense, and I’m not sure you did so well to include them. [...] but your other selections do have a contemporaneous and homogenous feel about them, the sentence fragments especially, the dry and prosaic line, the conversational rhythm, i.e., no rhythm, mostly.²⁴

Outburst also made some ripples in the mainstream press and was reviewed in *The Guardian* in 1963, an attention from the mainstream that was not uncommon at the time. Like Bonheim, the *Guardian* reviewer noted the magazine's divergence from conventional poetic rhythm, commenting that some lines "seemed to me flatly prosaic no matter how you lay them out" and "the typography seems sometimes to be just a bit too experimental, as when the contents bill is printed vertically down the page instead of across it."²⁵ Just like many of Raworth's later collages, *Outburst* already demonstrated a visual sensibility enlivened with its editor's familiarity with the history of avant-garde book design, in particular Dada.²⁶ The reviewer pinpoints Raworth's approach to writing and the publishing economy: "He hasn't tried offering stuff to journals which would pay [...] because 'I don't think they'd want the kind of thing I think I'd like to write.'"²⁷ This is a familiar sentiment from small-press editors: that they would rather not be published than compromise their aesthetics and politics. Self-publishing in this understanding is therefore a route towards aesthetic independence and, as the reviewer admiringly notes, "integrity." It was integrity that made Raworth later quit Goliard Press after it was taken over by Jonathan Cape, becoming Cape Goliard, because "I didn't want to print anyone I didn't want to print."²⁸ But as Cape Goliard was to publish a number of notable volumes already on Raworth's Goliard list, to give up direct involvement with publishing these books was more than a *gesture* of independence.

One reason *Outburst* folded after three issues was that, for Raworth, "the magazine was no longer useful in the sense that I wanted it to be, because by that time, by say '64, the people whose work I liked and who hadn't been published much in England were being published ... there was an audience and a market there so it seemed pointless to have yet another magazine doing that when I could do small books."²⁹ In other words, the medium of the magazine with its relatively quick turnaround and ephemerality was particularly suited to Raworth's magazine vision of offering unknown poets a platform and of introducing these poets to a new audience. Once the "problem" of their unfamiliarity was remedied, magazines could give way to single-author chapbooks or books.³⁰ While Raworth did indeed take a break from magazine publishing, concentrating instead on chapbooks for his Goliard Press, it was under the Goliard imprint that he would publish another magazine just four years later.

Before Your Very Eyes: 1967

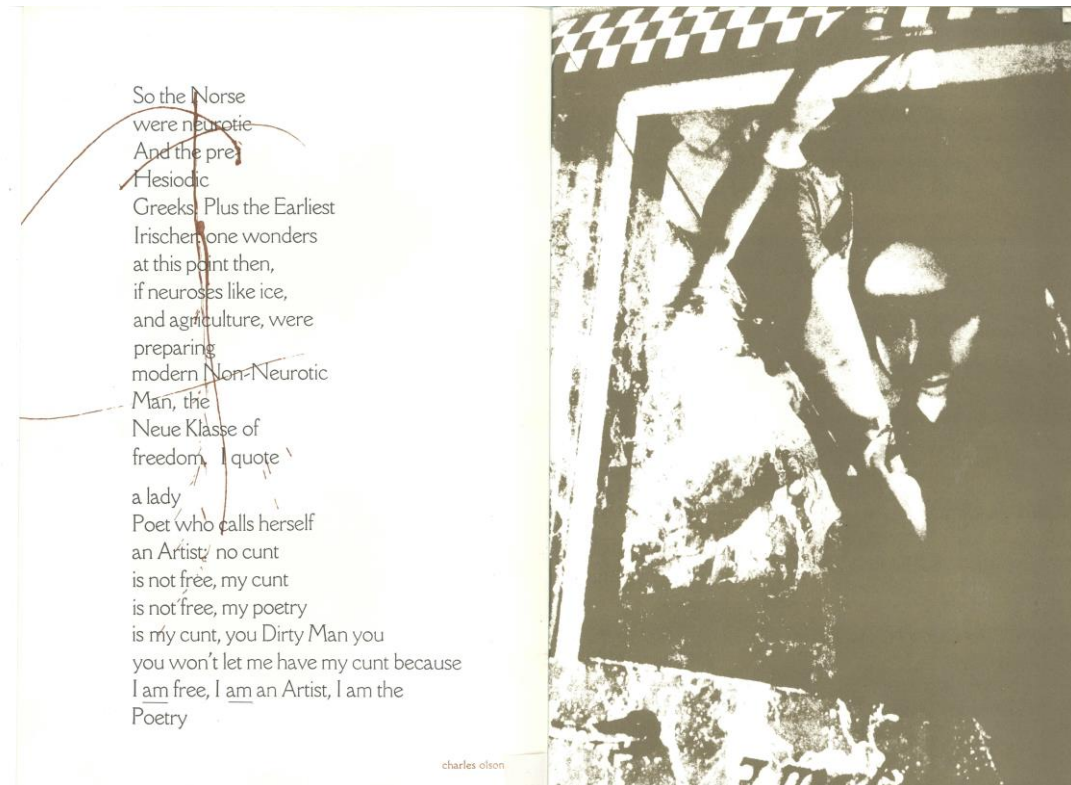


Fig. 3 Poem by Charles Olson and illustration by Billy Jahrmarkt in *Before Your Very Eyes!* Reproduced with permission of Tom Raworth



Figure 4. Aram Saroyan and Billy Jahrmarkt, in *Before Your Very Eyes!* Reproduced with permission of Tom Raworth

In 1967, Raworth published the one-off letterpress magazine *Before Your Very Eyes!* (12 x 8," 14 pp.), featuring Charles Olson, Aram Saroyan, Ron Padgett, Anselm Hollo, Jack Hirschman, and James Koller. By then, Goliard Press, co-founded by Raworth and the artist Barry Hall in 1965 following the end of Matrix Press, had already published chapbooks by all the *Before Your Very Eyes!* contributors except James Koller, presenting the magazine as a teaser for the press, which was advertised on the back cover. The magazine opened with a poem by Olson, overlaid with brushstrokes or ink streaks of sienna red (fig. 3), reminiscent of the abstract expressionist design on display in *The Black Mountain Review* and some issues of *Yugen*. On its facing page, we find a mysterious black and white image (very likely a Verifax print) reminiscent of the modified films of Stan Brakhage. At first glance, this two-page spread might place the magazine firmly in a Black Mountain context, but the booklet as a whole, just like *Outburst*, shows links to a number of print communities.

The sepia illustrations in *Before Your Very Eyes!* were by William (Billy) Jahrmarkt, photographs that Hall and Raworth had intended to publish as a booklet,

but since “the job was bad, some flooding of ink, loss of detail,” they decided to use the offset-printed sheets for the magazine instead, and combined them with the letterpress poems on an offset background.³¹ Jahrmarkt belonged to the circle around Wallace Berman, editor of the inter-arts magazine *Semina*, as did Jack Hirschman.³² Hirschman’s interest in Surrealism, (sexual) mysticism, shamanism, and the Kabbalah as a source for permutational poetry and imagery connects him to early work by Jerome Rothenberg and the Deep Image poets. Aram Saroyan, associated with Minimalism and Conceptual Art, contributed a concrete poem in the form of a four-legged glyph-coinage, done in the style of a classic woodblock letterform, reminiscent of a large letter “m” (fig. 4).

Whereas similarly minimal poems by Saroyan, which appeared frequently in the proto-conceptual magazine *0 To 9* (edited by Bernadette Mayer and Vito Acconci, 1965-67), look far more conceptual, in Raworth’s beautifully letterpressed magazine, Saroyan’s “poem” in a striking green looks much more like visual art. Its facing page features a short lyric poem by Raworth, haiku-like in its description of objects, sensory states, and nature, divided into two columns with lines almost mirrored in length:

slow cello music
 pushing the velvet armchair
 as the rain comes down

time under pressure
 dawn, and the green butterflies
 crossing the ice-cap

Ward suggests that “[p]art of the appeal of the early books lies in the play-off between the opulence of Goliard’s or Trigram’s fonts and the minimalist leanings of the poetry.”³³ There is a similar opulence in the minimalism in this issue, in its use of the elegant early-twentieth-century fonts Cochin and Westminster Old Style (again, according to Johnston), and its expressive illustrations, partnered with short and neatly arranged poems. Raworth’s predilection for a certain minimalism in the form of short lines (even more extreme in his later long poems such as *Ace* (1974), and *Catacoustics* (1991), to name just two)³⁴ might have resulted from the labour of typesetting by hand, as he suggested in an interview: “you get to wonder why some people write very long lines when you’re setting it by hand, and that’s how I probably got to like Bob [Creeley]’s work. I mean, I liked reading it, but I did appreciate the fact that you could set it then just slide in spacers all the way to the end.”³⁵ Unlike contemporaneous mimeographed magazines, which prized the speed of production,

spontaneity, provisionality, and improvisation associated with the performance of poetry and jazz, *Outburst* and *Before Your Very Eyes!* were typeset meticulously, belying the propulsive immediacy proclaimed in both magazines' titles. At the same time, as Raworth notes, in an interview with Schlesinger and Chambers, he had acquired his letterpress cheaply—the decision to print by hand was therefore not primarily aesthetic and political, but practical, as letterpress did not yet carry the cache of nostalgia it has for some small-press publishers today.

Unlike *Outburst*, *Before Your Very Eyes!* did not contain any reviews or commentaries. It presented an open and critically unframed model of magazine editorship, where poetic connections were left to emerge between contributions by proximity alone. The exception to its paratextual lack was the colophon, which spits in a characteristic 1960s anti-establishment tone: “Unsolicited manuscripts will be burned without ceremony.” The magazine was clearly for a coterie, usually understood as a small group with an exclusive readership, the championing and rejection of which was crucial to the formation of a number of avant-gardes. Although *Before Your Very Eyes!* described itself as an “occasional magazine,” there was to be only one occasion. Similarly, the back cover of *Outburst 2* fell short of its promise and self-understanding of the role of little magazines: “To be of use at all, it should appear regularly so something must change. And now the type is too worn to use again. Who has ten pounds to spare? But subscribe!” It would remain the last issue, but another venue would fulfil that promise with unprecedented regularity about 20 years later: *Infolio*.

INFOLIO: 1986-1991

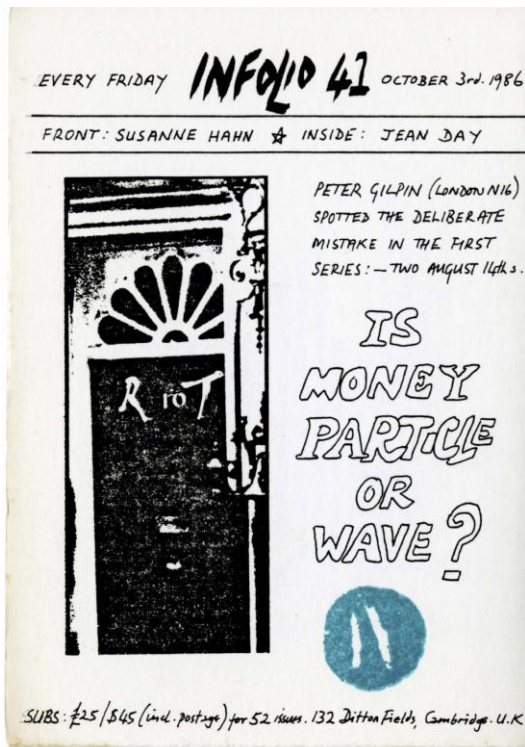


Figure 5. cover, *Infolio* 41

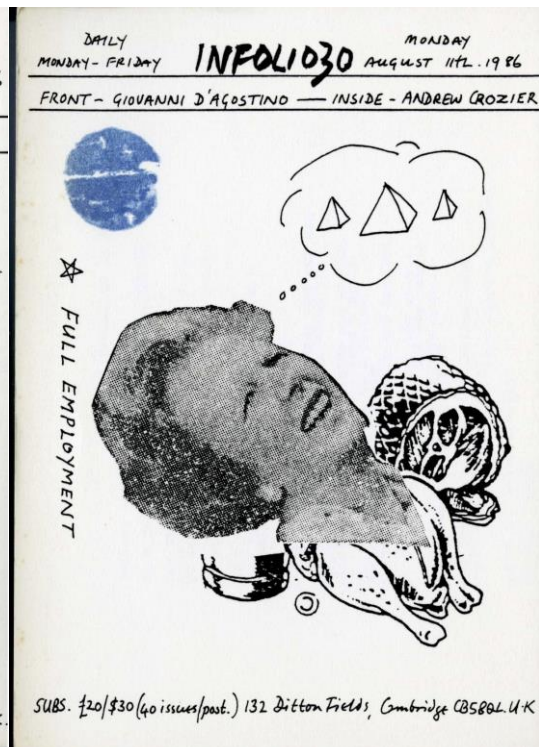


Figure 6. cover, *Infolio* 30

Reproduced with permission of Tom Raworth.

In 1972 Raworth considered himself “out of the magazine world” because “I don’t like that thing of 2 poems by each of 80 different people,” being more interested in “a book as a long poem,” a form he explored in his books *Ace* (1974), *Writing* (1982), and *Catacoustics* (1996).³⁶ But he returned—by publishing what I would call a magazine as a single poem. Similar to other 1970s and 1980s magazines, such as Tom Mandel’s *MIAM*, Alan Davies’s *100 Posters*, and Carla Harryman’s *Qu*, *Infolio* focused on the work of one author, flanked by a changing artist’s cover art and Raworth’s back cover design. Raworth published 116 issues, daily at first (five days a week), then weekly, then roughly bi-weekly, in three series, from 1986 to 1991, in Cambridge, England, where he had moved in 1977 to take up a one-year Poet in Residence position at King’s College.³⁷

While *Outburst* and *Before Your Very Eyes!* had furthered the UK dissemination of the New American Poetry, particularly that associated with Black Mountain, in order for stale British poetry to “outburst” (as Raworth’s many correspondents cannot resist to remark) under the influence of the livelier American experimental writing, *Infolio* displayed an even wider geographical range of authors,

genders, and formats. The first issue acknowledged its debts to the photocopied magazine *L'in-plano*, published daily in Paris in 1986 and edited by Claude Royet-Journaud, a French poet, artist, and translator of George Oppen, and publisher of American poetry, who also contributed the first cover image of *Infolio*. With Royet-Journaud on the cover and a poem by Asa Benveniste—an American printer and book designer who co-founded Trigram Press, which published Raworth, Anselm Hollo, Lee Harwood, Jim Dine, J. H. Prynne, and B. S. Johnson—*Infolio* immediately demonstrated its international connections and its links with other small-press publishers. The magazine appropriately ended with the same international gesture—a cover by the Italian Paolo Mazzuchelli and a poem by Gunnar Harding, translated from the Swedish by Anselm Hollo—an internationalism, which, in the context of Thatcher's isolationism took on a political charge that resonates with our current post-Brexit and post-Trump climate. But before discussing the magazine's end, I first want to spend some time with its material features and the contributors throughout the run.

Infolio veered away from the high production values of Raworth's earlier magazines and press publications toward a DIY aesthetic and concomitant speedier production and distribution.³⁸ The format resembled 1960s mimeograph magazines and later photocopied magazines in their low-key and playful designs, doodles, and handwriting. The only constraint was, as Raworth put it on the back cover note of issue 40 (August 25, 1986) that "WORK WILL CONTINUE TO BE REPRODUCED (SOMETIMES ENLARGED OR REDUCED) FROM THE MAKERS' ORIGINALS." Photocopying allowed Raworth to maintain the idiosyncrasies of design and layout of each contribution and thus to create a unique format for each issue. After the large *Before Your Very Eyes!*, Raworth "wanted something small".³⁹ Consequently, *Infolio* was a single A5 sheet folded in half (4.1 x 5.8 inches), using thin white card similar to that of a postcard, with its title directly commenting on its bibliographic interests. Referring sometimes to a folding method, or even just size and format, a folio ('in-folio' in French) is typically a sheet folded into two leaves (making four pages). Since folios were often used for expensive and large books (such as the Gutenberg Bible and Shakespeare's First Folio) and required larger and therefore more expensive type, *Infolio*, a magazine produced cheaply and frequently, humorously presented itself as a much less historically- and traditionally-minded undertaking. The first issue already declared its independent spirit: "NO GRANTS | NO SUBSIDIES | NO FREE COPIES."

The back cover usually included a hand-drawn title, underlined twice, and a cork stamp in different colours—the two unifying elements of the design. The front cover featured artwork, often a drawing or photograph; the inside contained the work of one writer, mostly poetry, but occasionally prose. The magazine published prose-poetry by Rosmarie Waldrop, experimental lyric poems by Wendy Mulford, Denise Riley, and Leslie Scalapino, as well as non-literary pieces, such as a short biography of the musician Race Newton, including his musical career, musical collaborators, future plans, and ending with a handwritten note stating height, vocal range and favourite colour (*Infolio* 42, October 10, 1986). The ‘lady poet[s]’ Olson derisively mentions in his poem in *Before Your Very Eyes!* (fig. 3) were indeed conspicuously absent from many 1960s avant-garde magazines; a lack rectified somewhat in *Infolio*, 19% of whose contributions, by my count, were by women. *Infolio* published its own statistics in issue 20 (July 28, 1986), by listing all previous contributors, as is fairly common practice for little magazines in advertising their back issues, but *Infolio* also proudly catalogued the countries in which its subscribers lived (Greece, UK, US, France), the bookshops in which it was sold (Compendium, London, SPD Berkeley), and the nine countries represented by the contributors: UK, US, Hungary, Holland, Italy, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Greece. This list was further expanded in later issues by contributions from Turkey, Canada, Spain, Russia, Norway, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and Ireland—a truly international network that the magazine both established and made visible.

Raworth’s own contributions to *Infolio* consisted of drawings on several covers (issues 12, 15, and 18 under pseudonyms for lack of contributions),⁴⁰ and occasional editorial or bibliographical notes, recommending new publications, such as Tom Leonard’s “On the Mass Bombing of Iraq and Kuwait, Commonly Known as ‘The Gulf War’” which, Raworth notes, “is well worth getting.”⁴¹ But Raworth becomes most visible as an editor in his collages and back-cover doodles in each issue. Commenting on Raworth’s book *Writing*, published in 1982 by The Figures, Ken Edwards speculates: “It would be fatuous to say that living in America has politicised Raworth’s poetry; [...] such writing as his *is* political—in the strategies it chooses to adopt” and “[y]et this explicit comment is new.”⁴² This greater political explicitness is also evident in *Infolio*’s editorial design. The collages usually depicted more or less familiar British politicians, or presented other more or less oblique political references. One cover shows Yasser Arafat, another Reagan, yet another two

modified faces that could be Karl Marx and Margaret Thatcher. For the alphabetical series (A-P), Raworth sometimes chose themes to go with a letter, such as H–History or P–Prat (over a picture of Kenneth Branagh). Another collage shows Margaret Thatcher’s head mounted on a plucked chicken, head tilted upwards, with a thought bubble depicting three pyramids (fig. 6), to which the editorial description adds “FULL EMPLOYMENT” (*Infolio* 30, 11 August 1986). Images of the police and Thatcher appear more than once; and on the back cover of *Infolio* 24, following a prose-piece by Carla Harryman, we read ‘Police quietly dealt with an empty box’, next to a blurry picture of what could be a letterpress machine. In issue 73 (May 15, 1987) Thatcher is depicted waving to the audience, the editorial adds, “A saucy little minx”, and in brackets “Cecil Parkinson” as if quoting the Conservative cabinet minister. The matching cover by Maurice Scully shows two 18p stamps with the profile of Queen Elizabeth; stamped underneath is the word “ignorance.”

At times the political commentary is more explicit, as in one cover note asking “Why are the homeless not allowed to build shelters?,” complemented by artist and Zephyrus Image editor Michael Myers’s depiction of a cowboy pointing a gun at what appears to be letterbox or some machine (*Infolio* 42, October 10, 1986). Often the editorial notes—such as “bombs tend to go off” above a picture of firefighters with the eyes erased by a black square—are offset by a poem that alludes to political dissatisfaction, as in Denise Riley’s “Small is the history, and dark,” with its reference to “militant trees.” In one cover (fig. 5), Raworth modifies a picture of No. 10 Downing Street by adding two letters, turning it into the word ‘RIOT’. Image and text also complement one another in Lyn Hejinian’s poem “Hands” (*Infolio* 31, 1986) and Fiorenza Ganapini’s high contrast photograph of what looks like a hand holding a grenade. But the commentary is not necessarily related to the featured poem’s content or the cover image, and often follows its own logic or narrative, as for instance on the back cover of an issue featuring a drawing by Johanna Drucker and a poem by Charles Bernstein (*Infolio* 54), where the theme of the issue is seemingly the “The Big Bang” (the deregulation of the UK’s financial markets in 1986), noting “now capital’s gone before you can organize...”—asking us to read the magazine itself as a collage.

Those politicised editorial designs chime with Brian Reed’s reading of Raworth’s poem “West Wind” (1982/83) as an example of Raworth’s dislike of Thatcher and the poem’s political commentary on British politics. Importantly, the collages and descriptions are also humorous, a humour *Infolio* shared with many

underground American magazines that also had a political edge—one might think of Dorn’s *Rolling Stock*, to which Raworth also contributed. The characteristically satirical or poignant black-and-white collages, the commentary in handwriting, and the differently-coloured round stamp give the magazine cohesion beyond its varied contributions. Raworth’s editorial vision, if it can be called that, materialised in these design choices. And as a publishing gesture, intentional or not, it produced a collective energy to marshal against the economic and political situation of Thatcherism, even if one had “no grants / no subsidies.”

*

The multiplicity of associations visible in Raworth’s editorial choices is reflected in his own contributions to other magazines. With these contributions, the magazine context must inform the interpretation of his poems and, more obliquely, his work as an editor, as the following examples will show. In *Vort*, which always published two writers who, as the editorial note put it, “have had an impact on each other,” Raworth appeared alongside Ed Dorn, perhaps presenting Raworth as a British Black Mountain poet.⁴³ In the American magazine *Paper Air*, Raworth’s short poem “The Serpent”—“half-door | clouds pulse in puddles | suppose | we pick up a tail wind”—might appear both like the proto-Language writing the magazine often published, but also as peculiarly “British,” considering Raworth was published alongside the UK-based authors Wendy Mulford, Asa Benveniste, Ulli Freer, Anthony Barnett, Ken Edwards, John James, David Miller, Allen Fisher, Paige Mitchell, and Paul Green.⁴⁴ He had connections to the so-called New York School and published in *The World* (produced out of New York’s Poetry Project); and he even appeared in the more mainstream *Penguin Modern Poets* series alongside John Ashbery and Lee Harwood. Raworth was also included in *Louis Zukofsky or Whoever Someone Else Thought He Was*, an anthology of responses to the work of Zukofsky, an objectivist lineage that had a particular impact on so-called Language Writing.

It is not hard to see why Raworth’s work in *This* or *The Difficulties*, for example, suited the sensibility of the then-emerging “Language Writing,” often described as interested in veiled referentiality and syntactic disruption, collagist poetry of unidentified quotations, an indeterminate speaking voice, doodles and other graphics that play with the ambiguity of signs, self-reflexivity, and experiments with

narrative. Rod Mengham highlighted similar features in a review excerpted in *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* for a special “Tom Raworth Feature”. Reviewing “Logbook,” Mengham asserted that “meaning” in Raworth’s work is “not a state which you finally reach and then persist in”—a stance embraced both by those associated with the Language and the Cambridge scenes (Mengham was part of the latter).⁴⁵ Raworth was also mentioned in Silliman’s special issue on “Language Writing” in *Ironwood* in 1982. But Ward is right to point out that while Raworth had links to both Black Mountain and Language Poetry, he “belong[ed] to neither.”⁴⁶ That said, it is important to remember that avant-garde group boundaries are always fluid—even for groups that seemed to have such claims to “belonging” as Ward argues here.

Possibly through his work as a translator from Spanish, Raworth appeared in Margaret Randell’s *El Corno Emplumado*, published out of Mexico. In a letter to the editor, dated 15th June 1965 and published in the July issue, Raworth reviewed the now famed Royal Albert Hall reading of Ginsberg, Corso, Ferlinghetti, Ernst Jandl, Christopher Logue, Burroughs (via tape recording), and many others. Raworth characterised it as “an interesting reading emotionally, i.e. there were, after all, 6000 people there, interested enuf for sure,” although “the quality of the actual poetry was not good,” the audience caring mostly about the “mainly political stuff, like Adrian [Mitchell]’s ‘Tell me Lies about Vietnam,’” the reviewers in turn “mainly concentrated on the ‘beat’ image.”⁴⁷ In other words, Raworth appears moved by the potential of poetry to interest an audience of 6000, though disappointed that such emotions could only be achieved by easily graspable political messages or “pseudo-hip talk.”⁴⁸ Raworth makes an interesting critique here that again reflects his own editorial and poetic practice: since the reviewers and the audience could not tell “what is good, and what is bad ... they don’t even know the people” (having mislabelled someone’s photograph in a newspaper), poetry reviews must be written from the perspective of someone who is in the “know,” who has engaged with the work and done due diligence in reading the poets carefully, rather than flatly throwing around labels of movements or going for the easily summarisable and unambiguous political catchphrases.⁴⁹

In his introduction to the British and Irish section of the *Exact Change Yearbook* (edited by Peter Gizzi) in 1995, Raworth similarly insists on attention to the poetry itself, rather than a simple summary of formal features and of groupings that

pretends to be objective. In a characteristic resistance to categorisation and self-theorisation, he states: “The work can, and should, speak for itself; and as I have no taste for explication or literary theory I’ll try a subjective glance over the past thirty years.”⁵⁰ Highlighting the various strands and networks that have influenced some UK poets, he also highlights the “proliferation of small presses and magazines” and “public readings” as important to what has constituted an “alternative” tradition of British and Irish poetry.⁵¹ What Royet-Journaud says about publishing his magazines *L’In-Plano* and *Zuk*, in whose pages Raworth appeared, also encapsulates Raworth’s own editorial model: publishing “enables me to make a theoretical statement without theorizing.”⁵²

It is precisely the rigidity of theorising movements and labels that Raworth rejected in his own practice as an editor and magazine contributor. Peter Middleton reads Raworth’s “silence” about his own work and that of others as a challenge to literary criticism’s “risk of superfluity” and, in some cases, its call for poetry’s instrumentality.⁵³ Only a few interviews exist, and he rarely spoke about his own poetics or a sense of group belonging. The exception to this might be indirect references to Black Mountain in *Before Your Very Eyes!* and *Outburst. Infolio*, in turn, did not attempt any labelling. We can piece together Raworth’s editorial vision and understanding of magazine or small-press publishing from the odd editorial remark, his collages, and, most explicitly, an interview with Barry Alpert in Alpert’s magazine *Vort*. In 1972, Raworth found contemporary magazines lacking: “Sure there are exceptions ... but generally there seems no energy from the person behind the magazine. I like that sense of somebody saying these are the things I like and fuck you if you don’t like them.”⁵⁴ Contemporary magazine editors were easily impressed by recognising some “name” they had seen on a book somewhere, whereas for Raworth “magazines should either have a sense, a good sense, of what’s going on, and bring various people together, or they should be much more local.”⁵⁵ As in his letter to Margaret Randall, Raworth believed that editors and reviewers should fulfil the role of educators who introduce readers to new voices, or introduce poets to one another, a role that requires knowledge of “what’s going on.”

Reading Raworth both within and as an editor of magazines exemplifies how avant-garde practice often emerges from dialogues between poets and from a material engagement with the medium of the magazine. Middleton’s astute praise of *The Big Green Day*—where image, design, and text cannot be easily separated—“perhaps

those were the poems: the blot [of ink], the titles, the spaces,” is true of all three magazines discussed in this essay, but in particular of *Infolio*, whose multiple visual and textual strategies for meaning-making cannot be instrumentalised for critical agendas that try to elicit a poetics or theorise a movement.⁵⁶ Raworth’s assemblage of magazine contributions, whether as editor, poet, or artist should have provided ample evidence that in order to read Raworth’s complex *oeuvre* we cannot “just” read the poems, since to do so would be to ignore a large part of their material and contextual richness. To return from the collected editions of later twentieth-century experimental poets to their pamphlet and magazine traces across the archive is to see work such as Raworth’s in a new light—before your very eyes!

¹ Daniel Kane, *All Poets Welcome: The Lower East Side Poetry Scene in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Alex Latter, *Late Modernism and The English Intelligencer: On the Poetics of Community* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Louis Goddard, “Migration Patterns: Two Little Magazines of 1960–1962,” *Textual Practice*, June 22, 2016, 1–14, doi:10.1080/0950236X.2016.1188143; Peter Middleton, “When L=A: Language, Authorship, and Equality in L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Magazine,” in *Among Friends: Engendering the Social Site of Poetry*, ed. Libbie Rifkin and Anne Dewey (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013), 87–105; Matthew Chambers, *Modernism, Periodicals, and Cultural Poetics*, 2015; Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Britain and Ireland, 1880-1955*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

² Geoff Ward, “Tom Raworth and the Invisibles,” *The Cambridge Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2002): 17–32; Alistair Johnston, “A Checklist of Matrix Press (London 1961-4),” *Booktryst: A Nest for Book Lovers*, October 30, 2012, <http://www.booktryst.com/2012/10/a-checklist-of-matrix-press-london-1961.html>.

³ Ward, “Tom Raworth and the Invisibles,” 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵ Barry Alpert, “Tom Raworth: An Interview,” *Vort* 1 (Fall 1972): 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Neil Pattison, Reitha Pattison, and Luke Roberts, “Editorial Notes,” in *Certain Prose of The English Intelligencer*, ed. Neil Pattison, Reitha Pattison, and Luke Roberts, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Mountain Press, 2014), i-xxxiv (p. xxx). Cf. “In Tom

Raworth's account, given in correspondence with the editors, it was composed by Raworth and Anselm Hollo, apparently in a single night; the prose by Tom and the poems by Anselm." Raworth wrote another spoof issue, this time of *The Times*, with John Barrell, parodying the 1978 Cambridge Poetry Festival.

⁹ Johnston, "A Checklist of Matrix Press (London 1961-4)."

¹⁰ Kyle Schlesinger and Matt Chambers, "Tom Raworth: An Interview Conducted by Kyle Schlesinger and Matt Chambers, Poetry Collection, Buffalo, May 22, 2006," *Mimeo Mimeo* 4 (Winter 2010): 9.

¹¹ Helmut Bonheim, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, May 4, 1962), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 6; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

¹² Fielding Dawson, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, January 18, 1962), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 13; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

¹³ Anselm Hollo, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, January 8, 1964), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 24 [3 of 4]; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

¹⁴ Matrix published books by Pete Brown, Piero Heliczer, Ed Dorn, Anselm Hollo, and David Ball.

¹⁵ Ken Edwards, "Ken Edwards on Tom Raworth," *Reality Studios* 8 (1986): 80.

¹⁶ Robert Creeley, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, March 17, 1961), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 12; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

¹⁷ Robert Creeley, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, January 21, 1964), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 12; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

¹⁸ Carol Bergé, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, February 23, 1962), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 3; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

¹⁹ Robert Creeley, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (TS, January 23, 1961), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 12; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

²⁰ Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Letter to Tom Raworth" (MS, n.d.), The Outburst Archive; MSS 022; Box 1; Folder 33; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

²¹ Tom Raworth, "Untitled Review of *The Dancers Inherit the Party*," *Outburst* 1 (1961): unpaginated.

²² Later, *Late Modernism and The English Intelligencer: On the Poetics of Community*, 1.

²³ Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents, 1950-2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 39.

²⁴ Bonheim, "Letter to Tom Raworth."

²⁵ Geoffrey Moorhouse, "Outburster," *The Guardian*, October 14, 1963, 7.

²⁶ In an interview with Ben Watson, Raworth acknowledges Schwitters as an early inspiration (Ben Watson, "Tom Raworth, Gridlock Fragmentist: A Poet Turns to Collage," in *Removed for Further Study: The Poetry of Tom Raworth* (Toronto: The Gig, 2003), 226.) In his introduction to the *Exact Change Yearbook*, in turn, he includes Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Dada, and Surrealism as a wider influence on many poets working in the UK and Ireland (Tom Raworth, "An Anglo-Irish Alternative," in

Exact Change Yearbook, ed. Peter Gizzi, vol. 1 (Boston: Exact Change, 1995), 316. p. 316.)

²⁷ Moorhouse, “Outburster,” 7.

²⁸ Alpert, “Tom Raworth: An Interview,” 32.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

³¹ Eirik Steinhoff, “‘Infolio Simply Means The Sheet of Paper Folded Once’: A Conversation with Tom Raworth,” *Counter-Signals* 1 (Fall 2016): 96.

³² Berman edited *Semina* out of California between 1955 and 1964. The magazine contained many unbound items, such as photographs, collages, and drawings, and writing by Ginsberg, Burroughs, Artaud, Cocteau, among others.

³³ Ward, “Tom Raworth and the Invisibles,” 18.

³⁴ At the same time, his work in the sixties and seventies is various: there are longer lines in *The Relationship* (1966) and *The Big Green Day* (1968); *Logbook* (1976) has justified blocks of text, and *Act* (1973) contains two-colour annotations in handwriting.

³⁵ Schlesinger and Chambers, “Tom Raworth: An Interview Conducted by Kyle Schlesinger and Matt Chambers, Poetry Collection, Buffalo, May 22, 2006,” 11.

³⁶ Alpert, “Tom Raworth: An Interview,” 33.

³⁷ A full run of the magazine is available online through Raworth’s own blog (<http://tomraworth.com/information.html>) and through the Jacket2 Reissues series (<https://jacket2.org/reissues/infolio>).

³⁸ Raworth published occasional Infolio supplements in the form of postcards and had an imprint for chapbooks called Infolio Productions, which published, for instance, a collaboration between Raworth and Ed Dorn—*Six Sonnets for Gotenburg and Geneva*—and between Raworth and the Swiss-Italian painter and poet Franco Beltrametti, *The Thoughts of Captain Alexis*, and books by Tom Leonard and Angus Maclise.

³⁹ Steinhoff, “‘Infolio Simply Means The Sheet of Paper Folded Once’: A Conversation with Tom Raworth,” 92.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴¹ Tom Raworth, “Untitled,” *Infolio*, Third Series, unnumbered (July 24, 1991): unpaginated.

⁴² Edwards, “Ken Edwards on Tom Raworth,” 82.

⁴³ Barry Alpert, “Editorial Note,” *Vort* 1 (Fall 1972): 59.

⁴⁴ Tom Raworth, “The Serpent,” *Paper Air* 3, no. 3 (1986): 26.

⁴⁵ Rod Mengham, “From Logarithms,” *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* 6 (December 1978): unpaginated.

⁴⁶ Ward, “Tom Raworth and the Invisibles,” 24.

⁴⁷ Tom Raworth, “Untitled,” *El Corno Emplumado* 15 (July 1965): 156–57.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵⁰ Raworth, “An Anglo-Irish Alternative,” 315.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁵² Jacqueline Pluet, “La Poésie Au Format Zuk: Entretien Avec Claude Royet-Journoud,” trans. Abigail Lang, *Jacket2*, November 26, 2012, <https://jacket2.org/commentary/la-po%C3%A9sie-au-format-zuk>.

⁵³ Peter Middleton, “Silent Critique: Tom Raworth’s Early Books of Poetry,” in *Removed for Further Study: The Poetry of Tom Raworth*, ed. Nate Dorward (Toronto: The Gig, 2003), 9.

⁵⁴ Alpert, “Tom Raworth: An Interview,” 35.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Middleton, “Silent Critique: Tom Raworth’s Early Books of Poetry,” 16.