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【学術論文】

From Romanticism to Language Poetry: Discovering the Unapprehended in Percy Bysshe Shelley, Gertrude Stein, and Lyn Hejinian

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Abstract

This article traces the development of ideas about the role of the poet and poetry in the world from nineteenth-century British Romanticism through the American Language poetry of the late twentieth century. Though Romanticism and Language poetry are often considered to be at odds with each other, particularly in terms of their considerations of selfhood, this study proposes that some of the movements' core tenets actually share some close affinities. An analysis of these affinities reveals a gradual elevation of the power of the reader in considerations of the poet's role. Under examination here are Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, several theoretical and poetic texts by Gertrude Stein, and the book *My Life* by Lyn Hejinian. Shelley famously declared that poets were the "unacknowledged legislators of the world," giving them power over it and thereby over their readers. Language poets in the late 20th century, however, more often worked against positions of power, in part by including readers in Shelley's "legislative" framework and offering disrupted grammar and logic as opportunities for readers to create new meanings and perceptive possibilities themselves. This article will examine this shift and show the fruitful possibilities of considering conversations between and among various times and schools of poetry.

Keywords: Romanticism, Language Poetry, Gertrude Stein, Percy Bysshe Shelley, hierarchy in language

1. Introduction

The history of English literature tends to follow a model of progression based on development by way of rejection. Possibly, this tendency has to do with a desire on the part of new, young writers to claim an identity wholly unique and separate from those who came before. How do the Romantics reject the rationality of the Enlightenment? In what way does Postmodernism reject Modernism (though not enough to shake loose the name)? Such a method of self-distinction, whether on the part of the authors themselves or the literary scholars who must claim a "field" in their universities, leads, it seems, to a neglect of the ways that individual authors across time and continents may speak to each other, even if that speaking occurs without intention. I do not here refer to allusion or retellings or homage or any of the myriad ways that an author *here and now* can call forth an author *there and then* explicitly in a text. Rather, I refer to the ways that readers create connections by functioning as nodes in a matrix of textual relationships that disregard division and isolation in favor of spontaneity and community [i].

Disregarding the historical mode, this paper will examine the ways that poets and readers together can use poetry as a way to alter perceptive possibilities as the topic is developed in nineteenth-century British Romanticism and both early and late twentieth-century American Language poetry (a definition of which will follow) with only minimal attention paid to historical context, focusing instead on the possibility of the reader functioning as sufficient context. I will show how some of the experimental poetry of the late twentieth century follows through on some of the ideals of Romantic literature, despite

the former often being positioned as a rejection of a number of Romantic principles. My goal is to show that, though the Language poets of the late twentieth century and the Romantic poets of the nineteenth have very little in common aesthetically, they share a similar motivation of using poetry to free readers from the rigid chains of tradition.

One of the themes that connects the much later Language poets back to the Romanticism that they seem to reject is a shared interest in the revolutionary potential of poetry. "Language poetry" can be loosely defined as a mode of poetry that does not take its medium for granted. Rather, poets in this mode tend to reject most hierarchical language ordering systems, such as grammar, syntax, and even the horizontal line. To them, revolutionary thought is impossible if said revolution does not also take place at the level of the sentence. Another way to describe these poets from the 1980s is that they take early 20th century American poet Gertrude Stein as their poetic ancestor of note. Stein began her career as a writer in the 1910s, an American living abroad in Paris with a good number of her artistic contemporaries. Paris afforded her the freedom not only to live quite openly with her lesbian partner Alice B. Toklas, but also to meet and be influenced by many of the best American, British, and European artists and writers living at the time. A particularly good friend of hers was Pablo Picasso. Though creating in entirely different mediums, the two shared a good deal of their ideas about art, and Picasso's cubism, which fractured visual perspectives on the canvas, influenced Stein's early writings. In 1912, she wrote a small portrait of the painter that illuminates their relationship of support and mutual fascination, while also providing a small taste of Stein's singular diction:

> This one [Picasso] was working. This one always had been working. This one was always having something that was coming out of this one that was a solid thing, a charming thing, a lovely thing, a perplexing thing, a disconcerting thing, a simple thing, a clear thing, a complicated thing, an interesting thing, a disturbing thing, a repellant thing, a very pretty thing. This one was one certainly being one having something coming out of him. ("Picasso" 334)

The style we see here is typical of Stein's early work, when she was attempting to create what she called a "continuous present." In this mode, which she compared to a film reel, sentences and phrases may have used the same or nearly the same words as the previous sentence. But to her, there was no repetition, because "naturally each time the emphasis is different" (*Lectures in America* 179). Stein's goal in this type of writing, which we can also see in her long book *The Making of Americans*, was to map her experience of the gradual development of understanding over a longer period of time onto a text which is written *after* that understanding is basically complete ("Gradual Making" 249). In other words, Stein's particular poetic *style* is an attempt to render the perceptive process as language made static by being printed permanently on the page. Stein's interest in perception should prompt readers to pay close attention to their own reactions to (or perceptions of) these sentences. Are they, in Stein's own words about Picasso, "a simple thing, a clear thing, a complicated thing, an interesting thing"? Or perhaps "a disturbing thing, a repellant thing"? Of course, the other possibility is that one finds them to be all those things together. Simple and complicated, interesting and repellent. Stein's texts seem to offer an ever present mixture of excitement and boredom, thus actually mirroring quite interestingly the actual process of perception, which surely wavers between concentrated attention and passive reception.

Because Stein's texts concern themselves quite explicitly with perception, they welcome readers into an active participation with her language. And yet, their strangeness also serves in a way to regulate that very same participation. Her texts defy summary and paraphrase, the convolutions and repetitions demanding that we quote liberally, creating what may appear at first to be a sort of textual tyranny. *Stein's words* will suffice, and nothing else. She called herself a genius. (Or rather, in a beautiful convolution, took it upon herself to write her partner Alice's autobiography, a terribly funny book that is not about Alice at all, but is instead about Gertrude Stein. And in this book, Gertrude declares in Alice's voice that she—Alice

—has met three geniuses in her life, and Gertrude Stein is one of them.) After achieving a bit of fame for the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein, with Alice in tow, embarked on a lecture tour of America, giving interviews across the country and reveling in her new celebrity status. One reporter, charmed by her wit and cleverness, asked her why she did not write the way she spoke. She answered, famously, geniusly, "Why don't you read the way I write?" (Brinnin 334). Simple and complicated, interesting and repellant. Does this response demonstrate an out of control ego? A great disrespect for her readers? I want to suggest—and soon this will bring me back to Romanticism—that this statement does not actually indicate a subordination of the reader to Stein's great and powerful will. Rather, Stein, fully aware of the radical nature of her own writing, was in fact empowering her readers themselves to *be radical*.

To demonstrate this call to radical reading, let me take the example of her rather peculiar theory about the use of commas: "A comma by helping you along holding your coat for you and putting on your shoes keeps you from living your life as actively as you should lead it" (*Lectures in America* 220). And a page later: "And what does a comma do, a comma does nothing but make easy a thing that if you like it enough is easy enough without the comma. A long complicated sentence should force itself upon you, make you know yourself knowing it and the comma" (*Lectures in America* 221). For Stein, it seems, the role of the writer is *not* to support the reader in a way that increases understanding, but rather to remove any hindrances to the reader not living a life of activity, choice, and knowing. Texts in this schema do not impart information to readers, or act as a vehicle for the authority of the writer, but instead function as opportunities for readers to activate their individual agency. I will argue, though, that while perhaps unique in the manner in which it is deployed by the author, such radical positioning is not necessarily without precedent, and in fact, the radicalness of Stein and her literary progeny can be placed within the inheritance of certain strands of British Romanticism.

2. Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*

Percy Bysshe Shelley's canonical *A Defence of Poetry* famously renders the role of poetry and poets in the world as its legislators. Specifically, because he considers poets' language to be "vitally metaphorical," he assigns poets the role of remaking the world by remaking the relationships between things in that world: the language of poetry was meant to "mark the before unapprehended relations of things," and new poets in new times should "create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized" (676). Poets do not, in this schema, maintain cultures and gods and traditions. Rather, they remake the world composed of cultures and gods and traditions by creating and then demanding new ways of connecting them all together. Shelley's description of poetry seems to be a more idealized version of Ezra Pound's dictum to Modernist poets to "Make it New." See what is there to be seen, Shelley and Pound seem to say, and create whatever is perceived into something that it could not be before. Far from simply rearranging the puzzle pieces of a picture drawn by someone else, Shelley's poets are called to enact a constant revitalization of the world through language, helping it to avoid the stagnation of repetition and reiteration. "All things exist as they are perceived: at least in relation to the percipient," he writes. "But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being" (698). That is, the poet does not merely record and order existence as it is; she adds to existence, making it always *new*. And for Shelley, this newness is not frivolous novelty. In fact, it is what saves us from annihilation. In this idea, Shelley is participating in a general doctrine among Romantic writers and thinkers as to the nature of the poetic imagination. Its purpose is to transform the familiar into something new, something unexpected, and by so doing, to gradually move away from the restrictions of tradition into a new and fuller truth. Fellow Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge explained such "genius" this way:

In philosophy, equally as in poetry, genius

> produces the strongest impressions of novelty, while it rescues the stalest and most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Extremes meet—a proverb, by the by, to collect and explain all the instances and exemplifications of which, would constitute and exhaust all philosophy. Truths, of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the powers of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors. (n.p.)

Coleridge here explains why perhaps Shelley referred to the "curse" of being bound to the impressions of the past, or, to those perceptive categories that are passed down via tradition alone. When truths become too easily accepted, to thinly dispersed, they become "impotent," incapable of *being* truth, making them, finally, no more than errors. For Shelley and the Romantics, truth too passively and readily accepted most easily succumbs to this impotency, and the poet's job is to enliven it via the creation of imaginative novelty.

Of course, for Shelley, the risk is not only that our ideas about truth are in danger. He does not separate the world from our perceptions of that world, and thus conceptualizes the destruction of truth as the destruction of the world. And who can save us from this destruction? The poet, naturally, whose disruption of society staves off the death of repetition. The poem, he writes "creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration" (698). Hugh Roberts, in his book *Shelley and the Chaos of History*, links Shelley's notion of annihilation through reiteration to his general opposition to social institutions that enshrine tradition at the expense of the evolution and improvement of society. Poets, in Roberts' vision of Shelley, are vital to healthy societies in that they inject a refreshing and enlivening chaos into the stale mustiness of "cultural reproduction," and "entropically 'disorganize' language that otherwise would be organically self-reproductive" (296). Jared McGeough, a scholar of Romanticism and anarchy, explains this "disorganization" through the lens of Jacques Rancière's notion of the "aesthetic regime." McGeough writes that in the "aesthetic regime," "art can hold onto its political promise only through its disincorporation from existing distributions of the sensible" (McGeough n.p.). Rancière ascribes this disincorporation to poetry's heterogeneous power, meaning that poetry's *form* can work to make a thought foreign to itself. McGeough explains this concept this way: "by virtue of its paradoxical autonomy and heteronomy, form produces a gap in the sensible through its neutralization of the customary meanings attributed to words and the assigned relations between bodies and their capacities. It is through this hiatus that form manifests alternative possibilities for a redistribution of the sensible" (McGeough n.p.). This brings us, I think, to the heart of poetry's radical form of legislation. Its radicalness lies not in its creation of and enforcement of strict rules, but rather in its ability to forever disrupt those modes of thought that had reified into rules and cultural hierarchies.

Jerome Christensen actually identifies this affinity with disruption as a "gift" that the Romantics have passed down to those of us following behind. He points out that the apprehension of previously unapprehended relations among things in the world—a task common to poets in general—is for the Romantic accompanied by the in fact exciting and exhilerating risk of random disaster: "the Romantic fully credits the possibility of accidents and readies himself or herself to take advantage of swerves or lapses from the norm as opportunities for change" (2). Thus the Romantic tendency toward anarchy, toward sexual deviancy, or even toward vernacular language and the poetry of daily life reveals a revolutionary potential that is meant to spur on social change. As Christensen wrote, "Romantic idealism involves a principled frustration with the way things have turned out and a deliberate impatience to turn them right" (2).

3. Gertrude Stein's Radical Readers

These ideas of the "redistribution of the sensible" and entropic disorganization help to illuminate the surprisingly fluid shift from the Romanticism of the

early 19th century to the Modernism of the early 20th century and, more specifically, to Gertrude Stein, whose own entropic forms ask readers to "read the way [she] writes" as part of the process of creating a new "being within our being." In order to think more about how Stein's version of Modernism is itself a redistribution and disorganization of Shelley's Romanticism, I want to recall for a moment a few sentences from the *Defence*: "All things exist as they are perceived: at least in relation to the percipient. But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions." For Shelley, things are perceived as they exist in relation to the perceiver, but poetry is able to reorder the nature of that relationship so that, ultimately, poetry can contribute to a disruption of rigid social hierarchies. Stein, I think, radicalizes the idea of disruption, so that the altered perceptions actually alter what is perceived at all. In her essay "Composition as Explanation," Stein writes about how compositions change from generation to generation, explaining that each generation is "looking" at something generally, and the composition of that looking is what distinguishes one generation from another. In her words, then, "The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen" (513). Shelley seems to have presumed a stable, material world outside of the poet-perceiver, a world that the poet *imaginatively* altered by apprehending new relationships among things in that world. This revitalized apprehension, as discussed above, is necessary for any sort of social revolution. Stein, however, seems to claim that *the world itself* is remade with new generations of poets, so that "what is seen" is what is revitalized.

In 1914, rather early in her career, Stein published a small book called *Tender Buttons*. The book is a sort of ode to domesticity, in which she creates small portraits of, simply, things one has at home: coffee, umbrellas, dresses, pencils, chairs, pianos, oranges, breakfast, and so on. The text is tremendously vivid in its detail, and yet, as one reads, one feels that "what was seen" by the poet is not in fact "what one has already seen" in one's own home. Here is "A Long Dress" as an example:

> What is the current that makes machinery, that makes it crackle, what is the current that presents a long line and a necessary waist. What is this current.
>
> What is the wind, what is it.
>
> Where is the serene length, it is there and a dark place is not a dark place, only a white and red are black, only a yellow and green are blue, a pink is scarlet, a bow is every color. A line distinguishes it. A line just distinguishes it. (467)

There is something like a dress amid these lines. There is a process of making, the lines of the form, and the waist. There are colors that blend and fade into each other, there are bows. But there is also something not like a dress. All these various aspects of dress-hood do not actually stitch themselves together into an easily perceivable dress. That is, "what is seen" is not clearly "A Long Dress." What is seen actually depends on something other than the long dress—the writer and, I add, the reader.

Written in 1932, but not published until 1956, ten years after Stein's death, *Stanzas* in *Meditation* is one of Stein's "long dull poems," and has been, in fact, compared by scholars to one of Romanticism's "long dull poems," William Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. It serves as an admirable example of the radical poetics given us by Shelley because, similar to *Tender Buttons*, it depends quite heavily on the *reader*, not only the writer, for the radical nature of its composition and vision. This dependence comes in part from the poem's complicated and contested publication history[ii]. But it comes also from the poem's refusal to mean in a way that can be standardized or fit into accepted, handed-down hierarchies of meaning. The poem overflows with strange chaos, which can be seen in this short excerpt.

> **Part 2, Stanza XIV**
>
> It is not only early that they make no mistake
> A nightingale and a robin.
> Or rather that which may which

May which he which they may choose which
They knew or not like that
They make this be once or not alike
Not by this time only when they like
To have been very much absorbed.
And so they find it so
And so they are
There
There which is not only here but here as well as there.
They like whatever I like. (100)

Similar to the passage from *Tender Buttons*, these lines seem to be pointing at something very particular with grammar that obscures its meaning at each turn. Something is always just disappearing around the corner, and we are left to pursue it like Alice chasing her white rabbit. Reading such a piece in good faith should, I think, do something interesting to our minds. Rather than being able to fall back on our reading habits, focusing on particularities of form or navigating references to culture, mythology, etc., we must slow almost to a stop and notice not only the meaning of the words, but also the very practice of reading. The writer here seems to have apprehended something previously unseen, to use Shelley's words. "What is seen," to use Stein's, has shifted so much that the language used to articulate that perception bears little resemblance to the generally rule-abiding language of not only daily conversation, but also Stein's earlier writing. Because so few rules are followed (double negatives, missing verbs, missing subjects, meaningless lists of helping verbs, and so on), readers find themselves with fewer than normal guidelines for how to navigate the passage. Their connection, for example, of the first and second lines is entirely arbitrary. Are the nightingale and the robin "they" who make a mistake? Or are they the recipient of said mistake? Or perhaps they are unconnected to it entirely, merely occupying line 2 as, in fact, some of the only substantive, tangible words in the entire stanza? The point here is not to find the answer to these questions, but rather to pose them at all. That is, Stein's radical language liberates readers not only from the tyranny of previous perceptive categories (Shelley's "curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions"), but also from the tyranny of the author's perceptive processes. Stein may have been a tyrant at home, but her texts refuse such shackles, allowing readerly and writerly perceptive processes to fold in and out of each other on every line. We can actually see this folding in of perception in the text itself in the second to last line: "There which is not only here but here as well as there." The line seems to indicate a subjective consciousness that perceives its own objective existence, so that its own *here* is by necessity someone else's *there*. There is a tension in this line of two subjectivities pulling apart from each other into here and there, while acknowledging the reflexivity of these simultaneous perceptions. The next line pulls those perceptions back together into a shared liking which, in Stein's poem, becomes an alikeness, an affinity of selves. If we like together, then we perceive together. We are alike.

What is truly radical about Stein's texts is the ways that they present themselves as opportunities for readers to act creatively in their reading practice. When reading sentences like those taken from *Tender Buttons* and *Stanzas in Meditation*, one has to quite actively create—not the poem, but whatever it is the poem is pointing towards. Shelley told us that poets "mark the before unapprehended relations of things," and Stein claimed that each new generation newly creates "what is seen." The path they have established seems to lead to the reader participating in that creation of what is possible for one to see. Shelly said that poetry "creates for us a being within our being," but by declaring poets to be legislators, he endowed these poets with the god-like power of creation. I contend that Stein offers the possibility that this creative power rests not only in the mind and ability of the writer, but in the liberating exchange between writer and reader that her type of poetry enables. We, readers, create new beings within our being when we read this kind of poetry. And each reading necessarily creates a different being if we follow seriously Stein's direction to read the way she writes. If we do that, then we participate in the activity of finding out "what is seen" instead of simply receiving what was seen, even if that had been itself a new seeing. In this way, poetry becomes an activity of creation, quite different from simply a created thing.

4. Lyn Hejinian and the Open Texts of Language Poetry

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a rather loose group of poets began practicing a form of poetry that transformed Stein's methods of disrupting language into social resistance against capitalism and the neoliberal commodity fetish, in my assessment taking us full circle to Shelley's linking of poetry with social resistance. The Language poets, centered around San Francisco but active around the country, wanted to use language in a way that prevented its appropriation by the capitalist social order, believing sincerely "that alternative forms of writing and reading might [participate in] its transformation. […] it is our sense that the project of poetry does not involve turning language into a commodity for consumption; instead it involves repossessing the sign through close attention to, and active participation in, its production" (Bernstein and Andrews x). That is, they wanted to inquire into the contextual aspects of a language, such as what elements of a culture enforce a language's grammar and vocabulary, or, reversing that perspective, how languages can support and maintain hierarchies. These Language poets have in a way recreated Shelley's radical poetics from a Marxist perspective, focusing as they do on language's power to shape the possibilities of our perceptions of the world. For the Language poets, the capitalist social order has forced language into a purely referential mode, in which each word points to a very limited set of references in the world, making it much easier for powerful authorities like governments or corporations to manipulate that language and thereby the users of that language. This occurs in part because the limitation of referentiality restricts the possibilities of a person's perceptive abilities—we cannot think what we cannot say. In addition, language that is persistently rule-abiding, or grammatical, more easily falls into the referential, controllable mode. As Charles Bernstein describes it, "Sentences that follow standard grammatical patterns allow the accumulating references to enthrall the reader by diminishing diversions from a constructed representation. In this way, each word's references work in harmony by reinforcing a spatio/temporal order conventionalized by the bulk of writing practice that creates the 'standard'" (116). Worldviews and ideologies then can become reified into dogma when writing follows rules and grammar without deviation or critique, creating a version of the impotent truth "bedridden in the dormitory of the soul" that Coleridge warned of.

Bernstein articulates some methods by which one can resist this enforced ordering and thus "diver[t] from a constructed representation." For example, "By rotating sentences within a paragraph …according to principles generated by and unfolding in the work (rather than in accordance with representational construction patterns) a perceptual vividness is intensified for each sentence since the abruptness of the cuts induces a greater desire to savor the tangibility of each sentence before it is lost to the next" (116-117). We might think of the cut-up technique of William Burroughs here, or the "open texts" of Lyn Hejinian, who shall serve as my example in a moment. Bernstein tells us that when these disruptive methods are used so that language *cannot* function in a primarily referential way, "the operant mechanisms of meaning are multiplied and patterns of projection in reading are less restricted" (117). In writing and reading these kinds of texts we can, as Shelley wrote, "defeat the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions," or, now, to the commodity culture of the capitalist world. For both the Romantic and the Marxist Language poet, language and experiment are the key to reshaping the world by creating new relationships among the phenomena we perceive.

Lyn Hejinian's prose poem *My Life* demonstrates how Language poetry fulfills and actually transcends Shelley's aspirations for poets. Very loosely autobiographical, Hejinian's book is what she herself has theorized as an "open text," a text whose sentences do not lead toward one conclusion, one authoritative reading. Instead, in an "open text" the writer gives up control of the text, which becomes generative instead of directive. Meaning in the text is created through a continual process that blossoms from the interaction of writer, reader, text, and context. Thus, readers of Hejinian's "open texts" do not find their world legislated, in the style of Shelley, but rather expanded and perhaps freed. *My Life* performs this action by offering perfectly

coherent sentences that dot the landscape of her text like islands isolated in the rolling tumult of her memory. She does not offer easy passage *between* these sentences, however, and readers are left to navigate them by whatever means they can procure. This example comes from the section titled "The years pass, years in which, I take it, events were not lacking":

> Somewhere, some there, disorder out, entangled in language. I was reading several books at once, usually three. If faster, then more. The typewriter at night was classical. As the storm approached it was as if the blue slowly evaporated from the sky, leaving the sky merely a pale shadow of itself. Why isn't the reflection in the mirror flat, since the mirror itself is flat. Or cream, when it turns. When we were children, in a careless moment, my father had suggested we go camping, but now that we were outdoors in the dark, he was scared. I want to remember more than more than that, more or less as it really happened. It seems that we hardly begin before we are already there. It was cancer but we couldn't say that. A name trimmed with colored ribbons. (58)

This excerpt, typical of the whole book, spills over with various types of phenomena apprehended in the world. Hejinian blends together specific memories of childhood ("my father suggested we go camping") and a general past ("I was reading several books at once") with simple observations of her present world ("Why isn't the reflection in the mirror flat"). We read as well images that seem unconnected to any specific experience, functioning instead on a primarily aesthetic level ("A name trimmed in colored ribbons"). In between these sentences we find no logical connections, and though the grammar sometimes suggests progression, the meanings of the words do not. For example, the sentence "Or cream, when it turns" seems to be logically connected to the previous sentence because of the word "or," but the previous sentence's topic of the flat mirror renders that connection unlikely. Similar to Stein's *Tender Buttons*, Hejinian's *My Life* seems always on the cusp of stitching together a sort of coherence, but that coherence always slips out of grasp at the last moment.

Hejinian actually offers an example of an interpretive methodology early within her text, preparing readers for the task they have undertaken: "It was awhile before I understood what had come between the stars, to form the constellations" (28). Between these stars is of course nothing more than the emptiness of space. The stars themselves have nothing to do with their own constellation formation. Instead, that formation comes from we earth-bound viewers, who see them and create the links between them. If we take this sentence as a guide to the text, then we could rewrite it to be, "It was awhile before I understood what had come between these sentences, to form this life." Again, it is we, the readers, who form the life by creating the connections between the sentences. So, though Hejinian does not call for Shelley's poetic legislation of the world, we can see a noticeable affinity between these constellated sentences and the "before unapprehended relations of things" that in his schema poets and poetry reveal. Open texts like *My Life* renew the power of poets offered by Romanticism and channel it into readers, providing opportunities for indefinitely multiple readings that "create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized" according to their own whim.

5. Conclusion

Percy Shelley has long been associated with ideas about cultural revolution and resistance, and also with support for anarchy and anarchic thinking. And yet, his defense famously positions poets as the world's *legislators*, giving them a sort of culturally sanctioned and institutional authority over the readers of poetry, a paradox that deserves attention[iii]. However, this question articulates quite well the overall shift I have presented as taking place from Shelly through Stein and into Hejinian. All three understand one of the poet's tasks to be not only creating a new poetic object within the world, but actually creating new possibilities for perceptions of that world—apprehending new relationships between things, seeing new things, even creating new things in the world through these rejuvenated perceptions. What has evolved over time, perhaps, is not the poetic task itself, but the arche that orders the poetic

task, gives it its shape and texture and mass. While Shelley surely explored anarchy as a revolutionary mode of *political* life, he remained firmly tethered to the arche of language itself, using syntax and grammar to legislate perceptive experience, allowing him and his fellow poets to legislate via this language authority. Gertrude Stein, however, begins hacking away at language's firm tether, showing that that arche too can be overthrown and demanding that readers develop new ways of reading amid its lack. Lyn Hejinian and the other Language poets, then, in focusing so intently on the social function of language, dispersed its arche out into community, so that readers need not rely on poets to legislate experience, but instead create these new experiences through interaction with the poetry. Ultimately, these affinities across time and country demonstrate that a fluid understanding of these texts produces not only fruitful readings of the texts, but powerful and liberatory *reading practices* in general.

[i] An early version of this paper was given as a presentation to the Okinawa Romanticism Society in August 2017.

[ii] Due to the presence of multiple manuscripts whose language may have been altered not by Stein, but by her partner Toklas, there also exist multiple published versions of the book. Thus a given "reading" of the text depends on which version of the book a reader has purchased.

[iii] I am grateful to Kevin Beverage for pointing out this theoretical discrepancy to me.

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ロマン主義からランゲージ・ポエトリーへ
パーシー・ビッシュ・シェリー、ガートルード・スタイン、リン・ヘジニアンにおける感知されざるものの発見

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要旨

本稿の目的は、19世紀イギリスロマン主義から20世紀後半のアメリカランゲージ・ポエトリーまでの、詩人と詩の役割に関する概念の変遷を辿ることにある。ロマン主義とランゲージ・ポエトリーは、特に両者の自己概念において異なる見解を有していると考えられているが、２つの文学運動は実際にはいくつかの主要な点において共有している事柄がある。これらの類似点について、詩人の役割という観点から分析すると、詩をめぐる読者の役割が次第に増大していくことがわかる。本稿では、この点について、パーシー・ビッシュ・シェリーの『詩の擁護』、ガートルード・スタインの詩論及び詩のテキスト、そしてリン・ヘジニアンの『マイ・ライフ』を取り上げ論じる。つまり、シェリーは、よく知られているように、詩人は「非公認の世界に関する立法者」であると宣言し、詩人の力を世界と読者の上に置いた。しかしながら、20世紀後半のランゲージ・ポエツは、しばしば権力的な地位に反発し、シェリーが一部の読者には認める「立法能力」さえも拒否した。すなわち、ランゲージ・ポエトリー派の詩人たちは、意図的に混乱した文法や論理を詩に導入することで、読者に自らの力で新しい意味と感覚を創造する機会を提供したのである。本論では、ロマン主義からランゲージ・ポエトリーに見られるこのようなシフトを分析しつつ、異なる時代の詩や詩の潮流の間に対話を発見することで、詩を豊かに解釈する可能性が生まれることを論じる。

キーワード：ロマン主義，ランゲージ・ポエトリー，ガートルード・スタイン，パーシー・ビッシュ・シェリー，言葉の階層性