The Shape of Silence in Writing

Text
Each piece of writing is presented at the start of this column while maintaining their original structure and visual form.

Uncovered Silences
A collection of silences that were identified and marked with different shapes and colors within each poem.

Space Before
Define silence as the absence of words on each line, marking the space before each word. This includes intentional displacements such as irregular word spacings and indentations.

Space After
Define silence as the absence of words on each line, marking the space after each word. This includes the space between words and blank spaces after the last word on each line.

Punctuation
Define silence as a point of demarcation between two or more thoughts, marking punctuations and the preceding space which indicates the end of a line, grammatical boundary, or break.

Literary Devices
Define silence as a result of literary devices which put emphasis on certain words, phrases, and sentences that silence others and diminish their presence. This marks the absence of literary devices.

Word Breaks
Define silence as sudden interruptions in the natural way of reading, marking instances where the letters in a word are divided, transposed, and recontextualized.

Line Breaks
Define silence as sudden interruptions in the natural way of reading, marking instances where an incomplete sentence or phrase runs over from one poetic line to the next.

01
(Title) "Songs I"

(Written by) E. E. Cummings
(Read by) Isaac Jung

Songs I

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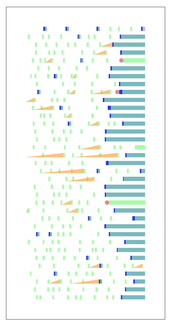
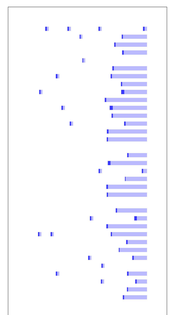
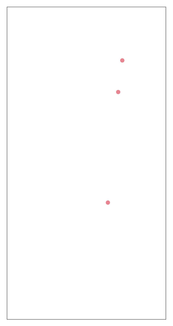
02
"Friends, Romans, Countryman, lend me your ears"

William Shakespeare
Ray Fearon

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men--
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.







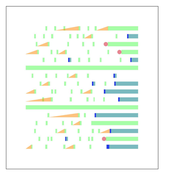
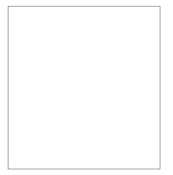
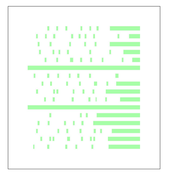
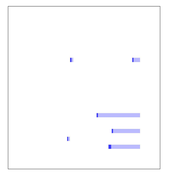
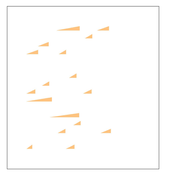
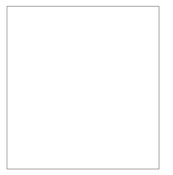
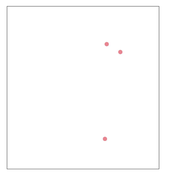
03
"Those Winter Sundays"

Robert Hayden
Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

04
"DetoNation"

Ocean Vuong
Ocean Vuong

There's a joke that ends with —huh?
It's the bomb saying here is your father.

Now here is your father inside
your lungs. Look how lighter

the earth is —afterward.
To even write the word father

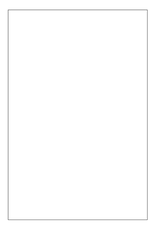
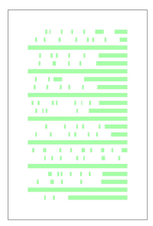
is to carve a portion of the day
out of a bomb-bright page.

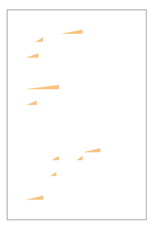
There's enough light to drown in
but never enough to enter the bones

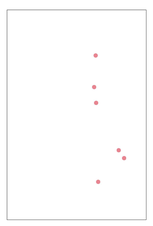
& stay. Don't stay here, he said, my boy
broken by the names of flowers. Don't cry

anymore. So I ran into the night.
The night: my shadow growing

toward my father.





05
"Poetry"

Marianne Moore
Daniela Galdamez

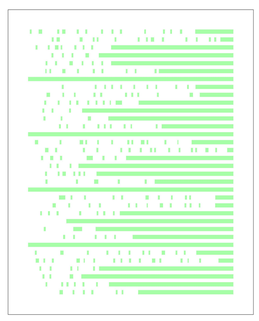
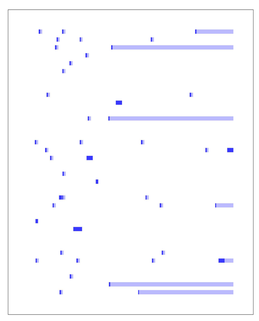
I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there is in
it after all, a place for the genuine.
Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a

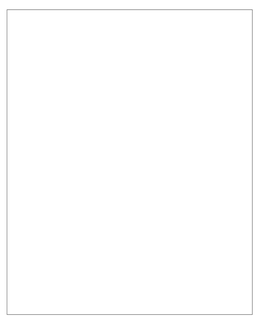
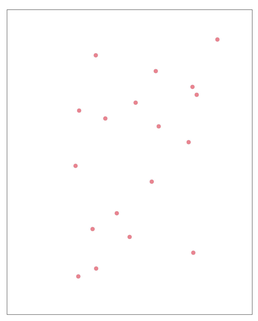
high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
useful; when they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, the
same thing may be said for all of us—that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand. The bat,
holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base—
ball fan, the statistician—case after case
could be cited did
one wish it; nor is it valid
to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,
nor till the autocrats among us can be
"literalists of
the imagination"—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand, in defiance of their opinion—
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness, and
that which is on the other hand,
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

06
"The Golden Shovel: II. 1991"

Terrance Hayes
Jakia Propet

II. 1991

Into the tented city we go, we-
akened by the fire's ethereal

afterglow. Born lost and cool-
er than heartache. What we

know is what we know. The left
hand severed and school-

ed by cleverness. A plate of wo-
ekdays cooking. The hour lurk-

ing in the afterglow. A late-
night chant. Into the city we

go. Close your eyes and strike
a blow. Light can be straight-

ened by its shadow. What we
break is what we hold. A sing-

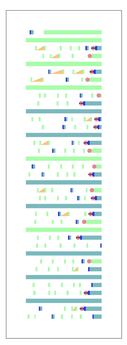
ular blue note. An outcry sin-
ged exciting the thrust. We

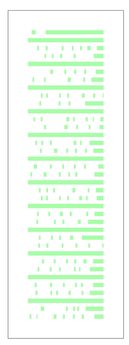
push until we thin, thin-
king we won't creep back again.

While God licks his kin, we
sing until our blood is jazz,

we swing from June to June.
We sweat to keep from wo-

eping. Groomed on a die-
t of hunger, we end too soon.





07
"Duplex"

Jericho Brown
Jericho Brown

A poem is a gesture toward home.
It makes dark demands I call my own.

Memory makes demands darker than my own:
My last love drove a burgundy car.

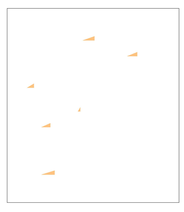
My first love drove a burgundy car.
He was fast and awful, tall as my father.

Steadfast and awful, my tall father
Hit hard as a hailstorm. He'd leave marks.

Light rain hits easy but leaves its own mark
Like the sound of a mother weeping again.

Like the sound of my mother weeping again,
No sound beating ends where it began.

None of the beaten end up how we began.
A poem is a gesture toward home.



08
I Will Always Love You

Dolly Parton
Whitney Huston

If I should stay
Well I would only be in your way
And so I'll go, and yet I know
I'll think of you each step of the way

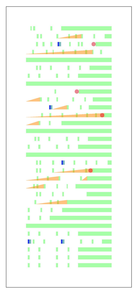
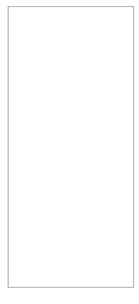
And I will always love you
I will always love you

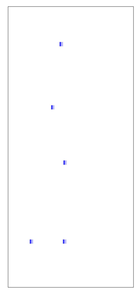
Bitter-sweet memories
That's all I'm taking with me
Good-bye, please don't cry
'Cause we both know that I'm not
What you need

But I will always love you
I will always love you

And I hope life, will treat you kind
And I hope that you have all
That you ever dreamed of
Oh I do wish you joy
And I wish you happiness
But above all this
I wish you love
I love you

I will always love you
I, I will always, always love you
I will always love you
I will always love you
I will always love you

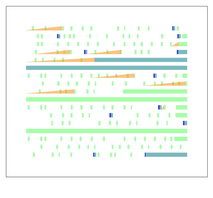
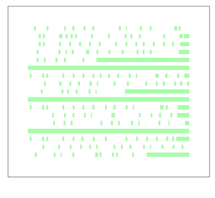
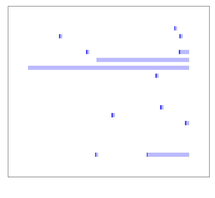
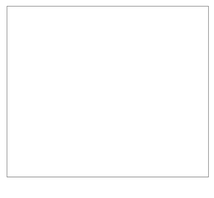
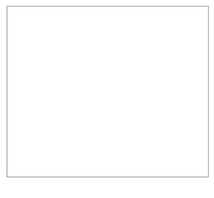


09
Excerpt from "I Have a Dream"

Martin Luther King Jr.
Martin Luther King Jr.

So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still
have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I
have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the
true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of
former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit
down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state
sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of
oppression will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a
nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by
the content of their character. I have a dream today.