

# SAY IT INTO MY MOUTH

H. L. HIX

BLAZEVOX[BOOKS]  
*Buffalo, New York*

Say It Into My Mouth  
by H. L. Hix  
Copyright © 2023

Published by BlazeVOX [books]

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without the publisher's written permission, except for brief quotations in reviews.

Printed in the United States of America

Interior design and typesetting by Geoffrey Gatzka  
Cover art reproduced by kind permission of the artist, Krista Leigh Steinke

First Edition  
ISBN: 978-1-60964-436-9  
Library of Congress Control Number: 2023935375

BlazeVOX [books]  
131 Euclid Ave  
Kenmore, NY 14217  
Editor@blazevox.org



*Publisher of weird little books*

**BlazeVOX [ books ]**

blazevox.org

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11

## I speak to you; clearly someone else speaks.

It *matters* what we quote and how we quote it.

What we quote constructs identity and affiliation, as is recognized in one political direction by advocates of quoting the Ten Commandments in stone at courthouses and on posters in schoolrooms, and in an opposite direction by Sara Ahmed's adopting in her *Living a Feminist Life* "a strict citation policy: I do not cite any white men."

How we quote conditions integrity and consequence, as is shown by university policies' finding plagiarism a form of "academic dishonesty," and by David Shields' taking himself to have written "the *ars poetica*" for an "artistic movement" by stocking his *Reality Hunger* with "hundreds of quotations that go unacknowledged in the body of the text."

These principles assign *Say It Into My Mouth* its pitch and moment. If *what* we quote constructs identity and affiliation, then this book, composed mostly of quoted text, is autobiographical, testifying to "with whom I believe my lot is cast." If *how* we quote conditions integrity and consequence, then the "heterodox practices of engagement" here secure me at once under oath and under erasure.

To mark this book's divergence from prevailing customs of quotation, I coin for its aspects new names: *florilects*, for the works in this book, and *florilectics*, for the work of this book. (*Florilects*, to call back to those pre-Gutenberg, ante-Apple, handwritten gatherings called *florilegia*, which, by creating "new texts from the arrangement of bits and pieces of the reader's reading, demonstrate how fluid the distinction between reading and writing can be"; and *florilectics*, to call across to that practice, *dialectics*, that values sustaining inquiry over completing it.)

All three florilects here contravene conventions of quotation, each in its own way and for its own ends.

“Always the clearest question keeps itself unanswered.” skews the traditional form of the interview, in at least two ways. Instead of the hierarchized Q&A, in which a subordinate asks questions of an authority figure who gives answers, and in which the question is means and the answer is end, it constructs a Q&Q. Also, I selected and arranged all the material, but invented none of it. Everything in “Always the clearest question...” is directly quoted: instead of asking questions *of* one’s own, it asks questions *as* one’s own. In so doing, it trusts that the act of questioning “places us in relation with what evades every question.”

“How opposition integrates itself.” presents a full edition and parallel translations of the work of Herakleitos. It, too, sets itself at least doubly askew to tradition. Against the parataxis to which strictly sequential numbering confines the work, it employs a hypotactic numbering that alludes to — that quotes — the numbering of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. Also, it complements one translation made of “my own words” with another that consists of quoted passages that their authors did not intend as translations, passages that had no connection with Herakleitos prior to their application here. In doing so, “How opposition...” replaces the customary treatment of Herakleitos (domino the passages, translate them, comment on them) with one more Herakleitean in spirit: set source and substitute in tension like the tips of a bent-back bow.

“Two pictures of a rose in the dark.” associates insights first tendered separately, to fulfill not as two charges but as one Ludwig Wittgenstein’s directive to write philosophy as a poetic composition and Leslie Scalapino’s observation of poetry doing the work of philosophy. It produces eighty-two reflections, each a compact florilect consisting of one passage quoted from Wittgenstein and one quoted from Scalapino, followed by another pair of passages (these quoted from other authors, in corroboration), and attended by remarks of my own. Replacing proposition with apposition as the primary means of inquiry resembles the change from replying with “Really?” to replying with “So what?”: the focus shifts from the truth or falsity of the material in question to its meaning and implications; consequently, the relation of the discussants shifts from opposition to mutuality. With “Really?” I oppose you, rejecting your position until through evidence or reasoning you *force* me to accept it; with “So what?” I join you, suspending concern over truth or falsity long enough for us together to explore what might attend the position in question.

There might be various ways to relate these three florilects to one another. Metaphors of location would generate an after/beside/between schema, suggesting subtitles: “One Question After Another”; “Herakleitos Beside Himself”; “Between Wittgenstein and Scalapino.” Grammatical function would generate a schema of question / translation / proposition. And so on. I have not tried to steer the reader toward any one way in preference to another, but instead have left each florilect to take the question “What do you make of that?” not as asking “How do you interpret that?” but instead as asking “What new structure do you build with those existing materials?”

To that apology for this book, others might be added. These quotation practices matter as philosophy because how one loves wisdom influences what wisdom one loves, and as poetry because what one makes *from* conditions what and how one makes. These practices matter because reading by the same rules over and over reveals the rules, not the read. If in reading I am reader rather than read, I am not reading.

But enough speaking for what is spoken here. Let this chorus of voices speak for itself.



**Always the clearest question keeps itself unanswered.**





*Where does my mortality end and the other's begin?*  
What else can we imagine now if not our own deaths?

*What is the meaning of the sharp pain?*  
And what exactly would it mean to be mistaken about one's own sense of shock?

*Is it because I had the most premonitions that I have become the most confused?*  
How dare I say what I do not know?

*If I do not know what being is, how will I know what the being of things is?*  
Whose knowledge is going to count?

*Can one be living and dead at the same time?*  
Is there good destruction?

*In an emotional and sexual way?*  
Why don't we make some new emotions?

*Wouldn't it make more sense to mourn birth and celebrate death?*  
Do they complete each other?

*Or is it that the words express nothing?*  
What dangers do we risk if we continue to overlook the force of things?

*And even if impossible norms had some sort of ideal force, how should we actual humans respond to them?*  
But is it impossible to listen to the dead?

*Who will speak up for them?*  
Would it make sense to trust someone who is dead?

*Whose soul is calling whom this night?*  
And would we have anything to talk about that we could talk about?

*But by whom are you possessed? Who carries you away? Who traverses you? Who has begun to dwell in you?*

And if you felt the strain of such a life, all the way down your spine, surely it meant that you were just holding on until such time as a miracle occurred?

*Yes, but what other choice is there?*

Can we refuse ourselves?

*As fossils or full-bodied beings?*

A lake, a boat, raspberry bushes?

*In what language should I ask this?*

In what language did God originally speak?

*How did the Word of Strange Flesh enter the Word of Flesh?*

And what mode of judging is suggested in the strange metaphor of light?

*Is human nature absolutely dark, or absolutely transparent?*

(Is there such a thing as a tear that appears without ever having been wept?)

*And if beauty is not form, what else can it be?*

What connects different forms?

*A fold between the two folds?*

a sun ??? yellow ??? a ??? sun ??? green ??? a ? boat ?

*And, furthermore, what does a “very short time” mean: one second? five minutes?*

*short in relation to what? the course of a day? a lifetime?*

How ought lovers to track the relation of local acts to long-term practices?

*What is it for? Where are we going? What is to be done?*

What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we breathe?

*The quiet?*

A day? A hundred years?

*And what if there is no regenerative absence?  
To whom do I speak? And out of what knowledge?*

*To stop screaming at typewriters, expecting rain?  
Was it rain that had hid him?*

*Can the "I" of the human that I am, the center of senseful activities, be isolated?  
You think you're the only one that matters?*

•

*Is the whole world inside me?  
What is that face in the sky?*

*What now, rosemary bush?  
Who else comes to see you from dreamland?*

*How do we tell the external voice from the voice in the head?  
What would human flight look like?*

*Why do you keep coming to me in dreams?  
Six blankets and a quilt? A rug and a hot water bottle?*

*(or thanks to?)  
The one in the snapshot?*

*The stones from the temple at Benteai-Srey?  
How, among the variety of alternative worlds struggling for dominance, does one  
assess which should live on?*

*And what happens to me, then?  
To take a breath of water: does the thought panic or excite you?*

*Are not most of our actions in any case fraught with uncertainty and hazard?*

What must be done, practically? Which action is good? Which is bad?

*where and how did they get those butterfly nets so fast?!*

Why don't you drown the baby in the stream?

*Why not rank such acts a kind of weather?*

Why not witches and ghosts?

*The next temptation would be to say: but why not both?*

Or a latch not catching as it should?

*Banal episodes of altered consciousness already show us that the real is constructed — we “know” it, but how could we instantly and durably suspend the experience of our experience?*

And what is thought if not letting the forms exit the shadows that gave birth to them?

*(Or is it that the possibilities of encompassing knowledge have changed?)*

Is it a window frame draped over to block out light, giving us an image of confinement?

*What evening star is this that always disappears?*

What could she know about a man who loved the water falling from her arms.

*How was I supposed to be ready?*

Who will hear my cries but gods?

*And why the gods? Why are they gods?*

What is it that came to visit that left foot marks here and there and everywhere?

*When did fear become a loaf of bread, and love a sky?*

Is it fear? Is it love?

*Of whom, of what?*

How do you learn to have the right feelings?

*What other trees would it be possible to construct?*

I mean what is it about a world spinning on its one good leg.

*Is it possible that, in this respect, the world should have been different from the way it is?*

How to dismantle the world that is built to accommodate only some bodies?

*Are all people such dreamers where you come from?*

Is the act of quitting the world a productive gesture of reparation, of making amends in the world?

*How does this help us understand the politics of the Emergency?*

What might be some other “schemas” through which skin acquires its legibility?

*Who am I, thinking about temporality, mortality, beauty, or death? Who am I, falling in love?*

A trickle of water to some gutter where, burbling, it dies away?

*What lives on?*

When? After all my deaths?

*Should I have fought back? Should I have screamed? Would that have helped?*

Is it possible to give, eat, and be full of the nothing? Is this the meaning of grace?

•

*What is the question of the present hour?*

How do certain parts of the world become legible as landscapes of atrocity, while others become spaces of humaneness and humanization?

*What reality is it that humans now inhabit?*

How can we sustain resistance to destruction without expecting to triumph?

*Which of these particular perspectives is the right one, metaphysically?*

Where does mist come from on the mountain?

*What bones do the planets comminute?*

I wonder: if I peer at the darkness with a magnifying glass, will I see more than darkness?

*What if I myself were to be dissolved into darkness, made one with it?*

Ice settling in a cocktail glass?

*How can you expect a man who's warm to understand a man who's cold?*

Is death this cold?

*Why distinguish between virtue and vice if everybody in the afterlife is to partake of the same helplessness, the same insubstantiality, the same desire to drink blood so as to feed what shreds of soul the funeral pyres have not entirely burned up and stripped from the whitened bones?*

Is one lighter and one heavier? Is one colder and the other warmer? Does one feel a tingle and the other a steadiness?

*After one has wrecked one's youth, brutalized one's soul, and numbed one's mind, can a garden come to the rescue and bring one back to life again?*

Which type of moisture, which type of soil?

*Is there a ground underlying the nonsolidity of the self?*

The rushed thundering chunks of broken ice?

*Allegro? Moderato? Tutta Forza? Largo? Perdendosi?*

And will it be terrible or beautiful to watch as you are swept away?

*What is singing, anyway, what is a song?*

Do rivers dream?

*Is there movement in burnt stars, some deceit left near the grave we seek?*

Active but unsummoned presences that can distort the workings of the machine and can also *make* it work?

*Some picture, perhaps, pasted to the top of a toy chest?*  
Another crow?

*Who's in the city besides us?*  
Do we see what we think we see? Do we love as we believe we love?

*Who sees the tree's reality?*  
Is love real and true only if it continues?

— *will it not?* —  
Do I want to be loved or misunderstood?

*Must color have suffered in order to grow?*  
Will it remain red-violet? Turn blue-green?

*While I might walk up to touch the surface of an object to reestablish its roughness,  
what am I to do about the phenomenon of color, the shift from red to violet?*  
What do you carry that others cannot see? What hovers about you?

*How long has this taken to happen? How long have I been out here?*  
how long until we run out of notes in the music?

*Is this the night? Is this the night I finally sing?*  
Someday, right?

*They won't blame me afterward, will they?*  
From this position of indeterminacy, of the ineffable, how to make intelligible the singularity of what cannot be measured or categorized but is felt and, in some sense, known?

*But is sensory experience fixed and neutral?*  
What objects gather, in our homes?

*Am I allowed to look out the window?*  
A window with a very long fall underneath?

*Fever visions then, retold now calmly?*  
Eyes gritty with paper encounters?

*How do we taste and sound the affirmative space, the air, the breathing of our blurred books?*

How do we know which pain is necessary, and which we inflict on ourselves?

•

*Where is this secret heart of history we trust has been beating?*

How do we imagine and struggle for a democracy that does not spawn forms of terror, that does not spawn war, that does not need enemies for its sustenance?

*To promote injustice one need not look at nature, with its “survival” of the fittest; one can look at the world of undeath, with its survivors — practically all (certainly the practical among them) unfit in that realm — a world of unmotivated, blind, generalized revenge, and then ask: if death is the realms of the blind vengeance of the shards of thoughts and affects of the decomposed souls of the dead, why shouldn't life also be unjust, allowing, among other things, for the wholesale slaughter in war?*

What relation obtains between treatment and repair?

*And why would it not be possible to employ both perspectives together, or one after the other?*

Can we learn not to eliminate the signs of disturbance?

*How long can one go on hammering without hitting one's thumb?*

If I drive the sandfly away from my body, whom do I want it to bite?

*“Principal adversary,” what does this formula mean?*

Does someone have to die in order for it to matter?

*Do you know that it rains inside the mortuary sand, that the mouth transmuted into a porcelain surrogate kisses the very fissure of its flash in order to ensure its precipitation into history?*



Can't irreversibility, or the increase of entropy, be given a positive meaning?

*If so, does this mean that language and logic are not events in their own right?*

How can a bird pass this test?

*How should 'subjectivity' with a subject or object be understood here?*

Can you feel the blood in your thumb?

*Heart-blood? Voices, you? That's my portrait?*

Why should my heartbeat become palpable from anxious anticipation?

*Can we actually bridge those gaps between imagination and experience?*

How can you tell who's up to what with whom?

*Whom will I gather, gather into these folds?*

To what are we tied? And by what are we seized?

*What is the source of this fluctuating asymmetry?*

And why the extra length of wire?

*What if it is not our fate to live here as outcasts?*

But what if it isn't? Is there no danger in behaving as though it were?

*Yet isn't there a danger in linking sympathy and obligation?*

Why is it so dangerous to play with fire?

*(does it burn?)*

(there is always the frightening shadow — is it forever?)

*Was there always a cypress tree?*

Were non-linear forces always operating this way?

*You know the saying that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers?*

How can one go about establishing a connection between thinking about unequal social arrangements in terms of remote first-order principles and sensing them close-up, in terms of suffering inflicted by individual human beings on one another?

*Why do people cooperate when it is against their interests to do so?*  
A package of stars?

*What keeps this light from pouring out as light?*  
What is the ground and relation of these subjects to the earth?

*Only four more days to reach the salt?*  
(Will I complete my border journey without anything bad happening?)

*Who indeed knows the secret of the earthly pilgrimage?*  
Was the journey forward the same as the journey back?

*Were the two not equally dangerous?*  
To love, to have been loved?

*What is it we want when we can't stop wanting?*  
(Who can say *want* for certain?)

*Is he drifting, rowing, a bit of both?*  
What should be my last thoughts on this earth, in this life?

*Do I have the capacity for grace??*  
Who doesn't dream of surrender?

•

*What do you know about real life?*  
I saw some old piping lying somewhere...?

*Where is life on this vast sauntering morning?*  
Ought a person not to turn over and sleep peacefully?

*Why did you stand staring at those staring at the night?*  
And what is that against the backdrop of the universe?

*But why should there not be something larger than infinity?*  
What were you expecting night to say?

*Who says madness is only for the night?*  
And, besides, where else would we wait for daybreak if not at night?

*What is the dominant foliage of the body and its flight throughout the dark invisible realms?*  
Could there have been torrents, and inside those torrents, birds?

*Maybe you have these sensations too?*  
What if to flow into the world is not simply understood as a psychological attribute?

*Are you sleeping or swimming?*  
If the Unmoved Mover, whom I take to be the subject here, imparted motion to the created order, is it meaningful to call him “motionless,” which sounds very like “static” or “inert,” and is not consistent with the great and ancient intuition brilliantly understood as the imparting of motion?

*You think that a precursor is someone who comes before those who follow after?*  
How do you start at the beginning, if things happen before they happen?

*But the past is passed; why moralize upon it?*  
What could halt the river?

*More specifically, what are the encounters that can lead to new formations, to new insurgent capabilities, and where can they take place — in what spaces or temporalities?*

Is it possible to dispense with the sharply defined temporalities that past, present, and future invoke as discrete time frames?

*Where do we get the idea of time that passes?*

Why is it given me to walk others' lives before mine?

*Have you ever noticed how on the decisive day the light comes through the trees a certain way, how the patterns of the future reveal themselves as a ghost language and you got to do more than just pay attention but use all the knowledge and wisdom you have ever gained to interpret it?*

Is it odd to say that your lover reminds you of a tree?

*What is it that would be lost by doing so?*

In what ways did we believe that our lover was going to enhance our lives?

*And what is a life that can no longer be distinguished from the rule?*

What can I take out of such a life and give to anybody?

*Insights? Moods or memories or values?*

Space on a floor? Space on the ground?

*What neutral, homogenous space?*

a kiss without touching?

*How do such conceptual structures affect how we live our lives?*

Might we understand the ethics of complex or global systems in this way?

*What do structures know of their defeat, and what does noise know of its shattering?*

Aren't anxiety, sorrow, and grief unavoidable affects in efforts of paying serious mental attention, of thinking with care, in dislocated worlds?

*What of work, tasks of muscle & nerve?*

What if the bees find me?

*How do I answer no, from my own death?*

What is it to wish for the absence of nothing?

*The house empty save for me, would the night breeze increase its absence?*

How can the cry of a night bird be a bad omen?

*Indeed, once the history of the world and its creatures has reached its end and the elect, as well as the damned, have received either eternal bliss or eternal punishment, what is the purpose of the existence of the orders of angels? How can we imagine inoperative angels?*

Can the emergence of music from nature through human beings speak with a transcendent voice, which retains its capacity to heal after its echoes have gone unheard, and which allows us to pick up the pieces of, or return to, a ruptured sequence?

*What is the highest being of the music?*

What is it to surrender the capacity to think?

*This is a setback, yes?*

Wasn't this exactly what you wanted?

•

*Are there to be no secrets?*

What, exactly, is at stake, ontologically, perceptually, and politically, in depicting a horizon as closed or as open?

*Faced with a real that is characterized by multiplicity and an almost unlimited capacity for polymorphism, what is power?*

Why work through the power relations that are shaped into state-centered hierarchies of scale?

*How many tragedies has war created? How many people have died, been crippled, robbed of any chance of a productive life?*

How do I live the violence of my formation? How does it live on in me?

*Violence, excess, and abuse?*

See how they swinghold hands and raise the sun?

*How come I've not found a way to shield myself from it?*  
Why not distrust? Unappearance?

*Who is to be protected, by whom, against what and whom, and at what price?*  
Why does every sunrise wield its knife, stranger?

*What if I don't answer the question?*  
Is the door into the oak hard to find?

*For all the bounty, what has slipped through?*  
Are we repaired by dreams?

*Who is to say those bags of cement at their slumber are not the material trace of some  
deep personal dreamwork?*  
Soul-smoldering, burgeoning?

*What words could I possibly put together to give texture to this lengthy and painful  
pang of mine?*  
How can I feel the cold that I am?

*Can silence protect truth from the contamination of lies.*  
Do the laws to which the pendulum is subject reveal the truth about the clock?

*But why do we want frequent truth in the first place?*  
Will every tear be wiped from every eye?

*And what then?*  
If the body is an object?

*(do objects really exist?)*  
What does it mean to turn a knob?

*Do flowers lack souls?*  
Why speak of the soul?

*Are you claiming, perhaps, that not only the form of the universe, but also all the forms of natural things are souls?*

Do the concepts of normativity and plasticity presuppose and entail a specific mode of existence, no matter its extension, into all forms of assemblage and entanglement?

*Who can forget those moments when something that seems inanimate turns out to be vitally, even dangerously alive?*

But what if emotional memories were not what they were assumed to be?

*And how shall these speak to the dispossessed, how capture their political imagination?*

The poor? The uncounted? The many?

*Do we know that it is unscientific to scream?*

Must we wait for epidemics, starvation, panic, police states, mass hysteria, and destruction, the complete devastation of human values, before we act?

*How can one accept the implications of something, understand them, and carry them to the “highest possible pitch of social consciousness” without encouraging them?*

Does this mean there is never any getting rid of grief?

*Does it make everything wrong?*

Why am I carrying a peony, in my mind?

*Is all organized meaning the work of thought?*

Who thinks the thoughts that we associate with the self?

*How is it possible to venture a transformation of our present constitutive principles resulting in a genuine conceptual change or shift in paradigm? How, more specifically, can the proposal of a radically new conceptual framework be, nonetheless, both rational and responsible?*

By the way, how do you free yourself from being dominated by a dead body?

*Is it possible to imagine being named by a place?*

Is there any alternative to the privative fatality of figuration?

*What, this red flower?*

Can someone please turn up the rain?



**How opposition integrates itself.**

