Kenneth Koch and the Play of Poetry: 
Pedagogy and Performance as Forms of Social Play

CY MATHEWS

Abstract
In this article I examine the highly significant but critically neglected role of socially oriented group play in avant-garde poetry via an analysis of two hitherto marginalized works by the American poet and pedagogue Kenneth Koch (1925–2002). I first examine Koch’s pedagogic instruction book Wishes, Lies and Dreams: Teaching Children to Write Poetry (1970), then consider Making it Up: Poetry Composed at St. Mark’s Church on May 9, 1979 (1994), the transcript of his 1979 public improvised reading with poet Allen Ginsberg. By positioning these texts within a new critical framework drawn from the work of seminal play theorist Roger Caillois and Katherine N. Hayles’s concept of “distributed cognitive systems” I explore issues of didactic authority, poetic collaboration, and freeplay vs. constraint that continue to be obscured by scholarly approaches that prioritize solo authorship and the self-sufficiency of the poetic text. In doing this I not only shed new light on Koch’s poetic practice, but also offer a critical approach that acknowledges the integral role played by playful social interaction in American avant-garde poetics.

Key Words
Kenneth Koch, poetry, play, improvisation, theatre, paidia, ludus, American literature.

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1. Introduction

Poetry and play are both intrinsically social activities. While a few scholars have made the case for treating poetry or literature in general as play, they have largely identified gameplay with individual acts of writing or reading. The role of sociality and collaborative activity in the game of poetry has gone relatively unexplored. In this essay, I use the work of American poet and pedagogue Kenneth Koch (1925–2002) to demonstrate how approaching poetry as a socially oriented play activity connects what Barrett Watten terms the “material text” of avant-garde poetry with its “social poetics.” At the same time, I also consider why socially
oriented poetic play has been relatively neglected within literary studies and how such critical lacunae mask significant issues—and significant texts—in twentieth- and twenty-first century poetry.

In making this case I draw upon the work of seminal play theorists Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois. Both these mid-twentieth-century theorists explicitly link poetry to play. Yet while Huizinga and Caillois are pivotal figures in the developing fields of game studies and digital literature, they have had relatively little impact on the study of poetry. Huizinga explicitly links poetry to social play, describing how “poetry as a social game of little or no aesthetic purport is to be found everywhere and in the greatest variety of forms,” and listing riddle-contests, antiphonal singing, and collaborative haiku as just some examples of such play.\(^3\)

Caillois, for his part, offers a taxonomy of play founded on the distinction between rule-governed play (\textit{ludus}) and freeplay (\textit{paidia}). As I will show, Huizinga’s observations and Caillois’s taxonomy—if taken together and refined—offer a new way of approaching the dynamics of contemporary poetry. This new approach highlights the largely ignored link between poetry and play and draws greater attention to the products of social poetics—collaborative texts, transcripts of live performances, and the everyday interactions that take place between poets—which tend to be ignored or glossed over by critics in favour of sole-authored and editorially approved printed texts.

Recognizing the importance of such interactions and the resultant texts allows us to move away from monological models of textual and authorial unity. Instead, we can consider authorship as something dispersed across a multiplicity of texts, processes, and individual creators. N. Katherine Hayles has described such networks of social interaction, in a literary context, as “distributed cognitive systems.”\(^4\) Building on Andy Clark and David Chalmers’ theory of “extended mind” and Edwin Hutchins’s concept of environmentally situated cognition, Hayles notes how individuals act “with partial agency amid local specificities that help to determine [their] behavior, even as [their] behavior helps to configure the system.”\(^5\) Such a system is a “self-organizing process,” a structure that emerges out of the dynamic interaction of text, convention, and individual action.\(^6\) Incorporating this model of open-ended and centreless systems into our understanding of poetic play further enables us to reconceptualise just what constitutes poetry itself. The poem ceases to be perceived as a finished textual object and, instead, is revealed as part of a larger network of poetic activity distributed across a multiplicity of texts and moments of social interaction.

Koch’s explicitly game-like approach to social interaction, coupled with his continuing influence on subsequent generations of US poets, makes him the ideal entry point into an understanding of this expanded field of poetic activity. His collaborative and pedagogic work not only illustrates how poetic play takes place on both textual and social levels; it also shows us how these levels interconnect and energise one another.

In this essay, I examine two instances where Koch plays \textit{beyond} the page—instances where his poetic activity exceeds the purely textual and extends into the varied social spaces of the classroom and the poetry reading. I address the ludic approach to pedagogy that Koch describes in his influential teaching guide, \textit{Wishes, Lies and Dreams}, and how this approach correlates with both his strong sociality and his resistance to authoritarian models of pedagogy. I then examine Koch’s 1979 performance of improvised poetry with Allen Ginsberg at the St. Mark’s Poetry Project (the transcript of which was published in 1994 under the title \textit{Making It Up}) in order to consider how this same impulse towards sociality and self-subversion manifests in the context of improvisation and performance. Both these examples exist at the outer limits of what is conventionally thought of as Koch’s poetic oeuvre because they extend beyond the printed page into the
ephemeral—yet vitally important—space of everyday life. Before turning to the examples themselves, I will first address why Koch’s social poetics have been exiled to the margins of critical discourse and why adjusting our usual critical frames to include such works is important to understanding Koch’s work and avant-garde practice in general and to appreciating the role of the social poetics of play in both.

2. Marginalised Texts and the Dynamics of Play

Koch’s socially oriented play poetics has its origins in the historical context of the early Cold War United States. The Cold War was fought, as David Campbell puts it, “on a discursive plain related to the production and reproduction of identity.” What Michael Davidson describes as “the eruption of new literary bohemias during the mid-1950s” was an attempt to create shared alternative identities outside the strictures of such social normalisation. Informal poetry readings were held, often in conjunction with live jazz music, at popular clubs like the Five Spot Café in the Bowery, while poets and artists mixed socially at bars such as the San Remo (popular with the Beats) and the Cedars Tavern (a watering hole for New York School painters such as Elaine de Kooning, William de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock). Jochen Schulte-Sasse, responding to Peter Bürger, has described how avant-garde artists sought to “reintegrate art into social praxis” through the creation of “unclosed individual segments of art that open themselves to supplementary responses.” These fragments function “very differently from the organic whole of the romantic artwork” for they attempt to require that the reader or audience “make [them] an integrated part of his or her reality.”

For Koch, highly gregarious and “eager to collaborate on poems with whoever might be willing,” collaboration “was like making a game of social life.” For him and his contemporaries, poetry was no longer something that could be pinned down upon the page, but was rather a process mapped out across a multiplicity of physical and textual spaces.

The texts most emblematic of such social interaction continue, however, to attract relatively little critical attention. This neglect is due to the fact that, despite widespread critical acknowledgement of the importance of sociality and collaboration in twentieth and twenty-first century avant-garde poetry, the texts produced via social and collaborative engagement occupy a problematic position in scholarly discourse. While critics such as Lehman and Mark Silverberg have emphasised the importance of collaboration to New York School poetry, Koch’s many collaborations with John Ashbery, Frank O’Hara, and other writers are not included in either his own Collected Poems or his collaborators’ collections. These omissions reflect how œuvre and authorial persona continue to be conceptualised by editors and critics. As Daniel Kane has pointed out, the construction of œuvre—typically carried out by editors, anthologists, and critics—“tends to promote (and in a sense to create) individual achievement by rewarding it with critical and editorial attention.” Texts grounded in a single authorial identity—texts where, as Roland Barthes puts it, “book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after”—continue to be prioritised over collaborative productions. The ideal of the artist as lone creator thus remains persuasive even in areas where the prevalence and significance of collective creativity has been duly acknowledged. Just as writers have, in the past, been removed from their social context to stand in authorial isolation, their work is still frequently viewed as complete upon the page, divorced from the networks of social interaction that gave it being.

Such valorisation of individual authorship and textual self-sufficiency is problematic, of course, because it elides the socio-historical realities out of which individual authors and individual texts emerge. It is also prob-
lematic, however, in that it gives a false sense of unity and order to the finished text. The importance of instability and disorder to the poetics of avant-garde poets such as Koch is thus obscured. Disorder—and its relationship to order—is central to the dynamics of play itself. Huizinga, writing in the 1950s, fills in one half of the equation by claiming that "play creates order, is order" through its constraining and ultimately arbitrary rules and conventions. Caillois expands upon Huizinga by pointing out that such ordered structure—what he describes as the "tendency to bind [play] with arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions"—exists at the end of a continuum balanced on its far side by "diversion, turbulence, [and] free improvisation." Caillois terms rule-governed play "ludus," from the Latin for school or game; and he terms freeplay "paidia" from the Greek for "child." For Caillois, paidia "presume[s] a world without rules in which the player constantly improvises, trusting in a guiding fantasy or a supreme inspiration, neither of which is subject to regulation." Ludus, on the other hand, challenges the player with "the need to find or continue at once a response" to the rule system "which is free within the limits set by the rules." For Caillois, paidia and ludus are antithetical; for one to increase, the other must decrease. Paidia, analogous to the play of young children, is characterised by Caillois as being low on the evolutionary scale. As play evolves, paidia thus gives way to the sophisticated formal structures of ludus. Indeed, it is these structures that make sustained play possible. Just as the formal devices of rhyme and meter, for example, have traditionally been used to support lengthy narrative poetry, ludic structures—games—provide frameworks within which the wild energies of paidia can be corralled and channelled over extended periods of time.

Caillois’s privileging of ludus ignores, however, what Lev Vygotsky describes, in the context of the transmissions and application of game conventions, as the "paradox of play": the tension between free, explorative play and the imperative that the player submit to the "rules and renunciation of impulsive action" so that the game can run its course. This tension between rule-bound and free play is present throughout avant-garde and experimental literary movements. If we followed Caillois’s account, avant-garde experimentalism would be an example of free play that only reaches maturity when it ceases to be avant-garde: when experimentation becomes solidified as convention and when formerly innovative works become canonized in the collected works of major authors. We see this implicit privileging of ludus in the valorisation of individual authorship and textual self-sufficiency. Such canonization occurs because the very gestures that reject custom and formality "easily ossify," as Silverberg puts it, "into a new set of unconventional conventions," innovation solidifying into dogma and anti-authoritarianism morphing into new centres of authority. Avant-garde experimentalism is thus frequently subsumed into a mainstream tradition of poetic formalism, the unstable energies of paidia corralled within the tidy boundaries of literary acceptance.

If, however, we understand the relationship between paidia and ludus not as an evolution from chaos to order but rather as an ongoing dynamic, then the ossification Silverberg writes of can be thought of in a different light. Ludus itself is not an end point, but, rather, part of a process open to destabilisation and change. It is here that Hayles’s theory of distributed literary cognition becomes especially significant, for it is not just the textual but also the social interactions in such systems that inject vital instabilities into the overall structure. These instabilities contribute to keeping ludus and paidia in dynamic imbalance: the chaos of paidia gives rise to the structures of ludus, which are in turn subverted and destabilised by the energies of paidia.

Due to the unpredictably of this process of stabilisation and destabilisation, socially oriented avant-garde
poetry will always constitute a moving target for the critical eye. The critic must, therefore, expand the scope of their analysis to include the full range of the distributed activity, including textual productions that might otherwise remain marginalised. The published poem upon the page—even the tidy, definitive version in the academically sanctioned collected works—is not, of course, rendered irrelevant. Its importance, however, is recontextualised as part of a broader, social poetics in which generative ludic structures are destabilised and energised in a process that cannot be reduced to a single poet or text.

3. Koch’s Ludic Pedagogy

One of the most explicit manifestations of Koch’s combination of ludic technique and destabilising sociality comes not from his published poetry but from his work as a teacher of poetry to schoolchildren. In the early 1970s, Koch published two books concerning poetry and children: *Talking to the Sun*, a poetry anthology aimed at young readers; and *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*, an instruction book for the teaching of poetry writing in the classroom. Both volumes do more than simply present texts and techniques. They also act as attempts, by Koch, to broaden the reach of his poetic social field. Poems by fellow New York School poets Ashbery, O’Hara, and James Schuyler all feature in *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* and *Talking to the Sun* (the title of the latter being, of course, itself a reference to O’Hara’s poem “A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island”). Poems by younger writers and others on the periphery of the New York School—people such as Joseph Ceravolo, Amiri Baraka, David Shapiro, Ron Padgett and Ted Berrigan—also appear in these books. The inclusion of these poets functions in two ways. On the one hand, Koch is disseminating and promoting the work of his fellow poets. On the other hand, he is also inviting outsiders—in this case, the student in the classroom and the reader of the anthology—into the same circle of sociability and poetic interaction occupied by him and his peers.

The teaching techniques that Koch describes in *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* also seek to expand this social circle by using play to demystify the process of writing poetry. In the book, Koch details how he taught poetry writing classes to children at P. S. 61, a public school on New York’s Lower East Side, from 1968 to 1969. He taught as part of the fledgling “Poets in the Schools” project initiated by poet Joel Oppenheimer and sponsored first by the Academy of American Poets and later by the Teachers’ and Writer’s Collaborative. His approach to teaching was heavily oriented against authoritarian models of didactics. Koch himself cites Katherine Lappa, his English teacher in high school, as the primary influence on this approach to teaching. He describes her as acting not as an authoritarian figure schooling him in the traditions of poetry, but rather as having simply “encouraged me to be free and extravagant in what I wrote, so that I could find what was hidden in me that I had to say.” Koch attempted to cast himself in the same kind of role in his relationship with the children of P. S. 61. His intention was, as he puts it, to act as “reader, admirer, and furnisher of additional ideas,” rather than as an instructor or adjudicator. He goes on to explain that, “I felt the main thing I had to do was to get them started writing, writing anything, in a way that would be pleasant and exciting for them.” Language and poetic convention are presented not as a discipline to master, but rather as a playground in which the student poet can move at will.

In *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*, Koch explains how this antiauthoritarian teaching method was based on one simple yet highly adaptable technique: the application of basic rule systems to poetic composition. Koch describes how he discovered this technique at the beginning of the course, during the composition of a
collaborative class-poem intended to ease the students into the process of writing:

I asked the class to write a poem together, everybody contributing one line. The way I conceived of the poem, it was easy to write, **had rules like a game**, and included the pleasures [of writing] without the anxiety of competitiveness. . . . I suggested we make some rules about what should be in every line, then asked them for others. We ended up with the regulations that every line should contain a color, a comic-strip character, and a city or country; also the line should begin with the words "I wish."25)

Here Koch again presents himself not as a figure of authority but as a collaborator in the creative process. He states that he did not **tell** the class to write a poem; he **asked.** Likewise, he did not instruct them in how they should write it: he "suggested [they] make some rules together." At the same time, he attempts to demystify poetry for his students by breaking down the writing of a poem into a game to be **played** as opposed to an artistic activity to be mastered. He does this by presenting his students with a sentence fragment within which they are able to improvise simply by adding words to a pre-existing structure. One third-grade exercise, for example, involves a line beginning with the phrase "I would like to have" followed by a simple metaphor.26) Koch introduces the concept of metaphor itself by mapping it out as another sentence fragment. By inserting nouns into the pattern "a ___ of ___," he teaches his students that they can combine two ideas or things into a metaphor. To complete his exercises the student thus needs only to contribute two words per line, repeating the process to create poems such as the following:

I would like to have a door of hearts
I would like to have a room of roses
I would like to have a window of flowers
I would like to have a book of stripes27)

The game-like nature of this exercise is obvious. "I would like" and "a ___ of ___" constitute a simple rule system within which the student poet is given a limited—yet significant—degree of freedom. Of the four lines quoted above, the student provides only eight words out of thirty-two, yet the possibilities for improvisation within this structure are immense.

It might be argued that Koch adopted such techniques solely to introduce children to poetry. Similar ludic teaching methods were also, however, a feature of the college-level creative writing courses he taught at Columbia University and the New School from the 1960s onwards. In these classes, working with student poets such as Lehman, Padgett, and Jordan Davis, he encouraged his students to experiment with a variety of clearly defined formal structures. Lehman would later describe how Koch "gave specific and highly detailed assignments" that focused on revealing the rule-based mechanics of poetic composition. He would, for example, instruct his students to:

Rewrite the first scene in Hamlet without rereading it first. Purchase a comic book, do not read it, tape white paper all over the dialogue balloons, then fill in your own dialogue. Write a story about a sports event in which the contestants are the members of your own family disguised.28)
While these exercises are more complex and provide greater freedom of movement than Koch’s *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* exercises, they conform to the same essentially game-like pattern. They are rule structures within which the students must situate their own creativity, which is simultaneously stimulated and limited by the confines of the given form. Within these exercises, thematic content either takes second place to the demands of the game or is itself transformed into part of the game. Autobiographical material in the form of “members of your own family,” for example, here becomes a component in a narrative exercise. Similarly, pre-existing literary texts become the raw material for further play. The student poet finds him or herself presented with a range of technical and thematic toys that include members of his or her own families, comic books, and Shakespearian drama.

The student’s relationship with literature, like his or her relationship with Koch himself, is not, of course, as truly egalitarian as either of them might have wanted. As a teacher Koch inevitably occupies a position of authority within the classroom environment; ultimately, it is he who decides on the nature of the games to be played and he who judges the results of those games. It is more critically profitable, however, not to view Koch’s approach to pedagogy as a failed attempt at utopian egalitarianism, but rather as a symptom of his more fundamental orientation towards socially oriented poetic activity. His demystification of the writing process and literary history does not create a truly non-hierarchical poetry, but rather opens this poetry up to the destabilising forces generated by social interaction. This social interaction invites other voices—other individuals—into the game of poetry, injecting an element of uncertainty and otherness into the rigidity of the established rules.

4. *Making It Up* and the Instabilities of Collaborative Improvisation

Koch’s 1979 improvised reading with Allen Ginsberg provides us with a glimpse into the real-time unfolding of such structured yet chaotic poetic interaction. The reading was held at St. Mark’s Church in New York. St. Mark’s had been a hub of New York poetic activity since even before the 1966 inception of the Poetry Project readings there. The Koch/Ginsberg reading, organised by Ron Padgett, was the focus of exceptional interest. The genesis for the event arose during a taxi ride shared by the three poets during which, in Padgett’s words, “Allen and Kenneth started joking about and even parodying each other’s work.” The later performance was, then, in a sense merely the extension of such moments of informal collaboration and so part of the wider social poetics of Koch and his circle.

The subsequently published transcript of the performance provide us with an insight into how Koch took upon himself the role of both facilitator of play and player in an essentially open-ended ludic system: a system of rules and constraint keep unstable by the incorporation of humour, chance, and environmental factors. Padgett would later recall how:

> The parish hall was absolutely packed, with around 225 people. For fresh air we had opened the big three windows on the west side of the room, windows that were soon filled with the faces of those who had arrived too late to get inside. Others gathered behind them in the churchyard.

This context is significant in that it is essential to how Koch and Ginsberg’s interaction unfolds. Much of the text of *Making It Up* consists of conversation (represented in the text in italics) between the two poets. Each
improvised poem is both preceded and punctuated by negotiations as to just what compositional rules they will follow. Several times external factors influence these negotiations, sometimes even breaking into the flow of an improvisation and triggering a change in thematic direction:

[Noise of whistles outside.]

K: Whistles outside.
AG: Is it cops? Is it robbers?
KK: Is it a sick frog?
AG: Is it a clownish frog?

KK: Do you feel, Allen, the haiku is a more natural form for us than blues? It seems to be.
AG: One thought follows another.
KK: What should we do next?
AG: More haikus. I think they’re very interesting. I could go on forever. The ground, the recognition, and the comment.

[Noise of sirens outside.]

AG: Sirens wailing down 11th Street
KK: Ron Padgett sitting
AG: The audience rubbing its chin

KK: Some lights on, some lights off
AG: Sweat on the neck
KK: Passion in the heart

Despite the editorial efforts to divide the transcript by means of italics into sections of poetry and non-poetry, the divisions between these speech modes is by no means clear. One exchange between Koch and Ginsberg even falls into a haiku-like 7/5 syllable pattern: “One thought follows another” / “What should we do next?” It thus becomes difficult for the reader—and even more so, the audience—to determine the exact moment when the conversation between Koch and Ginsberg halts and the composition of poetry begins.

The cause of this difficulty is the fact that both the conversation and the poetry are in fact parts of the same game. All the factors that surround the two poets—the heat of the room, the watching audience, sounds from outside, the historicity and traditions of poetic composition itself—combine together to form the centreless ludic structure in which Koch and Ginsberg are free to move within and beyond. Most importantly, they inject an element of chance into the reading, ensuring that the progress of the improvisations remains unpredictable. In the above exchange, Ginsberg segues from relatively abstract musings on the nature of haiku and an analysis of their three-part structure to reportage on the sirens outside. This leads to three more lines, Koch-Ginsberg-Koch, of environmental reportage before Ginsberg narrows his focus to
intimate physically with the line “sweat on the neck.” Koch’s response is to maintain the intimate tone while shifting Ginsberg’s physicality into the less concrete rhetoric of “passion in the heart.”

Yet for all the shifting nature of the poetry, the reading never becomes a free-for-all. Ludus is always present, and it is only within this ludus that Koch and Ginsberg’s freeplay occurs. Frequently, in fact, the establishment and maintenance of the ludic structure becomes itself a kind of game, Koch taking on the double-sided role of both adjudicator and player with Ginsberg in the game of composition. At one point in the evening, Koch and Ginsberg begin a chain-ballad narrating a fantastical meeting between Popeye and William Blake. Ginberg’s opening line, however, quickly sparks a debate over the appropriate ballad meter:

\begin{quote}
AG: Popeye, you represent for us only the body there; only the meat.
KK: Hey, hey, Allen. This is a ballad. You know, like: “I walked across the country grey And saw a little girl”
AG: Popeye . . . here you are everybody. Here you are in me. No, that’s a four beat line. Popeye’s in his body, Popeye’s in his meat.
KK: That’s an alexandrine.
AG: Could that be considered a ballad meter, is there any expert here?
KK: Well, actually it would be like . . . .
AG: Popeye sat upon his chair.
KK: That’s it.\footnote{32}
\end{quote}

Just as he directed his students towards experimentation in specific forms, here Koch guides Ginsberg towards the use of correct ballad meter. Koch effectively usurps Padgett’s role as master of ceremonies and takes it upon himself to establish the ludic conventions—the rules of play—by which the evening advances, countering each of Ginsberg’s moves with correction or approval until the rules of the moment—in this case, traditional ballad meter—are adhered to. Yet at the same time, both the environmental context of the performance and Ginsberg’s own incorporation into the process of play resist these ludic conventions solidifying into dogma.

5. Conclusion

There will, of course, always be moments when attempts at poetic freeplay do solidify into rule-bound dogma. The distributed networks across which poetic play occurs ensure, however, that such dogma forms only a part of broader systems of experimentation and innovation. Dogma—the ultimate immutable rule system—is itself, of course, highly mutable. Just as paidia tends towards ludus, so ludus reverts back towards paidia. The danger for both poet and critic is that the shifting nature of the situation will go unobserved, its complexities obscured by a focus on one isolated segment of the overall system. Within such segments, individual texts and individual authors can be isolated and evaluated. Such focused analysis is a valid and necessary part of the critical process. What an understanding of the broader complexities promises, however, is that the limitations of such reductionism can be understood and acknowledged. Attention can then also be turned to parts of the system that have previously been neglected, places in which the products of collaborative and competitive engagement—the textual remnants of practices not traditionally thought of as constituting poetry—remain to be discovered.
At times these practices play out across the open space of the page; at others they occupy the theatrical spaces of poetry readings. Recognising and exploring them provides not only broader understandings of individual poets such as Koch but also a fuller conception of the multiplicity of textual and social connections that we call poetry.

Notes


5) Hayles, 158.

6) Hayles, 158.


10) Schulte-Sasse, xxix.


14) Huizinga, 10. Italics in original.


16) Caillois, 27.

17) Caillois, 75.

18) Caillois, 8.


20) Mark Silverberg, *NY School Poets and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 56.

21) Marjorie Perloff in “Avant-Garde Community and the Individual Talent: The Case of Language Poetry” *Revue française d'études Américaines* 103 (2005), pp 117-41. 131 has described how this normalisation has, in the case of Language poetry, “invariably meant that the application of its principles would be codified, watered down, and misunderstood.” More recently, Brian Reed in *Phenomenal Reading* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2012. 194) has echoed Perloff’s reservations, pointing out that the mainstream popularity of constraint-based poetry—the very poetry Koch
so championed—risks co-opting the subversive energies of avant-garde experimentalism into what he terms “the service of a chastened, qualified humanism.” Ironically, Perloff’s own positioning of Language poets within a tradition of “individual talent” can be considered a similar kind of co-option.

23) Koch, 29.
24) Koch, 5.
25) Koch, 4, emphasis added.
26) Koch, 148.
27) Koch, 148.
28) Lehman, 233–34.
31) Koch and Ginsberg, 29, square brackets in original.
32) Koch and Ginsberg, 15, ellipses in original.