EVERY MAGAZINE IS A HEAVY investment and risk, not only of time, money and energy, but also literary purpose. Editors who eclectically publish friends, strain to catch "big names," or randomly regurgitate "Whatever comes in" may be popular today but are ignored tomorrow. Serious writers soon dismiss them.

The first SOUP was intended as a mini-anthology, a cross-section of current work emphasizing new directions. It won approval. One consistent recommendation: SOUP should clarify its focus. Gradually I realized my main interest was toward "New Narrative" writing.

Since Bruce Boone's essay on the "Talks" issue of HILLS suggests some central objectives of this project—if only by way of comparison to certain other writers—I need add little by way of introduction. New Narrative is language conscious but arises out of specific social and political concerns of specific communities. It may be foregrounded as in the work of Luisah Teish, Shirley Garzotto, Robert Gluck and Judy Grahn or more buried as in recent work by Leslie Scalapino and Aaron Shurin. It stresses the enabling role of content in determining form rather than stressing form as independent or separate from its social origins and goals. Writing which makes political and emotional (as well as linguistic) connections interests me more than writing which does not.

At the same time it is too early to close dialogue on these matters. Ron Silliman's review offers a divergent viewpoint. Gil Ott, Bob Perelman and others til a middle ground. Unsolicited manuscripts have poured in. A few contained surprises that fit the focus of this issue. A few I liked well enough I didn't care if they fit. Variety is the spice of life. Soup too. A good cook, however, uses spices sparingly.

SOUP 3 will focus on translations. Submission deadline is Oct. 1, 1981. Contributors should enclose texts in original language as well as in translation; also a brief note on translator's theory and methodology.

— Steve Abbott

Correction:

Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac referred to in intro of first SOUP was written solely by Gerald Nicosia. Frankie Edith Parker and some 300 other interviewees contributed information to it. Grove Press will publish it in one volume in 1981.

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Kathy Acker

FIRST DAYS

OFLIFE

MY FATHER HAD LEFT ME all his possessions and I was, by
the world's accounting, a well-to-do young woman. I owned a large
estate in Seattle. The rest of the money, since it was tied up in
stocks and bonds and lawyers' incomprehensible papers, only
meant that I was now untouchable. I knew most people wanted
money or fame desperately just in order to survive. I knew I was no longer a person
to a man, but an object, a full purse. I needed
someone to love me so I could tell what
reality was.

The rest of my life was programmed
for me: Since I had inherited an estate in
Seattle, I would go to Seattle. Clifford,
my father's best friend, was going to
accompany me. I would never do what I
wanted to do. My aunts Martha and Mabel
had made sure that my money wouldn't
allow me to act unreasonably and pleasur-
ably. I grew accustomed to that reality.

My father died in the middle of January.
It is now almost two years later. I can't
describe Sutton Place — where Ashington

People without hands walked slowly down
the middle of the streets. Just as during
the blackout, New York City had become
a small happy town or a series of small
towns strung out in a line. Whenever my
mind looked in its mirror, it counted up
its blessings: I was walking down a street.
There was no one who was attacking me.
There were no more stories or hard passion
in my life. I had real moments of happiness
(non-self-reflectiveness), when I freely
read books.

I knew there could be no way I would
live with a man, because, while I desperately
needed total affection, I wasn't willing to
give away my desires which is what men
want and I couldn't trust. The men who
were part of my life weren't really part of
my life: Clifford, because I hated him, and
the delivery boys, because they were weak-
ings.

Only sensations. What the imagination
seizes as Beauty must be truth — whether
it exists materially or not — for I have
the same idea of all our Passions as of
Love they are all in the sublime, creative
of essential Beauty . . . The imagination
may be compared to Adam's dream — he
awoke and found it truth. I am the more
zealous in this affair, because I have
never yet been able to perceive how anyth-
ing can be known for truth by consecutive
reasoning — and yet it must be. Can it be
that even the greatest philospher ever
arrived at his goal without putting aside
numerous objections? However it may be,
Oh for a Life of Sensations rather than of
Thoughts!

Of silks satins quilted satins taken
from grandmother's bed thick satins black
fur shorn from living lambs cottons steel
wool the density of shit chewed-up cin-
mamon bark clustered angora and linen
goose and duck feathers slumber

St. Agnes Eve — Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the
frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in wooly fold;
Numb were the beadman's fingers, while
he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven, with out
a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his
prayer he saith.

It was snowing all the time. Frost
covered the rooftops the trees the cars.
what her life's like, scared out of her wits, she doesn't believe what she believes so to know what love is she has no idea what money is she runs away from anyone so anything she's writing is just un-knowledge. Plus she doesn't have the guts to entertain an audience. She should put lots of money is she runs away from anyone so an ass cause I want to please. What'm I going to do? Teach?

Author: You're a dumb ass bucklicker. If some dumb person bought this book, he should have the grace to read it and if he doesn't like me, so what.

He (the author) has not hit the rumors, he does not know 'em; he has not conversed with the Barthol'mew-birds, as they say; he has ne'er a sword-and-buckler man in his Fair, nor a little Davy to take toll o' the bawdy. He is the second, if anybody's teeth should chance to ache in his play. None o' these fine sights! Nor has he the canvas-cut i' the night for a hoseproject to man to creep in to his she-neighbors and take his leap there! Nothing! No, an' some writer (that I personally know) had had but the peping o' this matter, he would ha' made you such a jigger job i' the booths, you should ha' thought an earthquake had been i' Seattle! But these master-poets, they ha' their own absurd courses; they will be informed of nothing! Would not a fine pump under the stage ha' done well? A good hearty and a punk set under her head, with her stern upward, and ha' been soured by my witty young masters o' the Cop Station? What think you o' this for a show, now? He will not hear o' this! I am an ass, I.

Author: Huh? What rare discourse are you fall'n upon, ha? Ha' you found any friend here, that you are so free? Away rogue, it's come to a fine degree in these spectacles when such a youth as you pretend to a judgment.

What is this that we sail through? What palpable obscure? What smoke and reek, as if the whole steaming world were revolving on its axis, as a spitty sailors, who long ago had dashed themselves to the taffrail for safety; but must have famished.

"Dood Hope, Dood Hope," shrieked Jackson, with a horrid grin, mimicking the Dutchman, "dare is no dood hope for dem, old boy; dey are drowned and d . . . d, as you and I will be, Red Max, one of dese dark nights." *: the only certainty*

To prove that there was nothing to be believed; nothing to be loved, and nothing worth living for, but everything to be hated, in the wide world.

Sir, my mother has had her nativitewater cast lately by the cunning men in Cow-Lane, and they ha' told her her fortune, and do ensure her she shall never have happy hour, unless she marry within this sen'night, and when it is, it must be a madman, they say.

Why didn't Melville suicide? He didn't want to.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy, Even to Madeleine's chamber, and there hide Hin a closet, of such privacy That he might see her beauty unespied, And win perhaps that night a peerless bride, Never on such a night have lovers met, The old woman leads him through many halls to the bedroom. He hides and hiding watches the girl he's in love with. Around the window a carved representational frame stained glass the middle a shield the middle blood. The girl who's never fucked takes her clothes off. She falls asleep on her bed. The young man covers her naked titts with candied apples fruits creamy jellies cinnamon syrup dishes silver, and lies down beside her. She doesn't wake up. "Now, Sarah, this is purely medicinal." He handed the full cup to me. "I'll warm you. You must be warmed. What you should have is a hot bath and climb into a warm bed. I'm afraid Parrot Cottage can't offer such amenities. Never mind. This is the next best thing.

I did what he wanted me to and I hated myself for doing it. I was feeling good because the hot liquid relaxed my body and my tension; this growing ease made me a traitor to myself.

I had to keep the joy growing to blot out my consciousness of what was happening to me. Sensuous beauty is its own perfect excuse, for it brings itself into existence. Constant unendurable sensuousness — not passion, which destroys better than I do. He's tricky. He gets me to be who he wants.

He says it's love. I mutter something about the girl I've heard he's going to marry. He laughs, and his laughter excites me.

"She's here with me," he says. "She's Miss Sarah Ashington. I decided she was the one as soon as I set eyes on her.

We married, but I still wanted madly to see him I will admit I love the man I had married. He had overwhelmed me and aroused a certain passion in me. For a deadly moment I had found him irresistible. I don't love him, I cried inside my mind. I hate the inside of my mind. I want loving kindness, tenderness, not this mad wild emotion, which he makes me feel.

He drops to his knees and kisses my brow my eyelids my throat. He is kissing my naked heart. His tiny hands are shuddering my naked heart and now he is beside me (he is whispering to me he is whispering into me ooh) This whisper is an outside cool breath This whisper is controlling me this whisper is my breath.

In Paris policemen wearing blue triangular hats walk past buildings smaller than themselves and murderers look like each other and wear black. The ornamentation of Venice is precise a fairy tale. The Roman streets lie sunlit, though there is no sun, where rooms, above, wander into room after room so that inside is outside though it isn't. Sometimes, I murdered a man or a group of men murdered me. I never saw the details of their faces.

"Sarah, my love," he murmured, "didn't you know? It was meant to be."

I stared at him incredulously.

"I want you to realize what a resourceful husband you have. You know how thick these winter fogs become? It occurred to me it'd be easy to lose our way . . . to wander around and around. You would feel tired. You wouldn't know what you were doing. I would make you drunk. I would be your savior. Under the guise of being God, I'd do what I want. You see how romanticism works."

"Is love always disgusting?" I was still regarding his perspective as useful.

He laughed. "What do you say, my pet? What's your bodysay when I touch it? I'm a man, Sarah; I'm not the mealy-mouthed man and you planned to rape me."

"Your heart is telling you the truth," he said.

I didn't know if I loved my husband, or not.

I hated him I hated him but I knew if he should leave me I would die.

"My Madeline! Sweet dreamer! Lovely bride!"

"Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest!"
"Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed?
"Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
"After so many hours of toil and quest,
"A famish'd pilgrim, — sav'd by miracle.
"Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
"Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
"To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

Is my lover trying to murder me?
Is my lover trying to get my inheritance?
Is my lover a stupid worthless being?
"You have to trust me," he tells me.
He won't tell me why. As soon as he tells me I have to trust him he takes some of my jewels, not my favorites, to sell because we can use the money, and when I ask him where the money is he won't answer me. It's always my fault.

The nightmares have begun again.
As I said, it was winter. Three days after the winds started they could never stop for the concrete buildings housed them the streetlights held them the very beds and streets were winds. My skin and the stuff under my skin tremble, feel the temperature extremes, I don't know what is physical doubt and what is mental doubt.

I want vision. If I do everything I can to change myself, (my self is my desires and dreams), so I don't have to leave this man — if I leave him, I won't bother again with a man, am I turning away from all that is dearest and deepest: vision? Or is vision that which has nothing to do with the will, but is necessity working itself out?

When I was in eighth grade, I thought the twins in my class who were the only girls considered to be as intelligent as me, absolutely evil. I thought about them or absolute evil all the time. My husband wants me to put my inheritance in a joint bank account and draw up a will in his name. How do we know how to act? How do we know when our actions will cause pain? How is it possible to choose? I knew I must not choose and I must escape.
Ye winds, ye cold air-snakes who wind through flesh, all who are nature:

FIRST PERSON
THIRD PERSON
NOTES

Shirley Garzotto

A STEADY POUR
perhaps an avalanche
in the morning, laying quite still, listening to heels on the wooden floor of the hall, apart from my sound of breathing or the hum of the humidifier, lending me the pleasure of knowing things are taken care of, and I don't have to do anything.

Short chapters.
Connections or Links.
The soft white calf of her daughter's leg.
Mrs. N. enters the room hunched over, not like she had a weight on her shoulders, more like it was an effort to move ... no, like she was protecting her body from an overhanging branch. Her pale face was beginning to accumulate those fine lines that add character but her gray eyes and soft thin lips gave her an uncertain quality. Like she didn't know if she was moving backwards or forwards in time. She smiled and several lines appeared in her forehead rebutting the smile. She wore a felt beige hat that blended in with beige-silvery hair. Everything she wore was beige, even the gloved hand she hesitantly extended and he hesitantly shook, soft chamois locking against his palm. He knew he couldn't be direct and open with her because she would shy away. Touching her glove was the closest she would let him get. He thought of water seeping in a long, barely noticeable line out of a hole in a rock. Grey cement, damp, cool to touch.

Behind her was Mr. N., tall with wide shoulders but somehow spare, as though he would only be comfortable in a black and white room. Any color would make him nervous. He peered over the top of Mrs. N.'s hat with a stale strong gaze as though Maury wasn't quite right, but then nothing ever was. Marco Polo, awkward yet cynical finding himself on Webster Street instead of the Yangse River, (unclear) Once their gaze connected, Mrs. N. seemed to be brushed aside like a curtain, and the two men shook hands. Maury turned to usher Mr. N. into the living room and was momentarily jolted to find Mrs. N. right beside his arm so that he nearly bumped into her. It was funny because he hadn't felt her presence at all.

How much energy could Maury sustain? He felt dwarfed although only Mr. N. was taller and only by a few inches. And, as always when alien people came into his home, he saw his furniture become alien too. The ashtray, a large black iron oval in the center of the room, seemed ugly.