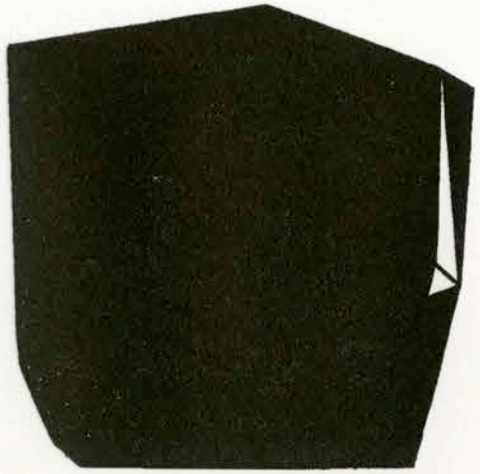
PLAIN ENGLISH

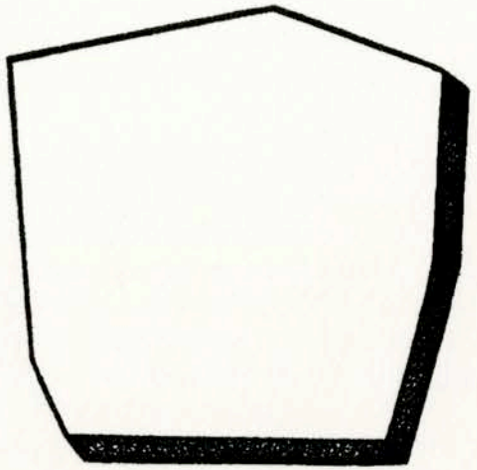


Plain English stands bright. The new townhouses sit atop thick paved streets and over-reaching arched lights in tight proximity. The good people of Plain English are few but they know each other and the perimeters of their existence. Enclosed by a thin fence, there is no wind within the boundaries of Plain English. The stillness is ever-present. The good people of Plain English are industrious all the same-- daily, they set to work making wind chimes.

Old Thomas surrounds Plain English. The houses are sprawled out over the countryside at a comfortable distance. Daily, the good people of Old Thomas tend their gardens. Their dogs wander unpaved streets, stretches of green, ditches or wherever the wind teases them along. The good people of Old Thomas follow their interests. They take long walks that circumvent the unwanted development in their midst, careful to keep it out of view.

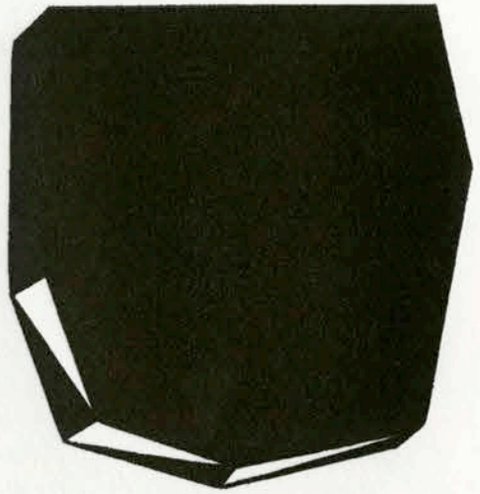
After a day of work, the inhabitants of Plain English retire to their rooms. They imagine how the chimes would sound if played indiscriminately by the wind. They write scores that allow for the possibility of random continuous play. Sometimes they whisper melodies through the fence knowing that the sound won't travel. They sleep and dream in a motionless hush and are back to work in the morning.

After their nightly bonfire, the inhabitants of Old Thomas sleep in. They linger awhile but knowing that they are the rightful owners of the wind, they rise and willfully construct their time. Everything moves. Bits of ash travel over the gardens; flecks of light cast through the trees trip over the bending grass; and the dogs jog along catching every scent delivered by the wind. The inhabitants of Old Thomas fill their days. Sometimes they spy the odd Plain English resident fabricating a wind chime at a distance.



The wind feels the intricate restlessness on both sides. It touches everything even in its absence and knows it is felt as a promise, a desire, an advantage and a nuisance. Inevitbly, debris passed along by the wind does not stop short at the borders of Plain English. The residents clean it up routinely.

Old Thomas residents are mainly concerned with the shadows that shape their landscape and hang on every corner. Unfazed, the shadow is right there, most stubbornly on the stillest of days. A language is needed to negotiate the shadows. And so a large birth of indulgent language takes hold. The gardeners speak obliquely to the budding plants they cultivate. They are weary of the little shadows cast by the plants, but when the wind transforms the pitched shapes, the gardeners have been answered. If they speak correctly to the plants they might overwhelm their shadows. And there is a palpable sense of relief at high noon and nightfall.

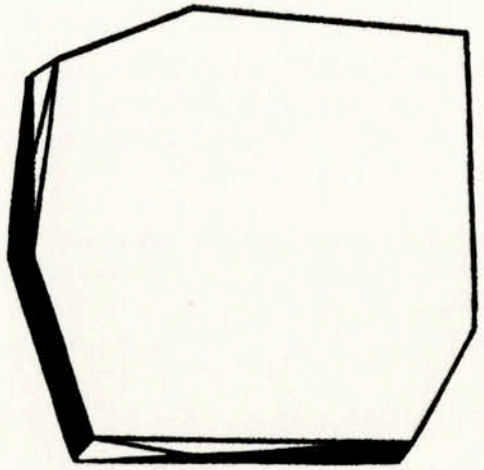


After a while, the language of Plain English transforms into the distinctive shapes that make up the chimes. Assembled or fragmented, the multifaceted models of colored glass and metal glow in the sun or in the shade. The chime makers trade in symbolic configurations, interpreting and expanding their vocabulary as necessary. The language operates ideally within the boundaries of Plain English. Their speech reflects the untenable belief that the energy distilled in their objects retains the potency of language. However, the chimes remain mute. The makers acknowledge the shadows in Plain English, but it is not their language.

Slippage occurs. While there was tolerance but little correspondence between the two communities before their self investment in speech, the divide has deepened. Glances are misread, quietude is confounded. Knowing the conditions prohibits any flow and both parties suspect something is amiss between themselves and the larger world. The denizens of Plain English wonder if they've been too reliant on a singular trade. They no longer whisper through the fence.

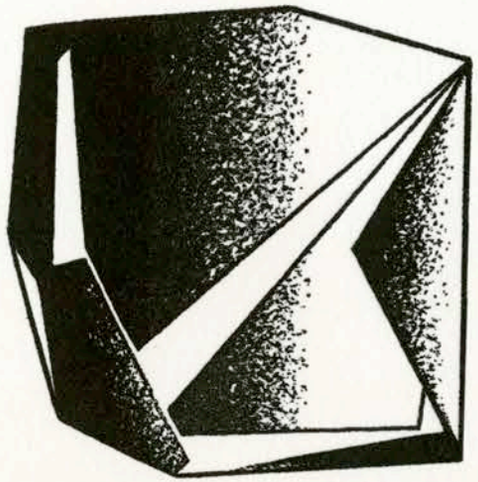
The denizens of Old Thomas ponder a lull in time and worry that conversations with shadows may be obsolete. Rightfully so. As bucolic a utopia as Old Thomas is, it is merely a province of New Oxford and the keepers of New Oxford control the time. To the keepers, time is more powerful than the wind and blind to its whims. Their ability to engineer time allows the keepers to manipulate the lives of all outliers. In time, they will simply annex Old Thomas, and Plain English with it.

The outliers keep the threat at bay with the conviction in their work at hand. While preening plants and shadows there is an assumption that days are created. The gardens of Old Thomas do grow in collaboration with time after all.



While faceting shapes in tidy Plain English there is a conceit that potency can be crafted and embodied. An unabled lexicon cannot be tested by time after all.

The outliers take comfort in their remote positions. To this day, Plain English is spoken in muted chimes. The gardens of Old Thomas flourish. The wind blows wherever it pleases and the faithful dogs run with it.



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