

# Journal of Linguistics

## song of the unknown grapheme

context is all quoth the linguist  
down to a native speaker who wept  
punctuation is but said lichen of  
your discontents made ruly matter  
can there but be words enough for  
the imperial litter oh data fruit  
virgule fleuron come manicule how  
hashtags curl up in bullet points  
and this stark fungi of asterisms  
yes punctuation is such lichen of  
your dissertated content drifting  
into sentence laws of the thallus  
imposing clouds of graphematicity  
in inscription of an anthropology  
as befits no colon worth its semi  
lozenge now no obelus nor pilcrow  
yes capitals do brand our science  
embracing too the comma as a love  
and to put too fine a point on it  
there is no linguistics worth its  
cognate that doesn't fall in with  
punctuation and in so falling who  
hears the I sing that accompanies  
all our silent misrepresentations  
and passes such as silence dashed

## sang of the unkenk lichen

the crack is wall spored a lichen  
fax to a fungal partner who shone  
bacteria as but the rift crust is  
mossy free living not algal bloom  
how little or no is to type still  
the oldest living given thing bit  
crustose foliose and fruticose oh  
beard moss unfurl a broken cortex  
and deictic vegetative propagules  
yes lichen is such punctuation of  
even a pre-cambrian morph to gold  
into a colonising as conjunctions  
made nitrogeneous waste to gerund  
in prescriptions of an industrial  
revolution calling for apostrophe  
o anaphora no arthonia galactites  
yes heavy metals do kill our kind  
polluting to lost veneers on aged  
buildings as to punctuate the air  
there is no lichen scale but maps  
in pulls of sulphur dioxide a new  
poverty and so many cryptic moths  
there past hydrogen flouride sing  
down wind of the unsung prolepsis  
who could survive the nuclear war

# JOURNAL OF LINGUISTICS

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For the three covers of our fiftieth anniversary volume, the *Journal* has commissioned three new poems on the topic of language. For this first issue, the two texts on the cover are poems by Drew Milne entitled 'song of the unknown grapheme' along with a translation of this poem, 'sang of the unkent lichen', presented in an image text collage conceived by Drew Milne, using a photograph by Sarah Hayden.