

POETICS LIST ★

1994-2013

DATE

The Poetics-List Writings of
Chris Stroffolino, 1994-2013

Poetry is for Everyone

Collected from the
UB Poetics List archive

His half of the
conversation, set
beside the words
he answered

edited by
Kristen M. Fabians

ARCHIVE



POETICS

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Poetry Is for Everyone

*The Poetics-List Writings of Chris Stroffolino, 1994–
2013*

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This book was gathered from the public archive of the Poetics List, the discussion list hosted for many years at the University at Buffalo, where Chris Stroffolino posted from December 1994 through 2013. Out of more than a thousand messages, the posts carrying real substance — some four hundred and seventy — were selected, and each was returned to its context: wherever the line or passage he was answering could be recovered from the archive, it has been set directly above his reply, so that both voices are heard at once, as a reader of the list would have heard them.

The posts appear in the order they were sent and are gathered into chapters by year, each opening with a short editorial headnote. Around them three finding aids were built — a linked Contents, a Reader's Guide, and an Index of people and topics whose page numbers are live links — and two appendices preserve the reading notices and a complete catalogue of every message, so that nothing is pretended away. The plain-text archive was cleaned, collated, paired with the words it answered, annotated, and typeset into the linked reading edition presented here.

edited by Kristen M. Fabians

A POETICS READING EDITION
Buffalo · Brooklyn · Oakland · 1994–2013

Introduction

The Man Who Answered

Chris Stroffolino did not, as a rule, start conversations. He answered them. Across sixteen years on the UB Poetics List — from a torrential arrival in December 1994 to a last question left hanging in 2013 — he began almost nothing and replied to very nearly everyone, arriving in someone else's argument already mid-sentence, addressing a poet by name, saying his piece with love and a pun and a stray bar of Elvis Costello or Little Feat, and signing himself “cs.” Where another correspondent posted an essay, Stroffolino wrote a letter. This edition is built around that fact. Because each of his posts is one half of a conversation, I have set above it, wherever I could recover it, the very line he was answering — so that the reader overhears both voices at once, as the list did, and the reply stops being a fragment and becomes what it always was: an act of attention aimed at a particular person.

He was born Louis Christopher Stroffolino in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1963, and he came to the list as a graduate student at what he liked to call “(sm)allbany” — SUNY Albany, where in 1998 he finished a doctorate on Shakespeare's middle comedies. Much of his biography can be read, as I have learned to read Poetics biographies, in the From: line and in the things that leak up through the wit: the university address, the Brooklyn flat shared with Gary Sullivan, the migration west around 2001 to Oakland and the visiting posts at St Mary's and Mills and Laney; and, threaded under all of it, the standing facts of the life — no health insurance, adjunct wages, a slow-defrosting freezer, a rotary phone, the recurring arithmetic of a poet trying to stay online. He was, for most of these years, broke, brilliant, and pun-drunk from coffee, and he did not hide any of the three.

The Stroffolino of these pages is a particular and lovable creature. He is erudite without a grain of pomposity, as happy to cite De Man or Barthes or Althusser as Sly Stone or the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band, and incapable of keeping the two registers apart for more than a sentence. He is combative and conciliatory in the same breath — forever granting the small point in order to keep the large one, apologising for a tone he is about to take anyway. And he is generous past the point of self-interest: the man who answers a stranger's query at length, hunts down an obscure soul record for someone he has never met, and lends his cerebral-palsy clients a book of poems “as an example of what can be done.”

His subjects recur, and they are the list's own, tilted to his angle. The poetics of the quotidian — poetry made of buses and rent and daily weather — is his first love and his lifelong brief. The quarrel between the avant-garde and the academy is his second, and when he argues it, as he does for years, the argument about class is very often an argument about his own mother, and he knows it. Around these run his defence of the New York School he adored; his steady, un-showy attention to Black music and to who is permitted to be heard; and, in the later years, an almost scholarly devotion to the late, embittered Laura (Riding) Jackson. He is not a systematic thinker and never pretends to be. His gift is for the live, glancing, associative response — which is exactly why he reads so much better in company than alone, and why an edition of his posts must go to the trouble of restoring the company.

A word on what I have kept, and what I have not. Stroffolino's output on the list is enormous — better than a thousand messages — and a real part of it is the froth any long conversation throws off: the one-line thanks, the corrected spelling, the “which bookstore?”, the flyer for a reading. I have kept the posts with genuine substance in them, and the shorter ones that anchor a real exchange, and I have let the rest go. Where a run of small posts adds up to something — a running joke, a private quest, a burst of kindness or need — I have paused between entries, in my own voice, to say what the reader is not seeing and why it mattered. The reading notices and the announcements, the working record of gigs and books and bands, I have gathered by year in an appendix at the back; and behind that, for completeness, a catalogue of every message in the archive, so that nothing is pretended away.

The shape of the whole is a rise and a long, uneven fall. The torrent of 1995 and 1996 — a booklorn doctoral student answering the entire room, twice threatening to quit and twice drawn back — thins as the money and the degree and the city all change; he leaves for a Jersey City walk-up at midsummer 1996, goes briefly silent in 1997 for lack of funds, lands the doctorate in 1998 into a market that pays it in adjunct hours, and by 2001 is writing from an Oakland two months old, on the coast that would keep him. He returns to the list in force in 2002, one part Shakespeare scholar and one part piano player, and for a few years the old generosity runs at full volume even as the ground thins beneath it.

And then, in 2004, without ever once being announced, the accident arrives. Somewhere between spring and summer the way he crosses a room quietly changes; a bicycle, a lasting injury, a wheelchair in the years that follow. He

carries it as he carries everything — sidelong, in a pun, between a Steve Lacy elegy and a defence of Philly soul — and he keeps answering, by name, warm, the poet of a quotidian that had grown a good deal harder to survive. The music takes over where the arguing leaves off: the Silver Jews record he had played on in 1998 gives way to his own band, Continuous Peasant, touring both coasts, and to a blog he distrusts even as he fills it.

The last years hold the endings the way late letters do — a season thick with mourning (Lamantia, Creeley, Lorenzo Thomas, and after Katrina a whole switchboard of worry), an eviction filed almost as ad copy, an elegy for a dead friend, a last scrap of verse. His final substantial post, quiet and easy to miss, is a dispatch about scanning and circulating out-of-print Los Angeles poetry — the first public sign of a labour of preservation he would go on conducting for years. The very last is a question about Ashbery, left hanging. A man may leave a room slowly, over sixteen years, and still be in the middle of a sentence when he goes.

I have set each post in the order it was sent, and placed before it, where the note earns its keep, a short remark in my own voice — some of them, I confess, fonder than strict editorial distance permits. Where he answers a bare first name, I have supplied the surname the list makes plain; where he replies to a line, I have set that line beside him. It is, as such things are, offered for the record. I have only proven unable to leave it alone.

A Reader's Guide

How this edition is arranged, and how to move through it

This is a book made entirely of replies, and it rewards a particular kind of reading. What follows is a short account of how it is put together, so that the reader can move through sixteen years of a poet's correspondence without losing the thread.

The order is time. The posts run in the sequence they were sent, from December 1994 to 2013, and they are gathered into chapters by year. Each year opens with a short headnote in my own voice — a paragraph that says where Stroffolino is living, what the list is arguing about, and what to listen for in the months ahead. The headnotes are meant to be read or skipped freely; nothing in the posts depends on them.

Each post keeps its company. Because Stroffolino almost never began a thread, a bare reply of his can read as a fragment. Wherever I could recover the line or the passage he was answering, I have set it directly above his post, in a lighter hand, so that the reader overhears both voices at once, as a member of the list would have. Where he answers a poet by first name only, I have supplied the surname the list makes plain. His own posts are printed whole, and he signs most of them, as he did, “cs.”

What is here, and what is not. Stroffolino's output on the list runs past a thousand messages. I have kept the posts with real substance, and the shorter ones that anchor a genuine exchange, and let the rest — the one-line thanks, the corrected typo, the flyer — go. Two appendices at the back hold what the main sequence leaves out: first, the reading notices and announcements, gathered by year; and behind them, for the record, a complete catalogue of every message in the archive, so that nothing is pretended away.

Finding your way. Three tools point into the book. The [Contents](#) lists all 470 posts in order, each entry linked to its text and back again, so a reader who remembers a title or a date can jump straight to it. The [Index](#), at the very back, gathers the people and the topics — the poets he answered, the figures he returned to, the quarrels he could not leave alone — with the page on which each is found; its page numbers are live links too. And the year-headnotes, read in sequence, make a rough map of the whole: a torrent in the mid-nineties, a thinning as the money and the city change, a return in force after 2001, and the long, uneven falling-off of the last years.

A note on the reading. Stroffolino is at his best in company — glancing, associative, punning, generous, arguing three things at once and granting the small point to keep the large one. Read a run of posts rather than a single one, and the man comes up out of the archive whole: erudite without a grain of pomposity, as ready to cite Barthes as the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band, and answering, to the end, by name.

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1994

The edition begins already mid-storm: a single fortnight of December 1994, when a thread nominally about school prayer swelled into the list's great quarrel over work, capital, the academy, and whether a poet owes the world his day job. Stroffolino answers everyone, by name, pun-drunk and cranky from coffee, defending the bachelor and the quotidian against both the family man and the theorist.

prayer

7 December 1994

He enters a school-prayer thread by way of the classroom, where Ashbery meets a student who will not be preached at; the seedbed of the month's long argument about didacticism and belief.

Well, are we against school prayer or what? "I would only be against prayer if they didn't pick MY prayer." So, I was teaching Ashbery's "Morning Jitters" and brought up the possibility that one of the main reasons Ashbery used the for "preached at" by a poet anymore--and so he had to create these ironic forms to be able to have his didactic cake and eat it to, as it were--a chaser, etc... And so I brought this up to my class, and a student (one who loved Silliman's MICROSOFT BUYS CATHOLIC CHURCH, by the way) said "THIS SUCKS, THIS SUCKS, I HATE BEING PREACHED TO" and then we had a moment of silence but only because time was up.

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prayer

7 December 1994

The list had been trading the epithet "vulgar Marxism" at Paul Hoover and Amiri Baraka; here he takes the insult and wears it.

As for those who accuse Hoover/Baraka of VULGAR MARXISM--What is this VULGAR MARXISM, any Marxism that remembers that the ECONOMIC is the REAL BASE ISSUE????? Well then certainly VULGAR Marxism is preferable to much of the obfuscating poetic/theory discussion that has dominated here for some time now...NOT THAT I MIND obfuscation (the noise of culture) per se--but when it PASSES ITSELF OFF as a revolutionary socio-political strategy then.... Besides, this weird hybrid of say Bertolt Brecht and(I'll save that harangue for another time). Chris Stroffolino

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prayer

9 December 1994

*In the thread, Clint Burnham had written · 8 December 1994 —**| chris don't forget "vulgar postmodernism"*

well clint one wonders if there's nothing but gossip at the end of this tunnel of vulgar hight postmarxism that flagellates self-importantly like the Ramones trying to play acoustic. You know, the "I care about global things" kind of intellectual ruse that might as well be Ruskin on a bearskin rug being blessed by Bishop Cardegan as far as I'm concerned. You know I heard a good one about Benjamin the other day, and ideas are ordered, yes they are, you know they are, ordered through personality networks, and it is my personality not to have one...chris

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Between these posts runs a sprawling list-wide debate on "occupational identity" — Silliman, Don Byrd, Steve Evans, Pierre Joris, Charles Alexander and others weighing corporation against academy, work against community. Most of it is omitted here; what survives is the running argument Stroffolino kept trying to drag back toward poetry.

Personal Blisters/Impersonal Burns

9 December 1994

His interlocutor is Steve Evans, writing from Brown, on whether anti-capitalist labour inside the university can be privileged over the shop floor.

*In the thread, Steve Evans had written · 9 December 1994 —**| The "you who can eliminate capitalism" is not singular but plural, not pre-existent but made*

WELL, STEVE, I AM SKEPTICAL ABOUT WHETHER WE SHOULD DARE MAKE SOME KIND OF CLAIM THAT EDUCATION OR ONE'S ANTI-CAPITALIST INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEMIA OR MCDONALDS FOR THAT MATTER, but i don't think you're 'criminally naive' either--if we can admit our own implication in the whole mess while still being aware that we ARE actually more exploited than exploiters, whether in academia or out, maybe then however there's, er, "hope"--but of course that means putting ourselves "on the line" as it were more...

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Univeral Blisters/Individual Burns

9 December 1994

Minutes later he answers again, having caught himself misreading Evans and echoing Silliman and Mandel; a small public revision.

In the thread, Steve Evans had written · 9 December 1994 —

You and I can both discern the difference between false universalism and true universalism.

steve, just read your new post, i had responded to the earlier one and then realized my argument was similar to Silliman's (if not Mandel's) but now I realize that I too misread your statement as claiming that academia is "beyond ideology" and am glad to see you are not arguing from that position, but what is this "autonomy" we should fight for if not the autonomy of "bourgeois individuals"? If capitalism can not be truly universalized to suit the needs of all, are you positing a kind of anti-oedipus anti-capitalism of anarchy as an alternative, as it seems you might, or something quite different?

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town/gown/marriage/kindergarten/bottle

10 December 1994

He answers Charles Alexander of Chax Press, and the debate turns to family versus boho — a division in which the unmarried poet has a personal stake he does not hide.

In the thread, Mn Center For Book Arts had written · 9 December 1994 —

We don't often think of its necessary involvement with capital, but we should.

In response to charles alexander, yes even men must realize the "personal is the political" as it were, because as 'talkers' or 'yakkers' with our "highfallutin'" ideas about things we men (since it is mostly men) have really not 'evolved' much since the time of LYSISTRATA, and though I don't wish to once again return to a reified "essentialist" grid of "male sphere" vs "female sphere" in the "old fashioned" sense, certainly such a grid haunts far more than these discussions on the "net" as it were. At the same time, there are those of us who are not family-men (whether by choice or chance, I cannot tell, "alas") who are not necessarily any less "responsible" or "engaged" with community, etc. on levels such as you suggest. Though i don't wish to criticize the "mainstream bourgeois family" as LESS IMPORTANT than the "bourgeois quasi-bohemian lifestyle" I do wish to question a possible assumption that claims that THE BOHO is more decadent than the FAMILY MAN. (and this is hopefully not an attempt on my part to merely reinscribe the dialectics that have informed the "town' vs "gown" debate under different terms). I wish you well with your family, but "the family" does not work for all of us, and I'd like to see what "common ground" there can be between it and the "boho" (for lack of a better word) rather than merely be antagonistic

context than the mere bohemian--at least since the 80's and the rise of the L poets. Anyway, what does anyone make of this?

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The National Question, etc.

11 December 1994

Byrd had proposed rebuilding cities without cars as the cure for corporate greed; the reply meets utopia with a bed of nails and a Lennon/Lenin pun.

In the thread, Donald J. Byrd had written · 11 December 1994 —

| *the earth cannot long support the levels of exploitation it is now supporting*

So, Prof. Byrd, Herr Doktor, how do we begin this psychoanalysis of greed? Maybe instead of a couch a bed of nails? maybe block off all the highways that lead from the city to the suburbs at 5PM??? Maybe dose people with psychedelics instead of the mainstay of the bourgeois psychoanalytic industry rhymes with "greed")...Ah, utopia, utopia, there's gotta be more to life and thought than that. "We all'd love to see the plan..." said Lennon to Lenin

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town/gown/marriage/kindergarten/bottle

12 December 1994

In the thread, Robert Drake had written · 11 December 1994 —

| *a counterbalance on the side of _human_ relationships*

Yes, Charles (Alexander)--Isn't agreement boring? But I agree about not "divorcing" so-called "work" and so-called "free time" and I was intrigued by Shoemaker's wanting to go beyond binaries, or maybe I misread him, maybe he's saying it's impossible--and sure, there's no point CONCEPTUALLY doing away with certain binaries unless of course we disagree with referentiality, but obviously we don't or we wouldn't be talking about the town vs gown as if its rival tribes.... When I was a freshman in college a long time ago, they wanted the floor I lived on in a "dorm" to form a "team" against another floor where most of my friends lived (this is not an allegory of upward mobility-hint, hint) Anyway, the point is THAT what's silly about all these distinctions is that there is SOME SOCIAL FORCE that keeps us divided from each other--I tend to want to call it capitalism (but a rose by any other name...) and as one gets older the possibility of social engagement OUTSIDE THE FAMILY seems increasingly harder to pull off--The same old song, the death of community. I find it funny that people say "town" vs. "gown"--for certainly academics do not form a unified front. So, what's at stake in all this divisiveness! Ego? Pride? 12 Step program Rhetoric! Investments, commitments, marketing ploys. Testosterone! None of these explanations seem

to account for it-- I know why because AGREEMENT (or what we call agreement) IS BORING and that brings us back to do....Chris Stroffolino

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town/gown/marriage/kindergarten/bottle

12 December 1994

The same afternoon's second pass at Robert Drake, having lost the thread in abstractions and found it again over too much coffee.

In the thread, Robert Drake had written · 11 December 1994 —

it also does not exclude extended definitions of family, including various Boho arrangements

i had lost my thread in abstractions--when I say "divisiveness" I do not merely mean argumentative divisiveness, I mean the entire, uh, existential, (there I said it, though a better word of course is welcome--since all words seem approximations anyway) divisiveness that has a lot to do with the way this society attempts to assign us in predetermined grids, not just alienated labour and specialization but its echo in "personal stuff" and they are two sides of the same coin, a coin we should either try to melt down, but HOW? Being torn of course between wanting to attack the "bourgeois individual" from a position of the collective and on the other hand distrusting the NORMALIZING function collectivity seems to necessitate as in Neitzsche's genealogy (strong become evil, etc). I don't know this but abstractly.maybe it would be better if Charles Alexander actually DID turn this into a discussion about DIAPERS--for there should be a way for us oh so enlightened and concerned avant-gardists (sic) to be able to deal with such things without either cynical irony on one hand or IOWA school "musings" on the other. Though I think WCW is relatively over-emphasized (if not over-rated), at least he could write things like "Dance Rusee"-- to find the BOHO IN the family man, the family man in the BOHO, etc... Otherwise we become stereotypes for each other, "the grass always greener with envy on the other man's yawn"--- Cranky (from too much coffee), Chris Stroffolino

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Academy, etc.

14 December 1994

Pierre Joris had confessed the whole work-versus-academia debate was wearing thin; Stroffolino agrees, then rounds on the list's appetite for personality battles.

In the thread, Pierre Joris had written · 14 December 1994 —

was getting ever so slightly wearisome

No, Pierre, you didn't dream it, or I did too (and certainly there's no santa claus) but WHAT A DRAG--you think on a poetics list, especially one featuring many writers known for their problematizing of the old lyric "I" and its bulky humanistic

cult of personalities, there'd be less "personality battles," less egomongering territorial pissing and at least some attention to, dare I say it, "poetry" or at least rockmusic in a way that isn't merely bitter like the comments on the Rolling Stones that imply a kind of dry smug superiority (that I am probably totally guilty of here). (By the way--there's a typo in the second line of this note--I meant "you'd think" not "you think"--"you" as in "one") Chris Stroffolino

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ASSORTED

14 December 1994

Rodger Kamenetz had offered a Buddhist frame — greed as one of the three poisons, an aberration to be fought within rather than out there.

In the thread, Rodger Kamenetz had written · 13 December 1994 —

| *there's no sense looking for greed out there*

Dear Rodger Kamenetz--Not that I disagree with you about the value of fighting the enemy within (and fighting fighting for that matter, to get to a place that's unexpressable), but surely the enemy "out" there is not merely an ASSUMPTION--some of us can no longer afford the luxury to assume an ontology in which an INDIVIDUAL's interests are totally opposed to the interests of a collectivity, I think it's a question not so much of compromise in its bandaid-on-the-wound sense, but of realizing that we are "always already" social, even in "meditation" which can also be "a weapon", right?

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ASSORTED

16 December 1994

His longest post of the year, written at the end of a semester he calls hellish; part apology to Kamenetz, part plea for poetic intelligence, it drifts by the close into something nearer verse than argument.

In the thread, Rodger Kamenetz had written · 15 December 1994 —

| *No luxury ontology here- just an economy model*

Dear rodger--I am finally done with this "hellish" semester and no longer consider dealing with the "internal enemy" a luxury but a necessity. Anyway, what is lacking from this discussion for the most part seems to be poetry. I don't mean as artifact (THOUGH EVEN THAT WOULD BE REFRESHING) but a "poetic intelligence" that can inform the discussions. Though I am not the only one who can be seen as having tried to crush IT the few the times the discussion at least seemed to move tentatively towards it (AND I definitely owe rodger kamanetz an apology on this count). WHAT KAMENETZ brought up--the question of not worrying about a "them" (which to some extent is what Charles Alexander and maybe Steve Evans too) NEED NOT BE EMBRACED IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE to be an ef-

fective counter to what Don Byrd calls "the prose of thought" that has been manifested here. Without it, aren't we just yakking opiners??? Even with it we might be, but at least it might be more "fun" (and I say "fun" where others might say more "spiritual") WHAT IS KEEPING an open mind entail??? Being wishy-washy? Wavering between politics-as-politics and politics-as-poetry as a starting point of the meditation and not really worrying how or where it goes as long as it's intense??? Attitudes cancel each other out. Turning back to a DISCOURSE of politics either out of guilt, the feeling you're missing out on something, feeling too lopsided, or even pissed off at genuine disenfranchisement may be absolutely necessary at times But it too is no answer (and can reify into so much primping posturing) As if consciousness moves through trite seasons And the second you name something it stops (OOH, OOH, IDEOLOGICAL DODGE, refusal to implicate one's INEVITABLE partaking in a bourgeois ideology--arrest him even though no one will marry him because he doesn't make enough money) But the desire to "divvy" consciousness up into characters is one thing both theorists (critics) and lyric poets deny---This is a denial they have in common, unless we read poetry as a novelist would (which we can) and see WORDS, ideas, images, gestures, whathaveyou as characters... And this should free us to live "inconsistently" by theory's standards... (of course, you're not supposed to SAY THIS ON THE PAGE, only on your tombstone, and even then only if you're FRANK O'HARA)

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ASSORTED

16 December 1994

In the thread, Rodger Kamenetz had written · 15 December 1994 —

| fueled by clarity and compassion rather than rage, hatred and projection

reply reply Question: IS "identity" limitingly singular in "poetry" (insofar as it problematizes identity at all), as limitingly singular as it has been invoked in much of these "hot" internet debates? Aren't the debates with others the debates we have with ourselves? And if they don't always take the form of debates with ourselves, why do they have to with others?? Certainly one can communicate without being contentious??? I for one have overdosed on my own weakness for contention. Granted, it was a useful tool to go "beyond" the sickness of those "superficial mutual admiration societies" most of us probably couldn't stand... But the need to DISTINGUISH oneself has eclipsed the potential use value of what has been said, meanings tangled up in the messenger- Perhaps I'm projecting all of this and certainly don't wish for the discussion to degenerate into a forum on the psychoanalytic model of interiority or subjectivity. For "interiority" and "exteriority" are "the same" on a level that can not be utterly ghettoized without

"burn baby burn" coming down from Harlem to Wall Street (or C=o=m=p=u=t=e=r=l=a=n=d), and the discourse of "curved space" is pasta or "game" for the poet... Or we could destroy something before it's built... (Because destruction can't tear itself down, strictly speaking) And sometimes WE HAVE TO LET OURSELVES GO---and that's been the MAIN VALUE of this poetic list as I see it, but is it enough to meet here only anarchically, To release TENSION here only to build it up in our more intense "heightened commodity laboratory solitude" where one churns out one's latest poetic/theory works???? It's like someone who goes public dishevelled and only dresses up when there's no place to go. It might as well be the other way around. Either way, we're victims of compartmentalization, or am i making a mountain out of molehill???

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1995

1995 finds Stroffolino a first-year graduate student in what he calls '(sm)allbany,' broke and pun-drunk, answering nearly everyone on the UB Poetics list and starting almost nothing — a responder who turns each thread toward the same handful of loves: the New York School, black music, the class politics under the theory-talk, and Emily Dickinson's dashes. It is a year of quarrels he half-regrets entering and warmth he cannot help extending, twice threatening to flee the list and twice drawn back.

Domesday Dictionary

1 January 1995

1995 opens three weeks into Newt Gingrich's new Republican Congress; even the greeting folds the year's politics into a New Year's wish.

I just wanted to take the opportunity to as unironically as possible wish each and every one of you a "Happy New(t) Year." Stroffolino...

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discursive disruptions//whether poetry makes anything happen

1 January 1995

Marisa Januzzi delurks to revive an MLA-panel quarrel — Perloff's 'big skeptical question' about whether disrupting the poem's form disrupts patriarchy. His first substantial post answers her.

In the thread, Marisa A Januzzi had written · 1 January 1995 —

| I would like to revive the question of the political content of poetic form

Dear Marisa-- Thank you for the insight you bring to the issues of "metaphor" and its "antagonism" towards allegedly more "forward-looking" poetic disjunction. I believe the extent to which these issues have been "gendered" by the current dominant poetic factions is highly problematic for it's quite possible that what's called 'reactionary' and therefore patriarchal by a certain avant-garde strain

(what's derided as "metaphor" or "symbolist" or even "Romantic") has been dismissed out of hand. If we look at it historically, one can see the rhetoric that has enabled the legitimation of so-called "nonmetaphoric" or "nonlinear" modes of poetry has, for all its claims of radical politicalization, too often played into the demands and dynamics of the "academic establishment." (This reminds me of the statement--"Derrida would not have ever been allowed into the academy were it not for the fact that it's extremely easy to read Shakespeare as such."). In the academic fashion-show, the notion that women (or other 'marginalized' groups) must reject anything that reeks of tradition, seems to be either (1) self-defeating or (2) a desperate attempt to justify the so-called 'new' poetry, a poetry which has now come to have its own share of investment not so much a matter of "which side are you on" or even "taste," but a matter not so much a matter of "which side are you on" or even "taste," but a matter and "form" is problematized. The fact is, the debate between "metaphor" and "nonmetaphor" based poetry, between minimalism and maximalism, between meaning and play, cuts across political lines. To the extent that debates over poetry center on the POLITICS OF FORM obscures a perhaps more serious issue. For if the great "Western Canon" is a repressive force that needs to be subverted, perhaps this can best be done so by entering into dialogue with it. Though we should be aware of the repressive patriachal capitalistic cases supported the so-called "alternative" as well. This is not to say that there aren't writers on both "sides" that ARE more politically subverive than certain formal code. Any more thoughts you have on this would be appreciated. Thanx, Chris Stroffolino

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motives for metaphor

8 January 1995

In the thread, Marisa A Januzzi had written · 3 January 1995 —

| *what ever happened to the surrealist potential for metaphor*

Marisa (Januzzi)- I wasn't going to reply because I too feel "at a loss" when it comes to "recommended readings" on the huge subject of political content of poetic form. It's not because of a dearth of material but because of a plenitude. It's so prevalent an issue in most of what I read to have run the risk of becoming a BLASE issue. At least IN THEORY. Yet theory is only as "good" as its praxis, its enactment. So I work by a case-by-case basis here in quoting this just because I happen to be reading it at the time (not that I mean to irresponsibly claim it's a mere arbitrary issue of 'taste'): In Carla Harryman's VICE, page 28, and 29, she writes: "and he went over to talk to his linguist friend, George Lakoff, about the sense of finality evoked by the word LAND when what he was really looking for was more like some forward moving limbo. George, however, counseled him

against zombielike, trancelike conditions. If LAND ended the matter, then move out of the house. The boy looked at George, "You're thinking in metaphors and I thought you tore them apart." George told him that he was human just like everybody else." I read Lakeoff's METAPHORS WE LIVE BY over ten years ago, and my memory is extremely vague of it. IS HE TAKEN SERIOUSLY by any of you, or is his mode of thinking facile and discredited? Just curious. Chris Stroffolino

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Freely Espousing Update

19 January 1995

'Freely Espousing' was a nationwide poets' action against the proposed abolition of the NEA; asked to help organise, he maps the Philadelphia scene he left in 1992 — the first of the year's many returns to that city.

Dear jennifer & Steve-- What about Philadelphia? When I lived there (1986-1992) we had gotten a pretty interesting scene together, most of whom seem to be gone now or at least not on line. There's Perelman who is on line, but he's probably too busy with school. Ditto no doubt for DuPlessis. maybe Gil Ott, is he still sick. Or Julia Blumenreich. I could senf you there mail (not email) addresses. Valerie Fox of the magazine 6ix is now in Japan. There's Mossin and the TO crowd but they're more aesthetes than politicos it seems. My friend Dave baratier just moved to phila. and edits pavement saw magazine there--If anybody, I would suggest him. Of course, just over the river in CAMDEN is Lamont Steptoe, black vietnam vet poet who used to run readings at the Painted Bride but now works at the Walt Whitman Ctr. and he would probably be a very good connection for you in terms of the NEA. I have a phone # again but no email. Does anybody else know anything about Phila.???? There's Eli Goldblatt. (Charles Alexander probably has his address. I lost it) at (is it) Villanova? For PENNSYLVANIA may be a crucial state as well, Jen & Steve, especially with the new conservative senator replacing Woffod (though I'm not mourning the loss of its conservative democrat governor CASEY to a conservative repub. etc.). Wofford not Woffod. Anyway, just to send this along in lieu of being able (i think) to do anything here in (sm)allbany. Chris Stroff.

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apex of the m...

25 January 1995

The Apex-of-the-M quarrel — the younger 'M' poets against the Language 'L' generation — has him arguing that hatred only feeds its object; Spencer Selby tests the claim on Gingrich.

In the thread, Spencer Selby had written · 24 January 1995 —

If what you're saying is true (about hate giving its object power), then wouldn't the same apply to Newt Gingrich?

Well, Spencer, that IS a tricky question is it. Let's SAY i HATE Newt Gingrich, or at least the interests for which he stands. Well, certainly that hatred isn't gonna make him or them go away, nor necessarily make him a larger threat than he is (except perhaps in our minds--LEST WE FORGET, etc.). It may be a quite different phenomena we're dealing with with the "divided left" which is basically how i read this L vs. M controversy... That the L vs. the M debate seems to obscure a more real debate... If we're going to be political, be political. Anyway, it's way more complicated than this...I'll use paper "without a net" to engage it more. All for now, Chris.

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reified names vs. boundless vocabulary

28 January 1995

No one prompts this one: he renames the whole L-versus-M debate mid-flight, less from any conviction that his title is truer than because it is 'more empowering.' His longest post yet.

I'm changing the "name" of this debate/discussion--not so much because I necessarily see the issue as more 'real' in an absolute way but it is perhaps more empowering. There are several 'issues' or 'insights' I'd like to 'address'. Tom Mandel's recent post claims "difference is where it's at" and basically I agree. The question then becomes a matter of the debate between the structuralist "Difference between" and the post-structuralist "difference within," a "meta" debate I find engaging. When Tom writes "I want the discourse to proceed at the level of the poetry" he raises the question of the RELATION between poetry and polemics. Eric Pape brings up the "politics is not simply content" but also form and that can be a little too black and white at times. For the example he uses claims that the trouble with Forche is her work in "reactionary forms". Yet, maybe that wouldn't be such a problem werethe work engaged in a more rigorous questioning of the complexities of current political/ideological/economic questions rather than the relatively SAFE poems about World War II, etc. And maybe Kali Tal would argue, but too much VIETNAM poetry seems to do this too... Nonetheless, I do not wish to reject these voices out of hand. And in terms of this i find Leslie Scalapino's comments quite helpful. She considers Lew Daly's appeal to "God" as a too limiting vocabulary and equates it to perelman's

rejecting "intuition" but not "thought." And this illuminates but one way in which the L poets (Baby boomers?) and the M editors (gen. x?) are actually quite similar, despite James Sherry's assertion that "The L group (not the CHUBB group] has tried to represent an alternative to such bluntness as antithetical to the complex process of writing..." Yes! However, I can not necessarily totally side with the urge for boundless vocabulary. In the first place, even if i hold it a value to have no taboos in my work and say everything (as it were), there are certain "charecteristic" things I return to often. In the second place this may be as much of an issue of "difference within" as "difference between" (When I first got into poetry in around 1986 I remember going back and forth, dialectically as it were, between Brecht and Ashbery and i also remember being rather skeptical towards the "times they are a changing" and the "gotta serve somebody" dylan--prefering the more complex "Bringin' It All/Hiway 61" stuff--but then one day it hit me "YES, there is a certain level on which it's BLACK AND WHITE"). I do not claim to solve any of this nor do I mean to come off like some "independent" "third party candidate" with an "open mind" (ever hear the song by MAGAZINE--"My mind ain't so open that anything would crawl in") but I'm curious when Tom (Mandel) writes that a NEGATIVE RESPONSE IMPLIES A CLOSED MIND. In the first place, what IS a NEGATIVE RESPONSE? Don Byrd told me (forgive me if I'm misquoting you Don) that although his last book of poetry was reviewed quite favorably, it wasn't the response he wanted. he didn't think people "got it." Often, so-called NEGATIVE responses show far more engagement with the work than so-called POSITIVE ones. But not always. One last point I would like to flog like a dead horse is the question of Mandel's definition of the identity of himself as a LANGUAGE poet as historical and not card-carrying. Do we define say David Shapiro or John Godfrey, roughly the same age and with many of the same concerns as a good number of the L poets, as LANGUAGE poets--historically. Doesn't this become like the academic co-optation of poets. i had a teacher at Temple who was bent on proving that marianne moore was an objectivist, because she saw herself as an objectivist and began to like Moore. That can be interesting I suppose, but what i'm more interested in at present is what Leslie Scalapino calls "multidinous dark horses." (typo at multitidinous) In what context? Chris...

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reified names vs. boundless vocabulary

29 January 1995

The morning after his marathon post, Selby's flat dissent brings on remorse and a familiar impulse — to cancel his subscription and flee the vortex. The recoil recurs all year.

In the thread, Spencer Selby had written · 29 January 1995 —

| *This discourse does not proceed at the level of the poetry. I don't believe it.*

Dear Spencer--Yes, immediately after sending my "contribution" to this discussion I felt like I wanted to retract--not so much everything I said as the way I said it. Agitation. Agitation. Oh what good does any of it do. In fact I was considering asking to temporarily cancel my subscription to this list, since it's taking up way too much of my psychic energy and is frustrating. To OVERDOSE on polemics, etc. Instead, I will try to hold myself to avoiding getting caught up in such argumentative vortexes. But will others do it? I guess it doesn't matter who started it. It was probably Tony Door disguised as Nils Ya disguised as Saint Geraud disguised -----BUT, then, Spencer, I'd like to ask you to help me with something... If we (and I think we're similar in this) want to get the discussion here in this email forum to be more like poetry, HOW can we go about doing it? Should we send rough drafts of poems to each other over email? Would that work? I'm considering it. Any other ideas? I'm certainly "open." Chris

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CALL FOR A DECISIVE BREAK WITH THE PAST (NURTURE THE APEX)

1 February 1995

To Ira Lightman, weighing a move to Albany: he reveals his own footing — enrolled as a graduate student 'thanks to the student loan sharks,' in a town whose economy is failing his friends. The quotidian he had to survive.

Dear Ira--Okay, that would be cool if you moved here by me. What would you do for "a living" though? I wish I could help you find a job here. Maybe you could apply to the school here as a student. That's what I'm doing (thanks to the student loan sharks). I'm sorry to have been so negative about America or specifically Albany but when your post came through I had just been informed that Elizabeth's husband, Jeff Hansen, is not getting rehired at his job at the "boy's academy" here and the economic pressures that are severely affecting this town right now. Nonetheless, this is where I live. Anyway, if you're serious about this I could send you more info--perhaps off this list...Chris S.

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reified names vs. boundless vocabulary

11 February 1995

The threading tangles: under Selby's subject line he is answering Marc Nasdor, who had mocked him for calling poetry 'violence.' He answers from what is happening outside his own wall.

Dear Marc Nasdor-- "Real" vs. fake violence. As i write this, there is a woman screaming next store at her 'lover' who is beating her. Physical vs. psychic-- it kinda puts my "merely mental" pain into perspective, yet there's also the fact that someone can GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS--be there physically but not mentally. "corporeal friends are spiritual enemies" --Blake...So, should we reserve the word violence for the strictly material realm. For instance, if a homeless man hassles you for money that may be more PHYSICALLY violent than the GOVERNMENT oh so politely raising taxes, but which is more VIOLENT. God, I feel like Peter Tosh singing "tell me who are the criminals..." Chris (or one who has also been told often to "get a life")...

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theory & truth

12 February 1995

A single throwaway line of Silliman's sends him spiralling through every sense of the word 'circle' — the associative motor of his mind at full tilt.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 12 February 1995 —

| *But that's because Parmenides didn't recognize the presence of the signifier.*

Is Ron saying thus that if Parmenides would have recognized the "presence" of the signifier that he would have been able to prove that language can produce pure immediacy???? And what does this "pure immediacy" signify for people? Can immediacy be said to be pure? Should we theorize immediacy? Is irony the expression of immediacy on the 'level' of theory? And what of the "circle"? Don Byrd spoke of the "circular dependency of immediacy and abstraction"--but if the "circle", an "ideal form" that doesn't exist "in nature", is an abstraction, this mutuality privileges the abstract (and is perhaps not mutual)... Circle line, vicious circle, Aristotle's god of pure contemplation, Short circuit. Spinning one's wheels without "intentionality" Will the circle be unbroken? When you get circulars in the mail do you consider them junk mail? IS THERE a circle, an "inner circle," "The pleasures of merely circulating"--the Blakian vortex, girl by the whirlpool looking for a new fool? Is the circle a chain, a golden chain, should we TRUST ANYTHING?

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Boy Talk

15 February 1995

The 'Boy Talk' thread began with a man asking why women rarely post; Alan Golding delurks about his own reticence. Stroffolino seizes on his aside about 'tone' — and, a post later, is caught for it.

In the thread, Alan Golding had written · 15 February 1995 —

| *Why do I, as a male (non-female?) lurker, lurk as much as I do*

Dear Alan GOlding--thank you for your comments on "tone"--Actually, that is an issue I am extremely interested in not only in this forum but in writing in general. I'm curious if there's any thoughts about TONE, as a form/content issue, as a question of moods, of ideological state apparati, whatever. If "tone" is "beyond good and evil" and "beyond right and wrong" then is it something that is automatically humanist (in a retro derogatory way) as a concern and should not be theorized and thus taken for granted and thus the emotional appeal of rhetoric becomes either lazily anarchic and "all over the place" or one may end up in that "toneless tone" that allegedly is a sign of "clear thinking" and "authenticity" (despite the self-conscious theatricality...)? Chris

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More Boy Talk

17 February 1995

Kali Tal's catch: in a thread about women's silence he had thanked a man and asked a man a question. He concedes at once.

In the thread, Kali Tal had written · 16 February 1995 —

| *only Spencer Selby has attempted to directly draw any of the women into a conversation*

OOPS--dear Kali tal--You're right, I did end up replying to a MALE in a subject topic concerning the lack of women. Sorry about that, chris

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theory and being heard

22 February 1995

Mark Wallace — as broke as Stroffolino — insists you must brand yourself 'a theory' to be hired at all. The class economics under the theory-talk, argued between two men who can barely afford the bus to New York.

In the thread, Mark Wallace had written · 14 February 1995 —

| *But if I don't call myself a theory I know for a fact I'm out of work.*

Dear Mark (Wallace), in response to your claim of having to be a theory to be heard, what then do you have to be to listen? Do only theories listen to theory? In any event, I do not claim to find any comfort in the hegemony of "theory" in the academy, and I do not intend my response to be "flip" and "merely rhetorical" but

"THEORY IS POETRY IN DRAG" can, as a motto, approximate a perspective a legitimate (i.e. IT PAYS) tradition is (re)-forming around, regardless of ruptures that on an institutional level are reinscribed into what becomes read as a "debate." I am trying to avoid the cynical resignation in the face of a compartment-alized view of the world. For such "resignation" simply perpetuates it. And if I may lapse for a second and indulge myself in a Freudian metaphor, isn't it possible, Mark, that sometimes what seems more like "theory" than "poetry" actually falls more on the "side" of the intrinsically motivated ID rather than the extrinsic SUPEREGO? And thus, occasionally if you didn't DO POETRY you'd be out of a job? Or is this just a matter of interpretation on my part.... As for Alan Golding's rewording of what many have called "theory" as really POETICS, which he claims is an institutional rather than essential distinction, that doesn't seem "accurate"--for "academic theory" only becomes poetics if put into dialogue with poets and or poems... Granted, we're on a POETIC list, so we can claim we're some kind of hermetically sealed interpretative community gathered around some transcendental signifier BUT isn't the question to some extent the idea that there exists this THEORY which in itself is HOSTILE to poetry, in a way quite different from "poetics" is... Now, this "hostility" of course brings in the whole question of whether thinking binary is a CAUSE of cultural disenchantment or merely a rhetorical exercise to show off one's "wit" with not external ramifications in the "real world"--And thus, that dreaded question of TONE becomes raised again in a piece of writing (this) that is marketable NEITHER as theory or poetry, and then one wonders if there is communication only with commodification, and I drank another dollar to quench my thirst for anti-naive-vulgar organic humanism (which of course is really really really what we all want "underneath it all") All of my love, Chris

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NY School

25 February 1995

Silliman having invoked the New York School, he presses him on where its lines really fall, and why a poet like Leanne belongs to it at all — the question of how affiliations get built from the outside in.

In the thread, RSILLIMA had written · 24 February 1995 —

I'm always amazed at how individual poets (including individual "NY School" poets) seem to draw the lines.

dear ron---thank you for taking up on marissa's NYS post. There's many questions I'm interested. The assumption that NYS poets don't worry??? There is the sense of the "laissez faire" Ashbery, the failure to write "critical (non-poetic) prose", the question of the relation to the Pound- Williams tradition (which is a whole other question---though I hear much talk of it, and Marjorie Perloff's

perception that hardly anyone is both deeply engaged with both POUND AND STEVENS is interesting---One thing here is that instead of Pound and Williams as the "forward looking" and Stevens and Eliot as the "backward looking" of those "big 4" male modernists, there is an equally valid contention that Stevens and Williams are the more "forward looking" and Pound and Eliot "backward"--to say nothing of Loy, Moore, Stein, Riding...but I DIGRESS)... Anyway, reading Auden lately it's clearer and clearer to me his debt to Riding (stylistically if not sensibility wise)...and Riding (who Ashbery claimed among the three biggest Am. influences) is as rigorously THEORETICAL (though that's not quite the MOT JUSTE) as Pound. In fact, contrasting THREE POEMS with THE TELLING (published less than a year apart) could be a very illuminating academic paper (hint, hint). I'm only "scratching the surface" but i'll shut up now. But, there IS a nother question that has been on my mind, RON, since you posted your NEW YEAR'S NOTE invoking Leanne. I'm curious why you consider her a NEW YORK SCHOOL poet? It can't be quite the "historical" reason Tom gave for calling himself a LANG PO? Is it because she was IN NYC? Is Waldman a NYS poet? She's not (historically) a beat? But what does one call those who address the same issues the beats did but are not males with gottees and bongoes (as Jerome Sala would point out)? Not that this name game really matters (i feel silly quibbling about it) but I am curious about how "affiliations" are constructed from the outside in. Chris

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Thoughts About Engagement

28 February 1995

Gary Sullivan defends Sheila Murphy and Spencer Selby from being caricatured as New Critics; Stroffolino amplifies — how glibly people wave off a New Criticism they never read.

In the thread, Gary Sullivan had written · 27 February 1995 —

Reducing their concerns, which are fairly complex, to anything equivalent to New Criticism

Gary's (Sullivan's) defence of Spencer and Sheila's positions as something that need not (should not) be reduced to a simplistic caricature understanding of "New Criticism" is well-taken. How easy is it for so many to mouth an "anti-New Criticism" stance without really knowing what N.C. was---for if the L poets are not a monolith, neither is New Criticism, and so much of the conversation once again becomes a navigating of the alleged "minefield" of the connotations of various movements---be it "New Criticism," the "Pound-Williams line" or the "Apex G2ers"--and this all has the effect of "translating" consciousness (or culture, if you must) into something very "pinball" like... And yes we may well wonder whether the stars are conscious of the constellations we "put them in" and whether that

consciousness can be seen as the REASON why they burn out (though of course we don't know they're burnt out yet), and there's probably some reason, some driving urge that should not be ignored, to PLACE OURSELVES, to orient ourselves, through the use of stickfigures. But to claim there's a definite anchor of certainty in such poetic schemas of culture is to not take seriously enough the potential power of reification and idolatry that can habituate identity to a point of barren solipsism. Otherwise, you can surely guess. Chris S.

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Form As Discussion Point

4 March 1995

Alan Sondheim, the list's resident theorist of the electronic text, is here answering Sheila Murphy's question about the moment before a poem exists.

In the thread, Alan Sondheim had written · 3 March 1995 —

| *Almost all my current writing is completed on the Internet*

At the risk of being accused of being "wishy washy" (or "worse," "Derridean,") I begin in what may seem like a "middle" (of undifferentiated nothingness) in response to Sheila Murphy's thought provoking "open question" of the "'thinking about' stage of creating a text... (and the idea that..."the seeming infinite ways to do THIS right" is "not the point." The question of what one considers "better" writing, "publishable" is related to the question of "getting lost in the writing" and the question of being suprised by one's "own" writing, of trying to avoid paralyzing self-consciousness, of the desire "to get all of life in the text" and keeping attentive and not getting carried away on romantic pipedreams that may be the kind of distractions that are necessary for the piece of writing to seem to "take off" as it were (though there must be a pre-airplane way of saying that)...and the question of POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY in the writing act, of editing out the POLITICALLY IRRESPONSIBLE points, as if you in "recollections of tranquility" you actually know what is politically responsible... and the question of various discourses, of the text explaining itself, of the THEME AS THE THING, and the whole socio-historical allegory of text circulation as if composition is explanation...Not all of these things always matter, but the question of "theory" and "practice" can be expressed "poetically" as easily as "theoretically" and so every every debate is also a "meta-debate" and maybe is only a meta-debate in an anti-essentialist world in which "having bodyguards but no bodies" (Perelman) is an attractive metaphor, just like Shakespeare's "putrified core"--Anyway, this ties in with ALAN SONDHEIM'S assertion that there is IN HIS WORK "a sense of ransacking traditional literature and values, in a manner consistent with (his) notion of dissocation"--But what ARE these "traditional literatures and values"? The WESTERN CANON is not set in stone as purely aestheticized...What I

thought I once wanted to subvert is not necessarily "traditional literature" but "traditional criticism" that has lent "respectability" and aesthetical-object status to certain writings by misreading it in such a way as to make one want to turn to the "avant-garde" (studd not taught in schools, the whole "auto-didact" cult from which I learned much---correction "studd" is "stuff"), to make one want to turn to a mere inversion of "traditional" values, an inversion that is no better than the so-called "tradition"-- In fact, one could say the "tradition" NEEDS THE ANTI-TRADITIONAL to prop itself up...and this binary view of culture is only interesting as a starting point one may return to again and again on the level of seeming, though of course you'll be accused of being some mere spinning your wheels ORC-CYCLE maya/karma being by those who seem to stand so completely in some "desolation row" of visionary rhetoric they put all their emotions in the PAST--this, too, is an interesting "rhetorical strategy" and may reach a point in which it becomes more, or at least OTHER, than a "rhetorical strategy"--but whether or not this POINT is THE POINT OF NO RETURN is a question i leave to anyone who wishes to take it up...Chris Stroffolino

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Close Reading

6 March 1995

The close-reading debate; he drops, in passing, that he took an M.A. without ever reading Shakespeare — the lack his coming dissertation would answer.

In the thread, keith tuma had written · 6 March 1995 —

many in the academy do seem to set up "close" and "contextualized" reading as (false) binaries

Dear Michael--THough I know what you mean about "close reading" and its debased form (as in X.J. Kennedy intro to literature anthologies)... there's no need to associate it with "agrarian" in some pejorative way. We do not need some city-country division. If, for instance, there is to be some viable way of dealing effectively with culture, there's no point isolating ourselves against the "agrarian"--which can also be the "tenement migrant farmer" etc...Also, the hegemony of the "contextual" the "new historicist" reading in much "hip" avant-garde discourse that claims to be a reaction to "close reading" goes too far in the opposite direction--like Stephen Greenblatt talking about Renaissance sex-operations for 55 pages and then quoting one line in a Shakespeare play, and saying "A HA, now you know the meaning of it..." and of course the essay is allegedly and ostensibly ABOUT SHAKESPEARE...and though I believe some kind of fruitful "balance" can be achieved, the "cultural studies" aspect of literature seems to be a dinosaur now, and can only have any value if it's ASSUMED that "close reading" is instilled--thus, one generation of academics are teaching a younger one to unlearn the

things they never learned (I speak as one who received an M.A. in english without having ever read Shakespeare, for instance), and then there's also the question that is seems the symbiotic relationship of GRADUATE and UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH departments can be reduced to this--the undergraduates learn exactly what they're supposed to UNLEARN in grad school....Chris S.

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Close Reading

7 March 1995

Born in Reading, Pennsylvania — Wallace Stevens's town — he distrusts the avant-garde's urban snobbery even as he plots his own escape to a city. The suburbs, not the country, are 'the big enemy.'

In the thread, Marc Nasdor had written · 6 March 1995 —

much of the "city/country division" in American poetry stems from a kind of urban arrogance

Right on, Mark, to hell with big city snobbery fascism, etc, etc.... I mean even "cleveland," etc--is BIG compared to certain art communities not on the map.... But then i wonder if what you're talking about to some extent isn't already a done dea, i mean the "decentralization" of the art world---somebody wrote about there not being a SCENE any more in SF, and NYC is not THAT happening anymore (etc. etc.) and a lot of this has to do with MONEY, and JOBS and FEAR. And I myself wanna move to NYC soon i think (even though...) and I realize how the conservatives have been highly anti-city since the whites could afford to leave in the 50's and 60 ' 's and up to now...and then I find "my people" more in a place like NYC than in the little town I grew up in (I went to a 10th year highschool reunion 5 years ago and saw most of my "hood" friends with their split- level babies and surbaban ties and potbellies and smug boring etc...or) and so we RUN to the city in an attempt to find something where you DON'T NEED A CAR...Now, perhaps an unfortunate consequence of this then is defensive city snobbery. I too succumb to it (here in SMALLBANY--see what i mean)...I guess I consider the SUBURBS te big enemy....Once Jeff Hansen (who is a dear friend) said in a "POETICS BRIEFS" that the ego is certainly worse than the SUBURBS (i'm paraphrasing)...well, I disagree but I guess if I'm preaching a kind of Marxist unity of cities and agrarian should take the republicanburbs into "account" as well... Best, CHris Stroffolino-----and sorry I SHOULD CHANGE THE TOPIC TO "TOWN & COUNTRY" as opposed to "CLOSE READING"--though the name of the small town I was born in s "READING" and Wallace Stevens was from there and Palmer says the NEW Formalists like READING him, so maybe there is POETIC LOGIC if not poetic justice....

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Teaching close reading

9 March 1995

His classroom method surfaces: a week and a half on a single Ashbery poem, and the fear that teaching so few poems could cost him the job.

In the thread, David McAleavey had written · 8 March 1995 —

| "Close reading," the way I intended it, is just a subset of "paying attention."

Another related issue it seems Peter Quatermain and Sandra Braman and Charles Alexander (and others probably) to this question of reading and teaching is what can be called the issue of "breadth" over "depth"-- Increasingly, it's becoming obvious that, although I certainly do not wish for a narrow and restrictive canon, that as a teacher the idea of teaching less poems (or whatever) or more SHORTER ones probably is more effective FOR ME (if not for everyone) in the classroom...Last semester i spent a week and half on one Ashbery poem and people would have most likely got not nearly as clear an understanding had I devoted that time to say 5 or 6 of his poems. I also devoted a whole class to a very short Weiners poem and another one to a very short Fanny Howe poem (etc. etc.). Some say this is irresponsible, and though i do not wish to simply say that reading 23 books a semester is irresponsible, I do hope that such academics allow room for people like me to keep our jobs--though what we do may seem "claustrophobic"..Chris Stroffolino

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close reading

17 March 1995

In the thread, Joe Amato had written · 10 March 1995 —

| there are some "readings" that just ain't gonna fly, period.

An open question--When people read (whether it's "close or not"--you decide what to call it), do you (plural) tend to mark up the margins alot? Do you sit there with a notebook? Do you find that you write more WHILE reading--(I i.e. do you read to write), or do you see these as discrete activities more often than not? If you do write in the margins alot does that have something to do with whether you like long-lined or short-lined poems? Does the kind of poem Spencer Selby just posted "turn you on?" By "kind of poem" I mean a certain kind of balanced lyric formal diction and tone that is not in much contemporary poetry I'm aware of...a refusal of gaudy gimmicks...a poem that "looks like a lyric" in a certain old-fashioned sense allegedly of "gem-like" White Buildings Crane--or at least the momeory of it, a certain modesty that is also authority...Personally I tend not to separate reading and writing much...I am interested in a discursive mode of close reading that doesn't exist until I do it...I am in academia now and am trying not to let that get in the way...or am trying to find a way NOT to let it get in the way...The great

taboos surround seemingly in force...One could say they're only in "the mind."---
Chris Stroffolino

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poetry v the sharp mind

19 March 1995

A confession folded into the theory-talk: in his first year as a graduate student he has suspended his own poetry — the maker gone quiet inside the academy.

In the thread, Tony Green had written · 20 March 1995 —

| *Who made the division (and when) between literary and philosophical?*

Dear Tony and Lisa--I guess it's a question of "finding a niche" or questioning what is allegedly considered "marketable" out there--I may be "naively" "deluding" myself--but I wonder about what is considered "fashionable" in academia today and how many people (whether as poets or not) seem to be cowering under these dimly perceived "demands of the marketplace"--As a student, I have no answers but hunches at present about such "ways and means" and 'strategies of subversions'--However, the division between "philosophy and literature" I do not see as a problem Foucault has answered--in fact, Foucauldianism may be part of the problem itself (not that there isn't "value" in Foucault)...the question in some ways is perennial--despite the generational specificity one could appeal to in terms of academic and economic realities... This is probably too vague... but, for the most part, unlike Lisa, I have suspended my so-called "poetic" activities in my first year here as a graduate student...(though that may change)...Chris S.

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poetry v the sharp mind

20 March 1995

Gabrielle Welford, a fellow graduate student, on the doctoral machine paring her bones; he answers with 'McAcademic discourse' and the wish that the institution not kill what first drew him to it.

In the thread, Gabrielle Welford had written · 19 March 1995 —

| *I feel as though I'm having my bones pared down in an effort to get me to think*

Dear Tony, Lisa, Gabrielle, etc.-- When Tony writes "If your practice with texts is margin writing..." I wonder IF my practice with texts IS margin writing, and I distrust what I will call my own tendency to introject and/or employ such academic/professional buzzwords...and I'd like to think that in academia the "use" of such terms does not automatically imply a too eager attitude towards "marketability"--etc. I don't think it's just true at my school, (though I may be overgeneralizing--especially in this age of Newt Gingrich and Allan Bloom), that there is a lot of discourse that announces itself as "margin writing" because it is

fashionable to do so...Whether this really is margin writing of course is a more interesting question because it allows one to see the OLD IN THE NEW and the NEW IN THE OLD...This does not mean that I do not wish my dissertation to "explode academic discourse" as much as MY EMILY DICKINSON does...But I do not want to be self-congratulatory about how "unique" and "new" and "progressive" either "I" or "my people" are--I guess I see such posturing as "getting in the way of the real issues" (as James Sherry read me months ago), and by "real issues" I just mean the possibility of COMMUNICATION of a more intimate sort occurring in institutional contexts....though I also think what is central here is that there is a need to be challenged intellectually as well...It is not a mere question of "new" and "old" or "margin writing" but of a desire to learn as well as teach and to actually not be one of those who, burdened by professionalism or scarred by academia, can not be fueled or excited by their involvement with it. As if one can play a role one hates in hopes it will catch the ear without killing it...and only then FEEL COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO BE ITSELF (if it knows what it likes anymore---and no I'm not necessarily "privileging" "humanist essentialism" here)....For there is not only McPoetry but McAcademic Discourse it seems to me, and it wants to have the house surrounded, blaring Eddie Cochran's "get to the top I'm too tired to rock," of which this impatience of mine to "correct" myself in public is no doubt part (but smile). Chris

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Back to poetry

2 April 1995

Ryan Knighton — a young Canadian who becomes one of his steadiest interlocutors — reopens Auden's old wound: does poetry make anything happen? The word 'transcendental' creeps back, warily.

In the thread, Ryan Knighton had written · 1 April 1995 —

| would you go so far as to say that poetry (words) makes things happen?

It's great to see the word transcendental pop up again...this time it seems people are giving it a little more breathing room...there are these half-hearted admissions of eating it on the sly as if it were junk food, or worse, health food which is politically irresponsible these days... But seriously--I guess I'm thinking about "if we make a revolution make it for fun" from D.H.L. and wondering if the infantilization of the transcendental Derrida flaunted, and the politicization of it Perelman wavers

"makes new advances" on the transcendental which is probably a style before it's anything else...and what of the idea that the transcendental is an feeling of scope that includes, potential, all others--that allows access to what could defeat it if

you couldn't keep up the illusion of returning to it, which may be an illusion because of course silly you're really there all the time--- etc..... chris s.

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Consent of the governing

7 April 1995

On Sulfur and its editor Clayton Eshleman: rejected far more than accepted, he still prefers the impassioned rejection letter to the form slip. His thin publishing record laid out plainly.

In the thread, Gary Sullivan had written · 6 April 1995 —

I'm talking about "poetry world" tenure--admittedly more tenuous than academic tenure

Dear gary (sullivan)--I just wanted to say one thing about SULFUR...Though I have been rejected by SULFUR far more than I've been accepted (I was only accepted once circa 1991), I do respect Clayton as a conscientious editor who does read works of young and "unknown" poets...In fact, he has often written me quite IMPASSIONED rejection letters, which I certainly prefer to the form letter in which ONE NEVER KNOWS if one's been read.... When he accepted my work, I had published hardly anything outside a more "working class" "beatnik" kind of mag...in terms of 'avant-garde' I had only been published in New American Writing and had an essay appear on Kit Robinson in POETRY FLASH...Sulfur showed an openness to my work that few did...furthermore, this was AFTER it had rejected my work with some "pretty nasty" words.Though I certainly don't consider it an IDEAL magazine, I respect this. Chris Stroffolino

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WHite History Month

17 April 1995

The 'White History Month' thread with Aldon Nielsen turns him toward his own experience — white ethnic enclaves in Philadelphia, and a year spent as the object of 'nigger lover' threats. Class and race, rarely so bare.

Dear Aldon--It's funny I saw a St. Patrick's day here in Albany and was kinda surprised how in 1995 there is still so much "ethnic pride" amongst whites...Like when I lived in philadelphia and shared an office space with a girl/woman (kinda transitional) who lived with her parents in South Phila. (highly ethnic italian and catholic and MUMMERS--do you know what MUMMERS are???????) and never left until she got married...and even then stayed there...Understanding such ethnic isolationism and the "tight communities" of whiteness came as a shock...especially during the year I lived in one of those ("white trash") neighborhoods and found ' it more , er, disconcerting than living in North Phila. as only white guy on block....I was called "nigger lover" and had a couple of close calls with the locals...and this is much of what we're up against.... CS

[↑ Index](#)***throttled by angels***

20 April 1995

Answering Marisa Januzzi's question — what first 'throttled' each of them into poetry, in O'Hara's word — with his conversion story: the beats, John Yau opening the New York School, a drunken Tzara-versus-Brecht 'poetry battle.'

In the thread, Marisa A Januzzi had written · 19 April 1995 —

| *I would be very curious to hear about what poets you first read*

Well, Marisa, the beats were biggies...but the poets who came to my undergraduate school were Gerald Stern (who I later read with, ugh!) and Daniel Hoffman--he read from his Southian epic, BROTHERLY LOVE. PBS was taping it and I think the camera panned the audience and caught me nodding off...John Yau came (this was 1985) and turned me onto the New York School (O'Hara, Koch, Ashbery) and this lead me to Tzara.... One night (wasted) i was reading Tzara to a friend of mine who just came back from England and he pulled out his big Bertolt Brecht collected and said you know what Bertolt would say about this, and then made a reproachful noisy gesture...and so i experienced my first "poetry battle"--but, hey, I like them both...and until this semester when I worked with Pierre Joris neither of these writers were taught in English departments (--no doubt coz they're "not in the american grain")...and perhaps it was the fact that they weren't corrupted by academia that I was able to enjoy them more than even the "alternative" writers who were taught when i got my M.A. at Temple back when Jesse Jackson was a brief frontrunner in the democratic primaries.... Well, that's one version of my "THROTTLING" Any others? Chris

[↑ Index](#)***Definition***

25 April 1995

The Cordelia thread with Ryan Knighton; his pushback on the orthodoxy that men 'wrote' women anticipates the dissertation to come on Shakespeare's comedies.

In the thread, Ryan Knighton had written · 25 April 1995 —

| *Women, according ot Howe and others, have been written.*

Ryan----Oh the implication that Shakespeare (and other males) WROTE WOMEN...why do people wish to claim it is some incontrovertible backdrop truth against which to "usher in the new era"--There are men reading women--the playwright (or "the language" if you must totally reject the "authorial fallacy") quite self-consciously shows the men misreading women. "Your actions are my dreams" etc. It seems it's the realization that women AREN'T written by men that allows women a freedom that is not some Gyatri Spivackian nihilism--that men only go so far...insofar as men are conscious of this there can be a solidarity. Yet

there must be a recognition that it's one thing to prove a writer "male" or 'female' and another to prove them "good" or "evil." Just a thought, CS

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gimmicks/"poetry" that's got nothin' on zimmerman

1 May 1995

No reply prompts it: Dylan (Zimmerman) over Gerald Stern, a suspicion of poetry-and-rock 'hybrids,' and Elvis Costello for a tag — 'I used to be disgusted, now I try to be amused.'

Awhile Back, Mark Wallace complained (or STATED) that a poet needs THEORY these days if s/he wants to teach. Either that or a really good hustler. Of course if one's a good hustler, why would one WANT to teach ? So, it seems this issue is coming up again. We see the SHAKESPEARE issue--and we see the ELECTRONIC and "audio/visual" culture issue... yes, poetry is not enough academically--one needs some kinda GIMMICK. Yeah, man, I DO like Bob Dylan (as a poet) better than Gerald Stern (who's my safe whipping boy, a metonymy for many others, many parts of me)--but there are so many silly hybrids out there. And not only that ALlen Ginsberg has a LOUSY voice! And not only that the Brannagh version of MUCH ADO could have been much better... It's all way to "middle brow" isn't it? It is far more fun (tis a far far better thing) to go to a loud thrash like concert and come back and read something like Wallace Stevens than to try to pretend that "poetry " that ain't got nuthin' on zimmerman, is more soulless than even your basic garage band IN ADDITION to being something that doesn't hold up under repeated readings, is going to be something we should like....heavy yawn "I used to be disgusted now I try to be amused...." CS

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who wrote this???

1 May 1995

He found four poems on a suburban street and half-suspects they are by someone he is 'supposed to like' — the name-game again, and the year's running question of what a poem is for.

The other day I found some poems laying on a quite boring quasi-suburban street in a tiny town that only has CHAIN bookstores (and some used) Suprisingly, the poem isn't totally hideous....and in some ways resemble H.D. There are four poems: "OLD MATH" "THE SEA OUTSIDE" :THE HIATUS" and "BREAKTHROUGH"---- I am curious if any one knows who wrote them? BREAKTHROUGH

Fields migrate into gold the sea sprawls out of its chains

the scene's torn the light patched

water cuffs the air while the bay laughs starlings sown like grain
 with a knowing wink of dark an airplane crosses noon
 the equinox leaps through the clock
 clouds fall upwards the moon feels tall the sky keels south what blooms is the
 wind

I want to say there's something really goofy about these poems, and maybe I'm only stopped because it may have been written by someone I'm SUPPOSED to like---Yes, SPENCER, what's in a name? But what is poetry supposed to do? to be?
 Chris

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cordelia

3 May 1995

The Gerald Stern set-piece — the whipping-boy of the year — lands under Tony Green's subject line but answers George Bowering: the poet who prefaced each poem with the anecdote behind it, then read the anecdote back as the poem.

Dear George Bowering--- I used to think Howard Stern was better than Gerald Stern, but then he helped get Pataki elected. Gerald Stern is a kind "Iowa School" poet who didn't get famous until he was mid-50's or so but has won over the "mainstream" "unpolitical" "suburban" proletariat crowd in many ways. When I was in college he read. The editor of my college poetry magazine was absolutely OBSESSED with him....he has a poem that ends with the lines: I lean on my right side for words And on my left side for music (something like that) this just knocked her out, for some reason i'll never understand...anyway, ironies of ironies, I read with the guy in Phila. in 1987....He would tell the "story behind the poem"--I wrote this when i was sitting on the back porch while my family was inside watching t.v." then he'd begin the poem, "I was on the back porch and my family was inside watching T.V." even my then 15 year old sister thought it was absurd....we preferred Paul Westerburg who had just released "Pleased To Meet Me"--- "One foot in the door, the other foot in the gutter The sweet smells that you adore. I think I'd rather smother...." Hope this answers your question....Chris Stroffolino

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A run of lighter posts is passed over here — birthday roll-calls for the tribe (Silliman, Snyder and Pynchon all falling in one May week), gossip about who is related to whom, and the string of squibs he signs 'Abby Hoffa' or, once, 'Rae Armantrout.' The name-game is half a joke and half his real

subject: how affiliations, lineages and reputations get built out of nothing but names.

Aleatoric Spree

9 May 1995

His running grievance opens: aleatory music is granted a seriousness denied to punk, rap and blues — the low culture that sells, and is envied or scorned for it.

In the thread, Sheila E. Murphy had written · 8 May 1995 —

| *12-tone music easily evolved into an alternative classical system of its own*

I'm wondering if there is a certain "unwritten law" of an "interpretative community" informing the discussion on aleatory music and conferring on it a certain legitimacy denied to more lyrically based forms such as punk and rap and grunge and blues and 60's rock...Because to talk about rock it seems to talk about "hybrids" that isn't as sophisticated lyrically as poetry nor is as sophisticated musically as Stockhausen etc. and thus is low culture and worse, it SELLS! (and either there is envy or contempt of such)...and if we put poetry in dialogue with rock lyrics surely poetry can not be said to aspire to "THAT KIND OF MUSIC"....movies, theatre, theory, painting....of the "sister arts" to poetry rock music ain't one of them..... I saw Joan Retallack read the other day she said that Emerson gave her an early authoritative defense of "inconsistency"--- And then there was an accessibility panel and I asked Bill Luoma if he considered "angst" more "accessible" than "flippancy"....and he said "angst, unless you are....."(he named someone here from the New York scene, it doesn't matter who. The point is he gave a quick answer.) Yours from the gossip beat, Chris

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lyric and/or

10 May 1995

Aldon Nielsen presses him, and he answers with his fullest defence of the rock lyric as craft — the double entendres in Tom Waits and Suzanne Vega, 'the enigmatic power of cliches,' and why a song is harder to discuss than either poem or score alone.

In the thread, Aldon L. Nielsen had written · 10 May 1995 —

| *found your nearly immediate move from interesting remark re: lyric to a radical narrowing of the question*

aldon---since many of the things i was questioning about preconceptions about "popular lyrical music" were "between the lines" of the discussion (or "only in my mind"), let me consider, for instance, a quote i heard attributed to Robert Kelly that claims that while rock lyrics are like looking in a mirror, poetry breaks the mirror.... (end quote--sic). Now, this of course makes poetry more like "aleatory" music than lyrics....and is a valuable distinction up to a point but one could argue the chance elements in many songs, the mixed metaphors even in tin pan alley (or

songs like "chek to cheek" about "cares" vanishing like a gambler's winning or is it loosing streak), and the alea that occurs (perhaps unintentionally---but in this day of "author constructs" and authors as FALLACIES this shouldn't matter, right?) when the "sentiments" of the lyrics seem to clash with the melody they are "couched" in....These phrasings, and lyrical hooks, can teach one much about "craft"---and about the enigmatic power of cliches....and also why three chords and their "lyrical equivalent" are not necessarily "naive" as they might seem.....Now, sure, maybe I wouldn't have meditated on the "double entendres to be found in songs like Tom Wait's "Time," Suzanne Vega's "Marlene On The Wall" or even whether the Moody Blues intended quotes around "Just what you want to be/You'll be in the end" had they appeared in poems rather than in melodies that one rides through the silence... but then I'm not one of those who agrees with the Literary Historian who calls the "olde English Ballad" a "hybrid" form either...It's only such from a specialized perspective that sees music and words as essentially distinct. The point I'm trying to make is that it seems why there is so little attention devoted SERIOUSLY to rock songs is that it's ultimately harder to discuss than either poetry or instrumental music in isolation is....(and i certainly don't claim to have found a way to do so, but I am curious about moves towards it). Chris Stroffolino

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four poems

17 May 1995

Lazer mourns a living Eigner; the alarm misfires, the grief does not.

In the thread, Hank Lazer had written · 17 May 1995 —

| *after all the singing faces, you with your mouths out of sight*

dear hank--enjoyed your eigner tribute...and then i got worried....DID HE DIE? If so, could you illuminate us? Thanks, Chris

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eigner, address, reality

22 May 1995

Eigner is fine; the elegy in Lazer's poems was for his own father, dying of leukemia. Stroffolino, who had sensed it, answers softly. The year's grief is often other people's.

In the thread, Hank Lazer had written · 18 May 1995 —

| *Sorry for the scare. Larry is well.*

dear hank--of course it's okay to write tributes to the living... it's just that it's so rarely done in a MOVING way... anyway thank you for the clarification.. chris stroffolino

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milo deangelis

30 May 1995

Gary Sullivan owns up to deriding Milo De Angelis; Stoeffolino, writing a review, rescues the offending line about theory — reading it as generous rather than prescriptive.

In the thread, Gary Sullivan had written · 28 May 1995 —

| "Deriding him"--that would've been me.

Thanks gary for filling me in on the debate--- I think the quote you're referring to is "The Greek theoria signifies "reflection" but also "solemn embassy," "spectacle." And perhaps there can be no great poet who has not had theoretical insights into other great poets...." The way i see it (aside from the adjective "great"--maybe it should be GROOVY--) is very qualified and not prescriptive but an attempt to widen the range of the meaning of the word "theory" to include what perhaps is too derided as "loose talk," and thought "as such." Certainly Auntie Hegemony would be theory then---and not just because of certain overstatements---for instance one (in an article on Mandel that came out last week) that claims just the opposite of DeAngeli--that no true poet should or would (though could) squander his life away on textual exegesis...etc... Thanks, gary, for filling me in. Chris

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Meet the G that killed me

2 June 1995

Mark Scroggins glosses the 'G1/G2' shorthand for older and younger avant-gardes — the Boomer/Gen-X split in another key — and gets needed for his examples.

In the thread, Mark Scroggins had written · 1 June 1995 —

| G1 & G2 are generational handles _someone_ on the list dreamed up

It's interesting that scroggins names as g2ers the most derivative poets of the gi styles in the New Coast anthology....just an onservation (i mean observation)....

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Warren Sonbert 1947-1995

7 June 1995

The filmmaker Warren Sonbert has died at forty-seven; Charles Bernstein relays the deathbed. Against it Stoeffolino turns practical and grieving at once — why is there so little crossing now between poetry and the other arts?

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 6 June 1995 —

| We read to him, to a strong attention. Whitman.

So--why doesn't somebody with money (like James \$herry or somebody) put on a Warren Sonbert retrospective and film festival in some poetry/art space in NYC (and somebody else can do it on the west coast)--- The reason i ask is because there is so little crossover between genres these days---it seems the specialization

of the art world is harder to overcome than it was 35 or even 20 years ago--Who are the young experiential filmmakers of my generation? (or of LINDzzzzz's generation)? Are they too busy trying to get funding to come down and meet us poets? Are they working in video? Maybe I haven't looked around enough, so I'm trying to keep my eyes pried open. Chris (oh--I got off the point--the point is that for those of us who have only the vaguest memory of Sonbert from college experimental film shows-- it would be good for the poetry community to actually get out of its sick little "words words words" attitude at least for awhile and come together over (it)).....

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Actually actual?

7 June 1995

The music-prescription fight — Sondheim and George Bowering over whether intellectuals may really love Hole — draws out his memory of a poetry editor who screened newcomers by making them sit through Parsifal.

In the thread, Alan Sondheim had written · 7 June 1995 —

| *I still listen to the Sex Pistols and they're not exactly Monk-like*

And george bowering also claims that intellectuals could only possibly like bands like Hole and not the "hard stuff" for spurious reasons of "hipness"---- When I worked on the editorial board of a poetry magazine in the late 80's--the editor made me listen to PARSIFAL (sp?) and if i seemed appreciative I was in (it was part of the screening process)--- Ironically, his love of OPERA--especially aryan opera--and other "difficult high culture"(and yes I know opera was ORIGINALLY low culture--like jazz before it was called "African American Classical") was not paralleled in his love of literature--he went for the Bly, Hugo, Logan nexus in poetry. I on the other hand preferred Ashbery, O'Hara, etc---but to "unwind" found myself listening more to rock and blues and reggae and stuff than classical and even jazz... I certainly do not want to be dogmatic about this, or eclectic-- but just who ARE these people to be so PRESCRIPTIVE about what music a good poet should listen to---it guarantees nothing, my friends, except perhaps a verbal sophistication when talking to someone like a famous poet who doesn't like talking about poetry at parties and so you gotta find something else to talk about (and "politics" gets boring--so it turns to music--but then there's these fights over music--I was at a party once where one friend called another "a musical nazi")...

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Omitted too is the small comedy of the medium: notes meant for one person landing on the whole list, the flurries of 'OOPS — ignore that,' the corrections of his own misquotations (Daniel Boone mistaken for Davy Crockett), and the recurring puzzle of the 'nomail' command. In 1995 the

list is still learning what it is, and he fumbles the machinery as cheerfully as anyone.

palinode on a nightingale

9 June 1995

An empty message from Ed Foster becomes a pretext for a survey of the little magazines piling up in his mail — Avec, Witz, Phoebe, The Impercipient — and a partisan's wish for a Duncan-versus-Spicer 'battle.'

In the thread, Edward Foster had written · 9 June 1995 —

| *oh, jordan, get off it. where, as rilke spent his life saying, does beauty begin?*

This message by ED FOSTER had no message attached to it--- This has been happening alot lately--- I wonder why.... Now that i got your attention I should probably tell you that I've been getting alot of things in the mail lately-- So--here's a plug-- AVEC and WITZ---theough there's been a "divorce" between these two venues, there's much interesting--Steven Farmer, Joe Ross--

etc... Then there's PHOEBE--edited by Jean Donnelley (who appears in new Sulfur too) which has incredible pieces by Jennifer Moxley, Heather Fuller and Leslie Scalapino and others.... Then there's Jennifer Moxley's own THE IMPERCIPIENT--which has work by Joe Ross again (much more up my alley than AN AMERICAN VOYAGE) and Kevin Davies and others--seems like there's a new "political lyric" kinda of voice... I also got the Barret Watten (Free Barry not JAWS!) of AERIAL/EDGE-- and it featur's some interesting writing as well. Alan Davies provides an interesting perspective which makes the book less of a mutual admiration society roast than it might otherwise be--the collaboration poem between Barret and Carla Harryman is interesting. Silliman is thoughtful...Scalapino again....I have not read the whole thing yet. I also got COMPOUND EYE today--- In any event-- it's so much more exciting than hearing Duncan ramble on and on about "CHarles Olson, he was a Big Man--A real big man"--Ho hum so was davey crocket--in the NEw SULFUR--I say this not out of animosity towards Duncan but to once again bring up the idea of "career trajectory" and how this plays into the quality of the work---Dear Clayton, etc., not everything Duncan did was tinged with the gold of the prophets or whatever---- So---FOR THOSE WHO DIDN'T GET TO GO TO VANCOUVER-- let's have our own little Duncan-Spicer battle-- I'll side with Spicer 9it will be like baseball...I usually got picked last and once when i was a third baseman I got bored and when the bat hit the ball I ran home---I don't think I've played baseball since I'm 6-- though that song "Boys Of Summer" is "nice")---Chris

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bedside reading*29 June 1995*

Nominally another bedside-reading list, it turns into an intimate note to Marisa Januzzi — O'Hara borrowed to say what he cannot quite. The warmth running under the year's banter.

marisa---i just read your note (there are 44 others for me--ugh--and non of them are by you) and thank you for being sympathetic again-- (none of them--not non--belated typo recognition--aren't they all?) and it was good talking earlier and then I sat down with O'Hara (and Lansing--who I'm supposed to review for Foster--is sooooo stiff by comparison--but then so am i too much)---"sat down with O'hara"--what a weird phrase---anyway he wrote-- "You enable me, by your least remark, to unclutter myself, and my neerves thank you for not always laughing" Which made me think of a feeling towards you (nerves)-- A feeling towards something between us that is neither you nor I And that doesn't at all seem accurate but vague and the urge to "express the unexpressable" is not perhaps the quickness that makes one want to blow the lid off self-consciousness (so-called "spontaneous" torrents recollected tranquilly) and ask you if you're still looking for "questions for kenneth" (a quiz-show)-- did you (or jordan) ask him whether he thinks he might have had a any influence on O'Hara's work--and if so, where? Many people seem to make their relationship into a one way street--but that can't be true, can it? ---I hope you read this before you go (so you can have it in your head to keep you company on the plane....) Love, chris

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women & tech*3 July 1995*

He tries to steer the 'women and technology' thread away from book-praise toward class and access — and away from Haraway's cyborg, which, he suspects, erases the very inequalities it seems to open.

This has happened again---what I hoped would be at least an INTERESTING debate (or something) about "women and tech" has just turned once again into a "wow--books are great" thing---So, Lisa S. and Sandra B. have mentioned this issue and the (in)famous Haraway book (and Silliman says it's great)---but one may wonder if Haraway is actually empowering to women or not? It seems she just builds an elaborate thesis around what may perhaps be an historical "accident"--that the increased number of women in the work-force or service industry (a phenomenon often attributed to "women's lib") happens to occur just as technology (computers, etc) is accelerating---thus, there's a cause effect relation, right? Sure, at least Haraway doesn't argue an "essentialist feminist" position and in this sense may seem to open up all kinds of possibilities--- BUT she does seem to erase class issues, issues of access, and posits some vague FUTOPIA

that doesn't give a fuck about ecologic depletion and the rich getting richer---at least it seems so....chris s.

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well, if we're going...

4 July 1995

Sandra Braman, a communications scholar, corrects him for lumping the women's posts together; he cedes the point and redirects to class. Another of the year's gentle public corrections.

In the thread, braman sandra had written · 3 July 1995 —

| *don't be essentialist in your reading of comments from women*

Thank you Sandra and Maria for your responses--Though the tone of my last posting may suggest otherwise, I wasn't trying to claim that there was a "mindless essentialism" going on--I too find the meandering inter- esting and i was trying to direct it towards such issues as "critiques by women of how men do science"(damon) and "the impact of specific information technologies historically on women" and away from the more depoliticized illusion of mere "writing about technology" and though my interests tend to be more "class" oriented (and find 'technology' if not a false issue at least a "vehicle" that has gotten too large for its tenor and thus often a huge mystifier of "social processes" ---which is not a critique i'd make of poetry--even if one retrospectively defines poets from Sir Thomas Wyatt to Emily Dickinson as "technology" as Fuller did), I am curious in both of your (and others') speculations about women and science, and what "the next phase" (if you will) would be, say, without the notion of CYBORG---Again, thanks. Chris

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flaming children

12 July 1995

On Duncan's dictum and the illusion of 'interpretive communities': the terms good and bad, he decides, matter only when you are drowning — then the shark is bad and the raft is good.

In the thread, Gabrielle Welford had written · 12 July 1995 —

| *Is the universe trying to send us a message?*

dear md---what would happen if took seriously duncan's dictum may be actually what happens now, depending on who the "we" is (no doubt) --that people would read poetry that moves them and poetry that doesn't, that they wouldn't know what moves them until they read it, and perhaps all poetry (even if we take the widest possible sense of it) moves one--but to disgust sometimes. And if a poem moves one to disgust, need we call it bad--not necessarily if it's what one needs--and so all these notions of "interpretive communities" does not work for a lot of people. Perhaps no two are alike--for, in the abstract, we may all "marry" "high

culture" and "low culture" in various, conflicting ways--yet, even if we all decided to call ourselves "populists" there'd no doubt be disagreements about the virtues of WHICH "low art" we find ourselves more drawn to--and most likely disagree with ourselves-- "Why did I like THAT in 1987?" etc. And, it's only if we inflexibly and dogmatically claim a certain definite zone, draw a certain line in the sand (and I'm not saying that I don't find myself doing that provisionally for "academic career reasons" and a "research project" that I sometimes believe actually fulfills a "real need"--Or should I say "feel" instead of "believe"), that terms like "good" and "bad" matter. I am a GOOD person. I am married to a GOOD person but I have a BAD job. Rejecting the terms "good" and "bad" (if not "evil") may be something aspires to, and may be the "ideal condition" good and bad lurk behind, playing dead. But when you are drowning in the ocean a shark is definitely "bad" and a liferaft "good" (unless, of course....) Chris

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Soul/body

20 July 1995

He shifts the list's discussion of 'the soul' onto its more formidable cousin, 'the self' — the poststructuralist bogey that ironising never quite killed.

In the thread, Willa Jarnagin had written · 19 July 1995 —

| *So which is more alive, the body or the soul?*

It just hit me that this discussion on the "soul" has skirted around a far more formidable (and perhaps familiar) terms, "the self" and ITS effectiveness, which poststructuralism and langpo may have ironized (at least in their blatant codifications). But the issue has not gone away as a site for many "responses" of varying degrees of emotional/ intellectual/formal intensity (at least rhetorically). Perhaps because it is more perilous, it opens up the can of worms of art's relationship to life, and not in a merely abstract way, that life may be a poem and a poem only life and what then of the poet, the rimbaudian cork???? tossing tossing, or willing willing, why not both? why not neither... and such "overcomplications of subjectivity" have a tendency allegedly to get in the way of the play of surfaces and the aesthetic distancing or, on the other hand, are accused of a certain aesthetic distancing by those who want the self as a given or ground, a *donnee* or *readu-made*, as both hardcore "straight" poets and hardcore "avant-garde" poetry (assuming either really exists as more than an impulse in the poems of most of us---cf. Zukofsky's "Shakespeare argued with no one, only in itself") beg the question that is the self, or the society or institution that takes the form as the "question which is the self" since there is a party in my mind and I hope it never stops, especially if one realizes that "to be alone in a crowd" (in the crowd that's also conceivably "inside one") may be the distance in which only

thought can occur, emotionalizing intellect, the dramatizations that prefer to see the self strategically as a vista from which to criticize society cold and calculatingly even as it rages in a frustration beyond--or at least between--words....chris stroffolino

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POETICS Digest - 23 Jul 1995 to 24 Jul 1995

25 July 1995

Marjorie Perloff on prosody; he probes the lyric/discursive split hiding behind the search for a name for the kind of line Ashbery writes.

In the thread, Marjorie Perloff had written · 24 July 1995 —

free verse means no counting, a variable line, and the line as unit rather than the foot

The search for a "new" term (or conceptualization) for the kind of verse someone "like Ashbery" writes is intriguing in that to dismiss him as merely "discursive" (or to valorize him for same reason) seems beyond the point...Yet, reading backwards from the contemporaries, many modernists (Stein, Stevens, Riding) seem to be equally removed from "song"--either in that they have a plainness in their diction or a hypnotic rhythm "akin to the saxophone"(as Eliot said of Stein)--Of course, "The Four Quartets" and some Moore (who despite her rhyme was tonally) also seem to be important "precursors" of a certain I-don't-want-to-say-discursive tone. But perhaps Moore would be disqualified because of the rhyme (as would Stevens because of the iambs?) as an alternative to "free verse"--Yet, when one reads Ashbery or Perelman or Harryman (scratch harryman for now--it makes it too complicated), one is definitely not reading most of O'Hara or Mayer or Armantrout? Would Marjorie, or anyone else say that the latter (O,M,A,) would fit under the rules of "free verse" as presumably so would Spicer and Weiners? And if this is this case, is this distinction argued on any grounds other than the "lyric" vs. "Discursive" debate? Chris Stroffolino

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beowulf (willa jargon)

27 July 1995

The Beowulf thread: Caedmon's Hymn against the epic — the lyric outsider who runs from society set beside the 'representative man,' both, he suspects, male compensatory fantasies. Dickinson makes the better anti-Beowulf.

Willa raises a good point when she asks is it possible that the emotional content of Beowulf and "Haiku" might possibly be the same-- I've been thinking about the "two poles" of the British poetic tradition--that the two pieces often AT THE BEGINNING of most anthologies are Caedmon's Hymn and Beowulf--and though the story behind Caedmon's hymn is more interesting than the hymn itself (bear

with me if i sad this before--it's kinda a schtick), the difference between the "lyric" and the "epic" sensibility in these two pieces that we see still I suppose exists today--- One could say that if Caedmon were a character in Beowulf he would actually be GRENDEL (if not Grendel's mother)--I think this notion of the "sensitive" lyric outsider running away from society vs. the "representative man" in Beowulf is quite emotionally distinct--- Yet,they are both potentially MALE COMPENSATORY fantasies--and perhaps the "difference" between Dickinson and Whitman is a better paradigm if I'd like to stress the emotional difference between "epic" and "lyric"--for while Caedmon wanted to see "God as a roof" Dickinson wanted the top of her head blown off and thus provides a better Anti-Beowulf strategy (if that's what you're looking for) ---well, enough for now--I've probably already said too much.... Chris S.

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beowulf (willa jargon)

28 July 1995

Burt Kimmelman wants the lost music of Caedmon back; Stroffolino insists the debased printed text — not some reconstructed splendour — is what actually founds our idea of 'the lyric.'

In the thread, Burt Kimmelman -@NJIT had written · 27 July 1995 —

if you are reading Caedmon's Hymn in the original where the music will come through

Dear Burt K.--Well, first I don't BELIEVE you when you say you can't imagine someone saying "subject position" while "making love"-- but as for Caedmon's HYMN--there IS No original, with the music-- I mean MAYBE Caedmon had a great voice and was a Bob Dylan or P.J. Harvey or something. What WE DO KNOW, however, is that the "text" (stripped of its music) has circulated beyond mere medievalist "circles" and has taken on an institutional life of its own as a version of "the thing itself" in vulgar official narratives of HISTORY OF ENGLISH LIT (just as "the ballad" is called a "hybrid form--neither music nor poetry" but this is only true from a certain perspective of what literature is, or has been, only with the advent of the printing press, etc.)---And, because the version we have (whether debased or not) has been accorded a privileged position as if AT THE BEGINNING of a tradition, it is worthwhile perhaps to consider the conception of "the lyric" that is implicitly justified by Caedmon (for instance, "christian"; for instance, "Confessional"-- for instance "poet as rebel-turned-seer; or rudolph the rednosed reindeer). I am not arguing that these "myths" do not have a place in poetry, and even haunt the most radical poetry that inevitably, at one point or another, places itself in some kind of relation to this voice (be it Shakespeare or Stein or O'Hara or L Poets), only to recognize the way the text continues to be used in undergraduate survey courses (if nowhere else) which, to me, seems to

matter more than some hypothetical reconstruction of the TRUE SPLENDOURS of the past that may very well be the present in drag. Thanks for taking this seriously, chris

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"marketing strategies"

11 August 1995

The summer's largest argument opens — 'marketing strategies,' the CAP-L list, factions — with his plea for dialogue across the aisle and a defence of Larkin against the reflex that reading a reactionary makes one.

In the thread, maria damon had written · 11 August 1995 —

| labels and categories more often stultify than enable thinking and engagement

dear rachel loden--thanks for your thoughtful response to herb levy about the cliquishness---whether or not the CAP-L people are McCarthyites I think must be an oversimplification--I catch myself speaking of "formally conservative poets" as conservatives, and am glad I have a couple of AWP-type friends. Of course, the "left",("this list we're on", whatever....) does tend to elide the difference between the more working class Levine types and the more James Merrill types --and I think there should be more dialogue between "various factions" rather than the balkanized inbreeding of any clique--and though i myself have not written "sonnets" since I tried some puerile ones long ago--I am definitely open to discussion of them--There does seem to be an abiding distate of anything that seems "conservative." I mean, even Phillip Larkin (WHO HATED JAZZ and was politically conservative) in his poems at times seems to speak from a leftist perspective--or could be read as such---furthermore, there is something VERY GENERATIVE in his work that it seems ridiculous for someone to deny on ostensibly "political" grounds--It seems many readers are so queasy about "the great tradition" as if the mere act of reading a fascist (oh, an dissertations on Yeats "fascist metrics" abound) WILL MAKE YOU (i mean ONE) a fascist.... And maybe Rachel (though your question was probably rhetorical) the reason you learned something from the Corn-Silliman debate was because it was NOT as claustrophobic as the little "divided left" debates that occur here (the L poets vs. the M--remember that one!--I hope for more of such--so thank you, Chris Stroffolino

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"marketing strategies"

12 August 1995

Gwyn McVay calls him on his own lazy label, 'AWP type'; he squirms, half-defines, and half-admits he might attend the conference himself.

In the thread, Gwyn McVay had written · 12 August 1995 —

| *curious--what's an AWP type? Can you spot one on sight?*

Gwyn McVay-- Thanks for calling me on "AWP type"--I mean people who frequent AWP conferences, people who when we talk about poets tend to mention Joy Harjo alot (for instance)--of course my two good friends who went to last AWP both complained about the fact that most "poets" there tended to look like lawyers too much--it isn't that I can "spot one on sight" nor that the boundaries are absolutely rigid (for, I may try to go the next one myself--though with the wish to "make it more interesting" which usually means "subvert it" but that's true in ANY scene, isn't it?)--Well, I guess i could be more specifc....Were YOU at the last AWP conference? Could you share with us your AWP experiences? chris s.

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"marketing strategies"

13 August 1995

Charles Alexander gently defends Joy Harjo from being made an icon; Stroffolino expands into a recurring figure of his — the single-style loyalist and the seeker of 'the freedom of the poet,' warring inside everyone.

In the thread, Charles Alexander had written · 12 August 1995 —

| *I hate to see her used as an icon in this way. But then I guess we're all fair game.*

Thanks to Herb, Maria, Gwyn and Charles for there insights on "AWP" of course--if we want to prevent this discussion from lapsing into mere abstractions concerning "balance" and "reconciliation" (to export Coleridge's terms on "organic form") of poet factions, the issue is not just whether Forche is okay and acceptable because she teaches SUN & MOON people, but the challenges such an aesthetic these poets (i should say "these poets" because my formulation is, OF COURSE, vague at present) practice may raise and/or pose... LIKE AWP, APR has shown an openness to certain avant-gardists-- Schwerner, Howe (though i don't think Fanny), Scalapino, and Shapiro have all been on cover, and someone once told me of Duncan's double standard (It's okay if *I* read beryyman, but young poets shouldn't) and I am reminded of Ashbery's assertion of O'hara as "too straight for the hips and too hip for the straights"--and perhaps I am just speaking about a fruitful (fructifying?) aporia that exists in the MAPPING of any sense of poetry---If there are "two kinds of people"--those who prefer to work within what may be called a single style, or ideology, and whose sense of "community" becomes rigidified (either because of "early success" or because of "habit, the great deadener" or because of genuine commitment a la Watten's "my

imagination locked into place during the vietnam war") and, on the other hand, those who prefer "the freedom of the poet" despite all the ideological markers that always reinscribe a certain "stance", can we say that these "two types of poets" exist in each of us, in a way LIKE CHARACTERS (as, for instance, the debate in Perelman's FIRST WORLD between "leftwing playgrounds" and "rightwing communication centers"---I don't have the book handy now, that's a paraphrase)-- and that "difference between" can't help but be "difference within?" And what good would such a distinction make? Well, I think it would encourage at least a certain re-opening to things one may have dismissed out of fear of being swamped by infinity.... For I witnessed a panel discussion with Creeley and Forche on it (I've written about it elsewhere if anyone wants a copy) last fall and found myself often siding with Forche against Creeley--- just as I find sometimes the "personal anecdote" of a James Tate more valuable by being put in dialogue with, say, Harryman or others. To find connections where they are not often said to be probably also implies its inverse (that "claims of lineage" are often done for ingenuous reasons)....okay, enough--- chris stroffolino

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Rejected posting to POETICS@UBVM.CC.BUFFALO.EDU (fwd)

14 August 1995

Alfred Corn, a mainstream poet, is forwarded in by Susan Schultz to interrogate the list; Stroffolino answers the perennial 'what is this list for' — valuing it as an escape from both 'poetry' and 'essay writing.'

In the thread, Susan Schultz had written · 13 August 1995 —

Is the purpose of the POETICS list to have a go at changing subscribers' thinking on questions of poetics

I'm readng Alfred Corn's posting to POETICS and wondering who it was a response to--perhaps Rachel...or maybe Herb Levy--though Levy's lengthy post did not really suggest "changing people's minds" so maybe that idea was a Corn intepolation. It sees to me that herb was less interested in changing people's minds than he was in wanting people to come out of the closet a little me and be willing to "define" themselves. But maybe that's a misreading too. As for myself, I'd like to see more of a attempt at such "definition" but I don't think a discussion of the work of somebody on the list would necessarily work---(esp. when there's a thread around still called "Jerry Garcia" which has nothing to say about its ostensible subject but "nifty" swear words)---in parts because then the list becomes subordinated to the published body of someone's work---for me, one of the values of the list is that to some extent it's AN ESCAPE from that, a possibility for a different mode of dialogue than "poetry" and "essay writing"--i still have some kind of faith in the possibility of "organic" "improvisation" or something among the rengas... And the possibilities of ISSUES that have come up here (such

as metaphor, the self/the soul, and others) seems more fruitful than bringing egos into it too much by discussing the work of a "big name" or career level (i meant "mid-career level"--mandel's term) or unknown poet---- Jordan Davis asked this question of what do we want to happen on this list awhile ago, and it's still an open question...I'm on a SHAKESPEARE list and though the arguments there are not so much analogous to the ones here (I.e.--not a matter of JONSON vs. SHAKESPEARE like OLSON vs. O'HARA) but there is HUGE division about critical approaches and/or temperaments (IF anyone still believes in that), and it's handled for the most part very gracefully--..and maybe in the POETICS world "candor" is nothing but the title of a book by alan davies (though maria damon and others have been quite candid), and maybe this is due to fear of alienating potential supporters---I keep thinking of that thing in Midsummer Night's Dream where the actors are afraid that roaring like a lion will scare the audience...when of course even a VERY GOOD actor can not convincingly roar like a lion enough to scare, let alone THEM! (us)--or the dylan line about "the one who tries to hide what it don't know to begin with"-- And, MAYBE MAYBE dear Alfred Corn I'm just loving to hear myself speak-- (and this has gone on long even for me--but what the hell---) but since I don't always believe you have to try to change someone's mind in order not to "just hear yourself speak" it may be something else..... sloppily yours (unwinding),

chris s.

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Left out across the year is the renga — the chain-poem some members built line by line on-screen — and the running quarrel about it: whether it was poetry at all, whether it deserved its own list, whether Canadians were constitutionally against it. Stroffolino mostly watched, lobbing the odd tease; the joke stood in for the larger question he kept circling, of what this electronic room was for.

Value in Poetry

20 August 1995

The heart of the Perelman debate with Silliman: how Stevens serves as the ghostly 'value' propping up The Trouble with Genius, and his distrust of any canon-maker who says 'this is subversive, read it.'

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 19 August 1995 —

| *What I think Bob is after is a fresh rereading of all 4*

Ron (and, by implication, everybody): The ghostly "presence" Stevens serves in this book (aside from a way to show Zukofsky's 's fawning) uses him as a kind of "value" to question the book's own stated guiding assumptions: He's first included in a list of other poets (ELIOT, Williams, HD, and Moore) who, according

to perelman "produced poems, rather than life-writing, There is a sense of finitness [as opposed to finitude] and social location that is not there in Pound and Stein, certainly." (page 3) This distinction is problematic, of course, and at first seems to be something that is NOT attractive to Perelman (as in Jed Rasula's WAX MUSEUM book)--they lacked a "project" (etc.). I'd want to argue this point and show that the distinction between life-writing and mere "poems" does not seem to apply to many of these poets. But, then I see that Perelman uses Stevens as an example (though, yes, he's not praising Stevens' work per se) of the value of "poems" over "life-writing" and credits him with "a clear, delicately elegaic presentation of the problem"(223)--this is pretty much the standard avant-garde line on him (see Don Byrd---certainly no L's poet's POETICS OF THE COMMON KNOWLEDGE), yet because Perelman is interested in showing what he considers to be the "trouble" with the ZUK, STEIN, POUND....his use of Stevens to 'affirm that there is something outside...' makes me question just what is meant by Perelman's assertion that Stevens work "fits within a socially well- defined sense of poetry." And this opens up the whole can of worms of what is SUBVERSION, of why we read....Do we really believe the canon-makers (or ourselves if we happen to be canon-makers) when they say "this is subverive; read it" any more than we believed the highschool teachers and their force-fed frost. Besides, the (start again).... I guess my question viz-a-viz "debunking" was this---If this book explores (at times relying on the fallacy ad hominen to the point ?) the problematics of a certain kind of writing, and shows the weaknesses of it, the delusions, etc--why doesn't it even attempt to posit an alternative in Moore, HD, etc? Isn't it possible that poetry that DOESN'T ADVERTISE ITSELF as "social criticism" as much as some others do, may be at least as effective--- Presumably, Perelman doesn't find such "empowerment" in any of the modernists (the four he mentions being the CLOSEST they get)--we'll see, I guess, if the answer to marjorie's question--has the problem been solved---comes up when he discusses the work of the in some sense WILLFULLY MARGINALIZED L poets he discusses (though the early "separatist" stance is no doubt crumbling....)-- So, I guess I'm doing that De Man thing--- "the second you rebuke a previous writer for his blindness, you immediately replicate his gesture." -----well, enuf, chris

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Value in Poetry

20 August 1995

Keith Tuma raises Perelman on Brathwaite; Stroffolino swerves to Laura Riding — his lodestar — quoting 'That Ancient Line' whole against the Lacanian 'masculine symbolic.'

In the thread, Keith Tuma had written · 20 August 1995 —

the most provocative prose I've read by Bob was the review-essay in _American Literary History_

Yes, Keith, Bob told me about this piece (which is one of the reasons I'm waiting for MARGINALIZATION to come out--for I haven't read it yet,) and it certainly would offer a different paradigm than what ROn calls "Bob and Charles's....social satire" (which I think is a reductive reading of even Bob's earlier work, much less "chain sauttine"). I am also extremely curious of what Barrett Watten's recent work on Laura (Riding) Jackson consists. Can it be said to be an endorsement? Or would it be the kind of "right-handed endoresement" (I'm left handed) McGann gives. I am especially curious because there are tremendous affinities in the work of Carla Harryman (who Watten is married to--to do an "ad hominen" thing) and Laura Riding (especially "progress of stories") And I will quote in full a Laura Riding poem which can be read allegorically (I suppose) as a kinda law (or Lawn--a la Rosemarie Waldrop) of the excluded middle shown as one and the same with a "parthenogennesis" fantasy not unlike that "glaoumourized" (for academics) by LACAN as "entry into the masculine symbolic" (blah blah)--There is a battle of names here---SHE'S only a monomaniac because HE'S parthenogenetic!

THAT ANCIENT LINE

Old Mother Act and her child Fact-of-Act Lived practically as one, He so proud of his monomaniac mother, She so proud of her parthenogenetic son.

After her death of course With his looks and education Lived on the formal compliments That other phrases paid him; And had, of his ceremony, one daughter Who remarkably resembled Her paternal and only grandmother.

Indeed, between Act and Matter-of-Fact Was such consanguineous sympathy That the disappearance of the matronymic In the third generation of pure logic Did not detract from the authority Of this and later versions Of the original progenitive argument.

Long flourished that estate And never died that self-engendering line-out. Scion followed after scion Until that ancient blood ran nearly thin, But Verily, In Truth and Beyond Doubt Renewed the inheritance--and And So On.

There is a "he" absent from the fist line of the second stanza (maybe other erratua too)--I can see the reviewers now "Almost as good as Silliman's MICROSOFT

BUYS CATHOLIC CHURCH piece"---I'm suprised no one has yet come to Susan Howe's defense against Ron. On that point, I won't (or can't). Chris Stroffolino

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place genre heading here and behead

26 August 1995

A rare openly aggrieved post: he mocks the pressure to present a 'unified front' behind Perloff and Silliman, and the way 'independent' — Corn's word — becomes an accusation on an undivided Left where some are more equal than others.

I was reading Perloff's O'Hara book and like what she says about O'Hara's poem "the critic" in which O'Hara famously refers to the critic (and the critic "inside himself" too, if you will) as the assassin of [his] orchards--- And Perloff certainly has helped advance the stock of more writers I respect than Corn has, but that doesn't mean (Rod S, Steve E. and Patrick P--to name a few) that she shouldn't be questioned--if only insofar as I believe that poets MUST question critical paradigms-- even critical paradigms that flatter and/or justify them viz-a-viz what WCW would call the "bastards out there" (and I am NOT naming names at present)--- There do seem to be, however, implicit accusations: (and they circulate): "if you don't "come together right now over M(arjori)e" and Ron in every instance to present a unified front you are therefore and independent (and isn't that Corn's code name) and thus a bourgeois self closer to corn that looks like it's climbing clear up to the sky poking a hole in the ozone of an undivided LEFTist community (aside:--in which some pigs are more equal than others, or to quote the renga "the power of pretending you have no power"...). FOR we all know what INDEPENDENCE DAY means, and community (which Bernstein, to his credit, recently problem- atized---oops, I'm stepping out of part--scratch that) is a flag you can't burn because it allows poetic freedom, poetic license, radical artifice." Oy, ye jealous gawds, and to think I gave up being a catholic to party in your ranks..... (this goes on, but it gets "less public"--I mean the topical side of the myth gets refigured in more "subtle" terms that may be mistaken as "universalist" and "ahistorical" to some)... chris s.

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dylan

26 August 1995

His fullest Dylan apologia — the basement-tapes bootleg, the album-to-album masks read as psychological need rather than mere marketing, and Bruce Andrews as the foil who cannot change.

Ron--thanks for the story about meeting dylan. He once said that he tried to write another Mr Tambourine man and that that was a mistake-- I was just recently listening (with michael Gizzi) to the outakes from the basement tapes---a five CD

bootleg set (which if anybody has I'd send you money for cassette copies of--since I don't have a CD player) and the major change in his style which you refer to is there evident (typo-style)--as is the "dropping out" of the pop-music scene at the height of the career, etc---Yet, I don't know if one can make a mere pre-and-post 1966 distinction---especially by focusing it around the notions of "metaphor" and "genius"---His language got plainer to be sure, but the myth of genius returns. Of course, even in earlier works like "HIWAY 61" we see the "roving gambler" (which may be a self-portrait, but it is certainly a harsh, ironized one, a la 1983's "MAN OF PEACE") and so it seems hard to script dylan's development so easily---For he changed album to album. Now on one level all the masks (country-star, christian rocker, recluse, etc.) can be read as but a marketing scheme, but it also seems that committing himself absolutely to a particular paradigm (or schtick, if you must) also fulfilled some psychological need (as if one must argue "authenticity" on this list for credibility) ---Whatever, the point is that one of the attractive things about Dylan (like say Yeats) was his ability to go through different "phases" in a way I find severely lacking in say Bruce Andrews---though that just shows you how retro I am.....we'll meet on edges soon, chris

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pardon my formalism

29 August 1995

He signs off the list 'for awhile' — the summer's arguments have worn him down, an August echo of his January urge to flee.

In the thread, Susan E. Dunn had written · 22 August 1995 —

| *I find their aura of competitive cleverness anxiety producing*

I will be signing off the list for awhile--If anybody wants to get in touch with me, please backchannel---thanks alot, and it's been 'fun'---chris stroffolino

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***The Art and Poetry Worlds* I'm jumping in here late(so may be redundant), but Carolyn's def. of "active participation" may need to be questioned on the grounds that while I do agree that the reading assignments should be done, the imposition of collaborations and other workshop assignments may do more harm than good in a long term level (as opposed to short term). I am operating on a particular assumption here--and perhaps generalizing from my own experience which is that I've never been able to write poetry as well when in a workshop environment than when "on my own" as it were---the pressures of performance, etc and also the particular audience (rather than the faceless(sic) one of not being in a workshop) may present obstacles to certain students--and I think this should be accounted for by workshop teachers---chris stroffolino**

7 October 1995

The funding cuts reach the state level — Burt Kimmelman's magazine 'zeroed out' — while Stroffolino makes his contrarian case that the workshop can do a young writer more harm than good.

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***Emily Dickinson-* the potential range of meanings and tones that the dashes make possible in dickinson's poetry has not yet received much more than perfunctory treatment---even Howe (and her "followers") have turned away from the dashes per say to focus on the handwriting etc. I think much more can be done, the "authorities" have for the most part very SELECTIVELY plumbed some of the complexities and not the others that may be inherent in the dashes. These dashes are hazardous, of course, but no more than ignoring them would be. Susan Howe's Book probably would be better if called "SEVERAL OF MY EMILY DICKINSON'S" since it doesn't resolve in the idea of singular author, and such work is useful in reminding one that the "I" in any given poem is not the same "I" as in another poem---In fact, the "I" in one poem may be like the "master" (or "owner") in another poem yet-- though Howe doesn't quite say THAT! ---chris stroffolino**

13 October 1995

His Dickinson-dashes campaign opens: against both the regularisers and the gestural fetishists. Howe's book, he says, should be called 'Several of My Emily Dickinsons.'

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The Art and Poetry Worlds so Ron (Silliman), when are you going to publish your memoirs and/or autobiography---it sounds "juicy," "a page turner" etc--a la Baraka's auto. It would certainly be a change from much of your poetry.... Or, maybe, THE COLLECTED EMAIL NOTES OF RON SILLIMAN..... forward by stephen weed, etc---chris s.

14 October 1995

Silliman's astonishing FBI-file reminiscence — the Socialist Workers Party, a CIA 'stringer' in the building, minding the Hearst ransom money in '74 — leaves Stroffolino urging him, delighted, to write the memoir.

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grandma Emily? Tenney--But the rhymes and rhythms ARE there compared to most of the poetry people on this list write (or publish)---even if ironic and "off" and, yes, terrifying (what else is new). And some people--trained in "free verse" or "blank verse" at first find her work offputting for that--and others of course find it somewhat reassuring for that--and the rhymes and rhythm does lend her work a more memorizable quality than much unrhyming work of contemporaries...I don't think the "avant- garde" Dickinson is any more real than the "mainstream" Dickinson-- I guess that's the "agenda" behind most of my postings on her.... And maybe Burt has got the best take at all--the dashes are just pauses in thought (while the ink dripped from the quill---Burt that's absolutely deliciously perverse!) And Patrick, well I guess I will meet PUDGY PARCHESI and you someday "where the meanings, are"----- COMMA vs. DASH! chris

16 October 1995

His Dickinson thesis crystallises against Tenney Nathanson: neither the avant-garde nor the mainstream Dickinson is 'more real,' and her rhymes make her memorable in a way the list's own poets are not.

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Metroplex Dear Ron--this should almost be a backchannel question. But I will ask it anyway (in the spirit of the discussion on Minneapolis a few months back): Why do you think Philadelphia has not been able to produce a kind of self-reproducing scene that has sustained itself as much as say Washington DC? It's a much bigger city and has some resources that could definitely be tapped. I know you are new there--but when i was there I was able to bring certain poets who suprisingly would not have come otherwise to a downtown art gallery for VERY LITTLE MONEY. I felt bad about the sums I paid out, and even worse in some ways that I had to almost pull teeth to draw audiences for Carla Harryman, David Shapiro, Leslie Scalapino, Alice Notley, Alan Davies for instance as well as Bob Perelman (who at that time had just moved to Phila.)--(to name some of just the most famous--I'd have to list too many other names however to stave off potential charges of being a "starfucker"). Anyway, TEMPLE does do better in terms of bringing poets in than many institutions of similar size (say, SUNY ALBANY) and there has been The Painted Bride there as well at least enough magazines for someone to "get started" (Phila. was definitely MY springboard in that sense). And now perhaps Perelman will have more power at penn---when I was there he didn't have much--taught no grad classes, etc. Now I hear they are letting him bring poets in. to read in the series. Yet though there are magazines and series, there are not book publishers or even chapbooks. Nor is there much of a salient community---It's like every time something gets started, someone moves to japan or albany, etc. Again, the nomadism that careerism entails etc that many married friends of mine have had to negotiate in thorny ways (though it effects us all, and to add insult to industry their ideological justifiers speak of "family" and "hometown" values--- oops, sorry, digression)--Anyway, I am definitely PLUGGING Philadelphia despite the seeming negativity. It is afterall by far the cheapest big east coast city (Albany and even providence has rents about as hi and albany, at least, unlike Phila. is not a WALKING CITY). Perhaps the proximity of NYC effects it. Effects it negatively. But it COULD affect PHILA. positively (aside from the poets I had read that wanted to VISIT BOB or GIL OTT anyway, I probably could not have gotten as many to read there for the price I paid had it not been for NYC proximity)... Anyway it seems that a more livable and viable scene could exist there than exists in NYC (the problems at St. Marx; the recent inbreeding at the EAR--the lack of communication among "factions" etc)--- So what the hell I'm the pied piper....chris

24 October 1995

The 'Metroplex' thread on the decline of city scenes becomes, for him, a Philadelphia elegy — why has the cheapest big city on the coast never sustained the community it could? The nomadism of careers keeps scattering it.

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& Ralph Waldo I've been reading the Emerson-Stevens Money thread with some "interest"-- I wonder what kind of "toll" it has taken on me (for surely once the microcosm-macrocosm metaphor is entertained it becomes difficult to wish or wisk away without a shot of Lethe that Universal Health Care would surely make available to all)--- "Seriously" however-- I have often distrusted and been skeptical of (which isn't to say I myself do not "employ" I mean "deploy" perhaps far too much) the linkage it seems Nathanson for instance is making (though I too may be tone deaf)--not so much between "politics" and "poetic form" (via a bi-directional OF),but between....Maybe this is better stated by way of an "oversimplistic" Spielbergian (alias Manichean) binary a fellow- teacher of mine told me she used to generate class discussion: She wrote STEVENS=InSURANCE SALESMAN and WILLIAMS=DOCTOR on the board and basically meant the former as "evil" and the latter as 'good"-- Such a GRID seems to lie at the "root" of much recent work (again the work on Yeats' Fascist Metrics coming out, for instance) and I am curious WHY people seem to be so interested in such arguments? I may be seem to be conflating two things here, two kinds of "form" that seem to "inform" the "content" of the poem. Insofar as the form is the content, to what extent is the POET the POEM? And though these are important questions, the whole notion that the reader and the writer are collaborators in the making of the work, if taken seriously, would seem to render questionable predetermined notions of exactly what STEVENS' or WCW's (for instance) stance truly is--insofar as their work lives more in the (un?)consciousnesses of those who read them than it does in the books. But, when the question of poetry as a kind of money comes up (as in THE MERCHANT OF VENUS), I don't mean to beg it. But, it's always possible that such "large-scale cultural thinking" may not be that different from the kind of so-called "solipsism" that is purely aesthetic (also in quotes) like "the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella...". In other words, money as poetry and poetry as money (either way), in Stevens and in Perelman, and in others, are tropes, metaphors with two vehicles vying for the status of tenor. And theory here can be "endlessly productive" no doubt but FOR WHAT? cs

28 October 1995

The Emerson-Stevens-money thread with Tenney Nathanson; he distrusts the grid that makes Stevens the insurance-salesman and Williams the doctor — 'theory here can be endlessly productive, but FOR WHAT?'

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the shape of jazz to come/gone Right On, Aldon!--Never saw him live unfortunately, but was hoping too-- Currently have his "Until the rain comes" on my answering machine message, chris s.

29 October 1995

Don Cherry is dead; Stroffolino's tribute is to report that his answering machine still plays Cherry's 'Until the Rain Comes.'

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dunno but

1 November 1995

The November 'dunno' thread opens with a long letter to Tenney Nathanson and Ed Foster — that an aestheticising poetics and a 'responsibly social' one might be secretly alike, the way a blues song about a woman demands to be read as also about injustice.

Tenney--I wasn't actually saying that it was a BAD or DECADENT or IRRESPONSIBLE thing that "the sort of conjecture [you] brought up is akin to the solipsism of a purely aestheticizing discourse" only that in recognizing the similarities between so-called "aesthetic" and so-called "responsibly social" poetries is itself an interesting conjuncture (oops, I said conjecture above--I meant conjuncture)--and an important one if the "personal (and the impersonal for that matter) is the political"-- Because, for instance, perelman foregrounds money and the culture industry so much, it's hard to resist the temptation to see that as but his OSTENSIBLE subject--just as when a blues song ostensibly about a woman mistreating almost DEMANDS to be read as ALSO (if not "REALLY") about the injustice a black (and, in some instances, lower-class white) man is victim of in American society. Perhaps this is because I've "been trained" (though not by my institutional teachers per se) to look for "hidden meanings" too much. But doesn't the poetics of "FACE VALUE" assume that? ED (Foster)-- I am not entirely sure I understand you, but it seems you prefer an economy of "essentialism" to an more "relativistic" or at least "perspectival" economy that you claim dominates poetics today as it dominates "late capitalism." Yet you seem to link "essentialism" to "laissez faire economics"(?!?) and eventually "alchemy". How does THE ESSENTIAL justify LAISSEZ-FAIRE economics? I know it has been USED this way ideologically in the past--but if you are claiming to prefer such a poetical mode, and contradicting it with the arbitrariness of value in late capitalism, doesn't your distinction ultimately collapse on itself (insofar as both "economies" ultimately support exploitive economic relations)? Then you claim that THE MOVE FROM NOUN TO VERB (which you recognize as a historical shift of emphasis; which I may not want to claim but that's partially because my idea of "history" when it comes to poetry is probably more emersonian than poundian; more steinian than olsonian) is somehow analogous to the move from ESSENTIAL

economies to more arbitrary ones. But, as I wrote in a poem once, "VERB IS A NOUN" and even though Stein, for instance, distrusted NAMES and to a lesser extent NOUNS, boy did she USE them (though was also USED by them, and in the process USE became a trope and information-bearing language co-exists with more "musical" elements---though I think it's an open question which ULTIMATELY gets the "upper hand" in both Stein as well as Shakespeare). As for "alchemy"---Again, I appeal to THE MERCHANT OF VENICE-- an absolutely intriguing play for anyone interested in the "intersection" of poetry and money-- and though there's way too many issues there to get into here, let me consider the CHOICE OF THE LEAD CASKET over gold, etc. When rejecting the Lead casket Bassanio calls Gold "HARD FOOD FOR MIDAS" and in such is recognizing (at least verbally, though of course his ACTIONS in the play contradict, or fail to live up to this insight-- which may ironically comment on the "insight" as well) one of the problems with Alchemy. It seems to me that many poets are very interested in the same thing Shakespeare is here: the idea that even if you "choose lead," that which threatens most, like Dickinson choosing Death because (in part) the name of God has been debased, like Blake's marriage of heaven and hell, like Stein's and Riding's and Loy's projects of de-alie- nating "beauty" from the "irritating" (and even in the contemporary climate say harryman's attempt to "distribute narrative rather than deny it"), the problem is that this "lead" can always turn back into "gold" that one rejected. Whether the significance of this can be as effective on a "vulgar political" plane as well is something I must save for another time. At present I see a certain incommensurability that perhaps could be called "the contradictions of capitalism"--- Later, chris

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dunno but

2 November 1995

With Patrick Phillips, on use-value versus exchange: the Border-Patrol 'family crossing' sign — now, he reports in earnest, a T-shirt — and Stevie Wonder's 'they don't use colored people' as the word 'use' cutting both ways at once.

In the thread, Patrick Phillips had written · 1 November 1995 —

It seems to me a task of poetry to de-essentialize language/diction so that it goes out to use

Of recent postings I am most intrigued by Pat Phillip's (in part because I know of the sign of which you and Rae spoke, Pat---Hey Pat, does RAE have a POEM on this sign? If so, I'd love to see it.) Though this sign of an illegal immigrant family crossing may not get stuck in what you call "the mill of the said," it has been MADE INTO a T-SHIRT (I'm absolutely serious about this) and the irony here assumes an idea of authorial intention. I don't quite know how to "read" it--IS the sign designed to be analogous to DEER CROSSING signs ("WARNING: ILLEGAL

IMMIGRANTS---like those "SLOW CHILDREN signs) or is it blatantly sinister in intention (as if to say STOP YOUR CAR AND PLEASE ENGAGE IN VIGILANTE ACTIVITIES and round up these "nonpersons" so the price of fruit may go up, etc). Anyway, your point is well taken Pat, A point of poetry is to de essential- ize. Of course, that's not the only point, and Aldon's reading of Derrida's non "relativism" is astute (I mean "task" not "point"). As is the complexity Pat points to through his recognition of inevitable failure in going "out to use". Part of the problem is that the word "use" in Pat's formulation is implicitly contrasted with "exchange" and thus seems it must be read as similar to "essential" in contrast to the relativity of exchange. This is useful (sorry) up to a point, but then the word "use" has been used in so many ways--and though it may seem to be some kind of archimedian point beyond "the mill of the said", in other contexts the word has decidedly more negative connotations. When Stevie Wonder sings "where he lives they don't use colored people" there is on one level a complaint about unemployment and on another level a critique of the systematic USE of employees in general. As if to say "THEY DON'T EVEN USE US" and calling attention to the doubly disen- franchised status. To the extent, that the political implications here are seen in opposition to each other--insofar as wanting to be USED and wanting to DO AWAY WITH USE as such are contradictory urges foisted upon people by "economic necessity" poetry may seem to fail--but the double meaning in Wonder's use of USE may be said to be a kind of Alchemy (as Foster understands it): the sum greater than the parts. chris s.

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14 November 1995

A flame war has broken out; he declines to take sides and answers instead with an 'IF...THEN' from As You Like It, noting the oddity that his accuser had once asked him to blurb a book.

In the thread, Gale Nelson had written · 13 November 1995 —

| *It sounds as though Spencer has some concerns about the state of poetry*

"Much Virtue in An "IF"----Shakespeare, AS YOU LIKE IT, act 5--

Well, Mark-- IF Spencer said that I was second-rate and IF Specncer said that I am a careerist who just sucks up to the powerful and IF he also said that I therefore have no integrity, THEN it no do doubt becomes quite bizarre that he would have asked me to blurb his last book----- signed, a fiend (i mean friend---much virtue in an R).

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yep & yep*17 November 1995*

Jordan Davis asks for examples; Stroffolino answers not with argument but with a poem — one of the few he lets onto the list all year.

In the thread, Jordan Davis had written · 17 November 1995 —

| *not cross-syntax--but a poetry of syntax--not acid etchings either--not Milton*

For all the times a "mind" alights, an alight "minds"
 on the color of the meaning that tried to do away with color
 as long as emotions are projected on an it you may call yourself
 as a pre-emptory gesture since in reality every fall from a great height
 is a ruse of rhetoric since in reality nothing happens and the hypothetical
 that is allowed to thrive in framed solitude seems unconfined
 only from the perspective that fails to confirm the badge of HUMANITY
 on the brain's harmonious tension with, say, the liver
 which science makes to break as long as practical motives are taken
 into account and healing is progress and aging is two ships passing
 like nights that would be days if all swamps who thought they were
 individuals and all the stick figures who thought they were communities
 could meet in the mosh-pit, trade bodies and roll out the red-carpet
 for a past disguised as the future that will treat it better
 than words of doubt could wield.....
 CS.

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trouble, slightly revised*17 November 1995*

The flame war again: two poets whose work dissolves the self have fallen into the most personal invective. He reframes it as a 'fruitful contradiction' between a poetry and the person who signs it, rather than choosing a combatant.

In the thread, Rod Smith had written · 17 November 1995 —

| *This tendency to take as a deadly or serious threat things that are said that one doesn't agree with or like*

Open QUESTIONS: Is it possible that one of the reasons "avant garde" poetics has been more against the "bourgeois" or "singular" or "continuous" or "autonomous" self that "mainstream" poetics because of the temperamental differences of the people involved. One of the interesting, for me, things about the recent "flame war" is that two poets, both of whose work is quite sophisticated and "polyvocal" and abstract in its problematization of the self (neither DODGE the issue as some other writers--not to name names here--seem to) have adopted the very PERSONAL "I"-based discourse and CHARACTER that their own poetry seems to be most vigorously and rigorously opposed to. I mention this not so much to pass judgment on either writer (certainly no more than I do on my "own" self) as to call

attention to what may be called a "productive site" or "fruitful contradiction". For, viewed in such a light, the "battle" becomes less exclusively between "avant-garde" and "mainstream" as between the poet's poetry, or the poetry's poet, and the "non-poetic" utterances made by a person who calls himself a poet. If we put the ostensibly "non-poetic" statements of the poets in dialogue with say NO ISLAND or COMPLICATIONS FROM STANDING IN A CIRCLE or, more generally, the ideology implied by the poetries, it might be at least as fun as a cookie to ask IS IT POSSIBLE THE STRICTURES and/or DEMANDS many (if not all?) kinds of poetics makes on its writers can stifle to the point where the only "equilizing" outlet can be a kind of ostensibly non-poetic admission of a frustration and rage whose reality may "call into question" or "severely problematize" the very standards the poetry itself may be said to speaking for???? (even though of course Ed Foster is right and there is ONLY CHANGE and OPENENDEDNESS in Stein, etc---). Chris Stroffolino

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Questions

27 November 1995

Steve Carll supplies the Blake he had been hunting — States versus Individuals, from Milton — and Stroffolino reads Blakean 'imagination' as close to Marx's 'labour': an activity, not a state. He needs the citation now that he is in academia.

*In the thread, Steve Carll had written · 26 November 1995 —
| We are not Individuals but States*

Thanks, Steve---I had forgotten I actually have the Blake dictionary-- but maybe it was just an excuse to get you to quote this to the list! But Damon may be--as usual--reductive--for though "States" may be errors for Blake, it seems his idea of the "individual" is also more complex than Damon allows. For if the "individual" is that which can not change, it is of course more like "imagination" and certainly not the autonomous individual or the "egotistical sublime" (as Keats says of Wordsworth). It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to say that Blake's "imagination" (in the above quote at least) is far more like Marx's "labour" in the way it operates in his system---as an activity rather than a state. So so much for the Edison division between perspiration and inspiration....Chris

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Condition of Poetry in the Academy

28 November 1995

Susan Schultz's catalogue of the anti-poetry bias in English departments draws out his own: the last hires all 'theory,' graduate students warned they cannot 'get away with' literature without being pegged reactionary.

In the thread, Susan Schultz had written · 28 November 1995 —

| *even poets on the staff claimed not to like reading the stuff*

Well, I can't speak for others, but am happy to include myself in the "we" Jonathon Levin outlined---JL makes a good point, too, that I've been thinking about since Don Byrd suggested that "theory is very sexy today". For though it no doubt has its attractions, Levin is right that there are quite a few graduate students who ARE GOOD AT and who CAN PLAY the theory game, but feel pressured by their junior faculty (the last 4 or 5 hires at my institution are all primarily theory, for instance)--as well as by what they are told are THE DEMANDS OF THE MARKETPLACE that somehow they can't "get away" with literature, that they can't unless they want to be pegged a RIGHTEST.... So, I'm glad this is NOT a closed issue, and where there's hope there's doubt. And where there's detachment there's (fill in blank).... cs

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Theory etc.

28 November 1995

Asked to 'interrogate' Judy Roitman's vocabulary, he interrogates it into a Thanksgiving fever-dream — 'Abigail Child is the father of De Man' — which Jeffrey Timmons will promptly relineate as a poem.

In the thread, jeffrey timmons had written · 28 November 1995 —

| *This vocabulary needs interrogation, I believe.*

Jeffrey T---Does Judy R's vocabulary need interrogation--or perhaps to be fleshed out? What is a PERP? Anyway? Fashion IS a toddler toddling through a world of grown-ups like the wind through an aolian harp bought at Walmart. And there are so many of them it's really hard to get one's beauty sleep which one needs especially as a grown-up and since Abigail Child is the father of De Man certainly everything will appear out of focus as in Marx's camera oscura which we were minding our business, interrogating, BUT IT'S TOLD US NOTHING and we relented until the fashionable toddlers decided to take the form of the turkey at the center of the yuppie mainstream bourgeois table that so tortured Joe Conte and so we decided to boycott the holidays whose false totalizing teleological standards of functional reality leave us in the lurch so in a defensive move we all start claiming WE ARE POETS! WE WILL INHERIT THE HEARTH! as a an attempt to have something to cling on now that we've gone cold turkey. This too all needs to be severely interrogated.....cs

[↑ Index](#)**Theory etc.**

29 November 1995

Timmons has set the fever-dream as verse and sent it back; the closing sign-off half-mocks it all.

In the thread, jeffrey timmons had written · 28 November 1995 —

| *Fashion IS a toddler toddling through a world of grown-ups*

Oh Jeffrey--with your brains, my brawn and Judy R's vocabulary, just think of cultural stud(ie)s we could toddle! your in aesthetic eugenics, cs

[↑ Index](#)**1996**

Nineteen ninety-six catches Stroffolino at his most prolific and least published: a booklorn doctoral student in Albany answering everyone at once, warm and pun-drunk, before he quits the list at midsummer for a walk-up in Jersey City. The year turns on a single dense February, where the poetics of the quotidian, the death of Larry Eigner, the copyright wars, and the long argument about class and the academy all run at once, and the argument about class is really an argument about his own mother.

Wanna date?

1 January 1996

The year opens with him scolding the list for going quiet over the holidays; hungover, ag-grieved, affectionate, it is the keynote.

Oh you POETICS people are SOOOOOOOO conventional, aren't you? It's soooo predictable that the talkers won't be talking coz it's the "holidays" or something----- and i was just ooking for something for my hangover.... looking, ooking... (and sorry ruminations on COMPUTERS a la Higgins are BORING BORING BORING)..... well, good luck in '96.... and love, and peace signs made of nixons....chris

[↑ Index](#)**vitalism?**

3 January 1996

Jordan Davis had tried to define the shared 'vitalism' they all read for; the first of the year's answers that are really poems.

In the thread, Jordan Davis had written · 2 January 1996 —

| *I thought it was something like energy that we were reading and looking for*

I saw a new born babe with wild wolves all around it. I saw vitalism and judges. Judges that couldn't help but be against vitalism. And it starts seeming like individualism And all kinds of taboos langourously jump on that, nip that in the

bud as if it's january and the hope of spring is but an extreme hyberbolic artificial good-guy bad-guy story that we should never let sing us to bed at night, much less cradle us in its arms without unless we dress it up in judge's robes. And if the voice in the wilderness claims to have found a beauty that can not be expressed in words and seems like an absence or a terror that could delay one's arrival at a "matter-of-fact" attitude that, for awhile at least, redramatizes the argument against argument that is vague enough on one level to crave yet hardcore enough to fly under its banner as if monogamously committed to a muse that lets you run away from it and play the prodigal cultural commentator at the other end of the continuum as if we don't need winter to get us through the winter because we have spring--- and only the oversuspicious would accuse you of not being able to enjoy spring in spring for the simple reason you can't enjoy winter in winter. And if you enjoy not enjoying, well then VITALISM is better in winter. And if you enjoy not enjoying, er--I lost my harmonica....c

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worldwide web presses

9 January 1996

The squabble over web publishing mutates into the year's first real argument: George Hartley has posted a passage from Gayatri Spivak on the academic's complicity in global labour, and asks what it does to the charge that Language poetry is elitist.

In the thread, george hartley had written · 9 January 1996 —

I myself have mixed feelings about the following passage, but thought it might spark some interest

Dear george hartley---it seems one must make several steps in order to "apply" spivack's statement to the question of whether language poetry is elitist. First, she's dealing with "critics" and "academic" workers primarily, and the picture she paints of her antagonistic interlocutor seems purposely absurd: "she will deny our cappicino!" Spivack is of (delete "of") is echoing Marx's definition of what property is, as if to reassure one that they will be allowed to keep their trinkets, etc. and that the current ideology of "middle classes" is an ideological ruse and that almost all of us are PROPERTYLESS and workers and thus working against our own interests when we engage in acts, or further ideologies, that appeal to the bourgeoisie. Now--as to whether this can be related to "language poetry," the question can go several ways. On one level, it seems the question must be taken out of the academy. But not only does the poetry circulate in the academy, some of the poets do. And the question of how the "poetry" relates to the "poet" or the "person" becomes something that might need to be taken up more and more, and if there is the same kind of "false consciousness" at work in such situations that spivack satirizes in the figure of the cappucino colleague. And one may long for a world that DOES NOT FORGET that labour power involved, and sees a solidarity

with "Juan Valdez", in a classic Marxist fashion. Yet it seems (at least in the passage you quoted, but even in what I've read of Spivack's larger project) that the force of critique stops there, and since SHE TOO is implicated in "the teaching machine" that, on one level, the proletarian interests she may claim to speak for becomes equally textualized---and just as a friend of mine once caught Robert Bly, an avowed vegetarian, red handed with red-meat, one may question how her ideological war against INDIVIDUALIST atoms may mystify a very particular investment she has in individualism. Just maybe! Insofar as certain poetries (whether long or no) call attention to the realpolitik of the academic workplace and its relationships to global capitalism, they may be seen as allied to Spivack's project (though not insofar as she's "against literature" and even "literature against literature" as such). And that much of it does call attention to the possibility that CAPPUCINO and WORD PROCESSORS are not necessarily indicative of "progress" or "privilege" or the other images propagated by media hype of the benefits of increasingly alienated labour, but in fact as alienating as the migrant fruit workers, the \$1 a day home-labour subaltern: The YUPPIE-FLU "service economy" technocrat is as unhappy in his or her "privilege" as the overworked coffee picker. WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE means that the top-heavy consumer and the bottom-heavy producer can be united and some kind of cultural revolution should occur that allows the lower classes the privilege of labouring in the mind and at the same time stops over-comodifying INTELLECTUAL LABOUR-POWER in the academy ("publish or perish") and gives up on the idea of the autonomous "work" of the intellect that likes to delude itself it's FULFILLED by labouring in the mind every day and every night, the mind and only the mind AND HAS TO PAY TO GO TO A GYM TO WORK-OUT because those needs are not being met by its profession. Therefore, of course, it's elitist. But then we are all implicated---even the "easy to understand" poets. I left a lot of holes, but I guess I kinda made my point. Chris Stroffolino

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outside in the web press

9 January 1996

The same afternoon David Golumbia pushes back: you cannot equate a teaching assistant's alienation with a coffee-picker's. For Stroffolino the precarity is not theoretical, and he refuses the distinction.

In the thread, David Golumbia had written · 9 January 1996 —

I can't make the leap from the alienation (in the technical Marxian sense) of that worker to the hard-core class

David, to make a "leap" between two kinds of exploitation is to make a "link." And though this may "erase a great deal of history", if there is to be any sense of solidarity between the two, it seems it must be made...especially in an America in

which many were duped by the promise that somehow white-collar work was somehow less exploit-ative than blue collar, and that even those in say a \$35,000 a year job who are able to buy VCR's etc need to rethink the oppression they are subject to and not just in the workplace. Sure, issues such as "homeland destruction" are not as acutely felt in the "first world" as in other places. But the destruction of inner cities, the displaced nomadism, the indentured servant status that is increasingly a reality for most academic workers, etc., etc., does wreak havoc too, and seems to discourage not only unionization, collective engagement, even "community" but its effects can be seen even even on the more "basic human" or "domestic" levels of "love" and the possibility of "family". It's not as much of a problem if one is "economically secure" but as tenure track job security seems to be going the way of the dinosaurs, this myth of individual security that has compensa- ted for the breakdown and destruction of our american homelands--- ie. what used to be called the american dream (not the homelands, but the anti-community myth; the "I got mine, don't worry about his") seems to call for something more than Spivack's rather specialized form of professional "critique"--- Chris

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worldwide web presses

11 January 1996

Hartley presses the question of the academy as a 'privileged technology'; the answer turns, for the first time, autobiographical.

In the thread, george hartley had written · 11 January 1996 —

to what extent is the academy a privileged technology that makes poetry-technology accessible to us

Dear George-- Since I find Spivack "hostile to poetry" I would still say "textualize" rather than "poeticize". As for whether poetry exploits, even if it's not "made available by" academia, I shall have to appeal to personal experience. If we consider our "EDUCATION" to be that which distinguishes us, we are either arguing strictly from "pedigree" or we place a faith in the powers of formal education and value what used to be called "intellect" over wildness. And that may have ELITIST ramifications. Of course, the attack on "romanticism" or Jordan's "vitalism" that in some parts is levied, would point to the "always already" cultural privilege that is "mystified" by the terms "intuition" or "wildness." Either, these terms REALLY MEAN "HArvard" beneath it all, or they exclude others. Though the second is a chicken-egg question. Who excludes who? And who really cares? The question of elitism is often figured as a question of "audience development" and vice versa. To the extent one is indifferent to these questions or engages in them as much "in game" as "in earnest", one may feel

"outside the teaching machine" or "culture industry." ---assuming the second is wider than the first. There is a myth that I don't always mind NOT being immune to, a memory of a desire for some kind of wild blue yonder or personal intimacy that either leaps over or is found in the nooks and crannies in the culture industry, and this may only be learned at school BY DEFAULT. If I had a stake in trying to prevent people from going to college (like the "system" increasingly seems to have), certainly to say "the best thing you can learn in school is that you can't learn anything in school" would be in my interests. But what if I wanted to assert that as a DEFENSE of our "noble profession" (though I am still a student, I mean "in the way the world speaks")? Perhaps this is the ABSURDITY--like people flocking to hear Dylan sing "you shouldn't let other people get your kicks for you." But what of those who can't afford school, and thus may be deluded into thinking (coz of TV, perhaps? An ISA Althusser downplayed too much) that they CAN learn something real and substantial from school besides a fashionable or marketable vocabulary, just as a virgin may be apt to believe that sex can solve his (if not her?) problems. And I could appeal to my own circumstances, "story" here. The father who wanted me to join him in the factory. The mother who, in defiance, worked herself quite literally to death to pay for an "education" she never had, and for which I am still in debt (even economically) for. Not to claim a BOOTSTRAP mentality here, but to say the TIME she bought me was what gave me access to "elite" poetry more than school. School, even for students, is more of a job. The fact that poetry doesn't pay for most can be seen as liberating, though I like Brecht's "Song of the cut=priced poet" too. Chris

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new book

23 January 1996

Kathryne Lindberg had described turning from high deconstruction back toward the global 60s; he answers a scholar well his senior as a peer, and as a fellow sceptic of academic 'radicalism'.

In the thread, kathryne lindberg had written · 22 January 1996 —

growing up in San Francisco in the 60's, with the treble pleasures of dope, sex, and rock 'n roll

Dear K-- Your wilder project sounds wonderful, and even though I was only 7 with an imposed crew cut at "honor america day" 7-4-70, I remember the yippies naked in the reflecting pond chanting "bob hope smokes dope" and am definitely skeptical of academic "radicalism" that is more like "careerism" and/or "paying dues"--and am wondering how we could go beyond this, and would be glad to offer any small hope I mean help I can. For what you are doing doesn't seem like safe little 60's retro stuff, or mere pop culture stuff...I'm looking forward to any possible existential refigurations you seem to be moving towards. How take it to the

streets? And yes STREETS not just "information highways"--or at least supermarket aisles.... Thanks (well back to my dues paying poststructuralist diss---hopefully I can bend the form a bit so theres something REAL in it though...) chris s.

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music and poetry

27 January 1996

The Motown-and-modernism game with Columbia and Silliman, Yeats to a Four Tops beat, is one of the year's steady pleasures.

In the thread, David Columbia had written · 27 January 1996 —

the ending of ABBEY ROAD by you-know-who features Paul M.'s attempt to set an Elizabethan lyric

Yes, David G., Syd Barrett! And Ron S., for Motown. Ever hear or see that Motownesque version of Yeats' "Turning and turning in a whirling gyre" Imagine the four tops, but with Eddie Kendricks rather than Levi Stubbs on lead vocals. I forget who did it. But, taking in (?????---the guy from London, Ontario)'s remarks to account, about translation-- I'm curious Ron S. WHY in your opinion Reich would be alien to the spirit of the WCW poem???? Implied question: WHAT kind of music would be in the proper spirit of the poem? I saw a version of !2th Night's Feste Song (the one with "jounrey end with lover's meeting) done a la Tom Waits once, it didn't seem exceedingly NOT in the spirit.... then of course there's Alan Golding's forthcoming album-- "Emily Dickinson poems to the tune of "Heartbreak Hotel"-- Irene Alebi (sic?) My own version of Brecht's "Orge's Song" from BAAL and, in reverse, Sebastian Cabot ACTOR does DRAMATIC READING of BOB DYLAN (poet)..... I'm sure there's more (though not by the gang of four-- though there's that great version of THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO on the National Lampoon Lemnings album.... (Papa was a running lackey of the bourgeois---by THE MOTOWN MANIFESTOES).. ---cs

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poetics of the quotidian

2 February 1996

The month's governing argument opens: Sandra Gilbert has dared David Carl to prove that Language poetry has any feeling for daily life at all, and Carl brings the dare to the list.

In the thread, David Carl had written · 1 February 1996 —

Sandra Gilbert has "challenged" me to demonstrate the extent to which "language poetry"

Dear David Carl-- As for the "hardcore" lang. po's, it seems Silliman's recent work (like TONER, etc) actually has a kind of WCW feel for the quotidian. Of course, you should ask Gilbert in what sense she means quotidian. Form? Diction?

Scenes? Portraits? I think Rae Armantrout and Fanny Howe manage it too. I'm sure there's more, but these are the first ones that come to mind (AND THIS IS NOT A VALUE JUDGMENT OVER WHICH L POETS ARE BETTER BY THE WAY)---best, cs

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poetics of the quotidian

2 February 1996

Ray Davis had welcomed a Language poetry that let daily life back in; here begins Stroffolino's month-long insistence on distinctions.

In the thread, Ray Davis had written · 2 February 1996 —

| *It was a great and unanticipated relief for me to find Silliman's poetry written on a bus about riding a bus.*

Keith, but I definitatly wouldn't call Bernadette a language poet-- and I don't at all mean that derogatorily to Bernadette--- didn't the L poets exclude her though they championed MacLow, etc-- I think this distinction needs to be maintained.... Though definitely tell Gilbert to read MIDWINTER, etc.....chris

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Bernadette Mayer Fan Club (charter member)

2 February 1996

Charles Bernstein steps in to correct the record on Bernadette Mayer's place in the early assemblings; the reply, to the movement's most central figure, stays courtly while holding its ground.

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 2 February 1996 —

| *If this makes it difficult to "label" her, that's all for the good.*

Dear Charles-- Thanks for the clarification. I should not have made so hasty generalization (though it WAS in the form of a question; and there ARE different levels of exclusion--but I guess there's no point getting into that).... But the main point I was trying to make in this discussion was a trend *I* consider disheartening---that is the co-optation of PRE-LANGUAGE poets under that banner, and I am NOT blaming any single person Charles for this--but am trying to cut a bandwagon off at the pass before people like Gilbert start seeing O'Hara, Spicer, Ashbery, Schuyler, etc. AS LANGUAGE poets....as if any of this MATTERS. love and love, chris stroffolino

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challenges

3 February 1996

A scholarly detour that will run for days: he asks Ron Silliman to date the New Critics' appropriation of Clement Greenberg, hoping to recast O'Hara's quarrels with Greenberg.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 3 February 1996 —

extends out of the new critics' appropriation of Clement Greenberg and is full of misreadings

Dear Ron---could you please elaborate on your sense of the New Critics' appropriation of CLEMENT GREENBERG? It makes sense, but WHEN did it happen? (late 40's?) Any specific essays by N.C.'s you might suggest on this... I want something more than speculation... It would really put O'Hara's quasi-polemical writings against Greenberg in a different light..... thanks, chris.

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trail Blasing

5 February 1996

The argument over Mutlu Blasing's book, faulted for lumping poets, turns to de Man's reading of Wordsworth; addressed to Tenney Nathanson, though the header shows Michael Boughn.

In the thread, Michael Boughn had written · 5 February 1996 —

isn't EP's famous translation of the Chinese character for "sincerity"

Dear tenney-- I like your pointing out of a methodological contradiction in Blasing's rather selective appropriation of De Man (Pound vs. Wordsworth). What always bugged me about De Man though was that he REDUCES even what Wordsworth SAYS he's doing so he can claim all this "unintentional excess"--and yes of course it's unintentional. But more like Kant's purposeful purposelessness. (i.e. as Shelley says "poets are...the words they understand not"). Also, I'm glad you qualified POUND as MISTER LOGOPEIA--- For Marisa Januzzi (and others?) suggest that LOY was MS. (sorry emily) LOGOPEIA---and pound may have even stole it. chris s.

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Larry Eiger (1927-1996) [long post]

5 February 1996

Larry Eigner, who wrote all his life with cerebral palsy, died on 3 February; Bernstein's memorial reaches the one man on the list for whom the loss is also a matter of daily work.

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 5 February 1996 —

how much he lived out his version of a democracy of particulars

I only knew Larry through his work, but knew that he had CP and since I have a part time job at a local CP center, I have loaned my copy of his early selected on occasion to some of the "clients" (the recent PC word for CP people here)--as an

example of what CAN BE DONE....At least one young woman was very inspired by him. I always was hoping to somehow relay this to Larry, not knowing whether he'd appreciate it or not, but I say it now.... cs.

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Eigner

9 February 1996

James Sherry offers Eigner's collected essays for sale; the reply looks for a way to turn the mourning toward the living.

In the thread, James Sherry had written · 9 February 1996 —

I would like to make interested readers of the list aware of the book and sell it for \$10

To tie a couple of threads together (Erique's----let's focus on births) (Emily's---put your money where your mouth is) (James'---Buy Eigner's book) Maybe James could donate the proceeds from the book sold to A United C.P. center--or set up some fund specifically in Eigner's name for poets with C.P.? cs

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writing the body

13 February 1996

Cixous has come up in a thread mostly out of sympathy with her; he answers as one of her few defenders here.

In the thread, Ryan Knighton had written · 12 February 1996 —

I too find Maria's phrasing radically different from Cix's, and, in some respects more interesting

It seems alot of american poet women really can't stand Cixous (warning: generalization--be glad to be proved wrong).... I too am curious about Maria's reformulation of "writing THE body" but I also think that Cixous is not just the watery bodily fluid writer of the EARLIER MEDUSA. I don't think it's there much in THREE STEPS ON THE LADDER OF WRITING and that she's being pigeonholed by her early work. I guess Rachel Blau Du Plessis (whose book by the way has that dreaded pink cover, perhaps, Dodie was referring to) and Susan Howe using Cixous as a straw woman doesn't help matters much amongst "poetics" people, and I DO find Clarice Lispector at least as poetic as H.D. by the way.....cs

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P*A*S*S*I*O*N, anyone?*13 February 1996**The list spends Valentine's week trading flower poems; here is his.**In the thread, Emily Lloyd had written · 13 February 1996 —**| She should have written that down instead of "The Pangolin."*

so much depends
upon
a red berry

hanging to
a jade rosebush

so delicious
and more full
of sap
than the
white chickens....

[↑ Index](#)**write that body***14 February 1996**Shaunanne Tangney has called ecriture feminine dangerously essentialist; he is not so sure the term fits.**In the thread, Shaunanne Tangney had written · 13 February 1996 —**| i find ecriture feminine essentialist (and therefore dangerous) as well*

I was thinking about the term "essentialist feminism" and wondering if it's REALLY essentialist.... I mean the second you get into "strategic essentialism" it becomes more "existentialist feminism", no? And I don't mean "existentialist" pejoratively.... am glad to see much talk of "radical existentialism" going on lately and though I don't mean to elide the difference between DeBeauvoir and Cixous....

[↑ Index](#)**(C) up for grabs***15 February 1996**The copyright fight opens: a federal court has just ruled a photocopy shop's unlicensed course-packs 'fair use', and Daniel Bouchard reads it as good for teachers, bad for writers.**In the thread, Daniel Bouchard had written · 15 February 1996 —**| Good news for teachers, not so good for writers*

Well--I think it's as good news for writers as for teachers, unless they also happen to be anthologists or publishers--- I mean, WHO really gets money from writing

poetry? (aside from SPARROW I mean)---It helps get the work out there, in ways anthologists and anthologies don't..... let's hear it for little privately owned photocopy places! cs.

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(C) up for grabs

16 February 1996

He has taught from Douglas Messerli's anthology and found it wanting in the way all anthologies are; the reply is his pedagogy entire, depth over breadth.

In the thread, Eryque Gleason had written · 15 February 1996 —

*wait for summer break when I've got some real free time to read and buy *gasp* whole books by those authors*

Dear Douglass (again): At the risk of still coming off GLIB (I resemble that!) let me just say that though it WAS a useful and valuable experience teaching from your anthology, I also realize that in the course of a semester undergraduate introduction to poetry course that ultimately less than 10% of the PAGE COUNT of the book was utilized in the class (and granted students may do "further reading" outside of the class; but many students simply sold the books used back to the bookstore)-- The point I'm trying to make (and maybe this relates to JONATHON LEVIN's "poetry and the curriculum" panel) is that when I teach the dense and complex work in avant-garde (and even in some mainstream) anthologies, I tend to want to focus on DEPTH rather than BREADTH.... In other words, we spent two hours on ONE WIENERS poem in the anthology-- at least 4 hours on ONE ASHBERY poem in the anthology.... a whole week on Harryman; another whole week on spicer.... etc. etc.----this may seem like piecemeal reading according to your philosophy--and I certainly respect that philosophy, but I also respectfully dissent from it.....love, chris s

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(C) up for grabs

17 February 1996

Eryque Gleason, a student deep in credit debt, has come round to his view; he presses the case with Barthes on rereading.

In the thread, Eryque Gleason had written · 16 February 1996 —

the result of digging DEEP(ish) into a few poets (or poems) in a semester is much greater retention

Eryque---thanks for your reply, and i don't disagree with you perse (and if i get to teach again some day I may even teach full books by single poets---and yes even SUN AND MOON poets perhaps dug not to be GLIB!) but the point I was trying to make is different, and I still think maligned. It's the point that one poem---even a short 12 line one-- can be as useful of a "site" (sorry, too much academic theory in

me head) for a classroom discussion, and may tell us more about both "poetry" and "language" and "the poet" and "the real world" than a huge voluminous book---sometimes less is more, macrocosm in the microcosm, etc- and sometimes more is less--- and as Barthes wrote somewhere "rereading is something that goes against the ideological and commercial habits of our society" or something to that effect (i think in S/z; and maybe certain people would call Barthes glib too).....best, cs.

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legacies

21 February 1996

The 'legacies' thread, on how influence passes and whether Hejinian counts as 'transcendental'; he distrusts the torch-passing model.

In the thread, Robert Drake had written · 21 February 1996 —

this seems to assume a linear progression, like a torch being passed frm olympian to olympian

Dear Christopher Beach--- interesting points about where these lines blur and/or mesh, or simply cease to exist.... When you ask about poets like Hejinian and the accuracy of calling them "non-transcendental", I am reminded of the way Jerome McGann tries to dance the question--referring to Hejinian and other L poets (even perhaps Kathy Acker!) as examples of what he calls "a nonmystical and nonromantic theory of poetry-as-inspiration." in BLACK RIDERS. I wonder what the writers in question would say about that.....chris s.

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103d Street

21 February 1996

Alongside the theory runs a quest: not the poet Charles Wright but the leader of the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band, whom Aldon Nielsen keeps supplying with leads. Black music and radio segregation are never far from his mind.

In the thread, Aldon L. Nielsen had written · 19 February 1996 —

For some time after their "Express Yourself" prime, the band was heard accompanying Bill Withers

Thanks Aldon for the Bill Withers/103rd tip.... "express yourself" is the song I taped off the radio the other day. He had two other white top 20 hits (according to my book)-- (I mean hits on the WHITE MAINSTREAM charts)-- and it's weird (but makes sense too) that you don't hear them on oldies stations--even though you'll hear songs that weren't as popular... Segregation in radio seems to be certainly bigger now than it was 25 years ago. Grunge stations might as well be heavy-metal stations in their unwillingness to play "black music". Waiting for someone

to update Gil Scott Heron's 1980 with its beautiful (and frightening) (and prophetic) 6-5-4-movement.....cs

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legacies

21 February 1996

Beach's thread again; when the argument tires he answers it as a thaw-scene, watching which words the season has left the list free to scapegoat. One of the year's finest small performances.

In the thread, Christopher J. Beach had written · 21 February 1996 —

| "Transcendental" does not have to mean unrigorous or ideologically naive.

Dear Chris Beach-- So I'm looking around at language--I mean the "social landscape" of language. It's kinda soggy today (late feb. "thaw"). But there's all this detritus jutting its head out from melting piles of snow. There's the word "inspiration" and there's the word "romantic." Funny how people who like the word "ideology" are willing to at least be seen hanging around the word "inspiration" why the word "romantic" sits there as if it is "Hitler" or "A" or "The" back in the days before zukofsky and stein.... Actually, I won't say "Hitler". I could say "Buchanan"--- Another thing is---why is the word transcendence and romantic worse than the word OEDIPAL? Talk about mystification. Two Apex editors are women. Oedipal women. Freud as allegedly "secular scientist." Yeah, right. Romantic bias all along, underneath "it all" but embarrassed by it. It isn't that ROMANTIC is "better", but it is interesting to see what words we scapegoat. pomophobically yours, chris s

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the none study

22 February 1996

Aldon Nielsen has been sceptical of 'transcendence'; here Stroffolino, unusually, defends the maligned word against the charge of snobbery.

In the thread, Henry Gould had written · 22 February 1996 —

| *The Divine Unknown* is by definition unknowable.

Aldon raises a good critique of "transcendental" But I'm not so sure that this question of a discourse of the transcendental need in every case mean "I have access to this inaccessible realm and you don't" in a kind of snooty way. Perhaps it is a much of a "nominalist" issue as much as a "realist" one. In the sense that this "you" that the "I" of certain poems may claim its "superior" can be read as something "inside" that speaker as much as outside. To me, poems that may appeal to the "transcendental" are in some ways not so different from a more "radical skepticism" and both modes can be aligned in critiquing the unreflective language of "nature" as a given. Chris S.

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Trans Sending

25 February 1996

*Patrick Phillips has diagnosed transcendence as the mind trying to climb over history; Strof-
folino is not ready to give up Emerson.*

In the thread, Patrick Phillips had written · 25 February 1996 —

*This need among transcendentalists to "climb over" history seems a sign of the
exasperated Mind.*

Hey Patrick-- I think the line is "You know that you're over the hill When your mind makes a promise that your body can't fill"-- But I don't know if everything called transcendentalism (though you may be right about Schwartz--who seems a vulgar transcendent- alist to me) need be seen as an attempt to "climb over" history. Emerson's notion of history still is quite attractive to me (moreso than Pound's "special view"). Like Stein's continuous present. A radical questioning of what's CALLED history---about how linear notions of history tend to reduce times into period and are often a projection of "the present" which of course can not be defined as such. The appeal to history and the appeal to "god" or what O'Hara called "elaborately sounded structures" may be all of a similar piece. Chris S.

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*Threaded through the month's arguments runs a quieter game, dropped
from the record here: Stroffolino and Aldon Nielsen lobbing Little Feat and
Lowell George lyrics at one another, a private liturgy of Black music and
back roads that needs no theory to license it. The one-line volleys are gone;
the affection behind them survives in everything around them.*

snoozers

26 February 1996

*Answering no one in particular, he arrives at a self-mocking pun on his own booklessness,
the 'NO poet', that will resurface at Christmas.*

Dear MW, if you're going to use oedipal, why not use Althusserian "hailing" as well--at least that way there's no Lew Gouging out his eyes after couplating with susan b. (sorry charlie--I mean copulating). Creeley, for instance, is not an L poet. I don't even know why I'm saying this (I must be bored or lazy) but it seems one can view them as a REACTION to L as you do, or an extention of Creeley and Howe.....I guess.... as for me, since I have NO book coming out, I guess I'm a NO poet (or a NOH play)....cs

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dead horses, live theories

27 February 1996

The month's other great argument, Silliman and Rod Smith on class and the two generations of the New York School, which he widens until it is about who can still afford college.

In the thread, Christopher J. Beach had written · 27 February 1996 —

| *Did all that many G1 folks really go to Harvard and Yale?*

Rod Smith raises some extremely provocative questions about class. The analogy between the 50's (Ashes, O'H) and the 60's (Mayer, Berrigan) and the g1 vs. g2. is perhaps a good starting place, but it's severely complex. One of the complicating factors, for me, has been that while the first generation NYSCHOOL did not claim to be as POLITICALLY RADICAL (at least not programmatically, but more incidentally, or as Ashes said "we merely refuse the government it's right to exist), the first wave L poets did claim to be so---despite (or perhaps BECAUSE?) the class similarities (I know this is a generalization, but I'm trying to extend on Rod's point--and there is at least SOME truth to it that might be usefully explored). This is where it seems history becomes a question (around \$\$\$\$\$\$ rather than around Foucaultian power which EVERYBODY HAS NO MATTER WHAT, yippee!) And why I don't think the analogy holds. For, unlike today, the generation of Mayer, etc. (mid to late 60's) saw a general loosening up of culture. Many really thought the system (which now goes under the more benign name of "the world market") was gonna fail. More affordable colleges opened up to classes, races and genders that had previously been excluded. The Allen anthology was being reprinted over and over. Being from the lower classes, and flaunting bohemian lifestyles, was NOT considered a handicap. With the oil crisis, the bicentennial clampdown, the erection of RAYGON, things clamped down severely. And things have been in general TRYING to return to the pre 60's elitism and pieties and increasing "incentives" for being uptight, and a growing underclass that includes many college educated people. An example re college: My late mother (b. 1942) wanted to go to college severely, and was not able to (due to class, but also to some extent gender). Because she worked her ass off, I was able in the early 80's to do so. In the five years I was in college, the tuition (i.e. price) MORE THAN DOUBLED. Had I been 10 years younger, it's probable that I would not have been able to go to college. I base this on the FACT that many of the current generation of college kids are having to drop out (and not like GINSBERG AND KEROAUC to go "on the road" out of CHOICE)--because of cut backs to publically funded schools. So, how does this SAME OLD STORY relate to the "battle over power in the poetic superstructure"?????n On one level, it may account for the tone of desperation, of divisiveness, the directionlessness even of younger poets. Sure, poets have been desperate, self-pitying and divisive way before. John Berryman almost tried to commit suicide in his mid 20's (during

World War II) because Harvard wouldn't rehire him. Today, one could cynically let out a communal cry: "OH, POOR JOHN!" Yet, at least in the 60's---despite many of the poetry wars going on, there seemed to be at least some shared feeling towards a common EXTRA-LITERARY enemy; and also a sense that we hurt ourselves more to be sequestered in our little boxes, in the suburbs, what have you.... What I would like to see more from my generation (given the systemic limitations) is at least an attempt to reach out more rather than mimic the tone of divisiveness. For instance, re the whole M question. Yes, their polemics have been divisive in a way. But what is the point in meeting this divisiveness with STILL MORE DIVISIVENESS???????????????? This is a sinking to the level that is hard to avoid, but I would like to try, and would like to be CHECKED by others, or CALLED by others when I lapse into it. I'LL CHECK YOU IF YOU CHECK ME. I mean, aesthetic differences NEED NOT always be POLITICAL differences. The problem with the POLITICAL PROGRAM that seems to follow from an assumption that DISJUNCTIVE POETIC FORMS is in itself POLITICAL is perhaps partly to blame for the "reaction" of the M poets. I DO NOT see a NECESSARY connection between the aesthetics propounded by the M (or by the Ed Foster group for that matter) and a political conservatism or yeegahds "the christian right". If the question really is politics, isn't it possible that (and it seems even MORE OF A NECESSITY TODAY than it was when the first gen. L poets were publishing their first books; the economic/cultural bankruptcy provides a climate even more threatening to poetry and to POETS now than then---the divisiveness of the L POETS in the 70's and 80's is a luxury we CAN NO LONGER AFFORD as, to their credit, I think Charles and others have recognized recently). I do not consider myself an M POET, but at the same time I DO respect them, ROD, and not just because they published me. In the 50's the coalition that Donald Allen managed to put together did manage to in some ways, at least temporarily, break the hegemony of the mainstream pieties. Why isn't that possible today????????????? Chris Stroffolino

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dead classes, living classes, theory?

29 February 1996

Maria Damon and Joe Amato have called the whole class argument a men's conversation; he does not dispute it, takes the charge onto himself, and answers with The Clash.

*In the thread, Maria Damon had written · 28 February 1996 —
| a certain (white?) male-ness in this conversation*

Okay, some will be bored by this (and I am curious whether Emily Lloyd, ShuanAnne T. and others may see this as male chestbeating) but re MW's latest post... No, I am not suggesting that we give up critique (even of the redhot variety) either, but

that includes SELF-critique, no? Also, I'd rather see critique or engagement with poems than with "positions" which may have little to do with the poems.... As for "rejecting" the academy, I've been listening to THE CLASH alot lately, and despite their maleism there is an attitude there that seems to be almost universally dismissed in avant-garde "radical" poetry (or theory academic) discussions as of late.... the idea of a POPULAR BASE for their work which they play against CBS/COLUMBIA (now SONY). Perhaps the closest to this was Bukowski in recent poetry years.... I am not suggesting poets should expect large audiences, but only pointing out that perhaps biting the academic hand that "feeds" (and other institutions---the "heirarchies" and althusserian hailing that still informs the various poetry subcultures despite the rebellions of previous generations) or would try to convince that it "feeds" seems a terrible taboo..... Perhaps we demand more sophistication than to find in a new ROOF book (or PENQUIN for that matter) an attack on the specific press similar to "they said we'd be artistically free/ when we signed that bit of paper/ they meant (make a little royalty) and worry about it later" and besides we're not in it for the money (as it were) (or a UNIVERSITY PRESS book).... but the equivalent of that is perhaps avant-guard language or theory legitimation and feeling hemmed in by habits when something you thought you did for intrinsic reasons is revealed to be, yet again, done for extrinsic reasons--- perhaps I am too restless, in a "self-defeating way" here, but it does seem that much of the sophisticated talk about how we can't do this, or do that, about "false consciousness" and the censors that can so easily be internalized onto any moment of true feeling that may seem like vulgar marxism or transcendence or love or desire or lust or "hate and war" even are really "repression...repression...repression"..... Now I love repression too, and take "too much monkey business" as a personal affront....sometimes, but not all the times but sometimes the dylan of "you gotta serve somebody" is right and as joni said "life is for learning" even though "I chide no breather but myself" is a well-rehearsed line, the things we hate the most in others may be in ourselves first and foremost. Yet, certainly the clash didn't always believe that, but there are moments when they did (in FOUR HORSEMAN for instance and DEATH OR GLORY where they turn their ire against themselves as well as their audience)..... Okay, enough said.....chris

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academic poet/ry

29 February 1996

Emily Lloyd has dreamed of 'guerilla explication', Stein's puns as street graffiti; the reply is pure play.

In the thread, Emily Lloyd had written · 28 February 1996 —

| *Graffiti about the puns in Stein on the street.*

yeah, emily, and Wittgenstein fortune cookies.... (the image of bernstein as park preacher is great)--- infiltrate the movies.... you know how much duncan donuts paid to be eaten during JUNGLE FEVER... now only if we could stick a few CHAX books strategically besides boxes of CHEX in a supermarket, and you'd pull a string and it would TALK (and drown out the muzak version of "straight: no chaser")ju(s)t think.... I did see a warhol graffiti in DC in 1983 "art is anything you can get away with" Marisa Januzzi told me that she plastered minalloy broadsides around NYC (hopefully blocking out those RWV AND COST FUCKED MAD- ONNA things)..... ONNA things).....chris

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prefatory remarks

29 February 1996

In the thread, Jordan Davis had written · 29 February 1996 —

| *I don't want poetry to confuse me, I don't want it to depress me or make me overexcited.*

Jordan writes: "I don't want poetry to confuse me, I don't want it to depress me or make me overexcited." Well, what DO you want it to do then? What's left after you've winnowed that "chaf"? And how do you avoid it? Or maybe it's a question of how you define OVERexcited?... cs

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academic poet/ry

2 March 1996

He answers Tony Green (not, despite the header, Jonathan Brannen) on the Shakespeare sonnets, tracing the argument back to Laura Riding's 1926 Survey of Modernist Poetry, one of his abiding causes.

Dear Tony Green--- In reference to the Shakespeare Sonnet thing--- Well, that was Laura Riding's argument in 1926. See her essay in "Survey Of Modernist Poetry" (a book co-authored with Graves). --in which she compares a Shakes sonnet (the lust one) to eecummings.... the essay has been an oft unacknowledged source for New Criticism (of course the NC's perverted it and institutionalized) and has been attacked by such as Jakobson and Shakespearean Stepehn Booth... I also detect

its "influence" in Zukofsky's BOTTOM: ON SHAKES (though again unacknowledged).....best, chris stroffolino

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academic poet/ry

3 March 1996

Still with Green on whether the academy is any place to meet old art.

In the thread, Tony Green had written · 4 March 1996 —

| our academies are not always the best places to get introduced to old arts

Dear Tony Green---I don't know if Chris Reiner is still on this list, but WITZ published an article just recently by Mark DuCharme on a Clark Coolidge and a Shakespeare sonnet...recognizing the syntactical ambiguity and all that in the S as well as C (though I don't know if he deals with the BOOK KNOWN AS Q punctuation and spellings.....cs

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let's talk about fascists, bay-bee...

14 March 1996

The long Pound-and-fascism quarrel; Emily Lloyd has counselled reading even the odious. His contribution is a poem.

In the thread, Emily Lloyd had written · 13 March 1996 —

| Often there's something to learn from these bad folks.

I probably quoted this once before...

Cixous quotes I. Bachman---

"the first thing in a relationship between a man and a woman is fascism...."

why are we racing to be so bold?

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in the public domain...

14 March 1996

Joe Amato asks what the list made of Il Postino; the reply widens to Baraka and to the whole question of holding a poet to the politics of his poems.

In the thread, Joe Amato had written · 15 March 1996 —

| what y'all think about *the postman*?

dear joe amato-- I was very interested in seeing IL POSTINO because it portrayed a poet as a character, and the tension between the poet as marxist/populist and as "ladies man" was quite interesting. And the way N became role model for young Italian male. At first middle man to woo/seduce woman and then, of course, more important to that young man than the woman now his wife. This latter part was

the weakest part of the movie for me... and the tentative Marxism (albiet culminating in heroic death)... anyway, curious what you thought of that.... Another issue: somebody raised the question of BARAKA (who interests me more than EZ) and it made me think of the whole question of discomfort with a poet's POLITICS (in the vulgar sense) and stance. I've seen Baraka speak in a very improvisatory way on political issues--and one of the things I admire about him (both in the microcosm of lectures and in the macrocosm of his whole development--the various phases he's gone through)--is his willingness to RISK saying things that may be perceived as stupid or wrongheaded. When called on it, at one of the lectures I've seen, Baraka appealed to the poets' right to THINK OUT LOUD, or to grow up in public. A lot of the question of "poetic responsibility" for me turns on a question of genre. When we read a novel or a play, we often accept the fictions of characters. Yet, in reading poetry (especially "statement poetry") there's this desire to want to hold the poet accountable as if the speaker of the poem (or even a whole book of poems) is not to some extent a character, a fiction. Perhaps this is because one wants to identify with a poet as a person---despite the "death of the author" and all that---and this need and/or desire is not necessarily to be blamed. Yet, at the same time, it does seem to hold others up to standards of consistency we may not necessarily apply to ourselves (sorry for the use of the "royal"? "we" here)-- Aside from the politics that makes Baraka great (see for instance his two pieces in the most recent NEW AMERICAN WRITING) is the ENTHUSIASM that may be involved in what many find disturbing about him..... Aside from my belief that even if we take Baraka strictly as a public intellectual (rather than a poet) the good outweighs the bad, there is also the sense that the whole question of judging poets' on their politics does to a large extent reduce the whole issue to one of mere OPINION. I can't believe that I am alone in thinking that "I DO NOT TOTALLY AGREE WITH ANYONE" and nor do I expect people to totally agree with me. I tend to be moved by things I HATE more than things I tepidly embrace. Ashbery said something like the reason he doesn't read much vulgar political poetry is because he finds himself in too easy agreement with it. I don't TOTALLY AGREE with that either, but AT TIMES I do. Am I "taking a stance" here? Is that a value? Or is it what "they" (and you know who they are) want from us?---- And perhaps the problems people have with poet X or Y are related very much to the POLITICS OF POETIC STANCE, of the perceived need for poets to commodify themselves, and take a position that is seen as consistent in both the narrower sense of the literary world and the larger political. But such a need for consistency is as much a problem as the failure of poets to achieve it, and probably more. It boxes people in to pre-existing grids, one becomes even more of a slave to one's past than one would otherwise---even in trying to make a "clean break".....

[↑ Index](#)**AN: Aldon Nielsen: BAD**

15 March 1996

chris daniels has asked the list to say what fascism is rather than how bad it is; one of the year's longest and least comfortable replies, granting Pound's sins and then worrying at the reflex of grading the dead.

In the thread, chris daniels had written · 15 March 1996 —

| *i'd rather talk abt what fascism IS than talk abt how LOUSY it is*

Dear Aldon-- thanks for taking up the baraka thread.... okay, i grant you these negative things about baraka BUT there's a couple issues here.... first, wasn't baraka closeted himself (re homophobia).... secondly, was talking to a *friend* lately about Laura Riding's THE WORD "WOMAN" in which at one point she makes an anti-homosexual statement....and we decided to "historicize" and "contextualize" it (in terms of her "project") as making a valid point about the homosocial qualities of the heterosexual male dominated canon and/or culture industry..... But the more important question I think needs to be raised, re WHOEVER (Baraka, Pound, Riding) is a question of OUR stance, and also of the the relationship between it and criticism of others. It's pretty damn easy and done over and over again recently to speak from a perspective of IMPLIED values ("liberal" and "democratic"?)--and this is not targeted at Aldon btw--and reactively critique the "great masters" for flaws in their politics. And this is a necessary step perhaps towards self- definition. Yet it seems so many are not going beyond it. Part of the MALAISE I see in academia and perhaps the poetry world is this FEAR of taking a stance. Alot of stuff I'm reading seems to have this attitude that "THOSE NAIVE MODERNISTS, those naive beats," back in the days when people really believed in such silly things as saying things, or even creating the illusion of immanence, or something.... related to this is the question of p.c. type verse.... probably one of the reasons the pound/baraka threads have been so HEATED is because there's passionate attachment and/or investment to the work (Pound: "can't move 'em with a cold thing like economics"--all writing is hero worship, etc.)--much of which has to do with PERSONALITY.... now there was the ANTI-PERSONALITY movement, the trouble with DUNCAN and GINSBERG, etc--that was perhaps born out of a recognition of the analogy with such differentiation on a personal level with a need for HEIRARCHIES which becomes disturbing on a "political" level. And since the personal is the political, therefore any admission even on aesthetic and/or subjective/psychological plane of the need for heirarchies is problematic and proto-fascist. I think such a rational needs to be rethought--it definitely accounts for why so many L poets don't write about things like LOVE and marriage from any kind of immanent perpspective --that becomes consigned to the margins and ironically the art/life distinction

THICKENS (with usury?).... If we look at Pound from the perspective of a poet dissatisfied with the tepid PC qualities of his day (which he saw in ROOSEVELT, who for us of course is far better than CLINTON---WPA stuff etc...) and remember that he was looking for JEFFERSON and had to settle for MUSSOLINI, and that perhaps it was done out of a feeling of powerlessness--despite how POUND is now served up as a cultural authority (Oh yikes, I really didn't want to get into pound again....), we may not be able to REDEEM him, but at least we can see why it's NOT JUST THE FORMAL QUALITIES OF HIS WORK that make him a more potentially subversive poet than the so-called liberal stuff that gets in the NEW REPUBLIC or THE NATION..... But Baraka is (as Emily Lloyd brought up) a different issue because there is a LOT more empowering on a strictly political level to him.... sometimes I wonder if the critical attitude of superiority is not a form of censorship---and if that's the case why not THROW OUT EVERYBODY..... Ginsberg is AT LEAST as compromised as Baraka, for instance.... I mean why not dwell on the good Baraka did, does--- or is there a fear of that VULGAR MARXISM again, or does it come to close to home.... that maybe looking at BARAKA and seeing his failure, we retreat into the academy, and then convince ourselves it's not a retreat. And maybe it isn't. But Baraka went to jail to help blacks, not to bash gays.... Yeah, he failed. Well, we fail too--especially if we side with the boring drab academic drudges AGAINST the barakas of the world.... I'm not saying anybody here necessarily is. But if you can't change anybody's mind (shades of alfred corn!), at least there can be unity in diversity. I used to be involved in local political groups in the early 80's and we always got into arguments over the one or two things that divided us. That attests I think more to the NEED FOR ARGUMENT than anything. And though Lou Reed sang that song to Jesse Jackson about common ground (great guitar playing, LOU!) about "common ground", I still would rather accentuate the positive when it comes to Baraka.... Just as Susan Howe wrote HER Emily Dickinson. As Rod Smith says "you take what you need and leave the rest...."okay, i contradict myself...i am contained by multitudes....

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Baraka again

16 March 1996

James Perez has argued that tainted work can be reclaimed; Stroffolino takes up Baraka's whole arc, refusing the two-phase caricature the anthologies prefer.

In the thread, James Perez had written · 16 March 1996 —

| I think we have to reclaim these things.

Dear Aldon-- You're right. I overstated the case about the reasons Baraka went to jail. Further, yes Baraka did ANALYZE HIMSELF IN A SERIES OF ESSAYS

ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT in Black Nationalism. But to me--I still love reading the stuff from the period. My only regret is that certain anthologies don't publish stuff AFTER that period--and give the distorted view of a two phased Baraka. The dead lecturer somewhat white assimilati- onist Jones (learning the language of the enemy to some extent so he could curse in it?--or at least get famous in white circles, a la the early FANON--and there may be a psychological need for this as well, a genuine love in the early years of Olson/Creeley/O'Hara who influenced that work) and then the BLACK NATIONALIST. Yet, since I am interested in Baraka's whole OUEVRE (sic?), I think we can't simply dismiss even (scratch even) this phase as nothing but negative. The separatism, like Malcolm X's, WAS heroic, and perhaps a necessary phase. Granted, it's easy to say this in retrospect (and may have been harder to accept at the time--if I may strain an analogy here, just as NASHVILLE SKYLINE alienated alot of Dylan's fans at the time, but later listeners see it as part of the overall sense of Dylan)--Yet, part of this very much has to do with CLEARING A SPACE FOR ONESELF.... you know? the whole Blake "I must create my own...or be enslaved by another's" and in such a creation often EXTREME postures are needed. The struggle against anti-semitism, homophobia, racism, classism, sexism (did i leave anything out?) can not be enforced. I certainly would appreciate it if anybody calls me on what may be perceived as any kind of hate politics. But the absence of hate is not enough, and the FEAR of being seen as sexist, racist, etc, may be a problem to address. I'll offer two examples: One of them reminds me of the POMO thread. While teaching a class of mostly black students, one student told me how she finds a certain kind of racism in the pious use of the term "african american" by so many whites. Now, this is a thorny issue--and the fact that I generally say BLACK does not make me immune...but this reminded me of a time I saw Angela Davis at Smith College lecture about how Northeast liberals (as I think she categorized them) are in some ways worse than the BLATANT racism of the southerners. At least they, she said, can look us in the eye...and deal with us on a day to day level as people. There's an irony here I, Chris Stroffolino, am only scratching the surface of. But it's something to think about. The other point is a story I love to tell in private.... It revolves around a reading I did years ago with a prominent male Language poet. I read a poem called BLACKBURNIANA in the midst of my more "abstract" pieces. In this poem, like Blackburn, I wrote of watching admiringly women's physical appearance in NYC---knowing damn well I ran the risk of being called sexist, but feeling HEMMED IN and needing to simply let it out. Well, the male poet came out and called it, and Paul Blackburn, sexist. Luckily, a famous woman avant-gardist/academic (who generally was unsupportive of my work), came to my defense..... The point is these questions are very complex.... and that anger (even if simply WRONG and misdirected) may be better than this unspoken,

hidden, bottled up fear that often passes for enlightenment. --at least as a phase. Chris Stroffolino "a sin that is mortal in a master is venial in a slave"--- P.B. Shelley

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you decide

23 March 1996

David Carl has forwarded Merleau-Ponty on those who 'split their lives in two'; he tries the diagnosis on poets he knows.

In the thread, David Carl had written · 22 March 1996 —

| *those most loyal to their youth-- have split their lives in two*

dear david carl-- very interesting Merleau-Ponty quote... I am especially attracted to the part in which he writes "others--those most loyal to their youth--have split their lives in two...." The "conservative" and "moral" "private life" vs. the the "public" and "immoral" aesthetic seems to be the distinction here. If so, it seems to be a somewhat accurate description of much poetry--though not, say, the more bohemian bernadette mayer, eileen myles, or berrigan. Some seem to split their life in two in EXACTLY the opposite way....Radical lifestyle but linguistically "conservative." Anyway, YOU DECIDE.... thanks for the quote again. chris s.

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A running joke this spring, left out here: Whitman, in a volley with Nielsen, Silliman and Jeffrey Timmons, is by turns a bridge, a toll bridge, a jail, a mall, a candy sampler, and the Republican governor of New Jersey, the sublime democratic poet reduced, lovingly, to Turnpike infrastructure.

reading report: hunt/killian/foster

24 March 1996

Standing in for the absent Jordan Davis, he files a reading report, Sean Killian, Erica Hunt, Ed Foster, in Davis's own genre.

On friday (the first one in spring--though you wouldn't guess by the snow), at the recently renovated ICHOR gallery, Sean killian, Erica (erika?) Hunt and Ed Foster read their poetry....Since Jordan D. wasn't there (at least I didn't see him), I felt I'd steal his schtick just this once and try to offer a "poetry report"... First, Sean Killian read. Intense rhapsodic work (still not in print!) that only at the rarest moments lets the listener off the hook. Someone in the audience complimentarily likened the work to Rilke....but I thought it was more like Beckett and Ashbery (not the suburban "short poem" Ashbery) Especially effective were the long prose poems, whose subtle wit and swift fade-ins and fade-outs addressed as a METAPHYSICAL problem, the systematic incentives

AGAINST human (especially male-female) connection in the hyper-ontological world of NYC and/or "late capitalism."

Ed Foster read work that, in terms of touchstones or "markers", was somewhat reminiscent of Duncan (especially in classical references and homoerotically charged) and/or Olson (his use of non-western cultures, and "special views" of history). Foster's work seems to have undergone profound changes since the last time I saw him read (1993). The more "aesthetic" quality of his earlier work has taken a backseat to a more prophetic/visionary tone--especially evident in his oracular reading style.

After a break, Erica Hunt read from her MS of her second book due out any second from KELSEY ST. PRESS. I had never before seen Ms. Hunt read before and strongly encourage all of you to do so at the first opportunity. This work is major, though in different ways than Killian. In the first place, her work had a "deceptively light" quality about it. But in the midst of the humorous, casual, everyday BELIEVABLE PERSONA that emanated from her work and radiated in performance was the kind of fast, dense sociopolitical turns that also characterize, say, Bob Perelman and Carla Harryman at their best. Hunt is definitely onto a synthesis quite unique, however, of more "language" based writing with a more NY School lyricism...

The three readers, coming from vastly different spaces, complemented each other. All were very powerful. Faith in poetry restored for the time being, etc. My little characterizations do them an injustice.... cs

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raw and cooked

28 March 1996

Jordan Davis on a reviewer who preferred the 'cooked' to the 'raw'; he declines to take sides.

In the thread, Jordan Davis had written · 28 March 1996 —

| *She argued that Ceravolo's poetry was raw, and Sandy's was cooked*

But, Jordan, isn't IRONY--whether New Critical ("conservative"?) or Ashberian/Lang.Po more "cooked" than "raw"? Sometimes I eat cooked, sometimes I eat raw. is one person's refinery another person's CRUDE?.....c

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AWP Chronicle, discussions of form*29 March 1996*

Ron Silliman has named closure the big question inside modernism; the reply comes armed with Murray Krieger and a suspicion that the New Critics are being made retroactively hip.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 28 March 1996 —

| *closure is indeed the Big question lurking w/in modernism*

Ron--Thanks for your interesting post on "modernist" "closure"---. I was reading a very "academic" (more in the sense of "stiff" than in "difficult") book recently---MURRAY KRIEGER'S "The Reopening Of Closure: Organicism Against ITself" and it starts by saying that it IS NOT AN ATTEMPT to make the New Critics hip again by pointing out how they really weren't such CLOSURE OGRES after all...and quotes a lot of their statements and explicates poems to show that to read them reductively as "poems that click shut like a box" is to miss the complex point.... Yet the argument is somewhat disingenuous. For he doesn't talk about Stein or even Riding and focuses on poems like THE EQUILIBRISTS (sic) to drive his point home---which goes to show how rhetoric (Krieger is very steeped in De Man and Lyotard, etc), especially a rhetoric of rawness, can be used to foster a particular canonical agenda. This of course can work both ways, however. SusanAnne Tanguy (sp.?) mentioned that Jeffers can hold up to a "deconstructive" reading. So can many. By the same token, it would be interesting, and possible (though not necessarily needed---though it could I suppose make a good marketable dissertation) to read Stein and others using the more "old fashioned" terms, etc.....
cs

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new york city, a bag*1 April 1996*

No reply, no occasion: a stand-alone document, his to-do list after the NYU Poetry Talks, which doubles as a census of the younger New York scene, name by name.

THINGS TO DO AFTER THE NYU POETRY TALKS a continued convergence of mysterians Ask Carla Billeteri if I can see what she's written on Laura Riding Ask Joel Kuszai, Beth Anderson, Sean Killian and others on that panel if they'd be willing to continue the discussion of maximalism vs. minimalism in a forum Mark Wallace will do his damndest to get published Ask Kim Rosenfeld and others about gendered essentialism... Try to get a copy of the Shaw/Strang collab piece in which they say "reality threw a series of backbones" and refer to the "boxy little realisim" of "lineage" and the Louis Cabri piece in which he says "i wanna be erected" and "ego chaos machine" Condemn the privatization Buck Downs spoke in favor of (Jordan claims he seconded buck, but I remember him only half jokingly begging for a local millionaire) Reopen the question, posed by Kristen P.,

and evaded by her immediate interlocutors, about what "language itself" really means, and how it functions in discourse? transcendental signified anyone????? Get Rob Fitterman to expound on CONTROL and LETTING? (i mean LET him....) Write Dan Farrell about BOO magazine (and send him check in American \$\$\$\$) Question the young advocates of the lyric about whether it is a mere "reaction"? And may it repeat the gestures of previous exclusionary tendencies? Or does it allow a new eclecticism, if not per se a new synthesis? Send Stephen Rodefer poems, and try to get the copy of his broadside to Stephanie Seymour. Read "In Memory Of My Theories" and write an essay called "In Memory Of MY Queries" Write Sianne Ngai for a copy of her poem in which she wrote "I had nothing in my mind/But I changed it" and procure copy of her magazine BLACK BREAD Ask Joe Ross to tell some "success stories" about how he, as editor of Washington Review, was able to overcome specific resistances to non-linear, non-"realistic" verse, etc. Try to get X and/or M and/or R and/or A to leave her boyfriend, at least for an affair Try to get Bill Luoma to write an essay explaining what the restaurant MONTE's symbolizes in his allegory (but don't expect a straight answer) Thank Louis Cabri for switching places with me Get a tape of the panel with Ben F. and Nancy S. (etc.) that I missed... See if Jordan D. wants to continue the collab. we started during the collab. panel. Quote these lines from Ashbery for Mark Wallace: "But most of all she loved the particles that transform objects of the same category into particular ones, each distinct within and apart from its own class" Reopen the question as to whether what is needed at this time in Canada is similar, and/or how it differs, from what is needed at this time in the States, and ask what can be learned by the USA poets from the Canadians present, and is it possible to go the "wrong" way down the one way street of imperialism i mean the free trade agreement.... Notice how the Americans for the most part dodged any question of politics except that of "the politics of poetic form".... Resist the temptation to compare this conference unfavorably to the NEW COAST ONE (in terms of diversity, lack of coffee, two panels at once...) or favorably (in terms of the great FORM panel, the superiority of NYC to a "riot proff campus...") Hope and pray that someone publishes it as a book (good suggestion, ron) and keep reminding ROB F. to include the question and answer sessions in it too and let people revise their comments (which I have a hunch Perelman did with WRITING TALKS...) Suggest that there be commemorative t-shirts with BIG QUESTION MARKS on the back, and tell Kevin Davies he can wear it over his CLASS OF 78 shirt. Find out whether it was Fiona Templeton or Melanie N. who said that we shouldn't think of an "audience" as much as a "perceiver"... Ask Bernadette Mayer for her correspondence with LAURA RIDING, then try to get it published. Ask James Sherry if I can stay at the Hotel Sherry-ton while I look for a job in NYC.... Ask Jessica Grim if she was serious about her banishment of "touchy feely

stuff....heaven forbid" from what Larry Price would call an explanatory register... Ask Lisa J. what she meant when she said I ALMOST didn't pull off my fish poem at my reading.... Don't forget the ghoulish doorman at the ICHOR and the rose colored glasses Charles Bernstein (if not Willie Loman) had on.... and be sure to wish Bruce Andrews a happy April Fool's Day....

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my script for a poetry video...

5 April 1996

Amid talk of poetry videos, an older enthusiasm surfaces: independent film.

Dear Charles-- good plug for Brackhage.... very subtle filmmaker....forces me to SLOW DOWN, very DEMANDING the undergrad teacher, Gary Adelstein, who turned me on to both poetry and independent film (i used to make super 8's back in the pre video-craze days and when i could glom parasitically onto an institutional structure that provided me free access to equipment) tells me that he's now working on landscape films (a la Brackhage) but based on James Schuyler poems..... It'd be great to see it.... Le Ann Brown at the NYU poetry talks, by the way, suggested that poets and filmmakers may collaborate far more among "my" generation than in the past and maybe some young Marjorie Perloff could eventually write a book POET AMONG FILMMAKERS.... but I'm jumping ahead of the game.... what is needed is more film shows in NYC... like in the heyday of the L scene and Henry Hill's great "MONEY" movie.....

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contrasimilacrum

7 April 1996

The perennial Riding thread, here bibliographic; he defends the popularisers, Perloff included, that everyone else derides.

In the thread, Mark W Scroggins had written · 7 April 1996 —

| are you sure about Persea's Collected Riding?

Dear Mark S-- I think Dave's right about PERSEA's collected riding. It was out for a couple of years (like the collected O'Hara) and came back in original form (well, in the 1980 version).... An interesting oddity that I've found is that almost everyone I know who has the 1980 COLLECTED says it falls apart after the first reading... (the binding, not the poems--unless in a "positive" sense)... Allegedly the new version doesn't do this. Now if only a store in Albany, well, that's another....

Dear Dave B-- Well, yes, I do think the article/chapter you mentioned on Riding is not very helpful. Unless one really thinks the LANGUAGE POETS are the TANK we must hop onto to ride into the academy or something.... But, at the same time,

I know at least one person who got turned into (onto I mean) her work through that article....And I do believe that POPULARIZERS are very important. It's very easy for many to deride, for instance, Perloff's Book on O'Hara---but it IS the first, and when I was 20 and just getting into poetry it was VERY profound..... And, there's just hardly ANYTHING that really engages Riding's poetry very much out there. At least McGann deals with poems that are more Riding and less Stein... in contradistinction to the Joris/Rothenberg anthology who seemed to try to make Riding into another Stein rather than recognize her own terms as as radical as Stein (see RObert Hale's review in ST. MARK's Newsletter for an elaboration of some of these points.....) ---chris s.

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symmetry

8 April 1996

Unprompted, an appreciation: Laura Moriarty's new Avec book, which he rates among the year's best.

Just received in the mail the latest AVEC book by Laura Moriarty. Definitely one of the best books I've read in the last year... Only about halfway through it. It is demanding, tropologically subtle work, lyric, somewhat minimalistic (yet with more "meat" than much minimalism--meat as meaning, as murder?). Also, a kind of feminism is very central to it. Perhaps it may be linked to Susan Howe's "archive" trip, but I actually prefer it to much Howe because it is also "love poetry" (albiet love poetry that is ALSO a critique of love poetry...but then that, for me, has always been true of the best love poetry). There is much more to say about it, it'd be interesting if anybody else has anything to say.... I wrote a lot in the margins, which I will not here post.... I just wanted to mention it. Chris Stroffolino

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Poetry video & Performance

8 April 1996

Maria Damon and cris cheek on music and poetry; more autobiography leaks out than usual.

In the thread, Maria Damon had written · 8 April 1996 —

i teach some of the dub poets and jean binta breeze knocks'em dead in the classroom everytime.

Thanks Chris Cheek for that great wonderful note about loving all kinds of music lyrics. We need not call them "performance poetry" to legitimize them. I like to read "poetry atrophies when it gets too far from music" not so much in terms of "meloopia" (that's really unavoidable) nor in terms of the "hybrid" kind of "performance poetry" that's "too musical for most poets but not musical enough

for most poets"--- One of the things that bummed me out about reading on the LOLLAPALOOZA TOUR (sic?) was that I was hoping we'd get to hang with the musicians more--but it was pretty separate..... I play piano and write three chord type songs. I have made no effort to "get them out" yet (due in part to time and \$\$ \$\$). I know alot of other poets (even those who like me and Mr. Cheek resemble Harryman and Ashbery more in our writing) who also have an interest in Reggae, Punk, Dylan, Gil Scott-Heron etc... and feel no need to say "well, they're NOT POETS!" which I always thought was a defensive move made by those (no names, that would be stupid) envious of their fame, and hopefully not any fear of rastafarian politics....got to build our love on one foundation... tell me who are the criminals..... just babbling here....chris

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why is art and how did she get in my backstroke. the soup?

9 April 1996

The recurring quarrel over slams and 'democracy'; drawing on his own years in a Black open-mic scene in Philadelphia, he doubts either camp is as democratic as it claims.

Dear Mikl---Yes on PAVEMENT ambiguity (career-korea, like early REM etc) Dear Maria D.-- Yes on Michael Smith....certainly no happy nationalist... another question---much of this talk of poetry slams and open readings and performance poetry seems to involve assumptions about "democracy" that I question. That the "avant-garde sophisticates" need to be in touch with the more "populist" slams, etc..... But, it seems to me there is at least as much HEIRARCHY and SNOBISM and even a "star-system" in the slam scene as in the "avant-garde sophisticate" scene. Maggie Estep is seen as a kind of metonymy for " a NYC slam poet" by many (just as BERNSTEIN is seen as a metonymy for Paul Naylor, etc). I am not trying to be judgmental here, but trying to come to a clearer understanding of the difficulties involved in forging alliances between these scenes. In PHILA, in the late 80 's I was originally far more embraced by a largely black "open mic" scene (we didn't call them slams--perhaps because the illusion of co-operation hadn't yet been REAGANED out) UNTIL I stopped reading a certain kind of poem. Wouldn't it be nice if more events combined these two groups without snobbery on either side? Of course, then there's the other question-- We (was it Amato?) may say "WE RESPECT EVERYTHING" and that can be our public political stance, but at the same time there's always these DECISIONS to make, and these preferences..... so, should we just cop out and say it's arbitrary... or that so and so has a bigger name or that so and so is less of a threat or that so and so has done me alot of favors so therefore or that so and so is REALLY good in bed or sat up with me in my hour of DREAD... why do so many people, when they talk of poetics,

sound like politicians (me no excluded here)? "let me make this perfectly clear," etc----

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stop breathin', breathin' for me now

10 April 1996

The long back-and-forth with Steve Carll on taste and hierarchy, public and private, the year's fullest working-out of his ambivalence about judgement.

In the thread, Steve Carll had written · 9 April 1996 —

I think any scene eventually (de?)generates this kind of hierarchy; it seems to be a facet of institutionalization.

(write it on a postcard) Dear Steve C. Do you think the question of heirarchies relates to what Henry Gould called taste? The ambivalence here, for me much of the time, relates to the "division" between "public" and "private" in many ways. If the so-called private is really public, which I believe it is, then the "subjective" can be considered as legitimate as the so-called "objective" (which is really subjective). Thus, the link of private with subjective and public with objective can be blown apart or simply ignored and seen as false as if we aren't "always already" corrupted by the linguistic grids we're (i mean I) trained in from elementary school or wherever. Thus, I disagree with Gould on the point of trying to find a "lost paradise" or some primordial Wordsworthian childing dancing on the shore--but I am interested in "dwelling in possibility" (as well as in prose) and so I can not claim FULLY AND ACCURATELY what, indeed, my taste is. And I suspect others who claim they can as boxing themselves in (like Perelman's great pun on the spectators who "MUST FIND WHAT IDENTITIES THEY CAN"). Yet, at the same time, I feel to some extent OBLIGATED to question others when they claim to be "democratic." Perhaps, it's because I've been raised in a country in which this word is pretty much a meaningless buzzword. Now, what is TRUE DEMOCRACY (aside from a Steal Pulse album with that great song "ravers" on it---whoops, ron silliman, unintentional typo)? is it perhaps a democracy that admits of heirarchy, admits of the arbitrariness of taste, admits of individuals, and to be honest I feel a lack of such a world. I guess I'm afraid to offend people by saying "this doesn't work for me" or afraid that I will end up eating my words because suddenly tomorrow it a poem I derided today as drivell may become the ONLY THING THAT GETS ME THROUGH that day.... And then when it moves from "poems" to "poets" to "scenes" to whatever, there arise all these questions of "package deals". And I know I should not let these things worry me, but do I now? But in lieu of simply shutting up about it--"I won't tread on you if you won't tread on me"--I also have been absolutely SHAKEN (in a way I call positive) by the "fools who rush in where angels fear to tread" and who dare say things like "OF course,

Pound is stupid" or something. It quickens the reactive mind, and Pam Rehm somewhere has that great think about "locate CREATION in REACTION" and thus perhaps maybe it would be a more TRULY DEMOCRATIC world if we did away with the "trickle down" theory of Democracy and actually delineated exactly what has MOVED US up to this point and what has NOT...even if such a delineation will seem heirarchical and subjective. This doesn't mean that one becomes immune from questioning, but that such questions will not be merely asked by one's self, but by others. I am curious as to what "liking everyone equally as poets" (as I understand Maria Damon's position) really means. It seems alien to me. Yet does that make me a snob? I hope not. I don't think poetry's necessarily an exalted activity. In fact, it may be a crutch alot, a neurotic activity, a compensation. Yet I'll DEFEND it against others who I see as just as deluded (Westerberg---"I suppose your guess is more or less as bad as mind" as a VERY empowering statement). This depends on "mood" and "need" as much as taste. For instance, I look at Shakespeare and I say "he must have really needed to write that way" and perhaps that makes me democratic, joined to others by NEED..... but is it a manufactured need, ah, that's another question.... and I am drawn to poets who deal with THAT question too.... chris

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minnesota

14 April 1996

The list has been mapping the regional geography of poetry; his contribution is a grudge against liberal Massachusetts, born of a sour season there.

Well, I've never been in Minnesota....I DID however try to live in Massachusetts on two different occasions (the summer of 1985, when I lived on the cape and worked for MASSPIRG and 9 months in 1992-3 in Amherst)--both experiences were fiascos....The image of great "liberal" MASSACHUSETTS (the only state that voted for McGovern, etc) turned out to be a sham. What I found on a personal daily basis (I mean basis) was more of the NIMBY type liberal, the "love me love me love me I'm a liberal"---very white, very witch burner decendents.... But, to whom it may concern, I hope this doesn't effect any professional relationship we might have....I do like Jonathon Richman, for instance (and I love the replacements and prince too....) Chris

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Elmslie*14 April 1996*

The Silver Jews come up; their leader is David Berman, a name from his Amherst past and, though he cannot know it, his own future band.

In the thread, James Perez had written · 14 April 1996 —

| *make sure to check out the Silver Jews, featuring two members of Pavement and the King Jew*

Dear James Perez--- Are you in touch with David Berman? I knew him briefly at Amherst.... He, in fact, turned me onto PAVEMENT as well as his own band.... But I lost touch, but if you have his address, or know his whereabouts, I'd appreciate it. You may backchannel it (if you wish). Thanks, Chris S.

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Often I am permitted to return to Tom Raworth*14 April 1996*

A quick reading report: Tom Raworth in Albany, at the Joris-Peyrafitte house.

Tonight, in a reading available on cassette from Chris, "EAP", Funkhouser at chez Joris/Peyrafitte here in Albany, Tom Raworth read from his new forthcoming ROOF Book, "A CLean And Well Lit Place" (I think that's the title). As usual, I understand, he read very fast, very dense--- It seems quite different than the TOTTERING STATE (and pre) work.... the only line that comes to mind (I didn't take notes) was "deluded by false hopes" (again, I might be misquoting)....but it's great work, and I can't wait for the book..... cs

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poetry and audience in the nation*21 April 1996*

Herb Levy has blamed a Unix mail program for the strange stagger of these posts; their author would rather it were WCW.

In the thread, Herb Levy had written · 20 April 1996 —

| *Now I understand why, for example Chris Stroffolino's messags look the way they do*

Herb Levy-- although my poetry pretty much stays GLUED to the LEFT(ist) margin in a way that is (ironically?) considered RIGHTest, how do you know that many of my notes on the poetics list--- (someone--i forget who--once remarked on their "ziggeraut" quality)-- are not intentional in the spirit of WCW's "three step" late style... ? chris

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all this OPEN LETTER BUSINESS

1 May 1996

Mark Wallace has reduced poetic community to where one hangs out; the reply complicates it with the crossover case of Jeff McDaniel.

In the thread, Mark Wallace had written · 1 May 1996 —

| *it is often LITERALLY a matter of where one hangs out*

Mr. Wallace raises a good point about social scene vs. aesthetic "bent"-- I think the former causes a lot of walls that are often attributed to the latter (more than the other way around, it seems). For instance, Jeff McDaniel. When I became aware of Jeff, it was through meeting him in a bookstore and a shared enthusiasm about people like BILL KNOT (hardly a slam poet, though he has tangential social connections with the NY SCHOOL--zavatsky, etc.) and even more MFA types like James Tate. Such affinities are evident in his book. And since I've never seen him perform, I can't say much about his SLAM side. But, I'm told he does that way (Bob Holman---I still haven't got to a friend's to watch USOP on TV. so I don't know if McDaniel is there "represented". It will be soon). Anyway, so I consider him a crossover, or a straddler in that sense. So, I don't know if people actually choose "scenes" or if scenes choose people.....more later, chris

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USOP

8 May 1996

Bob Holman's PBS series The United States of Poetry gets a full, ambivalent review, watched alongside two former students.

In the thread, Bob Holman had written · 7 May 1996 —

| *Much of the more expansive poetry is not about anything.*

Bob H.---I did see the first three USOP shows. I tended to like the second and third ones better than the first. Perhaps this is because I became used to the format by the second show, but also that there was more of the urban poetry of protest in the second and third segments and seemed to be less of the country stuff (Okay, I must acknowledge my subjective biases here). I kept thinking "wow, what is going on in the minds of the country folk when they hear these city folk" because the "value systems" are so different, but then I shouldn't be a city snob (especially considering I haven't lived in a city now for 4 years). Anyway, no point repeating the critiques of lack of variety others have made. I did watch it with two ex-students of mine and they dug it (though not as much as POETRY IN MOTION) I wish there would have been more of LORD BUCKLEY. My students really liked Matt Cook. Leonard Cohen was a surprise, as was Thylas Moss (i would have expected less of a slammy type voice from her). John Wright's Bob_Newhart deadpan delivery was interesting. The money channel graphics were interesting.

"tumbling like love through a rich man's fingers" "i'm stubborn as the garbage bags time cannot decay".... PINA's poem which said the opposite in english of what it said in spanish too. Jim Northrop's thing about the shrink committing suicide... even Dennis Cooper---"SO BORED THEY BEG TO BE BEATEN" and the poem about the IT'S SO HOT TODAY, and the two poems about wanting to wake up at what tom waits would call "the crack of noon"....I didn't much care for the poet who wrote about stealing her sister's fattening food though..... Looking forward to parts 4 and 5. Chris S.

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POETICS Digest - 8 May 1996 to 9 May 1996

10 May 1996

The running Nielsen-Holman dispute over whether poems must be 'about' anything; he parses Holman's distinction.

In the thread, Bob Holman had written · 10 May 1996 —

| *The poem is about, Aldon, but the poetry is not, is what I think I mean.*

This discussion between Aldon N. And B. Holman about being not about to be about or not to be about I don't think Bob was saying that poems that aren't ABOUT something don't have any meaning.... but what he meant by ABOUT was a very particular kind of "aboutness" It can't be "about" things like "consciousness" or "words" as much as rootedness, in place or ethnic identity, and there must be some kind of thematic consistency, PIN DOWNable.... easily..... though pop songs are sometimes more of a challenge than wild "out there" "free improv....."

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formal continuum/conspicuous repetition (fwd)

13 May 1996

Annie Finch, relayed by Mark Wallace, proposes that all poems lie on a continuum of form; he suspects hidden preferences slip in the back door.

In the thread, Mark Wallace had written · 12 May 1996 —

| *poems are all formal but lie along a continuum between regular and irregular form.*

Dear Mark Wallace--- Thanks for forwarding Annie Finch's remarks on poetry. I am going to have to print the message out before I can respond more fully, and hopefully then, some of the distinctions she makes between formally innovative poems, etc, will become clearer. But, valuing a stance of "naivete" as I do, I'm curious as to some of the applications of these distinctions. In considering form as a criteria for anthologies (ostensibly in disregard of other aesthetic/tonal/emotional/ concerns), do these other (ostensibly non-formal) considerations slip in through the backdoor as it were? For instance, there seemed to be an implicit (latent--though I may be simply reading this into Ms. Finch's remarks)

PREFERENCE for the "regular" forms of MacLow over the "irregularities" of Mayer. Does this mean that Ms. Finch would be more apt to include MacLow in her forthcoming anthology than Mayer (let's get down to the realpolitik of it!)? I am also wondering if my recent series CUSPS (Aerial/Edge, 1995-- I think Rod still has copies) would be considered as "innovative regular formal" or "innovative irregular formal" (or neither).... Chris

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sometimes a formal Finch comes

14 May 1996

The form argument reaches Dickinson, and the contest to enlist her, as formalist or as Grenier's proto-Language scribe.

In the thread, Henry Gould had written · 14 May 1996 —

| *forms that are old - have been around - and 20th century forms in the "tradition of invention"*

Of course, it might be worth remembering that the title is lifted from the first line of a Dickinson poem... AFTER GREAT PAIN, a formal FINCH comes.... Is the Dickinson poem itself a "traditional" form? After all, it is one of those Dickinson poems that does not really fit the "amazing grace"/"heartbreak hotel"/"yellow ribbon of texas"/ "gates of eden" pattern-- and so I am also interested in the co-optation of Dickinson as a formalist (which i distrust at least as much as the co-optation of Dickinson by the Grenier types---you know "the message is the handwriting"....) cs

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For a fortnight the list tries to christen the avant-garde: 'quertzblatz', Gwyn McVay's coinage, gets declined, hispanicised ('el quertblatzo'), and finally refused by Maria Damon as too Germanic. The naming game is dropped here; that a movement so sure of its poetics could not name itself is the joke worth keeping.

a foraml Finch comes

16 May 1996

The form thread, now several hands deep; he keeps trying to drag it back from form to meaning.

In the thread, Gwyn McVay had written · 16 May 1996 —

| *Form is never more than an expression of _malcontent._*

Mike Boughn, I agree with Maria. I was not trying to demonize finch as to assert my lack of interest in systematic studies of form (which I know, you're interested in too). Maybe this will change on my part-- but the questions of the MEANING that get attached to forms interests me too. What does Maria mean by this

meaning, meaning as value? Since I read both "traditional" and "non-traditional" (i'm not defining that now) verse (in terms of "form"), I guess I'm curious what form attracts me and why. But I guess I feel that "meaning" tends to get pushed aside, in such discussions. As if the meaning of the form matters more than the meaning on a more content level. If I see the MEANING of say a Berrigan poem as similar to the meaning of a Shakespeare sonnet (and i don't mean a SINGULAR meaning, but a kind of meaning-complex), am I being a bad boy who has not eaten enough of my post-modern peas and recognized how IMPORTANT the formal differences are in the fashion- show of life? cs

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Will Alexander's work

19 May 1996

Ron Silliman on Will Alexander's dense Asia & Haiti and its 'controlled overwriting'; Stroffolino, a partisan, wants the context before he'll grant the objection.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 19 May 1996 —

| *for want of a better phrase I want to call "controlled overwriting."*

I am very glad that Ron has brought up Will Alexander for consideration here. Though I haven't read ASIA AND HAITI in over a year (I remember finding ASIA more engaging than HAITI; and I also tend to prefer other shorter work of Will's better--such as "Being As Neutrality And Drift" but I digress), and I'm having a hard time finding my notes on it.... Actually, a question for RON--What PAGE is the line about the PENUMBRA from---because context may matter in terms of the question you ask about whether he contradicts himself, and on what level, etc. For, my memory of ASIA (which I think that passage is from) was that despite the "us" vs. "them" frame device, these contradictions are really complications that deal as much with the "internal" enemy. But, again, I want to see the context of the lines you quoted. Perhaps this goes towards answering the MARXIST question. I think that regardless of Alexander's general views of Marxism, the historical specificity of the poem allows him to get away with such generalizations because it is being spoken by, and/or through (the p.o.v. goes back and forth between Alexander and the monks), these beings persecuted by MAOISTS who did invoke MARX. For instance, if I were to write a poem attacking CHRISTIAN HYPOCRISY that wouldn't necessarily be attacking christ (say Sinead O'Connor pope picture incident). For me the problem is not so much Alexander's reduction of Marx as it is the Maoist's misapplication of same Marx.... Chris

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fake book*20 May 1996*

A question about 'interpretation' from Herb Levy opens the spring's most speculative essay, Bloom, Benjamin, and whether any poem has an original.

In the thread, Burt Kimmelman -@NJIT had written · 20 May 1996 —

| A quasi analog to musical fake books is perhaps the old english manuscripts

Dear Herb Levy-- That you mentioned O'Hara's "In Memory..." as an example for the "interpretation" question (music/poetry analogy) pricked up my ears. I'm genuinely curious about how you perceive the parameters of "interpretation" for surely they are wider than (was it?) Rob Hardin's more strict analogy (where say one poet with a distinctive reading style --say Andrews--"interprets" O'Hara, but of course then the locus of comparison would be not O'Hara's writing but O'hara's performance of the same poem--Are their tapes of him reading it?). It seems to me that you're more onto the idea of reading as a collaborative act, of writing-while-reading as an interpretation, and I think of Pound's "diluters" but also Bloom's idea that the only "strong" criticism or interpretation of a poem must itself be another poem (and of course trying to claim that his form of criticism may BE a poem). Thus, there is no end to interpretation. And thus, there is no "original" poem per se (or the dreaded "lost original" as Shapiro interprets it--or Sappho). And the two senses of interpretation interact in complex ways. From one perspective, poems (ALL POEMS) can not help but be interpretations, yet in being interpretations of interpretations (i.e. conventions), self consciously, as O'Hara's poem-suite is, they attempt to cancel out the hyperontological, mere simulacrum, to bring one to the illusion of "the thing itself." (Now, I'm thinking of Benjamin's "task of the translator" here--translator as poet-interpreter). Anyway, is there a way to tie any of this into Rod Smith's recent "IN MEMORY OF MY THEORIES" (or as a friend called it "In MEMORY OF MY O BOOK)? For instance, the marker is there (just as in Ray Ragosta's William James title), and could send a scholarly interpreter/explicator towards looking for similarities between the two books, as if there was some REASON, beside a spur-of-the moment flash, or a flash that occurred repeatedly more than once, that Smith called his book such. Though part of me (or one of my selves, as O'Hara would have it) wants to say, "No, Chris, it is absolutely a wild goose chase to see Smith's book as an interpretation of O'Hara" (or to take Perelman's O'hara meets Barthes in heaven as anything but a high joke to get the goat of academic drudges---for as Shapiro writes, "a title is not a can opener"), another one of my selves feels that even stale conventions such as a comparison/contrast mode can be a starting point for new possibilities. (though not "new" vs. "old" in possibility....)

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Will Alexander's work

22 May 1996

A coda to the Alexander thread, and the year's best deflation, at his own expense; Funkhouser has described the poet's method with the dictionary.

In the thread, FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH had written · 22 May 1996 —

he got the biggest dictionary he could, read it all, spending a lot of time writing down every interesting word

I don't know if I should be saying this... And I hope it's not fuel for any severe detractors of Alexander's For I say it with absolute respect... But one interesting thing re Will Alexander's "earlier draft" is that when I was sent the poem ASIA in MS, I marvelled over his vocabulary and also words I considered to be NEOLOGISMS.... I wrote Will about my love of his word "exhile" (which I took as a neologism on exile and exhale) and also "furnance" ("furnace, finance?")--- and went through explications of such.... Will said, "oh no, they were just typos, spelling errors." c

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Nonset form

31 May 1996

Annie Finch is not on the list; he writes to her anyway, wanting a formalist's verdict on the early sonnets of poets later known for free verse, O'Hara, Spicer, Riding.

Dear Annie Finch-- I have a question in all seriousness that I would be really interested in your answer to. I am currently looking at alot of sonnets by poets who later on in their careers went on to be known for, and celebrated more, for their "experimental" vers libra. For instance, the early sonnets of Frank O'Hara, Jack Spicer, Laura Riding. Coming from the perspective I do, I tend to want to vindicate these early experiments in form (just as I am interested in Mondrian's "flowers" (etc) and Franz Kline's early railroad landscapes)--as important. Yet, would you be interested in me posting one or two of these. Because it's one thing for a critic like Marjorie Perloff to criticize, say, O'Hara's early sonnets in terms of his later work. But I am curious what you would say about them. I ask this in all humility. Thanks, Chris Stroffolino

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Passings

11 June 1996

Silliman posts an obituary for the anthologist A. Poulin; the reply is half elegy, half grievance about the editions that got worse each time.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 11 June 1996 —

| *An obit yesterday in the Times for A. Poulin, Jr.*

Ron--Did you know POULIN? I remember his intor. to poetry anthology was what my first "hip" teacher used (and the WCW selected) to turn us on to poetry. I think the 3rd edition (it was green). Then each subsequent edition got WORSE. Like take out Baraka and put in Gerald Stern; take out Kenneth Koch and put in Michael Harper. Etc. Didn't he also do BOA? Pardon my ignorance, but who's larry hart?cs

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what matter who's speaking

12 June 1996

The list has been weighing Beckett's mark on contemporary writing; he sorts the early Beckett from the late.

In the thread, Charles Smith had written · 12 June 1996 —

| *it's hard for me to imagine the writing of Clark Coolidge without the example & explorations of Beckett.*

Hey Rod--- Is BRECHT part of the B-effect? It would seem that Bernstein in this schema would be more a CHARLES (more C than B) in terms of darkness, while Perelman would be more a BOB (B)--I've been thinking about the BECKETT connection with AKA (who brought that up?). It seems that AKA is less, er, "stream of consciousness" though than more Bruce Andrews-like in the way it reads. By Andrews like I mean, the emphasis is on the sentence (not emotional) rather than paragraph. Beckett's emphasis seems more on the accumulative rush effect. (again, i'm speaking primarily of the trilogy era Beckett... and I haven't read AKA in years....so I think I know what I'm going to read today.....cs

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Sonnet!: What to Name the 20th-century World-Baby?

17 June 1996

Emily Lloyd has proposed 'early Stones > early Beatles > James Joyce'; he can never resist a canon set to a backbeat.

In the thread, Emily Lloyd had written · 17 June 1996 —

| *early Stones > early Beatles > James Joyce*

the early stones are james to the early beatles joyce..... should we rip off motown or should we rip off muddy waters perhaps is the question? so silly to take sides, of course, though my heart of course with lennon when he snaps at reporter in

1965 interview "the rolling stones are NOT a protest group"--- the kinks? animals? etc. blow up the BINARY pretty much or the zombies. susan howe would not be dusty springfield in such a context (neither would fanny)--but nor would she be charlie rich-- the pre-smaltzy famous charlie rich which is actually suprisingly good on my tapedeck now and really challenging my prejudices and making me redraw my mental conceptual map at least as much as the world-baby ODORONO conference which I am off to now will (in fact, just found out I MAY be able to see Hank Lazer's panel now and that JOHN SHOPTAW cancelled out--- which points me on a

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some questions from orono (tentative toe testing)

23 June 1996

His report from the National Poetry Foundation's 50s conference at Orono, the year's set-piece, circling the vexed relation of the erotic to the political and race in the O'Hara papers.

Though I can not offer a full report of even the fraction of the official activity I witnessed and to some extent participated in at the 50's poetry conference, I want to try to make sense here of some of my impressions. In the first place, it was absolutely great to meet y'all in person as it were. Unofficial events were really fun. Fie on the rumours that academics are dry personalities! (I'll elaborate on this later). As for content of the panels, some of the issues that are "hottest" and most volatile in my mind at present would include the RACE question. Aldon Nielsen chaired a very good panel on Stephen Jonas, Russell Adkins (atkins?) and Melvin Tolson. Very informative and provoking. It seemed the most sensitive issues surrounding "race" however were tied in with discussions on Frank O'Hara. Nick Lawrence (who i didn't see) and Katherine M. Davis, Steve Evans and Ben Friedlander all dealt extensively with the race politics involved in O'Hara's work. Though I do not want to generalize about these three papers--- which took different positions on race and theorized O'hara's position to race quite differently--after the smoke of intensity cleared I found myself asking about the relation of the EROTIC to the question of RACE POLITICS. In fact, the relation of the erotic to POLITICS in its "broader" concerns became a large question that seemed to loom over the conference as a whole and for the most part seemed to be answered or theorized unsatisfactorily for me. Of the papers and speeches I saw, with the notable exception of Rachel Blau Duplessis's excellant talk about the sexual politics that informed Olson, Creeley and others, most of the papers seemed to invert the old "THE PERSONAL IS THE POLITICAL" battle cry. Perhaps invert is the wrong word. By "invert" I mean that the personal address in the lyric poems of O'Hara and Creeley etc was often read as a thinly veiled allegory of the artist's struggle with the repressive climate of the 50's (Michael

Davidson here, but others). Thus THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL, but it's not POLITICAL as PERSONAL. In such formulations, the "personal" becomes marginalized and is "revealed" to be an introjection of the "political." Basically, there is no "personal" in such a formulation. The RELATIONAL sphere-- "the only reality is face to face" (or body to body, etc.), and the erotic sphere can only PROPERLY be called POLITICAL if read in terms of "larger" sputnitbeatnickcivilrightsaficanliberationidentitypolitics (etc.) Perhaps this is the NATURE of a conference that is based around an HISTORICAL ERA. I do not mean to absolutely INVALIDATE such modes of thought. I was very provoked by these papers, but to open up a question of race, specifically on O'hara, again (echoing a discussion Aldon and I had a few months ago), I have a hard time seeing the value in GLOBALIZING or generalizing from such erotic fantasies of race relations (or racial fantasies of erotic relations) especially when the questions of SEXUAL POLITICS (whether hetero or homo) seem to be not touched on at all. The question of the politics of eros too easily gets obscured. Furthermore, I sensed at times, a kind of moralism (whether by apologists for O'hara's views on race as progressive for his time or by more critical stances towards such views) that marginalizes the specifically amoral (extra-moral qualities) that O'hara's poetry so blatantly announces itself as (the thing about the "tight pants" as a kind of Shellyean INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY or Stevensian "jar"). What does moralizing a blatantly amoral poet do? (such questions are not specific to O'hara--nor is O'hara ALWAYS amoral--just USUALLY). What assumptions inform an academic urge to "EXPOSE" one's sexual preference--one's "object choices." I am genuinely curious here. Also worried about what I see is POSSIBLY an academic urge for REVENGE against, er, "poetic license"--the "freedom of the poet" etc--Revenge through creating a climate of critique that if taken TOO SERIOUSLY by poets (realizing that "theory" does not always "follow" "practice"--and that certain poets write a certain way BECAUSE of the theoretical climate, and the "war" between "poetry" and "theory" which I believe is still "not over") can become a TABOO as if one shouldn't write about sex or love AT ALL anymore except in the most goody-goody of ways and not dare saying anything that might be perceived as racist or sexist etc. What IS racist, or sexist? The fact that less than 1% of the people who gave papers at ORONO were black (african-american) may have been the MOST RACIST thing about the conference--at least as racist as the mostly DEAD POETS being discussed (we can't change the past, but we CAN change the present). When we're dealing with the subtlety of O'hara can a white person really determine what is racist? Or what IS the point? The Gender question, however, is different--1) because there were more women at the conference (though still far less than men) and 2) because the poets of the 50's--again as DuPlessis shows--or at least many of the male poets of that period--

did not seem to problematize gender very much at all---in fact, a poem that was read from the Rothenberg Joris anthology became a hot site of contention among many women in a conversation I witnessed. It was a poem that it seemed was picked for its "humour" value--but the assumptions that poem seemed to make about "little ladies" did not seem to be questioned AT ALL. Yet, why do I consider the feminist critiques to be more valuable than the race-based ones? Perhaps because WOMEN made the former while WHITES made the latter. Well, surely that would never hold up in an academic court. But, as the court jester, let me throw it out and hope it will be taken seriously. Also, because the feminist critique PERSONALIZES the political in a way the racial critique doesn't. In terms of O'hara (the poet for whom the strongest racial critiques seemed to be made), I think as much can be learned (if academically analyze we must!) from contextually race in terms of sexual politics. Because he was gay, the feminist strategy of the MALE DOUBLE STANDARD in terms of objectifying woman can not be levied as much. But how does QUEER THEORY deal with a man objectifying another man? An open question... And what ever happened to the "separate spheres"? I.e.--in one's "political" poems, a very different attitude may present itself than in one's "amoral, sexual" poems. Why does such an attitude seem so discredited. I was talking to Paul Naylor about this seemingly MARKET demand for "theoretical consistency" and its discontents. I thought that Robert Von Hallberg actually made an interesting gesture in this respect that can actually be quite revolutionary. He did a reading of ROBERT HAYDEN'S "aspiration to universality." And read some poems by Hayden that can be seen as, if not ENTIRELY ahistorical, at least not entirely race based (though I would argue that even "those winter Sundays" is CLASS based. Yet, he also read some poems by HAYDEN that were quite specifically UN-UNIVERSAL. Showing that Hayden spoke from, as, different "subject positions." The idea that a poet can speak as a "human" at one time, speak as a "BLACK man" another time and as a black MAN" another time--to name just three overlapping ones. It seems each poem demands a different way of reading it. Of course, I'm just fostering my own agenda that privileges poetry over theory as such. ---- This has gone on way too long (joe amato-esque), and barely scratched the surface--but I hope some of these questions will be taken seriously. (even if you gotta ASSASINATE ME BORROWED ORCHARDS). I also have notes about Perelman's and Altieri's (to my mind) somewhat parallel attempts to question the cult of the avant-garde hip-straight division by arguing that Rich and Plath respectively need to be taken at least as seriously as Olson and Creeley and O'Hara. That's part of how I read their papers anyway.....(chris stroffolino

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"50s in Orono - the Reviews"*24 June 1996*

A collaborative poem composed on the bus to Cadillac Mountain and transcribed here before it could vanish; the whole conference had a hand in it.

In the thread, Loss Glazier had written · 24 June 1996 —

| *Maria Damon and I are soliciting reviews of this event.*

Colloboration POEM composed on BUS 210 en route to the
Heaths of Cadillac Mountain ("methinks the ground is flat"---KING LEAR)
by, I think, every bus member and read by Nathalie and Michael Bas-
sinski-- (loss, i think you should publish this in your website too!)

EMPHASIZED BY GREEN IN THE POST-CONFESSIONAL
CONSTRUCTIVIST RAIN

anthem for doomed youth like a truck stop siren
but she bought four burps and a bitch
so they decided simply to shut up and do it
oh, the flight of the candor
cantor
canteen
pass water

I have boring bees she sd.
and then came up from seeds
prune the main roads into wet curls
please don't sit on the waterbed of roses

Sometimes I look up and smile for a satellite photo
from the spiky (+++ untranslatable) of peg's toil
to the lathe booo mooose, buffy, now stuck in the zoo
green hat blue noise.

What whiteness like this whiteness,
what candor?
Bar harbor. Bah humbug!

Every toenail throbs like a sparkler.
Poems aren't found they are MADE
The first point is the nation from which the demon(?) dawn
may be seen the hive that is a mummy's mask
but only when viewed by a mummy
what thou lovest well in Maine?
lordly women to heaven overgiven
"I'll trade you a winter for two summers"
until the wall waits to window childlike

departures

I myself am smell/well/fell/dell/George
 spilling its ashes(?) of jam at the MLA convention
 (ALMS) and, with a scream, collecting coke bottles,
 the armless cowboy ignites a marshmallow and mosies away
 "old people should be forced to watch"
 But what?
 -----(i don't know all the authors names)

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oh no orono

29 June 1996

His leave-taking: after twenty months he resigns from the list and leaves an address to write to. He would not be back for five months.

In the thread, maria damon had written · 28 June 1996 —
 | yes it's all true, the conference was fantabulous.

yes, maria, song lyrics would be fun.....

okay, this is probably going to be my last posting on the poetics list for awhile (unless INSOMNIA tonight turns me to the comfort of the electron screen and the "immediate gratification" a prose fiction writer accused "us" poets of recently that this forum allows.... thank you all for a 20 month "virtual" community (virtual vitriol?) and if anyone wants to stay in touch i will be at: 464 Monmouth St. #6, Jersey City, NJ. 07302.... [REDACTED].... haven't figured out if it spells anything yet..... love to all, chris s.

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Then silence. He leaves the list at the start of July and is gone through the summer and autumn, the move to Jersey City and a life off the screen, and resurfaces at the very end of November as if he had never been away.

taste, judgment, etc...

30 November 1996

Back on, mid-sentence, as though no time had passed.

In the thread, maria damon had written · 30 November 1996 —
 | what are jetskis? is this an ethnic slur? or waterskis?

hello rod---i don't know if this is going to you personally or to the know i'm back on again (DUH!) and that i was in a bookshop with l"sl" j and was looking at the terrible magazine "george" (sorry, it's just TASTE--really i may change my mind tomorrow!) and noticed that they stole your ON YOUR KNEES, CITIZEN" idea---

hey maybe I'm legally liable (labile?) saying this and it would be great to be SUED...just think what it did for ginsypoo.....yours in "myth"--cs

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TOMORROW PEOPLE

2 December 1996

A found item from the Village Voice: a poetry-generating program, MacProse, and Ashbery's bemused blessing of its output.

For of those of you who (like Chris Funkhouser) are doing dissertations on TECHNO-POETRY, etc., this may be of interest (and for others too)-- In this week's VOICE, an article by David Gallagher called Cyber--the subject of which is "MacProse" which is a POETRY program (making me wonder if "francine poetry" is really a prose-writer)--subtitled ROLL OVER, KEATS... the most interesting part of the article is this: "Avoiding the typical lilt and cadence of the lecturn, I read this sample of MacProse to the poet John Ashbery: "Towns--where have they hastened? What has vengeance molded? Spring moves. Vinyards sleep. The listening street has killed it." "I'm afraid I may get put out of business for saying this," Ashbery quips, "but I like all of these lines." Explaining that he "would never rule out any way of doing anything, includ- ing poetry," he stresses that poetry is "always result rather than process." (VOICE 12-3-96) Well, aside from Ashbery's last quote--which seems weird and perhaps taken out of context (what is "result" vs. "process" here and how does that not contradict official avant garde pieties, etc.) I am interested in the lines of MacProse themselves.... Insofar as there can be "meaning" in them, it seems that the meaning is somewhat VESTIGIAL and actually ANTI- technological, or one could say the "airy nothing" of this computer program has a wry sense of irony... IT is wreaking VENGEANCE--and KNOWS It is--on the TOWNS and IT is the listening street....any others? yours (in MC 900 ft. exo-jesus), cs

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sublimation (sex, etc)

9 December 1996

A spiralling prose-meditation on poetry and sex, addressed to no one, the freewheeling private register he rarely lets onto the list.

----thinking about the relation of poetry to sex.... two theoretical terms.... sometimes poetry is sex? sex is "not all" (stevens, ashbery, etc)-- a substitute for sex? or sex is a substitute for poetry? (those who have sex to write sex poetry, assuming they exist)--the life of theory is the sex of theory, and romanticism.... or are certain poetic practices or assumptions more prone to, or grounded in, the necessity of sexual frust- ration? "IMAGISTS are certainly better lovers than

symbolists and romantics, but not as good as amygists?" or does poetry ever LEAD to sex? or do they, should they, occupy two opposite universes? life and art should be kept apart.... if one agrees that the most "social" of poetries can be seen as a kind of "onanism", does macho bravado (or macha bravada) signify the gentleness that revolutionaries lack until collaboration is revealed to be the nudity one can only write about while clothed in textual frustration that is an honest anger for green privilegings of the impersonal that could be confused with writing the body as long as it's spiritual as a personal letter written by a rich person who isn't concerned with "poetic economy" which in such a forum can be said to be the trouble with minimalism? or do you prefer sex in the head to a hex in the shed?

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lesson plan/ sales pitch

17 December 1996

Near the end, the fullest self-accounting of the year: why he 'went academic', told as defeat rather than ambition, rejected by avant-garde and mainstream alike, funded by nobody.

Hey Bill Wallace and Mark Luoma--I like binaries too--especially when someone else sets the terms so I can mix them up (kinda like the normative brain)--- B says, "sales rhetoric is metaphorically based on seduction, so it has its moments"---but too often in this land of money (where i come from feeling is a crime...) it seems that seduction is BASED ON sales rhetoric.... anyway that's not what i am here to say..... REAL CRITICS VS. REAL CHEESE.... and then those of "us" who are "torn between" the two (like the Thracian singer by the tipsy bachannals) feel guilty when writing one for not writing the other.... well that's like saying i feel guilty when i'm suicidal for not being happy (and i may but that usually doesn't help) or, on a lighter note, feeling guilty when i'm happy for not being suicidal (don't know why i think it's a shame when i get feeling better.). The first option (trying to figure out why you're sad just leads to more sadness until something she has no control over comes to rescue. A BIG IF) is possible. But is the second? (feeling guilty for being happy) I don't think so..... Anyway, this of course has EVERYTHING to do with the academic vs. "real artist" distinction. The (I HATE THE WORD HYBRID but what the hell) academic/ artist may--in trying to participate in several dialogues-- be a very weird kind of inbalance. Yet probably no more than any others (it takes a fast car baby to lead a triple life) Like Gender (like realizing you don't like being, say, a male and so you ENVY WOMEN and then you try to undo that envy by remembering they are human too--or the glass ceiling or something) So why do others "BETRAY" the real artist status bill speaks of to join the academy. I--as you may know--RESISTED for years. But I ultimately felt claustrophobic (isolated, hollow) by the "poetry world"--- Tried the "avant-

garde"--they wouldn't publish what I thought was my most ambitious work. Tried the mainstream--for pretty much the same reason. IN BOTH A FEELING OF HAVING TO APPEAL TO SOMETHING LIKE "MUSIC" as one in another field of specialization (politician) might appeal to "MODERATES"-- Wanted to start "my own scene"--like so many others have (though they probably won't admit it--for modesty or for TQM reasons)--but found no patrons and my friends seemed not to feel as strongly claustrophobic, unfulfilled in working within the assumptions of any given scene-- or were able to keep decent paying jobs better than I and so could start their own journals, etc..... So, I went academic....hoping to be funded but Pataki.... (i digress). The point I really wanted to make was that THE SPECIALIZED DIVISION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND POETRY scenes is something I'm very interested in straddling-- because I feel I FIT in neither as is-- but if I can somehow play them off each other (in my mind at least) and simply not be disappointed by the lack of intensely verbal engagement and argument and passion and personality in the poetry scene because maybe i can find it among the shakespeareans or in grading papers-- like one of my STUDENTS writing on STEVENS: ("Perhaps it is of more value to infuriate philosophers than to go along with them," is very true because philosophers love to argue. They just want to prove their point to you as best they can)--- and so i go back and forth and can be refreshed enough to try once again to bang my head against a brick wall I mean ignite or be ignited by the poetry scene. This movement may eventually allow something i crave and have not yet really found (a "soulmate" for instance, or even a playmate..) Yours in cloudiness and flipping, Chris

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N/O

24 December 1996

The booklorn NO / NOH pun of February comes back as a Christmas grumble.

Is it "N/O" or N/O
 Are they NOH plays or NO plays?
 Who is in the know?
 Only those who are in the no.
 (oh N/O, sounds like bad Merwin)...
 I don't know if there'll be snow....
 and what the hell is "goodies"
 as in "toys and goodies"---
 signed, scrooge or stooge

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FALLING IN LOVE (JUST SAY NOH)

27 December 1996

His dissertation subject and his record collection converge on a single phrase: did Rosalind, or the Buzzcocks, invent 'falling in love'?

I NOH this may not be the best place to ask this, but then I NOH not what I Dew (forgive me)--- so, HAROLD BLOOM is running around saying that Rosalind's use of "falling in love" was the first use of that phrase in the english language--or at least english literature.... Does anybody NOH is he's right about this? I used to think the BUZZCOCKS were the first to use it. Now, what did people do B4 Sx (i don't mean sex) coined that phrase, if indeed she did coin that phrase? did they mention your name, twirl round on a chain? did the sky open up for you?--- c. stroffolino

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MLA GROUPIE QUERY

31 December 1996

He missed the MLA; from a distance he frets over its Laura Riding panel and the shape her canonisation is taking.

Dear Poetics List People--- For those of us who didn't get to go the MLA, I am VERY curious in particular about what happened at the LAURA RIDING panel that allegedly Lisa Samuels, Barrett Watten and even the founder of this list were on. What was said? By whom? How's the "canonization" going? What sides of Riding are being emphasized? Is she being "l=a=n=g=i=f=i=e=d?" or if not what? Maybe somebody would like to say something here (for those of us who didn't get to the MLA) and when is that DICTIONARY OF RATIONAL MEANING (well, the part that's finished, coming out?) Chris Stroffolino

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WCW QUOTE---

31 December 1996

The last post of the year turns a line of Williams over and over, on fulfilled love and the ethics of a poetry that presumes to judge.

So, when William Carlos Williams writes--- "For if the poem set out to punish the wicked and reward the virtuous, it had better be on the basis of fulfilled love rather than unfulfilled" (SE 207)-- do you (dear open question interlocutor) agree? What is the CONCEPTUAL distinction between grounding an action in fulfilled love vs. non-fulfilled love? On one level, I wanna say that WCW is being too restrictive... not denying the validity or the possibility of unfulfilled love as a basis for poetry, at least ocassionally, and kinda takes some of the "poetic license" (that allows for pain and despair, etc.) away--and is too ideal.... but then i think

that can't be the real point here because WHAT IS the difference between loves? IS THERE really such a thing as "fulfilled love"? And even if there IS such a thing (the love you take is equal to the love you make), is it possible WCW's really point here is more to question and challenge the assumption that poetry should even PRESUME to be apocalyptic--judgmental, to reward the virtuous (i.e. those who like me are frustrated--the whole christian guilt trip in which one is BETTER only to the extent one is self-sacrificing, or martyred, or BETTER only insofar as BITTER) and punish the wicked (or the successful). That WCW is checking the reader's urge to categorize people on a moral scale in the first place. But, then, isn't he actually judging those who judge too much? Can judgment really be done away with that easily? I am skeptical (as you might have guessed) and maybe the only way "out" of the quandary (the "quary", the "wilderness of tropes" is to judge judging, to damn damning, to hate hatred, to have one's rice cake and eat it too, and accelerate the process of meaning so it approximates meaningless ness (a disclaimer on a meaning level--mere aesthetic formal structural concerns) while at the same time getting to be apocalyptic (kinda like Will Alexander's ASIA AND HAITI, but other examples too).....chris s.

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1997

1997 finds him at his most discursive and his most exposed: the long theatrical arguments run all spring—Williams and unrequited love, the marginalization of poetry, O'Hara's machismo—while beneath them the facts of his life press up through the wit: no health insurance, a dissertation to finish, and, by the end of May, no money left to stay online. The year that talks the most is also the year he goes quiet.

WCW quote

2 January 1997

The year opens mid-argument: Mike Boughn has invoked a line of Williams', and the question on the table is whether a poem may be made from unfulfilled love at all, or whether one must wait for the settled authority of the required.

Well--is it selves or secrets? ("we have no selves; we tell each other everything"--carly simon) And Mike Boughn--thank you for your response. I think we read the quote differently--I was not suggesting that how dare WCW disclaim large bitter mean-spirited narrowminded (sons of tricky dicky?--sorry) poems trashing Larkin or Ashbery or Silliman or whoever--but was questioning or uncomfortable with what seemed to be an implication that one cannot write poetry from the point of view of unfulfilled love--that such is not valid, that one should ,say, wait until one is 40 and married or something until one can claim the "stable" authority of being a poet--- I fear such a taboo (though I wouldn't say it's WCW's fault) seems to have

taken hold in many poetry interpretative communities, or "scenes" or "aesthetics" and that I rather wish to leave the possibility open that one may indeed USE one's frustration and unrequital--if that's all one "has"--to write poems, and explore that subjectivist gap in which one may punish one's own desire to punish others (etc. a kind of via negativa) without necessarily "taxing any private party" (satire--but satire, too, often gets a bad rap--one thinks of some dude in a powdered blue wig oh so witty oh so witty and privileged and lacking pathos as if the two modes are incompatible).....chris

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"tough love" WCW (the judge he holds a grudge)

3 January 1997

Yippee, the holidays are over! I saw CITIZEN RUTH tonight (and recommend it--Ruth's reply to her mother's question: "Just think what would have happened if *i* would have had an abortion?" is worth the price alone) Ruth, Dan Bouchard, rejects "tough love" (or is it "rough love") at one point.... Well, ONWARD, to Williams--- Open question, when shoplifting at the store (or swimming near the shore) where they sell (or where are anchored) ethical maxims, do you chose "JUDGE NOT, LEST YE BE JUDGED"? Now, let's say they're playing a muzak version of the DIRE STRAITS song that reminds you that "when you point the finger at someone because your plans went through, you got three more fingers pointing back at you"---but you may not have to hear it (because of the poetry walkman you're wearing and unheard sounds are sweeter...) and it may not inform the decision you must make.... Or do you CHOOSE TO JUDGE, choose to choose, choose to go...knowing that you may most likely be judged in return,(and are too impatient to wait for death) and maybe choosing to judge harshly because YOU want to be judged, or want people to ADMIT that they are judging as if somehow it's deeper, or more intimate than mere "unconditional love"? Judgment is often contrasted with perception.... but that distinction is largely linguistic (unless one does not ever feel like EYES are JUDGING)... judgment may be allowed to be irrational, provisional.... but it seems to me it is too often taken (mistaken) as final and binding (because interlocutors are queasy? or because they don't consider it to be as SEXY as I do?)

"Make it easy on yourself" is another song they play on shore... "You made it there somehow"(Dylan) So, Michael--yes, WCW's point is certainly to criticize the ethical puritan vindictiveness that he feels ignores and denies the sensuous pleasures of the present and certainly i would not argue against him here yet I don't know if I can so easily translate his "fulfilled love" into "generosity" as you do. It may be what YOU mean, but I don't know if it's what HE means (of course,

what YOU mean is more important to me anyway right now). For my own part, I would change the terms to something like "doubt" and "dogma" (even if this seems to sacrifice "eros" for the time being)--- I.e. "If the poem sets out to punish the wicked or reward the plants, it had better do so in the basis of DOUBT, in a spirit of PLAY, improvisation, DESIRE FOR love, truth, rather than on dogma, certainty, too rigid posturing." Fulfilled love (if not merely a "notch in a belt") would be "nice" but if we argue that it's NECESSARY as a PRECONDITION for judgment (or dialogue), then poetry (or poetics) becomes subordinated to "life" (an ideal pretending to be the real) and is reduced to a mimetic advertisement for a self, a ready made, that has no need for "poetic creation".....And although I do not want to outrule the value and beauty of such a mode of poetry, it does seem quite rare and one has to do something in the meantime, and attempting to write one's way OUT of "unfulfilled love" (as, say, Dickinson did--sometimes at least) may be as valid as an activity as writing FROM "fulfilled love", whatever that is...and one may even make moral (or at least ethical) claims in the process (and such claims need not be seen as mere trying to "drag you down in the hole that he's in") Chris--- (P.S. STILL NO ONE TO REPORT ON THE MLA RIDING PANEL yet?)

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a boughn to pick (ULRO)

6 January 1997

Jordan has joined the Williams thread, and the term of art is now Blake's ULRO—the lowest hell of unbelief; the quarrel with Michael turns on whether a poet can voice that state without being consumed by it.

But Jordan--I don't think neither Michael and I were equating PROTESTANT with MORALIZING (at least not in a positive sense, or even in a negative sense... nor was I (will not speak for Michael here) suggesting, unlike some people (who will remain nameless) that a sense of the ETHICAL in poetry means that "one supports the status quo....

but I see now that Michael has replied..... Michael...okay, Blake claims that good poems can not be written from the state of ULRO.... Yet, I would suggest that part of Blake's "genius" (if I may so use that term without somebody LAFFING OUT LOUD....although actually if they ENJOY that laugh, let them) was that he, especially in the 4 ZOAS, MILTON and JERUSALEM, actually did "give voice" to the ULRO impulse--but made it into a "character". I am very interested in the poetic freedom the more expansive mode of poetry afforded Blake--an ability to spend a lot of time enacting and exfoliating exactly the negative and vindictive and destructive and vengeful and painful and bitter and dark processes and relationships that his "better wisdom"---the unfallen Los--could exist as kind of

implicit judge for. One of the questions is, DOES Blake actually "purge" such negativity, whether seen as "inner" or "societal"? ---Chris

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POETICS Digest - 4 Jan 1997 to 5 Jan 1997

6 January 1997

Ron Silliman has put a set of questions to the list about the fortunes of the left—one of the recurring class-and-politics threads Chris could never leave alone.

RE Ron Silliman's post of questions (which I won't here articulate an answer--still waiting to see how he responds to Rod, etc.)--or should I say "assignments"-- He claims that the collapse of the left is a consequence of the breakdown of the USSR (in america as well as europe) I see that in europe, but HOW in America.... It seemed to me it was as collapsed b4 as after.... One could even appeal to the argument that now that the phony communism of the USSR is gone, that there's a hope for a new left more than there was before the "breakdown"..... (also, the "french thing" in us poetry seems to be waning... even providence has turned out Lisa J., Pam R (both with B D books), Jennifer M---who have very little in common with the Albiach/Palmer nexus (and now, say, Ange Mlinko).... well, i'll stop here. chris

"i got sunshine on a cloudy day"---smokey robinson "Creating the effect of sunshine on a cloudy day over the area of a city block was something our budget didn't allow for"-- spike lee

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Historically Riding Bernstein

8 January 1997

Charles Bernstein has sent round a paragraph from his introduction to a Laura Riding volume; too impatient for the book, Chris starts dialoguing with the excerpt on the spot.

Dear Charles--thanks for the paragraph quote from your intro. which I am looking forward to almost as much as the Riding book. Since I am impatient to dialogue, however, I will risk "wrenching" the paragraph you quote out of context to ask some questions.... The idea of historicizing "The Wind, The Clock...." is fascinating. Her address to the "lone survivors on paper" does seem to suggest a kind of WASTELAND as a backdrop. And she did write about how she had turned to poetry as a kind of shelter. Such a reading certainly avoids the pitfalls of "self-choked falsity" or a kind of reading that would deign to be dragged down into the kind of relationship with a certain kind of reader the poem seems to posit as well as criticize, one who would see "self-choked falsity" as an imagined reader-as-follower, or even a flattering (conjuring) of the critic who wants to be flagellated. From one perspective, this could be seen as a disclaimer of "personal

responsibility": (we all gather around NOTHING. NOTHING is what keeps us together. I am telling you I am telling you nothing. Therefore this "nothing" you may tell me I tell you may also be history, or may make you wish to TURN to history, where the answers, my friend, are blowing in the wind no less than here--no matter how hard "I the story" may try to become history) I.e. You seem to read her as saying "the story" is "history"

Now the Oppen connection (which McGann tried to establish as well) is also interesting..... Riding's politics moved in an opposite direction as Oppen? In what sense do you mean this? There's an implication that Oppen's leftism and his return to poetry are related, while Riding's attempt to critique certain aspects of poetry from a seemingly genreless perspective may invoke a kind of "rightism?" Are you implying that Riding's "voiceless telling" does away with "poetic turning?" Back to the question of the HISTORICAL CONTEXT (the HOLOCAUST, etc.)....

Has the historical context changed? Against the backdrop of the unnameable atrocities of today. If the poet is to think globally and see (if not imagine) the human forces that seem to move history more than are moved by history and if we assume that history means POWER and carries an authority poetry doesn't and that poetry may wish to claim but can only do so by killing for history is a club more easily admitted to by killing (of course, when a poet says "kill" the poet may mean kill history and its hierarchies-- chief among these the hierarchy over poetry.... the way it lies like poetry, or only speaks the truth when disguised as poetry (or a dictionary for that matter). Then there's the kind of poetry that "contains history", I mean history as history, as if to find the HUMAN there Today, of course, there are more inclusive notions of history in circulation...but are they wide enough to contain poetry without threatening their status as history? Or there is literary history.... (sylvia Plath is, in many interpretive circles, criticized for her reduction of the horror of Nazi Germany to a Freudian "family romance" while others are said to be "in denial" about the "personal as the political" from a certain perspective, history becomes a friendlier context, or habitation.... a way to make use of one's hell (Why bother, as Perelman wrote, except already bothered).... There is a crack in the world (Waldman), not just in me. The historical world. We are no longer to be duped by the possibility that one can actually solve one's problems (Hence the Oppen quote about fantasies and savagery), or become an "integrated personality" (FREUD being the OPIATE of the "middle classes" --or of the proletariat basking in their own fat of linguistic, conceptual confusion that mistakes themselves for the "middle class"--another example of doublespeak that attests for the need for Riding's dictionary).... A book that purports to be about "the mind" or "language" or "the possible" may

"really" be about the historical wall the author bangs her head up against---or the historical wall poetry had this "nasty habit" of helping you forget to bang your head against. Remember it. Fight it. But don't fight fighting, Or don't beg begging Lest history hush you home to silence, considering what kind of hearing you'll get. (this is not "me" speaking) But things change. There USED TO be a left (as Ron reminds us). Now there isn't. Hope used to be "realistic." Yet nothing is realistic until real and nothing is real until history says it is(by killing it). There are many contexts. Many HISTORICAL contexts, even if we choose to operate linguistically within the workroom (or play pen) of history,

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Threaded through the year, and mostly dropped here, is his use of the list as a switchboard: does anyone have Doug Messerli's address, Clint Burnham's email, whatever became of the 'OH CANADA' issue—and, in all seriousness, what is the name of the lead singer of the Cranberries. He fired these off between the essays, and they belong to the same restlessness.

selfless shame promotion

4 February 1997

Aldon is Aldon Nielsen, the magazine his; a thank-you note that quietly turns reviewer, praise and mock-outrage in the same breath.

Dear Aldon: Thank you for sending me THREE copies of LLS, your beautiful magazine available in fine bookstores everywhere... aside from the mention of your book and the very funny satirical (collage) piece by Steve Tills and the visuals by Spencer Slby and Jacques Debrot, there was also Mary "interrupted puppet" Winters who has a great piece called "What I like Best About A Relationship is its Potential FOr Narrative" and the lost glacier. Loss Glazier has a line about the "Text's ability to DOPE the given situation" and there are some bittersweet 'nostalgic' type poems too-- Richard Flynn "Feeling and form/(a yesterday I/ find almost impossible"!!!! and geoffrey jacques' "California"-- "nothing's sweeter or lovelier/ than the acquaintance I'm pleased to make/alongside this tinkling/tinker toy/if only i knew what hearts meant as we sit staring over coffee/talking about sublime occupations/.---etc. or as Michael Basinski says (on a similar topic): "the mouth of the heart is/not near the heart/ who is"-----

The only thing I hate about the issue are those terrible poems "Society's Child" and "Things People Say While Dancing"--- I can't believe you'd publish such dribble, but I'll forgive you. Chris Stroffolino

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POETICS Digest - 5 Feb 1997 to 6 Feb 1997*7 February 1997*

Bromige has evidently teased him for courting the academy; the reply lets the day job show—composition, adjunct pay, the odd coalition of comp and literature he would like to see broken.

Dear David Bromige: WHAT academic doors have I darkened? Do you know something (about this) I don't? They (the doors) may be locked for the time being, and I am trying to cast myself into a role different than the one who is begging to be let in (and hence the off-again on-again romance with a posture of indifference), but is this a darkening? (answer: yes, virginia, there is a santa claus).... well, i currently teaching COMPOSITION again (and asked my students to write: "If the LAND (that has been raped and pillaged) could speak, what would it say?"---- but ENGLISH as a "field" is really bizarre..... The "coalition" it makes between "composition" and "literature" should perhaps be BROKEN down..... being that poetry, etc. for me has less in common with comp. than with other non-ENGLISH things (it isn't academia per se that's the problem, but "package deals") and teaching literature is more like teaching "decomposition" (which I long for.....even if it still pays adjunct). darkly, chris

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HOW BRIEF THE HUMAN SPAN....*12 February 1997*

Today on east 13th
 between first and second
 (this seems childish)
 I found many soggy and dusty
 (not quite mildewed, musty)
 copies of a literary magazine
 called "feed"---
 Issue 1 (fall 1993) and
 the double issue, 2/3
 I don't know if it still exists.
 I didn't recognize the names of
 any of the contributors
 and didn't have time to
 read any of the pieces.
 I did however hear of De Boer
 who distributed it
 and Joey Ramone and David Trinidad
 who are thanked or at least acknowledged

for being themselves.....
(Chris Stroffolino)

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POETICS Digest - 16 Feb 1997 to 17 Feb 1997

18 February 1997

The question at the top is real—where a certain O'Hara credo lives; what follows is one of his first true free-associative dives, memory outrunning syntax into a man named Grof and the flotation tanks of 1985.

First, a question (out of sheer laziness)-- Where is the O'Hara poem (or is it not a poem) in which he speaks of poetry (his?) in terms of the Abstract Expressionist Credo to want to keep the surface up?

Second, all that push pull stuff (is it dialogue yet?) and, going, (out of sheer exhaustion) though if the truth had rounded up many transparency mixtures and scattered the lens in the city's sun, one could oppose opposing "and mine I loved till I to myself was not mine" (etc.) which is MAYAKOVSKY that is STALIN that is MAYAKOVSKY Assuming you are reading this very fast like what was that LSD guy's name oh yeah slanislaw grof and the junk bin of memory the hypnosis of the exroommate telling a friend subliminally "turn right" and outloud TURN LEFT, as if to get on the wavelength but always spillover and so GROF didn't take him in (oh this was 1985 or so--- before poetry or at least the great poetry wars (out of sheer exhaustion) and then he lived in the flotation tank society on central park west but i heard he was last in hawaii and he wasn't harry but poor harry what he did wandering was there a detox program, a way to figure out how to stay alive past 23 (even though he's 33). The answer is NO (out of sheer idleness)---but there is no tragedy unless you wake up one morning and realize your LEGS ARE TWISTED coz you FELL ASLEEP WITH YOUR ROOTS ON.....

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POETICS Digest - 18 Feb 1997 to 19 Feb 1997

20 February 1997

Answering Jordan again; the ostensible subject is Ashbery and Harold Bloom, but the post keeps sliding back into his own undergraduate Romanticism and the sense of Bloom as a radical who later leaned, tower-of-Pisa-like, toward the establishment.

How nice, when the DIGEST FORM is small enough so I don't have to download and then later sign back on, etc. (a rare day)

This may address (not answer) some of Jordan's questions ("where was the emphasis in some trees? were cliches a tragedy?"): one thing that might be said about a line like "No more odes, the dood doctor said, come in with something distressing" is that it is another one of Ashbery's many "I got your PRESCRIPTIVE

GAME number" to Harold Bloom, your "ruin the sacred truths shit attempt to elevate WORDSWORTH and retract on BLAKE ("skyscrapers going up to the sky, people going down to the ground"--dylan) and all the ideological implications---remember Bloom WAS a radical in the 50's and early 60's and I am grateful to him for the fact that Shelley was part of my undergrad curriculum in a way, say, Beddoes was not--despite smug Benjy Brown (god rest his soul?) who divided Shelley's phases up into "Mad Shelley" "Anarchist Shelley" "Atheist Shelley" etc. Fuck him, he was a Shakespearean. Whatever that meant. I dropped the course to take my 6th with the guy who turned me onto the beats, Brackhage, Fassbinder and Bloom (last time I saw him he told me he felt guilty for teaching the visionary company all these years and got some NEW book on the romantics, perhaps edited my McGann i forget don't quote me and how it just seemed so bland (article in this week's NEW YORK PRESS on creative writing departments (fiction but could be applied to poetry too) "Am I bland enough"?--- So I was a lopsided english major but I wanted to ask Jerome Rothenberg if he'd sanction my hunch I mean theory (IN MEMORY OF MY HUNCHES,hmmmm, coming soon to a NO BOOK near you) that they felt betrayed by Bloom as he began leaning like the tower of PISA away from the prison which OLSON took from pound and towards the James Merrill and May Swenson (not fur person Sartre) side of Ashbery instead and one of the RIFTS, like the developing rift between AM and FM music around the same time, the center not being able to hold after "some folks are born silver spoon in hand, lawd don't they help themselves, y'all" and even stevie wonder more POP than HIP (he bible, they say--Cixous, Dickinson) and "can't the bad guy win every once in a while" reached #1 (smirched, worm-eaten) but it didn't matter (STAIRWAY TO FREE PEARL BIRD JAM FOORBALL) and so he could claim the authority of BLAKE et al and put it in MERWIN (even as he could still be perceived as a radical who broke down STULTIFYING ACADEMIC PERIODIZATION (helen liked when I was in that groove) even though he (I'm still talking BLOOM) had to use FREUD (UGHHHHHHH!) to do so and already turned his back on emerson and in this sense followed the fashion as much as he made it so the FREUD-WORDSWORTH SIDE won out (evident in his emphasis on Tragedy in his recent Shakespeare) and McWorkshops fed it and the PAST GREW more distant and THE MAINSTREAM broke with tradition de facto if not de jure THE AVANT GARDE broke with tradition de jure but not de facto. Is the distinction between Bukowski and Berrigan really that great? (I mean there' a perspective in Bukoski and Berrigan and Marvin Bell are the same, or is that just a reductive reading of the "language poetry"?) How petty! Yes, Harold, poets are characters in a play (she is anyway--flipside is better)--but WHICH play? "UH, DUH, THE PLAY OF SIGNIFIERS" Right answer, but out of character. Remember your stake in pathos. It's your responsibility for us confessionals lop- sided in the human pole

of myth. Our stock is dropping without you. Your stock may drop without us, but only to those who still think MALLS are disgusting (guiliani spar, editor of K-MART, a CHAIN mag) and we'll let them play to the youth market (elvis needs boats--latest routledge catalogue?) THE AUDACITY of the MLA holding a special session whose main purpose was to determine whether CULTURAL STUDIES is dead." Is anything else ALIVE? PROVE IT. hire me. I know a woman (email solely) named Lisa Kenyon who couldn't even get her PUNK MUSIC panel accepted last year. How did Gillian McGain pull it off? (uh oh the town vs. gown thread could be triggered by this one) and Jameson appeals to thre AUTHORITY of GANG OF FOUR and TALKING HEADS (like the way Ulysses abuses poor Achilles, according to Thersities at least, who IS a reliable observer in this case) and I'm so SICK of the canonization of CHINA-- almost everything in THE FIRST WORLD, FACE VALUE and C.A. is better (r.i.p. pig xiaping---to be "credited" for "market economy" which is the same as the tomkin square crackdown) and I'm also noticing (but not necessarily sick of) the canonization machinery surrounding Bernstein's (or should I say Charles') LINE poem and I'm WITH YOU IN ROCKLAND (rockville) all of you who were disappointed by the fact that he (Jameson) didn't talk about the HEADS or the GANG (no one I know calls them that, though when me and George acted out "we all have good intentions but all with strings attached" to make a mockery of "air- guitar" night Andy wrote us up as "disjointed chrysanth- emums swaying in the wind") or that Clint Burnham didn't let himself talk about P.J Harvey or Pavement enough (allegedly Christgau in this week's voice talks about Ashbery's influence on PAVEMENT--I gotta get) (and why did JONI MITCHELL recently express her disgust with poetry? Would she have said this 20 years ago?) "as serious artists deserving of close readings" and cultural studies is not a term in the ode-distressing polarity with which I started. Bloom ignores it largely. Ashbery doesn't at places. So is this just a parlour game?----- (to post this to the whole list would be a kind of "he's always making love to the whole world" (sic)) Thank you Andrew Epstein for notes on Second Ave. And yes Mark Wallace, Everyone is a poet sometimes... even poets! -----Chris Stroffolino

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FRANK as HANK?

25 February 1997

To Michael Magee, who has traced Berrigan's tough-guy machismo back to O'Hara; what is really at stake is the New York School's sexual politics and whether the charge of classism against O'Hara masks a later homophobia.

Hey, is it okay if I agree with both Kevin Killian AND Maxine Chernoff? (oh, David Bromige, where are you?) But--I think I wanted most to respond to Michael

Magee today. (any relation to Kevin Magee. Whatever happened to Kevin Magee?) in reference to Berrigan getting his tough guy machismo from O'Hara--Well, I will try to bracket the question of Berrigan for now, but this will be hard to do, because a comparison has been urged and to me it seems that O'Hara definitely has less of this tough guy machismo than Berrigan--especially considering the fact that he was writing in a generally more macho time (Olson, and others) while Berrigan--though Tulsa--i still associate with the influx of many women writers (Mayer, Notley, Waldman, etc.). Of course, O'Hara didn't hang out with writers as much as Berrigan did....but he did hang with many female painters. Yeah, Mike, maybe compared to Warhol O'Hara is less "stereotypically gay" but not compared to, say, Ginsberg....(and how stereotypically gay was even Warhol?).... One thing I notice in my recent standing still AS sitting in cafes with poets is a tendency amongst younger poets (those who seem to react against the L school, or, never were very affected by them in the first place, and tend to see themselves more in a NYSCHOOL kinda thing, and more of the O'Hara/Berrigan/Mayer (and not even Ashbery as much) thing) to see O'Hara as primarily a poet who wrote about his friends, etc. I call this reading O'Hara THROUGH Berrigan...and sometimes there is a tendency to accuse O'Hara--again IN CONTRAST to Berrigan--as CLASSIST, and I've been wondering if this accusation of O'Hara's alleged classism (but see his essay on PASTERNAK!, for instance) may be a subtle kind of homophobia that comes out of the infinitely more heterosexual aesthetics of later NY school males. I am not suggesting that one must be rich to be gay or poor to be straight (or even "cruel to be kind/ in the right measure"), just trying to theorize history from scant little details of "deep gossip" and in so doing I see O'Hara can NOT really be pinned down to a kind of homosocial machismo that you, Mike, seem to attribute to him. I am not denying that there are elements there of this, but they seem--especially for his time (more the 50's than the 60's) to be not dominant.....(his love for Pollock being no greater than his love for Friedlander or Hartigan, or even Joan Mitchell, who are still quite underrated painters viz-a-viz the great DeKooning and yet more Picasso retrospectives at MOMA....).....Chris S.

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Perloff/Kellogg, et al.

13 March 1997

The month's big thread—'deeply disturbed,' on multiculturalism and poetic form—has drawn in Marjorie Perloff; Chris steps in to broker between radical form and radical content rather than take a side.

I've been watching with much interest (and dare I, at the risk of seeming an irresponsible aesthete, say "with much pleasure") the recent "deeply disturbed"

thread and am excited by the possibility of something like a "public sphere" beyond coterie debates and would like to address a few points that hopefully could be further addressed, etc.---

At one point, Marjorie writes that these multicultural poets are "ironically, quite conservative so far as form, rhetoric and the ontology of the poem are concerned." Being a reader of Marjorie's work, I know what she means, but it may not be self-evident to many why these forms AND ONTOLOGIES are conservative, or naive, or unreflective, etc. For there IS a valid point to be made that much of what many of us (I'm including myself in a larger interpretative community here, but any one of you may feel free to deny you share these assumptions, in fact I myself do not ALWAYS share these assumptions and who knows what tomorrow will bring) consider to be properly self-conscious, sophisticated, reflexive, recursive, whatever, work may, for many people, actually be a kind of decadent masturbatory work. I find such a dialogue interesting and it is often the subject matter of my work, as well as the work of many writers I admire--but it is NOT a necessary precondition for GOOD POETRY for me (I am, by the way, not saying that anybody on the list has said it was--just trying to raise some questions). And I guess what I would like to see more of is the kind of dialogue, or "coalition building" between some of these rigid factions. In the first place, to speak of identity politics or multicult, whatever, as a recognizable kind of verse, may very well elide the differences between several kinds of modes--i.e. RITA DOVE (as current whipping woman DU JOUR) is very far away from say Sterling Plumm(psic?) or Paul Beatty. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, and suggested in Marjorie's calling attention to "the erosion of all democracy in washington" and the "refusal to criticize" (at least in any blatant way) on the part of many poets many of these problems, that there may be a UNION of practitioners of "radical formal innovation" and "radical CONTENT innovators" that can be emphasized more than it seems to have been in the past. Even the union of "bohemian" and "avant-garde" is a good-place to start (and certain gestures in Paul Hoover's anthology are to be very applauded for moving in this direction). That a poet can be INTELLECTUALLY or EMOTIONALLY or ETHICALLY radical, or at least challenging (even on a strict word level, as say BRECHT or LANGSTON HUGHES or D.H. LAWRENCE, is, despite the lack of what many would call formal innovation in their work--in ways, admittedly, Angelou or Dove, FOR ME, are not) may "compensate" for the lack of the more purely formal radical qualities in their work. I've said this before, but will again--that there is no necessary connection between FORMALLY innovative and SOCIALLY innovative work. It's great when a poem can be both, but for me if it's at least ONE of these (and if often doesn't matter which one, as long as it's at least one), it passes through my censors and is therefore deemed INTERESTING, etc.

What makes certain poets in the ALLEN anthology, for instance, radical is NOT NECESSARILY form, or limited to form, or the formal radicalism may, after 38 years, seem now incidental, more a matter of fashion (see O'Hara's "Mayakovsky" for an example of a "speaker" theatrically aware of the the STRICTURES of the avant-garde as much as say a Lowell would come to feel the strictures of the "mainstream"--and in this light I could call attention to the replacement in the 80's (the period that is largely in questin here) of both Amiri Baraka by Michael Harper and of Kenneth Koch by Gerald Stern in the widely taught Poulin anthology (the latter of which, in both cases, are more benign both FORMALLY and SOCIALLY), or, more generally, the way much black radicalism was replaced in anthologies (definitely the NORTON--not the Hoover one) by 1) more benign black writers (i.e. Dove again) or 2) other "fashionable" minorities (which in many cases, and probably not accidentally, are also more conservative, I think of Cathy Song, in particular, but there are others)--which has the effect retroactively of calling into question the decisions on the part of the anthologists to publish the more radical writers in the first place (kinda like the way "silly love songs" called into question the motives behind, say, Sgt. Pepper--for those who didn't already suspect SGT. Pepper when it came out--okay, sorry, a strained analogy). So, I would question David (Kellogg's) remark that "MULLEN, HUNT, ET AL., are not excluded because Rita Dove is included...." Sure, I do not want to act as if "the currently included poets are part of the problem" and I hope I will be forgiven for the use I am making of RD (Dove, not Duncan or DuPlessis) here, as a kind of intellectual shorthand, or synechdoche, for a certain style, but sometimes it is important to entertain the possibility of conspiracy (as long as one does not get all ghashthy serious about it) and realize that, YES, the poetry climate as well as the "larger" political climate has indeed gotten much more conservative in the last 20 odd years--but I do think that we should question what we mean by "conservative" in several ways. 1) the rhymes in the work of many slam-type poets (or rap) are not EXACTLY conservative in a new formalist way, as Creeley once told me in a letter "NEVER TOO LATE TO RHYME!" (Bernstein is rhyming alot lately, and Lee Ann Brown....others....). There is a whole set of issues of orality involved, and to say I HATE SPEECH does not necessarily make one a radical these days. Also, conservative and conservation share a similar root, no? What if one says "I am a conservative in exactly the ways that the so-called 'conservatives' are not"? Conservatives are actually some of the most WASTEFUL, final-fronteir, macho, make it newers out there in many FIELDS (clinton's techno "bridge" to the 21st century). Anyway, one can only go SO FAR out, and the urge to be simple can be radical, it needn't implicate one in a reductive sense of "identity politics" or "esentialism" (on this, Maria Damon's point is also, well taken). I'll stop here, because I'll probably be seen as contradicting myself, or confused, or trying to

play more than one part in this discursive situation--i definitely have more questions than answers, but, then, if one can not help but define oneself maybe it's okay to define oneself as undefinable.....at least as an opening gambit, in a cultural climate that seems way too rigid (but then rigidity IS rather comic, no?)---Chris Stroffolino

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DIVING Into The (Human) Zoo...

16 March 1997

Same argument, three days on: the whipping-woman du jour has shifted from Rita Dove to Adrienne Rich, and the debate now runs through Rich and Carla Harryman.

I'd like to address a couple of points re "Rich" (notice how we've gone from Dove to Rich, as if this is the REAL issue "Dove" disguised). Marjorie's point (which is very similar to a point Perelman makes in THE MARGINALIZATION--and by the way, I will once again plug next Saturday's event at the SEGUE space ostensibly on Perelman's book, for, as I foresee it, the discussion will not be limited to the book hopefully but to such issues as these, and beyond ((like MUSIC, etc....))I digress)--anyway, Marjorie's objections (echoed by Mike Magee) seem to be twofold here. First, she critiques the poem because "It's so willed". In this, I would agree with Jordan Davis that it very well may be a form of "mysticism to say that form forces its message" in a way more "indeterminate" poetics do not. Or, again, I'd point to the seeming paradox of "you HAVE TO let (as opposed to will) in poetry" assuming that description as a way of becoming injunction, and that the "will" vs. "letting" dualism may be as troublesome as the "mind" vs. "body" dualism (and, no, I am not denying that we may need such dualisms at least strategically, and at least in order to seem to be able to communicate, or even "think"--but of course then there often comes the point where these dualisms go meta and what's "at stake" is the "dualism" between "monism" and "dualism" etc.). In any rate, I do not think that the form of Rich's poem NECESSARILY undercuts its message and I guess this leads me (though not seamlessly) to my second point. The issue of what I will call "metaphysical conceits" in poetry. Mike Magee (and Perelman in the MARGINALIZATION) contrasts Carla Harryman favorably to Rich because the former is more formally fluid while the latter is not. Specifically, Magee mentions "THERE NEVER WAS A ROSE...." Now, I have been more interested and engaged in studying Harryman's work than in Rich's (I am trying to avoid the dogmatism of saying that I like it and will always like it better however) and yes I do believe there's a lot of truth in Magee's statement. However, if one wants the more FLUID Harryman it is, I believe in ANIMAL INSTINCTS and especially VICE....although even in vice she's looking for that "adequate vice to LIMIT the liquid of this voice" (i.e, she's trying to come to terms

with WILL, and forms or in Dan Salmon's analogy ZOOS?) and in many of the new pieces in "NEVER WAS..ROSE..." Harryman does, far more than anywhere else in her PUBLISHED oeuvre (thinking of the GAME "poems" in particular) employ something that, to me, seems very similar to "a metaphysical conceit"--it may be done more SELF-Consciously than Rich does (though there is, I believe, a way to read rich's poem as an allegory of its own form as well), but it is not SO self-conscious that the conceit shatters before it is constructed. This, in my opinion, is largely the strength of these new works of Harryman's. I do believe that metaphysical conceits are hard to sustain, and I do not WISH to make them into a STANDARD by which we judge poetry (by such a standard of course I'd have to shoot myself in the foot and admit that I'm just not a poet, etc.)--but I do think there is a thrill in constructing and sustaining such an illusion and that it needn't destroy one's allegedly postmodern love of "work that rejects easy closure" etc. Now, maybe Marjorie's (and others') rejection (that may not be the right word) of Rich's poem has more to do with its tight STANZAIC FORM than it has to do with the fact that it employs such conceit(s)--Marjorie, I WOULD appreciate clarification on this point, since they are two DIFFERENT criticisms---and if so, we have to deal with other issues than the issue of "conceit", but I'd like to extend this question of "conceit" beyond Harryman and even towards more seemingly PURE "language poetry", which seems to me to be as "cooked" (raw vs. cooked allusion) as Rich, and that therefore the silliness of Rich's FLIPPERS may be seen as part of its charm and even power. I don't think Rich's poem CAN be as written off as easily as say William Stafford's TRAVELLING THROUGH THE YARD, partially because the former is less conservative on a content level, or at least CAN BE (if we really do believe in THE READER), in a way it seems the stafford poem can not....because, to invert Jordan's claim, it's possible the MESSAGE can force the form without being a form of mysticism..... Well, just some thoughts.... And, thank you Jonathon Levin for the word "adjunctification" and thank you Dan Salmon for the ZOO metaphor ("we're all inmates of the human zoo" or do i mean "the prisonhouse of language" which might as well be "sestina") and thanks Keith Tuma, Franklin Bruno, and Susan Wheeler, and Chris Alexander and Joseph Lease (and others) for interesting posts in this in the last few days. Chris Strof-
folino

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THEY WANNA COVER US WITH MARGARINE(alization)*25 March 1997*

A long report on the SEGUE panel on Bob Perelman's The Marginalization of Poetry; Jackson Mac Low's closing question—whether the evening was about marginalization or merely about a book with that title—organizes the whole essay.

Dear to whom it may concern:

Although I've been suspicious about what "call" it is that I am exactly responding to, I will try to "suspend" (or at least diffuse) such suspicions and try to address some of what for me seemed the issues that were (and were not discussed) at the MARGINALIZATION event.....

Perhaps the best place to begin would be at the "ending...." (in real time) The last question asked at the event was by Jackson MacLow (who, earlier that day, had given one of the best readings I'd seen him give--despite that damn ear inn perennial p.a. problem), and it was a question that, had it been asked earlier, may have changed the whole discussion. It was something to the effect of---(warning: all following 'quotes' are paraphrases and if I misrepresent anyone PLEASE let me know) "I came here thinking that this was going to be a talk about THE MARGINALIZATION OF POETRY, and it turned out it was a talk about a particular book called "The Marginalization of Poetry" and...." Jackson apologized for his ignorance and naivete, on a "face value" level, but also addressed, although in his rather childlike zen-master way, a question that in some ways was "very near the surface (or the heart)" of what seemed to be Silliman's challenge (which I'll address shortly) to Perelman's project here. The question, for me, and that seemed to get lost in the discussion that night, might be phrased in terms of Steve Carll's "ontological activism" (why am I here? etc or how do we position ourselves viz-a-viz certain questions). Marginalization is a LOADED term and perhaps (as Steve Evans and others pointed out) a cliché by now--and its meaning (like the "sublime object") depends on its context, and WHAT WAS the context of the event? Was there a context? Can there be a context? Maybe it hasn't been constructed yet and of course *I* can not construct it here, but only in questioning....

Jackson's question elicited from Bob the response and REMINDER that the book's title grew out of the essay/poem (or whatever you wanna call it) that he wrote for a very specifically academic context in response to a call for papers from Marjorie Perloff (see book for details). Had this REMINDER been made at the beginning of the event, I think the discussion would have gone quite differently. For, IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE (as Jonathon Levin and others), and in English Departments, poetry is marginalized viz-a-viz novels, cultural studies, etc (again, take a look at the latest MLA call for papers, etc.) in a way it might not have been

in previous eras (I'm not going to get into that one here though....). Marginalized in general, and there is perhaps a desire amongst poets who work in the academy to DEFEND poetry against such a status (there is even a desire, for understandable reasons, of teachers of poetry to do so)--this is perhaps as true of champions of "the western canon" as much as it is of champions of "language" or "new york school" etc. etc. writing

Yet, when we take Perelman's book OUT of this particular context, and bring it to the SEGUE space, suddenly it becomes a DIFFERENT book. Suddenly we see a Professor at an Ivy League school on the defensive because the audience (and perhaps the fellow panellists) was mostly people who see themselves as MORE MARGINALIZED than Perelman as poets, and one could imagine the satiric scenario depicted in Kenneth Koch's "FRESH AIR" being updated, and instead of the "you make me sick with your talk of swans and candy hearts" etc of that poem, there was "Free Bob Perelman" stickers and whispers in the wings of him, from both the linguistic left (as a native informer), the social left (as an unmarginalized white middle-to-upper class male) (which may be seen as a "linguistic right" though I that's why I objected to what I saw as Marjorie's distinction a few weeks back although I certainly agree that poems that CAN'T STAND UP AMONG REPEATED READINGS are 99% of the time boring and dull) and others. The point I'm trying to centralize here is that, as far as I could tell, THERE WASN'T ANYBODY MORE ACADEMIC THAN BOB in the audience (or on the panel) and this certainly informed the tone of the event and seemed to ironize the book and at least its title in ways that could have been made clearer BEFORE Jackson's pointed question. Ron Silliman's paper (which began the event, after a pointed introduction by moderator Sean Killian in which he lamented the lack of intellectual forums in NYC and hoped this event would begin to change what he perceives as the rather anti-intellectual bent of the "downtown" NYC poetry scene and after a recital of the poem by Bob about being abducted by (academic?) aliens he posted to this list) did seem to make many of these points about Bob's book as he pointed out that it was primarily addressed TO ACADEMICS rather than to poets and considered that the primary FAULT of the book---that the distortions of the kind of NORMATIVE ACADEMIC DISCOURSE Bp is working in here simply CAN NOT do justice to what, for RON, is the most exciting and interesting strains and achievements of LP (Hannah Weiner and Bob Grenier) and centered on BP's reading of Grenier as an example of this method. Ron made a conceptual distinction between "critical" and "academic" writing (as if the latter is always already more corrupted) and found Bob's attempt to create a NARRATIVE for Grenier's poetry as well as for his PLACE in "poetry" (canon, etc.) deeply disturbing, as if narrative is always more corrupt than poetry that "is not ABOUT" or "about the nanosecond before choice itself occurs" (and as I digres-

sion I wonder about what the implications of Ron's seeming preference of Grenier's project to Bob's--especially considering Ron's problems with the "Burning Deck" or "French minimalism" thing, which to me seems to have much more in common with Grenier than it does with Perelman in terms of this "nanosecond" standard Ron is setting...but this is another topic) Ann Lauterbach took a different tactic. Not needing to SPEAK FOR THE HEART AND SOUL of LANGUAGE POETRY as Ron's argument with Bob seemed to, she dealt more with what she perceived as Bob's ghettoization of emotions and the personal. One of the high moments of her talk in this connection was her reading of Bob's reading of a Creeley poem about him having sex with another woman as his wife drives the kids to school or something. I think she did a very interesting job of pointing out an aporetic hedging on Bp's part as he tried to disclaim the importance of content in a writer who write "form is nothing but an extension....". She also addressed some gender questions--for instance, why THEORISTS are gendered male and PRACTITIONERS are gendered female in this book. Of course, Lauterbach concluded, PRACTICE subsumes theory, and BP was not necessarily claiming a hierarchical privilege of one over the other--but, then, he doesn't really devote that much page space to the women writers he addresses and that might be telling (again, this may be a severe misrepresentation of the thrust of Lauterbach's paper)....

This is going on too long (I think I understand Joe Amato).... but Juliana SPahr was next and spoke about what she perceived as Bob's COASTAL bias, and (as if NEW YORK is the NEW COAST) focussed on what for me seemed to be a defense of Bruce A. and Charles B. against what she perceived as Perelman's neglect. She claimed that, in contrast to BP's assertion, that these writers CAN be taught... Then Steve Evans did a long and funny (and almost dada-like) performance of a reading of a Bunuel movie, and claimed to have DIRECT EVIDENCE of how academia dulls people and used some VERY interesting DOWNSTREAM metaphor in which I would like to cast myself as the missing SALMON swimming upstream.... But, all these discussions (and most of the Q and A session afterwards) stayed within the confines of the agenda the book set up. In the Q and A session, bp was primarily on the defensive, as i said before. It would have been interesting had THE MARGINALIZATION OF POETRY (the issue as much as the book) in SOCIETY as well as in the academy had been addressed...It would have been at least interesting not to single out Bob but to ask what role the L poets have played in marginalizing poetry? Did they willfully marginalize it? (with their own networks of publishing and not needing to make certain compromises in the beginning that other, perhaps poorer (economically speaking) poets, must, at least at the beginning? And in this light, can this vindicate Bob for at least trying to break out of a small, perhaps too self-satisfied coterie, and fight certain academic

battles? Or is poetry marginalized through no fault of poets? Is it one of the exigencies of heavy "LITE CAPITALISM" (who said that?) that poets are helpless against, and in such a light are the strategies the L poets adopted (I'm talking about "circulation of texts" as much as the actual writing of them) seen as at least NOT making matters worse in the increasing rifts and poetry wars? Or has poetry ALWAYS been marginalized and is it perhaps okay that it is best so? (always best so, or at least sometimes, as in Evans' quoting Auden's "poetry makes nothing happen" and stressing the positive side of such a formulation--as if this "nothing" is kind of like Silliman's "nanosecond before choice is made" and CLASS IS SUSPENDED)? These questions, as well as why are so many poets deciding to go back to school later in life (not just bob, but myself and Ben Friedlander come to mind)--after already publishing at least one book, are interesting questions, as are the questions of the workplace and race and class that were attempted to be discussed in the Q and A session.....(hope this helps Chris Stroffolino

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LAURA NYRO (one child born to carry on, etc....)

10 April 1997

Laura Nyro, the songwriter, dead at forty-nine; the news reaches him by radio, and he brings it to the list half to confirm it and half to mourn.

I just heard on the radio this morning that LAURA NYRO (who wrote "I swear there ain't no heaven and I pray there ain't no hell") died on tuesday at the age of 49..... Does anybody know anything about this? What she died of, etc? I'd appreciate any info....."And all I ask of dying is to go naturally...." -----chris stroffolino

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TUBERCULOSIS (and individuals)

27 April 1997

Here the year's cleverness meets the body: against the list's slogan that 'there are no individuals,' he sets his own symptoms of tuberculosis and the plain fact of having no way to pay for a cure. The class arguments stop being theoretical.

There comes a time in the life of () when "one" must risk sounding STUPID or at least UNTHEORETICAL.... And, concerning the questions raised by the phrase "there are no individuals", one may, I think, respond that to say THERE SHOULD BE NO INDIVIDUALS (or at least they should be consigned to something that doesn't have the status of poetry) is not the same as saying THERE ARE NO INDIVIDUALS..... and so what about this GAP? We can retheorize alot, The esso of individualism can become the EXXON of "false consciousness subject position" etc. but what about "EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF" or James Brown "I GOT MINE

DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM"..... Oh, we're SO MUCH BETTER THAN THAT....la di da.... we could cry, in unison (as in inversion of that scene in "life of brian" concerning said individual) But lets say one may find that he has many of the symptoms of TUBERCULOSIS, and let's say that one has no HEALTH CARE and can not afford healthcare.... Well, if there are no INDIVIDUALS, this shouldn't be a problem, right? Because "ask not for whom the TUBERCULOSIS tolls, it tolls for thee" and "I can almost smell your tb sheets" and we can all check into the FUND FOR POETRY'S HEALTH CLINIC that allows one to be properly diagnosed and then given the cure. How far does "community" go? So, how does one GET OVER TB without having to check into a hospital? Does one simply die? Oh, of course, these questions have nothing to do with poetics.... Write this 100 times on the board.... -----Chris S.

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Neg. Cap. (oh providence and the russians)

20 May 1997

Keats's two letters—the chameleon poet and the irritable groping after fact—set against a week of Providence readings; the theory keeps collapsing back into the scene, and into his own souring on it.

So, obsessing on negative capability--- As a critical terms with CREDENTIALS stemming from two letters by a poet who had none.... And the contradictions you pointed out in Providence may "stem" from the two different letters-- One is about the "chameleon poet" (b[o]ly george) who is everything and nothing-- and for whom EVIL is just a matter for speculation (i think Harriet monroe yelled at wallace stevens for that one) and the OTHER letter is the one about the IR-RITABLE GROPING, which seems to contradict the other one on a certain level because this requires some sense of a stable identity, an integrated personality. They become complementary symbiotic nemeses (hiss). One man's "speculation" is another's "irritable groping"--It may have a lot to do with the tension between ESTABLISHING an identity on (or in or by or through or as) the indeterminacy of writing and NOT NEEDING to do so because one has LIFE for that, and suddenly (voila or POOF), there's no need to.... Oh(m) or O(h)m--- Me thinks I'm getting personal again.... went to a lot of poetry readings last week (well, this is relative-- a lot for me). Jennifer Moxley was great....read New stuff... then saw Larry Price....also great (but didn't read enough) Was doing okay at Garret Kalleberg and Lewis Warsh reading too.... Unfortunately, by sunday (talisman book party-- much food and books called WORDFLOW--and anselm berrgan, who's quite intensely loopy, back and forth dialogic not, LUCKILY, a synthesis, between push and pull of ego language language ego though anxiety because anxiety too much performance pressure but doesn't seem to get in the way negatively more than

anybody else's burden, familial or otherwise)-- unfortunately by sunday, i was burnt on the scene and feeling bitter again and thinking that there are certain writers (not the one's mentioned above) who don't seem to NEED writing as a compensation, or integral part of their identity, but who think their plain selves are a sight too behold and who are kinda cocky and snobby and oh so cool about their "trip" and that this becomes a doubled edged questionmark i choke on even in the spitting up of celery as a salary and the art-life wall collapses for those who are not on the wrong side of the one-way mirror waving the banner "LIFE LIFE LIFE" as if it's a cereal killer and I'll be branded and (which could be contrasted with or, but back in shakespeare's day it was synonymous with IF

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His last week on the list dissolves into pure play and practical panic at once —a formatter wanted for the dissertation, a final round of unanswered manuscripts chased down, Aretha and the Beach Boys and the Unabomber colliding in one associative spray—because by the end of May he could no longer afford to be online. He signs off, and the year that talked the most goes silent.

PATHETIC CREATURE (seen on tombstone)

23 May 1997

Seen on Tombstone--

"I just wanted to let people know I was
(and it's okay to be) a PATHETIC CREATURE"--
it was written or maybe clawed....

c

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1998

1998 is the year the degree finally lands — a Shakespeare PhD from Albany — and pays out chiefly in adjunct wages and toothless benefits; from a Brooklyn apartment shared with Gary Sullivan he argues Laura (Riding) Jackson, John Yau, and O'Hara's emotional range with undiminished ardour, then closes the year jobless and couch-hunting toward a San Francisco interview that would soon carry him west.

song lyricists (was teaching h.s....)

8 January 1998

Safdie's question caps a thread begun by Gwyn McVay's defence of Neil Diamond's 'I am, I said.'

In the thread, Safdie Joseph had written · 8 January 1998 —

has there even been a panel at the MLA that discussed the relation of psychoactive drugs to poetic practice?

Safdie---I don't know about drug panels, but I know the MLA has consistently rejected proposed panels for PUNK MUSIC--- once again attesting to the normative bias of culture studies being more interested in movies and sports than such.... Well, I used to teach (not in a poetry class but in a composition class) alot of song lyrics, one of my fav. comparison contrasts topics was comparing tracey chapman's "talkin' about a revolution" (which by the way i think is included in xjkennedy type anthologies) to dylan's "times they are a changing" and preferring the latter (chronologically the former) partially on the grounds that it doesn't have the pat ending of chapman's ('finally the tables are starting to turn"-----).
chris

On Thu, 8 Jan 1998, Safdie Joseph wrote:

Gwyn McVay says (in part):

I remain fond of Neil Diamond's lyric:

I am, I said To no one there And no one heard me, Not even the chair.

*Besides the rather obvious "Waste Land" allusion in the first line, and indeed in the poem's tenor itself (1), the implications of the tremendous disaffection of someone who is so sensitive (not unlike Malte Laurids Brigge) that he *normally* hears emotional empathy from the furniture, and then *ceases* to hear it--who can imagine the agony of the speaker whose inanimate confidant retreats into its role as a mundane object?*

Then again, perhaps the speaker was just following the practice of the talking horse, as detailed in an earlier post by Ms. Dant.

On a (slightly) more serious note: has there even been a panel at the MLA that discussed the relation of psychoactive drugs to poetic practice? Possibly even more, ah, illuminating, than gender in Charles Olson -- (or Duncan!)

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Dead ants are blowin' in the wind*10 January 1998**In the thread, Robin Morris had written · 10 January 1998 —**| I'm happy if it can rate alongside _Oh Mercy_, a grossly underrated effort IMO.*

Hello Robin---it has been a long time. Anyway, yes, I agree-- though I like the new album, I don't see why it's supposed to be "better" than OH MERCY (or even GOOD AS I BEEN TO YOU or INFIDELS) which to me are just as good.....chris

On Sat, 10 Jan 1998, Robin Morris wrote:

Personally, I'm happy if it can rate alongside _Oh Mercy_, a grossly underrated effort IMO. I'm still listening and deciding whether it does. _Time Out of Mind_ definitely has some beautiful songs, but I'm not sure I like the uni-coloredness of it.

Robin

On the new Dylan CD, yes, it's simply terrific. Certainly seems the best since Nashville Skyline and possibly even Blonde on Blonde.

Ron

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Between the arguments runs a parallel life of the ear: misheard lyrics traded with Elizabeth Hatmaker (Melanie's 'wounds' for 'wombs'), a lament for the vanished English pop of Roy Wood, Gwyn McVay's cascade of confusable poets — James and Jay and C. D. Wright collapsed into one. None of it is kept here, but it is never quite idle; the man who argues Whitman also knows every B-side.

LOOSE SUGAR 2nite in my tea*15 January 1998*

Don Byrd had just wondered aloud whether any book of poems from the past year had been read by even five people on the list.

Well, yeah, i had a similar response to hillman--found it more engaging than graham and her "hubby" hass (still remembering fondly that excellant critique of hass by joe wenderoth in an apr last year---oh no, hey does anybody know the email address for the CAP-L list? where some of these names might mean more; i won't send you a free copy of LIGHT AS A FETTER but maybe a discounted one)--so where was i? Oh yeah Hillman's book has these great moments DESPITE its terrible title....

So, I also wanna plug a book that came out last year not by me..... SCENE OF THE CRIME by Jane Ransom. Her work might be of interest to many on the list, though

she has not circulated highly in such circles. I became aware of it courtesy of GENERATOR magazine Disassembling issue several years back and it's knock out wild feminist punny theory ridden (but worn so lightly) dense but oral somehow and daringly "sloppy" enough to get a rise out of those who love to be hit on the head with a bad joke that rebukes one's smugness---and it's very fast. One of my many new year's resolutions is to write a review of it, but maybe this will have more of an effect. Ransom also published a very weird novel this year called BYE BYE. Chris

On Tue, 13 Jan 1998, pritchpa wrote:

Important recent books for me have been:

Stepping Razor - Aldon Nielsen il cuore: the heart - Kathleen Fraser Prosepect of Release - Tom Mandel

I'm intrigued by Brenda Hillman's _Loose Sugar_, and would be interested in others' response to this work. I've only had it a couple of days, but so far am struck by the way she has opened up her work to more experimental techniques while retaining a backbone of more traditional narrative. I find the way she's gone at this more appealing - and far less pretentious - than the way Jorie Graham has.

Patrick Pritchett From: Don Byrd

Isn't it curious that we have extended discussions of Dylan's album, but rarely, if ever, a comparable discussion of a new book of poetry. I wonder if there is a book of poetry, published in the last year, that five people on the list have read.

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"actually new"

24 January 1998

In the thread, Jacques Debrot had written · 22 January 1998 —

*| the important question is not *whether* emerging writers are betraying Langpo*

Someone brought up the "New Critics" and the way we can see them as similar to the "langpo"--- Well, what do you think of Todd Gitlin's assertion that the "beats" also share this.... "Their clubbiness echoed the general withdrawal from political activity; echoed the New Critics' strategy for extracting the literary text from historical context; echoed the do-it-yourself movement, which sent husbands into their basements to muster the small autarkies of leisure time; echoed, overall, the American infatuation with private strategems for social troubles." But then he adds that "among the well-known Beats, Allen Ginsberg was exceptional in skating along the radical edge.....Thus, when the zeitgesit shifted direction, retreat passed out of style, and other beats grew steadily more forlorn, Ginsberg could make the transit into the political sixties with grace....."(pg. 51).

In a related story, the Bernadette Mayer interview in latest St. MARx newsletter is interesting: she attacks doctors, monogamy, talks of her utopia, lizard, and the lack of sex in the poetry scene comparatively today (among other things--like langpo). Good to see a poet still offering lifestyle challenges rather than simply aesthetic..... Chris

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Material/Physical

28 January 1998

In the thread, Jacques Debrot had written · 28 January 1998 —

Am I alone in thinking that the term "materiality" is often used in too reductive a sense?

Hello Jacques---Yau's terms may be useful, the SPIRIT of Yau's terms are definitely worth exploring in poetry. I (and I think many other poets on this list) attended the opening to the show from which Yau's essay comes from. It is worth attending (Apex Art C.P. 291, Church St., NYC---until 2/7), not just to get a sense of Yau's curatorial eclecticism in the art world, but also to consider the possibility of the relations between painting and poetry again, or between painters and poets--a connection that i personally would like to see more of, Anyway, i'm writing on the fly so I bye.....chris

On Wed, 28 Jan 1998, Jacques Debrot wrote:

Am I alone in thinking that the term "materiality" is often used in too reductive a sense? Koestler once made the telling point that in a cosmos where sub atomic particles go forward and backward in time, where light is both a particle & wave, that "material" is something almost imaginary.

*The distinction between physicality & materiality -- quite apart from the context of visual poetics, or how the body/language divide was played by the New Americans & the Language poets -- seems very suggestive to me. An essay of John Yau's has been kicking around in my head for a couple of days in which he speaks of a type of artistic *scale* for which "the determining factor was the human body, not as something that could embrace an immense vista or chart a seemingly unlimited expanse, but as something contingent, doubtful, and questioning . . . Is it possible," he asks, "to privilege neither body (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling) nor mind (remembering, conceiving, and dreaming) and still make art?" This seems relevant to poetry as well, & suggestive somehow of a kind of constantly shifting perception of the physical & material without the binarism that frequently occurs in LangPo & the New American poetry.*

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Missing generation*30 January 1998*

Kevin Killian and Katy Lederer had been worrying the fate of poets of his generation who fall silent or 'drop out'; he rises, at length, to their defence.

In the thread, k. lederer had written · 30 January 1998 —

| *only about one out of every four of "us" will be writing in 20 years*

One thing I've been thinking about lately that might tie in with some of the points Kevin Killian raises is this: Isn't it a little too early to complain about poets of (I guess) "my generation" that have "dropped out"? Maybe I only speak for myself here (maybe not), but when one thinks of Oppen's alleged 30 year hiatus, or the fact that Stevens didn't publish his first book until he was 44 (and had his economic life together) and then didn't write a poem for 6 years or so (while Holly was born and toddled etc.)--- (kinda like John Lennon's househusband phase? "watching the wheels" ah the courage to say "everybody seems to think I'm lazy/ I don't mind I think they're crazy") or Dylan's basement tape/nashville sky- line "drop out period" ("just who were you expectin'? jesus zimmerman?) and the examples could proliferate, considering this, considering the sometimes really silly pressures poets place on other poets or on themselves (or maybe the "agent" that places these pressures is just some idea of productivity, some puritan ethic, some spurious "conscience", some idea of the career of the poet, the way the idea of the POET gets in the way, becomes perhaps at times somewhat debilitating, a question of aesthetic reputation), one may wonder and maybe it would be worthwhile to investigate exactly what is meant by "poetic commitment". So now that I've perhaps come off like an "EXASPERATING" killjoy, codger of sorts, let me say that I am not interested in preventing anybody from NOT "dropping out", but I do want to "rise" to a defense of those who may have dropped out (and I'm not naming names right now, names are not exactly what i feel is at stake here), or may have seemed to drop out. Dropped out from WHAT? is I believe a valid question. I don't know if anybody else here has felt that there's sometimes when it's very important to "lay fallow" as it were and maybe even WILL or FORCE oneself NOT to write, recognizing that there are, at certain times at least in ones life, when the enthusiasm to write write write fight fight fight publish publish publish (and in "the right places" at that) may become counterproductive, get in the way, when (dare I say this today, when LESS IS MORE), etc. and this can go many different ways, in many different directions, but i'm curious where you, oh dear collective of listers, might take it. Thank you, Chris Stroffolino

On Fri, 30 Jan 1998 dbkk@SIRIUS.COM wrote:

| *Katy Lederer wrote: "a number of primarily male language poets in the 70s and 80s basically drove an entire generation of young writers out of San Francisco because*

they were so critical of them. Etc. I believe this stuff because I hear it from people who know--and also because of the strange absence of young "experimental" poets between the ages of 35 and 45 in SF..."

This is Kevin Killian (aet 45) . . . Like Katy I too have often noticed the strange absence to young "experimental" poets between the ages of 35 and 45 in SF. I think she's right on the money there, there is a great gap that exists, and I too have often speculated on the reasons why. But Katy, I don't buy the explanation that male language poets drove these people out of the city [OKAY I CAN THINK OF 1 or 2], and I wonder who the "people who know" who told you this might be! Many writers left the Bay Area for the same reason you did--because after Berkeley, what else is there? But there are other reasons too for this gap. Not only in poetry, not only in all the arts, but in every occupation or avocation, there's a missing generation, men and women who might have been 35 to 45 today but who instead died of AIDS. The new wave of miracle drugs that began circa 1991 have slowed the progress of HIV through the body, enabling seropositive people to live longer and more productive lives; but before that, it was like, you got the virus, you died, wham. And many, many of the promising poets and writers in San Francisco, where we enjoy and sometimes even reify our drug use and high risk behaviors, simply died instead of filling the gap that you and I both see.

There's another explanation too and that is IMHO many poets just simply stop writing around the age of 30 or 35. The younger poets who you would kill for now are an exciting crew, but in ten years a third of them will have given up poetry not due to squelching criticism, just due to -- mmm, it's hard to say why. [A second third will have taken their writing into directions you will no longer respect.] I notice this not only in my own generation (since many of the writers whom I thought were genius, when I first moved to San Francisco in 1980, are now silent) (and of course many of them dead) but in other generations too. (Writing the life of Jack Spicer I saw how many brilliant poems were written by young men and women who were between the ages of 20 and 35 in the forties, fifties, sixties, and then for various reasons just stopped, period). I wonder, looking at an anthology like Juliana's and Peter's "Writing from the New Coast" how many of the poets even in that book--who were the younger poets of five years ago--have since stopped writing. Or, as I look back on the poets Dodie Bellamy and I have published in our zine, "Mirage #4/Period[ical]," hundreds of them by now, and half of them must have been under thirty, I look at the earlier issues and I go into a melancholy mist thinking, Too bad X decided to become a full-time programmer, Too bad Y decided to write for cable TV. Tell you what, back channel me with your list of the young poets of today who are writing the most exciting work and I'll keep it for ten years, then you and I, sitting on our rockers, will uncover the time capsule and work out who is still writing, what they're writing, and who went on with it.

And one more thing, the absurd length of this post, it would be just as fair to say that the language poets were themselves driven out of San Francisco: one by one they all left us--though your advisors might say that this is what has made the current re-birth of new poetry here possible?

And finally, and this is not only for Katy, but if any of you on this List don't have that copy of Philly Talks with Ron Silliman and Jeff Derksen, let me know (back channel) and I'll send it to you as supplies hold out. It's really interesting and I personally would

enjoy a wider discussion of Jeff's announcement of the tendency, among "emerging" writers, "toward a poetics of disgust and overdetermination."

Okay, see you. XXX Kevin K.

P.S., Aldon, if Shauna Hannibal and Giovanni Singleton are between the ages of 35 and 45, then a) so are, mmm, the boys in Hanson . . . b) get me the phone numbers of their dermatologists and or surgeons . . . c) it must be true what they say about how living close to the water keeps you preternaturally young . . .

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Through late January the list fought over criticism itself — Henry Gould calling for an 'independent' reviewing that would 'smell the existence of authentic poetry,' Mark Wallace and Rod Smith pleading lack of time, the whole thing curdling into charges of whimpering. Stroffolino kept to the margins with one-line demurrals, unwilling to let the young be scolded; the substance was elsewhere.

Love Poems

4 February 1998

The first answer to Rob Hale's Valentine's predicament, which sets the month's argument about seduction, feminism, and the male desiring subject going.

In the thread, Robert Hale had written · 3 February 1998 —

At risk of using the list as a Dear Abby column, I seek advice regarding the sending of love poems.

Great POST, Rob Hale. Even though I cannot offer you advice, I guess it depends on the woman. I remember being in Pierre Joris' class a couple years back and having been so thoroughly inundated in a certain kind of "feminism" had internalized this idea that FREE UNION was a sexist poem, would certainly not (to paraphrase Moxley) "agitate the beloved into loving you" and sure enough the smartest and most attractive (to me) women in the class told me they loved that poem so there's no formula but i do think much of my poetry is "about" the tension between respect and even passion for feminism (though i am skeptical that there really can be a male feminist) on the one hand and one's status as a "male desiring subject"..... and though i don't really wish to once again be accused of being a languagepoetbasher, this issue was something i found lacking in many of the male langpos. well i have a lot more i could say on this, but i will wait to digest the implications of your message rob. Your message was quite courageous. thanks, chris stroffolino

On Tue, 3 Feb 1998, Robert Hale wrote:

At risk of using the list as a Dear Abby column, I seek advice regarding the sending of love poems. Valentine's Day is next Saturday. I don't plan to send out any love poems and here's why.

I was dating this girl for a while. Things were going well. I took her to see David Bowie. We talked about stuff. We had crazy nights. We even went to a friend's wedding together. I sent her, like, a poem a week, or something. I also sang to her over the phone. Then I sent her a poem by Andre Breton (see below). She freaked out. Our relations broke off within a week.

It wasn't the singing. Suddenly, she said I was a weirdo. It was the Breton. But the one of the first poems I sent her was by Clark Coolidge!

What gives?

My woman with her forest-fire hair With her heat-lightning thoughts With her hourglass waist My woman with her otter waist in the tiger's mouth My woman with her rosette mouth a bouquet of stars of the greatest magnitude With her teeth of white mouse footprints on the white earth With her tongue of polished amber and glass My woman with her stabbed Eucharist tongue With her tongue of a doll that opens and closes its eyes With her tongue of incredible stone My woman with her eyelashes in a child's handwriting With her eyebrows the edge of a swallow's nest My woman with her temples of a greenhouse with a slate roof And steam on the windowpanes My woman with her shoulders of champagne And a dolphin-headed fountain under ice My woman with her matchstick wrists My woman with her lucky fingers her ace of hearts fingers With her fingers of new-mown hay My woman with her armpits of marten and beechnuts Of Midsummer Night Of privet and angelfish nest With her seafoam and floodgate arms Arms that mingle the wheat and the mill My woman with rocket legs With her movements of clockwork and despair My woman with her calves of elder tree pith My woman with her feet of initials With her feet of bunches of keys with her feet of weaverbirds taking a drink My woman with her pearl barley neck My woman with her Val d'or cleavage

Cleavage of a rendezvous in the very bed of the mountain stream With her breasts of night My woman with her undersea molehill breasts My woman with her breasts of the crucible of rubies With her breasts of the specter of the rose beneath the dew My woman with her belly of the unfolding fan of days With her giant claw belly My woman with her back of a bird fleeing vertically With her quicksilver back With her back of light With her nape of rolled stone and damp chalk And a falling glass that's just been sipped My woman with her rowboat hips With her hips of a chandelier and arrow feathers And the stems of white peacock plumes Her hips an imperceptible pair of scales My woman with her buttocks of sandstone and asbestos My woman with her buttocks of a swan's back My woman with her buttocks of springtime With her gladiolus sex My woman with her sex of placer and platypus My woman with her sex of seaweed and old-fashioned candies My woman with her mirror sex My woman with her eyes full of stars With her eyes of violet armor and a speedometer needle My woman with her savannah eyes My woman with her eyes of water to drink in prison My woman with her eyes of forests forever beneath the axe With her pale eyes of sea-level air-level earth and fire

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various - a spray

6 February 1998

*In the thread, Louis Cabri had written · 6 February 1998 —**| Both seem to write of peer pressure & peer pleasure within overlapping*

Louis Cabri--in taking off from a line from Perelman about poetry and its hypothetical location BETWEEN communities rather than between individuals--makes an interesting point that, for me, raises the question of identity as a differential and what may be the "reactive nature" of it (identity). For, perhaps we all have some pre-existing idea of what (though of course it's an "imaginary construct")) and there is a very valid perspective from which "those positions having to do with reinvoking that famous figure of the outlaw (figure as in figure of thought/speech) : the outcasted male individual hero loner poet-thinker" though "a caricature" must be seen in relation to the community." And perhaps the VALUE of such an "outlaw figure" position--apart from any question of intrinsic value which I am going to BRACKET for now--is precisely in the way it may place the tension BETWEEN communities WITHIN a community. Thus, maybe it's not coincidental that Joshua Schuster finds the fact that "academic slander" can be found in all its glory on this list both "sickening" and "compelling". Ah, such ambivalence we may locate in the individual Joshua Schuster, taking a position against other individuals (in this sense the "sickening" is supposed to take precedence over the "compelling"), or we may locate it in between two communities, whose "competing discourses" play themselves out in the words of (or mind of) Joshua Schuster. Again, I keep thinking of that quote by Mr. Bernstein about being a "communist in st. petersburg and a capitalist in leningrad". As for me, I don't think I'd say half the things I say on this list if I were in other contexts. When I was on the CAP-L list alot, i tended to be part of a "unified front" with Ron Silliman strangely enough In U-Mass MFA prgram creative writing class with James Tate I defended Bernstein. Of course I would defend Tate here (and not JUST for reactive reasons, but I'd be lying to say such reasons don't play at least some part in it)... Anyway, just some friday morning thoughts.....chris

On Fri, 6 Feb 1998, Louis Cabri wrote:

It might be interesting to compare Barrett Watten's Bad History IX, "Presentation" (see Antonym #14) to the Tom Clark excerpt Joe Safdie posted Jan 24 (recently reposted by David Bromige). Coincidentally parallel subject matters in both poems, with very different treatments (as would be expected). Both seem to write of peer pressure & peer pleasure within overlapping, "warring" poetry communities: Watten, from the viewpoint of a shared poetic tendency (always plural, never singular); Clark, as someone who claims to have miraculously eluded all tendential poetic groupings (always singular, never plural) - as David has so excellently, in my view, recently

*detailed for us. Perhaps Steve Carll, who edits *Antenym*, could post that section of Watten's poem, if he's here? There is no "good" and "bad" in this suggested comparison, either - even though I side with David's view on Tom's poems - because Watten's poem is itself, it strikes me, oddly ahistorical in its address to a generality - "they." ...I'd be curious to know what others think.*

*During so much of the recent discussion I have gone back tangentially and for a sort of touchstone for my own thinking to a "chapter of verse" in Bob Perelman's poem by that name to be found in his last book, *Virtual Reality*. I wonder who on this list finds this quotation, in the way that it negotiates values for the social through various "walls" of individualism, to be a compelling one, or even an interesting one. It's a seemingly real plain statement:*

"Poetry begins, not between individuals within a community, but rather at the points where communities end, at their boundaries, at the points of contact between different communities."

*Where are the ends - and are they coterminous with the ends, as in the goals - of our communities, or are we a part of the same community even if we take opposing sides on fundamental issues of poetics? (The latter a question of scale, to some extent, that Ron critically addressed as an entropic state of current social affairs, in his PhillyTalks.) What does it mean to think of "poetry" as *not* "beginning between individuals within a community" - in other words, within the same community? "Community" of course can also be an imaginary construct (if it's ever anything else).*

I kind of lump together under one claim some variety of positions that a number of people on this list have recently marshalled forth - those positions having to do with reinvoking that famous "figure of outward" ("figure" as in figure of thought/speech): the outcasted male individual hero loner poet-thinker. Perhaps that's a caricature? Still, the shared claim these positions hold I think is the one that is swilling the last dregs of that sad legacy of the imaginary politics of anarchism in the US. In this recent listserve revival, it has taken such a reified form that its once communal politics can hardly be perceived - by those very champions of this view - in the vocabulary used to identify its social positioning - this given the already vastly reified "social" landscape of this nation, in the midst of its bathetic attempts to clutch to such a stripped landscape for support.

Not that anyone will find and of this of interest, but: I just want to say in advance that at present I can't post to the listserve as often as I'd like. Please don't take my possible further silence on these things as mean indifference. Oh no!

Oh, no!

Mais non!

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Sex, Power and Poetry

6 February 1998

In the thread, Robert Hale had written · 5 February 1998 —

| that of male power objectifying and controlling women

Though I am interested in Linda Russo's (and others) endeavour to combine the "feminism" thread with Rob Hale's original seduction valentine's day query (and now that I think about it; I think I was the one who first made this connection by bringing up the idea of how Free Union's "sexism" may depend on the reader), I want to again open up the question (which may have gotten a little lost in the shuffle) of writing as seduction in "amorous" contexts.....

If one writes a love poem, an epideictic praise poem (like, say, Elvis Costello's: "I can tell you that I like your sensitivity, but you know it's the way that you walk") one is often, of course, trying to persuade (forensic?).... Now, if poetry is beyond rhetoric, as many argue (though not in poetry if poetry is beyond rhetoric), the forensic or persuasive aspect of poetry should not be as important as the poem as a "self-sufficient act of mind," an aesthetic object whose SUCCESS should not be measured by the degree to which one has actually persuaded the lover of the "truth" of one's love, has reassured the lover, but by some other standard (and this can lead one to POLITICAL analysis of love poems, the poem is "not really about love" , not really about the person to whom it pretends to be addressed, may be really about politics [like all those blues songs by black men can really be about how white america doesn't requite their love as a subtext], that the poet is in love with love and that this, in a non-medieval age of non-troubador, non-minnesingers, is of course BAD: "you can't have sex with a muse" they say).... but if we try to take such love poems in face value, whether they are praise poems, complaint poems, etc.... one does suspend political questions and even aesthetic questions aside from "are my trousers tight enough" (again, O'Hara) but, as so often happens, one may write a love poem for someone (the person that inspires it) and either cannot send it, will not send it, or will find it "unsuccessful" (falling on deaf ears) and then, seeing that one has a reading coming up and wants to read something new, will read it to others, and then the "you" of that poem becomes a "she" (or "he"), unless someone else can have the "act of faith" (aka delusion) that the poem is "about" that person, and then the poem is "a success" (but such may seem to the poet a "hollow success"--- DOUG CRASE has a very good essay that reads ASHBURY's "project" in such terms by the way). THE SF Hippie underground folks, the diggers I think (unless it was the motherfuckers) said "to love is to fail"... and I still think it's important to clear a space for poems (AND poets) who, let's say may be a little shy and introverted, and feel maybe a little uncomfortable around people in "normal" situations and who maybe decide

to use writing as "a sophisticated form of personal ad", as a kind of "compensation", or even as an attempt to find a soulmate, a double, in ways that "social life" and the spontaneous exigencies of wit and the marketplace and parties do not allow (at least for some of us, not all of us), or even, dare i say it, a "higher" way that may make it obvious that the writer of the poem is somehow DIFFERENT from one's Tarzan and Trump and that that difference, despite what the "world" says, is not always crippling--and that it means the writer is interested in more than the attributes of the body of the beloved and wants to be loved for more than that as well....Well, I'll stop here. gotta run to teach yet another class (adjunct salary toothless benefits!). Chris

On Thu, 5 Feb 1998, Robert Hale wrote:

I respond here, not exclusively to Linda, but to her remarks in this note and another, in addition to numerous posts by others that invite a similar reading of Breton's "Free Union" along a similar course, that of male power objectifying and controlling women -- the sway of which I underestimated in the heat of my picaresque adventure.

I would also venture another interpretation of "exterior" that might lead somewhere other than the phallus and its well-worked calculus and mass redundancy. Exteriorization as a "positive task" (Deleuze and Guattari) working against interiorizing forces -- control, perversion (you name it), those which "no longer open to any outside." Then exteriorization is the highest, and albeit most abstract, task of love. I guess I consider this romantic in the context of my delivery of Breton to "my woman", but as I try to explicate I realize how ethereal it can be and probably was to her.

There seems to be some consensus over the idea that the love poem must strive for egalitarian goals, though I think the "heat" I mentioned above makes this very difficult to achieve. And as Pierre eluded to, the Surrealists, Breton esp., cared little for egalitarianism or any other such bourgeois concepts. I am not a Surrealist, but as I recall, a blurb on my work once mentioned the influence.

To summarize, I quote Mariana Valverde from her "Sex, Power and Pleasure" (a book given to me by an ex-girlfriend, which I obviously have had trouble applying in real life -- I keep forgetting that I have lit cigarettes already as I am writing this so the ashtray has three camels burning simultaneously in it, all mine!):

"The task is not to reject all objectification in favour of an impossible ideal of pure subjectivity, but rather to integrate the two aspects of human existence. The task is to remain a full human subject even while someone is considering us as a potential erotic object, and vice versa. An eroticism that is both sexy and egalitarian is one in which both partners are simultaneously subject and object, for one another as well as for themselves."

This sounds good (utopian?), but I keep forgetting that I have lit cigarettes already as I am writing this so...

Lastly, what about the use of "My lover" as the addressee? Bill Luoma has used this quite successfully, I think, in recent love poems of his.

At 12:31 AM 2/5/98 +0000, you wrote: *snip*

Also, what happens to the language when it's delivered as such a message? -- the route as part of a text "loved" when isolated, packed and unpacked, yet trouble-making when delivered?

i can only guess that you wanted "my woman with" to translate into "you"; odd that "my woman with" seems so fill-in-the-blankish except(!) when a specific "subjectivity" is demanded of it; i.e. "my susan with" might work but "i, susan, with" won't.

snip snap

I wrote some love poems (as some of you suggested), but there is nothing like a Breton love poem, and it is a love poem, contrary to opinion, very complicated, I think, and emotional (whatever these words mean), all these things in a very exterior, and arguably, male way. yes, in the way that it is all cock. i.e. he loves her with his cock or with whatever else skin he can glom all over her -- the old standby question -- do you think he respects his "woman with"? is there a being beneath this mass of female goodness? yes, it's nice to receive compliments re your bod. -- but to the exclusion of ? ? -- i'm reacting now out of context, of course, you couldn've sent a love poem praising her mind, her ideals, &c her bank account, i dunno, but i'd like to know of some poems that do!

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sex power shakespearey

8 February 1998

The Shakespeare of the dissertation-in-progress arrives to counsel the lovelorn Hale.

Eric Blarnes brings up Shakespeare (though he confuses one Antonio for another, Sebastian and Bassanio, if not Ben Jonson for Samuel Johnson).... and david bromige suggests that mr. hale's "failure" might have been because of the "one size fits all" quality of the poem and so i say (though it's easier to tell someone else what to do than to be one to take my own advice---to paraphrase a repeated shakespearean device [Portia in MV, Ophelia's rebuke of Laertes before she turns pliable, the Queen to Bushy or is it Bagot or Green in RICHARD II, LEONATO to another antonio in MUCH ADO, etc.) Well, Mr. Hale, if you REALLY want to bw with this woman, if you still want to try to woo her in words and try one more time (at the risk of coming off as one "romantically overobsessed" etc.), maybe you could write her a LETTER that JOKES about the whole thing... a la the early scene ion 12TH NIGHT when VIOLA (disguised as Cesario) confronts Olivia with the prepared text from ORSINO which lies in her "MASTER'S BOSOM" and OLivia says "IN WHAT CHAPTER OF HIS BOSOM"?????????? It is a great instance of one of those ways Shakespeare can have his "romantic" cake and eat it (or diss it) too, a way to go beyond a narrow sense of petrarchan poetry while at the same time NOT ignoring (or absolutely debasing) the sentiments (tho one could say ideology) that give rise to it... while widening the idea of "poetry" to include wit

and dialogue and all those heteroglossic things a lot of twentiethcenturialists (sic) like to think is part of the "NEW"..... chris

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INDIVIDUAL-UNREAL

10 February 1998

The first sustained appearance of Laura (Riding) Jackson, the poet he had once meant to write his dissertation on; the argument with Louis Cabri and Lisa Samuels will run to the autumn.

Thanks Lisa Samuels and Louis Cabri for excellent posts on Ms. (Riding) Jackson. I have some thoughts on the matter: A couple of questions for Louis. One) When you (LOUIS) write: "to me (Lisa) you have recuperated what Riding's words worked for when they worked for poetry" I detect the deployment of an assumption (too common) I think needs to be challenged: that Riding Jackson RENOUNCED poetry. She may have renounced "poetry as such" (but in terms of RATIONAL MEANING, only insofar as poetry is a "name" and not a "word."). Perhaps, "working for poetry" is the problem and maybe one could understand Riding as asking: "ask not what words can do for poetry but what poetry can do for words" (sorry about the Lee Harvey Oswald quality here)-- The way I see it, her later (post-poetry) writing, like THE TELLING (or "Engaging The Impossible", which in light of Ms. Samuel's remarks is especially worth considering--or even the Preface to the Selected Poems) can be seen as "working for poetry" or, MORE IMPORTANTLY, working AS poetry (if one is willing to consider a poetry not in the narrow "new critical" sense, or even perhaps the narrow 1998 sense), and Riding, even as (Riding) Jackson, seems to me to be more interested in critiquing the generic CRUTCH of poetry rather than poetry itself. It is the extreme endeavour of "space clearing" for the possibility of the "individual unreal" that I find almost everywhere in her work, the shucking off of the "baggage" of the "individual real" (which may be seen as the "expressive" self....).

Two) 2). Louis, how does the word "unreal" "do and say more than its cultural grammar at the time can support?" What "cultural grammar" do you feel is necessary to support her terminology or matrix? Does such technology, lacking in 1928, exist now? And, if so, for whom (and how do you know?) By the way, I don't think she's posing a simple "oppositional matrix" (real vs. unreal), because it is complicated by the combination of another simple oppositional matrix (collective vs. individual), and one may notice that the "fourth term" (like the "fourth wall" of "theatre") is conspicuously absent (i.e. Ms. Samuels makes no mention of the possibility of a "collective unreal"---perhaps because, for Riding, the "individual unreal" IS one with "the collective unreal"). Well, I would be curious to see if

anybody wants to continue this. (I also like Lisa's connection with O'Hara and LC's connection with Whitman...) Chris Stroffolino

On Sun, 8 Feb 1998, Lisa Samuels wrote:

in response to louis cabri, sat 7 feb, on individualism vs. singularity.

in her 1928 book, =Anarchism Is Not Enough=, laura riding distinguishes among the "collective-real" (people in groups), the "individual-real," (a person in relation to reality, to the "real" world of nature, broadly considered), and the "individual-unreal." this last sounds akin to what you are calling "singularity." for riding, the realm of the individual-unreal was The One worth living for and in. and in writing poetry one accessed this realm and "discharged pieces of self" as she put it. not =one=self, "but self." in this unreal singularity one was truest to the self and to poetry. and effectively truest to other people as well. promoting what you call the hardwon. in participating in the institution of publishing (though never in academia), riding wanted people to =try= to live that individual-unreal even as she knew it was impossible. and the only thing worth trying, while always keeping in mind its impossibility. what you wrote reminded me of her, hence the comment on =anarchism=. in either case the issue is maintaining one's deliberate ideals within necessary participation in the world. oneself as social construction is the "individual-real"; oneself as experientially incommensurable is the "individual-unreal," your "singularity." we can and do have both. at least this is my deliberate belief. and despite all those serious sentences, it's a belief that makes me delirious as o'hara: "YIPPEE!! I'm glad I'm alive!! I'm glad you're alive too, baby, because I want to fuck you" ("ode to michael goldberg ('s birth and other births"))

yippee! lisa samuels

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colding & heating

10 February 1998

The day job surfaces plainly — a nineteenth-century course got up on adjunct wages — folded into an exchange with Henry Gould on Whitman.

In the thread, Henry Gould had written · 10 February 1998 —

| I think Whitman's style is based on a balance between the particular

Henry, is it balance? or ambivalence? (tension)? "these are not the me myself"--- a tension between the "self" which is REALLY an impersonal force (and the mistaking of this "impersonal force" for the "person" Walt Whitman may be why some call him megalomaniac) and the more brooding self that champions what Wordsworth would call obstinate questionings but is generally sad, desperate and pathetic (though these are not necessarily pejorative terms). Such is this dialectic, this unresolvable tension... Since I've gotten into this 19th century groove (the class I'm teaching soon [adjunct salary toothless benefits]), I want to ask CAN ANYBODY SUGGEST A GOOD TRANSLATION EDITION OF GIACOMO LEOPARDI? I can't believe I haven't really read him before.... he seemed more

fashionable in the 1920s in the USA than in any time since. Any help would be appreciated. CHris

On Tue, 10 Feb 1998, Henry Gould wrote:

On Tue, 10 Feb 1998 00:10:48 -0500 Louis Cabri said:

What is the lineage of the "individual-unreal"?

What if it were Whitman! Not "precipitant of the American character," as the standard critical reading has it, but he who differentiates between individualism, which "isolates," and "personalism," which "fuses, ties, and aggregates . . . fraternizing all" (_Democractic Vistas_). "Personalism" thus is not identical to personal expression.

I've found numerous historical resonance for this word, but Whitman's usage, it seems, is distinct.

Anyone who can help me would be very welcome.

You might also look at Whitman's singular use of the word "disintegrated" in Song of Myself. It means, I think, "given an identity" (in the cosmos) by being "de-integrated" - separated, precipitated-out, of the whole. I think Whitmans's style is based on a balance between the particular, the individual, and the whole - the balance gives it that "anonymous" character which is one sign of real poetry... - Henry G.

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A Hughes squall passed through in February — Birthday Letters just out, Marjorie Perloff charging him with cashing in on Plath's death once more, Suzanne Burns pleading that Plath herself be let back into the frame. He said little worth keeping, beyond a good word for one poem in Crow, but the fight was real and the grief in it older than the thread.

acker/scalapino

22 February 1998

In the thread, Tom Beckett had written · 21 February 1998 —

| Scalapino's anger and passion are evident but mightily restrained.

Tom, I wanted to reply to your "depression" and "suicide" post, and just say thank you, but since others already have I will anyway. As for Acker and Scalapino. I like the comparison you establish in terms of "affect" and do find considerations of "emotional range" valuable aesthetical/ethical distinctions. Reminds me of Garrett Kalleberg's comparison of myself and Pam Rehm, That being said, I do not prefer Scalapino to Acker And do not prefer Acker to Scalapino. OR, there are times when I prefer one and times when I prefer the other. The "flattening" vs. the "manic-depression." One wonders if you would have agreed with your preference for Scalapino when you wrote the "depression" note. Sometimes gaudy calls the subtle boring. Sometimes subtle calls theatre gaudy. Prolegomenon toward a poetics of MOODS? Chris

On Sat, 21 Feb 1998, Tom Beckett wrote:

I wrote the following text for TapRoot Reviews a couple of years ago: I think that DEFOE is a work of genius on the scale of FINNIGAN'S WAKE, THE MAKING OF AMERICANS, THE DISASTERS OF WAR and GUERNICA. But, while Scalapino's work deserves comparison to that of Joyce, Stein, Goya and Picasso, it is Kathy Acker's oeuvre I want to invoke here. The universe of Acker's fiction- built-from-fiction is abusive, apocalyptic and "in your face."The horror (whore-her) of her narratives derives from the ways in which sexuality and violence are casually, causally and explicitly intertwined. Something related but different is happening in DEFOE. DEFOE effects a kind of dull affect, a resolute flattening of language horizonizing perception and consciousness, description and event. Fantasies, autobiography, commentary on current events, film and DEFOE itself merge with dream narratives to produce a landscape less blatant but more terrifying than anything to be found in Acker's work. Scalapino's anger and passion are evident but mightily restrained. Her strategy of understatement pays off in a major way with DEFOE's overwhelming cumulative effect. Working out of received fictions, Kathy Acker's writing highlights our culture's essential disfunctions. Scalapino's enacts a backdoor move on the received through a poetic phenomenology of the perceived in which "the fiction is so transparent and separated that it doesn't exist." DEFOE is one of those rare works of art which will not be exhausted of its meaning. And Leslie Scalapino is that rarest of writers--one that is utterly awake.<

What do people think of my Acker/Scalapino connection? Is this something we can discuss. Best wishes, Tom Beckett

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A recurring comedy deserves noting: the citation-hunts. Lacking web access and, he insists, unable to read a poem on a screen, he issues periodic distress calls — an Eliot phrase 'borrowed' or 'stolen,' a Bernstein line half-remembered, an address for Keith Tuma or Heather Fuller — often stamped, in Katy Lederer's borrowed words, THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. The list, patient, always answers; Bernstein himself eventually supplies the missing line.

metaphoracity redux

12 March 1998

In the thread, Henry Gould had written · 12 March 1998 —

Every piece of writing is marked by a worldview and motivated to "get across" something.

I've never "bought" the anti-metaphor line, at least in any rigid sense (to say there are limits to metaphor or to any linguistic tool is one thing, but to say "metaphor forces association" and doesn't just let the world BE is quite another... for to condemn metaphor (or symbols, etc.) on the grounds of the latter, wouldn't one have to condemn POETRY on the grounds of the latter more generally? I mean,

poetry, if it is referential (as the simple readings of WCW go), itself doesn't let the world BE, nor do I think it is necessary that we claim it should. By the way, I think that KARSTEN HARRIES essay in the SHeldon Stacks book ON METAPHOR (which touches on WCW and others), though I do not always agree with it, is very useful in addressing how WCW does NOT avoid metaphor, but rather employs it precisely to show its own (and the poem's) insufficiency....and THEN, only after engaging in what Stevens might call the act of the mind defending us from itself (in this Stevens and WCW are actually aligned--despite the well-publicized divisions between them), may be let the world BE (in a way perhaps we couldn't beforehand and is maybe why we 'turn to poetry'). Anyway, that's a simplisitc reading of Harries, but it at least points towards a view that allows for metaphor in 20th century poetry--- though I like the Neruda line too. Chris

On Thu, 12 Mar 1998, linda russo wrote:

it seems that some postmodern poetry disregards metaphor FOR political reasons -- i'm wondering abt. this distinction.

while i suspect the answer could be construed to be yes, the most famous example of this is not a postmodern one: Neruda i think, said something like "the blood of the children ran in the streets like the blood of the children ran in the streets."

or, a little closer to home, "So much depends . . ." or any number of wcw poems where the gesture is "look" and not "compare" or "look at me looking at that!" (which perhaps next natural gesture is to compare "you look at that different than i look at that)(granted this maybe oversimplifying b/c (so much lyric) poetry already says "see me looking"). But there's a way in which metaphor doesn't just let things be in the world and be seen there in whatever "chance" association. metaphor forces association (which forces universality -- this poem is so you see like me)

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political unconscious metaphors

17 March 1998

since i tend to worry alot, i tend to revise. yet ocassionally i notice an unintentionally "politically uncorrect" metaphor creeping into a poem "too late" (after it's appeared in print) (as opposed to the "intentionally politically incorrect" metaphors I DO let people my work)...

For instance, I write "sanity goes on strike" in a poem and I'm angry at myself (though the alliteration is 'nice'), because I'm looking at Ange Mlinko's poem MATINEE (which will be in her forthcoming book I think) which has a line: "and others laid off by sleep and asides" which makes me wish i had written "sanity lays me off" or "sanity takes away health benefits" etc..... if some academic close-reader wants to accuse me of being bourgeois or something....assuming they still

do that... nonetheless it's fun to worry i suppose about such things and is part of the flow as are occasional fits of "intention".... chris

On Tue, 17 Mar 1998, Kcglowworm wrote:

The seeming transcendence of metaphor (the carrying away from one plane to another) depends on the maintenance of a metonymical division of labor always in flux. This does not imply a hierarchy of tropic orders but rather a complicity. Metaphor (the priesthood) needs metonymy (the police).

Got it?

Got what? What is the nature of this it and of our getting? What is the power of such a question, with its implication of the self-evident?

For Fredric Jameson, allegory is the basic symbolic act of the political unconscious.

George Hartley

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fresh

30 April 1998

Now Mayhew has caused Mayhem in the mind i keep by a bar serving coors and is reminding me of that terrible kool and the gong sang (DIGRESSION: i listen to rap when cars pass, and i heard this line "LIKE THE CAT WHO KILLED VERSACE" yesterday, can anybody NAME THAT TUNE) anyway, when i first read this quote i thought it was "Tate is trying to make words FLESH again" ah, the materiality of the word meets the school of disembodied poets Well, one could take Mayhew's problem further--- if the avoidance of cliché is now a cliché then everything is permitted (which is a cliché too)....

But when we speak of the issue of "making language fresh" (or however you want to express a similar impulse), i guess there's a question involved about WHO you want to do that for? And I wonder if there's a way to avoid the possibility that someone will find "too obscure" and "meaningless" what another person finds "too cliché"---- no matter WHAT kind of poem you write..... chris On Thu, 30 Apr 1998, MAYHEW wrote:

From a review of James Tate in the "New York Times Book Review," by one Adam Kirsch:

"Like the even more nonsensical Language poets, Tate is trying to make words fresh again, to restore the glow that is rubbed away by advertisements and professional jargon and simple day-to-day repetition. Thus the reader discovers these deadpan absurdities: "Please don't taunt the scrivener. . . . / No muffins permitted in the aviary." Or: "my studies, Retro- / gression and the Requiem Shark, to name but one area.""

The problem is that this idea of "making words fresh again" is itself a tired commonplace. I also find the phrase "the even more non-sensical language poets" hilarious. Apart from this, the review does have some insight.

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: *fresh trace*

30 April 1998

In response to TRACE---I guess I read Kirsch differently (I disagree with his review but for different reasons than trace). I think he's using the word "challenge" positively and lamenting what he sees as a lack of that "challenge" in Tate. Kirsch, as I see it, seems to lament the "19th century role" of poet as consoler and comforter which he detects "beneath" the seemingly modern disjunctive aleatory qualities of the poetry he's discussing..... Now, whether he's ACCURATE about that is one thing (in the first place, I don't quite know what he means about the 19th century poet of comfort and consolation: Baudelaire? Dostoyevski [i know, not a poet] speaks of his writing as "corrective punishment", I see that in much of Dickinson, Shelley, etc. too) Kirsch, of course, poses a reductive dichotomy between "challenge" and "comfort" (but, then, critics and scholars on both sides of the fence have been rewarded for such rhetorical maneuvers for quite some time now....)

I also wonder about the phrase "retreat from the rigors of the world". I think Kirsch finds such a stance terrible, and Trace (who thinks Kirsch craves that kind of poetry) also finds it terrible, or ethically unsound. But sometimes the world does not come in the form of RIGORS (rigors unmixed), and then such a "retreat" is not really a retreat.... c On Thu, 30 Apr 1998, trace s. ruggles wrote:

And, Kirsch's conclusion is:

.. And this, finally, is Tate's message to us: the little .. pleasures of "pure ordinariness" make all the pain .. worthwhile. The poems in "Shroud of the Gnome" are often .. difficult; but with a message like that, they cannot be a .. challenge.

Is Kirsch apologizing for Tate's poetry? Ah, if only the _message_ is good, you can forgive the poet for being _difficult_!

And, get this:

.. But while poets today may still use modernist techniques -- .. free association, surrealism, complex allusion -- the .. modernist temper is gone; poetry has to a large degree .. resumed its 19th-century role as a comfort and consolation, .. a retreat from the rigors of the world.

So, the 20th century was but a little diversion in the grand stream of POETRY which gave the POETS a few neat little tricks to use, but THANK GOD! we're back to comfort

and consolation! So, please quit being so difficult, y'all, and give me some nice little lines I can fall asleep to...

--trace--

At 8:39 AM -0700 4/30/98, you wrote: Now Mayhew has caused Mayhem in the mind i keep by a bar serving coors and is reminding me of that terrible kool and the gong sang (DIGRESSION: i listen to rap when cars pass, and i heard this line "LIKE THE CAT WHO KILLED VERSACE" yesterday, can anybody NAME THAT TUNE) anyway, when i first read this quote i thought it was "Tate is trying to make words FLESH again" ah, the materiality of the word meets the school of disembodied poets Well, one could take Mayhew's problem further--- if the avoidance of cliché is now a cliché then everything is permitted (which is a cliché too)....

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My Mediocrity

12 May 1998

Gary Sullivan's apology to Jordan Davis leaves a question hanging: has O'Hara an emotional range worth the name? It occupies him for weeks.

In the thread, Gary Sullivan had written · 12 May 1998 —

I'd personally really like to see instances in O'Hara's grander scope of emotion posted here.

Emotional Range..... Should it be a value? I often say "yes" but sometimes say "no".... Sometimes "sanitized" is good is necessary..... The more interesting question for me right now is the relation of reader to writer when it comes to "emotional range"----- I know I keep harping (unduly) on that Auden blurb in

which he says he can read Marianne Moore in ANY MOOD.... and that I am skeptical of that (and I don't mean this as a criticism of Moore).... I guess when looking at myself reading other poets (or writers) I wonder what effect (or affect) my "emotional range" has on what I'm reading. And, if one is a SUBJECTIVIST, how making claims about a poet's emotional range will always be too some extent a claim about one's own emotions while reading it..... or something IN BETWEEN or something IN BETWEEN

Yet, despite the seeming noncommittal quality of what I've just said, I realize there IS a valid perspective from which O'Hara can be said not to have a comprehensive "emotional range"--- but this brings me to the limits of poetry on the page and I turn to theatre or music (in which dylan has more emotional range than THE FALL or FLIPPER who said "you're so bored coz you're boring" (just talking to myself here disclaimer)...chris

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F O'H

12 May 1998

In the thread, MAYHEW had written · 12 May 1998 —

he is extremely difficult to generalize about, because I can find you the poem that shoots the generalization to hell.

I'm not taking "lack of emotional range" for granted... some connoisseur of the mess i could call frank's but could also call mine (would du charme call this oedipal?) or society's, or language's, etc.....c On Tue, 12 May 1998, MAYHEW wrote:

Wait a minute-- Are we taking for granted O'Hara's lack of emotional range, then? I've never found this to be the case. It is true that he usually has his defenses up (except when he lets them down); that he is chatty and facetious (except when he's not) etc... In other words, he is extremely difficult to generalize about, because I can find you the poem that shoots the generalization to hell. He has more styles than just about anyone in a shorter period of time. There is the style (and emotional range) of "The Clouds go Soft" for example, or his poems about Gregory Corso. This is not to deny the point about a certain reticence in his work, like Asbhery's "Our days put on such reticence / these accents seem their own defense." Yet this "aesthetics of silence" is not a constant either. What about "Biotherm"?

I am not arguing that having such an emotional range is a sine qua non. I don't care that Creeley has a fairly limited range, for example. I am just puzzled by the acceptance of this judgment about O'Hara....

Jonathan Mayhew

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Byrd's reply 2 Alex and droffolino's quest

27 May 1998

The 'permissions' thread, seeded earlier by Jordan Davis and here taken up with Don Byrd, by way of Duncan and Anselm Berrigan.

Don--thanks for thoughts on PER-MISSION.... so, I'm reading the latest LUNGFULL magazine and finding note from ANSELM BERRIGAN on his poem therein included: "the poem is an attempt to figure out what might be "permitted" to do in 1998, & how not to do that & therefore continue (& not intended as a slag on R. Duncan, by the way, but a use of his half-line as extension into a field that requires some clearing"----- (the line by the way is "often i am permitted/ to blow my brains out") Now, this may be one of the ways it's possible "to draw back from the representations of the Gods to the attentions that worshipped them"---- although perhaps to someone in their 50s this may seem too "adolescent", but considering that 1998 may be EVEN MORE REPRESSIVE and TOTALITARIAN than 1950s was, maybe "adolescent" emotions need to be valorized, or at least cathartically, in poetry (so it can still serve some kind of safety valve function for suicide urges....).... and so I also therefore give permission to Steven Rodefer to Heckle Ondaadje (sp?) and give Ondaadje permission to donate proceeds to the KSW! and maybe somebody will give me permission to indulge my LOGORRHEA as Duncan's was indulged..... chris

On Fri, 22 May 1998, Don Byrd wrote:

charles alexander wrote: -- the obvious thing to do is

to take things from southwestern/Sonora desert indigenous peoples, relating to living well with the earth here. We may do some of that. But I also want to do some non-obvious things. I already have a bunch of potential selections from poetry & art (some wonderful things from Eva Hesse) -- but if anyone can suggest other possibilities, I'll be forever grateful.

Gravelly hill was 'the source and end (or boundary' of D'Town on the way that leads from the town to Smallmans now Dwelling house, the Lower Road gravelly, how the hill was, not the modern useableness of any thing but leaving it as an adverb as though Earth herself was active, she had her own characteristics, she could stick her head up out of the earth at a spot and say, to Athena I'm stuck here, all I can show is my head but please, do something about this person I am putting up out of the ground into your hands.

--"at the boundary of the mighty world," _Maximus_, p. 330)

And Chris asks why we do not have O'Hara's permission. Why do we not have Olson's? to call, as creatures of earth, on Athena herself? Or Duncan's permission to return to the meadow where we hear everlasting rumors of What Is? or H.D.'s (thinking of Bowering's recent post).

It is a real problem. Mythology has been bought up by New Age commercialism, and, to a certain extent, even the environmental movement has been colored by it. I am

glad to hear, Charles, that you are trying not to draw too much on the indigenous people. As much as one admires their culture, it does not have much to teach us _directly_. It was local and the numbers involved were small. We are now five billion (and growing) on a small earth and all subject to the same market.

Is it possible to draw attention back from the representations of the gods to the attentions that worshipped them? Something of this order would seem to be task. The images of mythic beings are altogether too conveniently available (mindlessly) in video games. What are the rhythms and movement of spirit that correspond to what might once have been available through those images?

Don

--

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APOLOGIES TO RON SILLIMAN

4 June 1998

So, last night, at St. Marks group reading church for anthologies I arrive early to assuage nervousness in drink and am standing at urinal stall talking about the weather to a man in a green shirt who "looks familiar" but i can't place the context.... anyway, he stays for 90% of the reading, and then as he leaves I realize he looks like ROn Silliman. I ask Drew Gardiner. It was Ron Silliman. Thanks for coming Ron Silliman, and apologies.....chris

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Anarchy

11 June 1998

In the thread, Peter Baker had written · 11 June 1998 —

| *one way to anarchy is *absolute refusal to work*.*

Peter.... well i dont know if ted berrigans view that the poet is always doing poetry "TAKES THE WRITER OUT OF THE CASH NEXUS" (so that's the phrase to play with---"chew on"--for "awhile"....) money plays a role, "has a presence", in tb's work, and i don't think it's just the villianous cash nexus one is glad to be taken out of..... chris

On Thu, 11 Jun 1998, Peter Baker wrote:

I'll add my voice to Jordan--Bernadette Mayer is key here. I talked to her a year or so ago and she said she was writing a book on anarchy. Has anyone else heard anything more on that? I take her MEMORY project as a how-to for practicing a refusal of the dominant society (July '71).

*Coming out of Rimbaud (Je suis en gre`ve) one way to anarchy is *absolute refusal to work*. See also his "Je m'encrapule le plus possible." Guy Debord and the Situationists, Paris May '68. Greil Marcus makes the connection from there (a little too self-celebratorily for me) to the Punk rockers of the seventies in his *Lipstick Traces*.*

Baraka "Black Dada Nihilismus" (I agree) follows this through Dada and Surrealism and the refusal of power in the Olson/Baraka poems to each other from early sixties time evidences this. Spicer relevant in this regard, especially his refusal to play the poe biz game.

Ted Berrigan's view that the poet is always doing poetry at every moment takes the writer out of the cash nexus. Michaux connects to Surrealism and important beyond what Ted did with him. Not only his work on drug experience but also his immersion in the world of the "mentally ill" who by definition are isolated from and other to dominant society (big thread here connecting up with Artauld, Foucault, on and on).

Georges Perec's political involvements in *La ligne generale* as this leads into his shift to OULIPO in the sixties might be of some relevance.

bp Nichol has been going through my mind in this connection, maybe for that same singleminded commitment to only poetry, invention of all the possible new forms. Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* a practical how-to manual that ties anarchism to immigration.

Has anyone mentioned Andrei Codrescu and the anarchist streak that gets here through the Eastern Europeans, anti-authoritarianism as wild humor?

Peace, Peter

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WORKERS OF THE WORLD DISPERSE!

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MFA/PhD

26 June 1998

His fullest accounting of the degrees, the debt, the near-default — a CV as confession, addressed to a student weighing an MFA against a PhD.

In the thread, Robert Archambeau had written · 26 June 1998 —

| *the tenure track not really being all that cushy*

Dear Brent--- Good specific "practical" question. I don't know if there is such a thing as a "cushy" academic job. Tenure certainly doesn't equal cushy these days, but since I have neither I tend to sometimes conflate them too... especially since I have a creative writing masters AND a Scholalry Ph.D. I think that nowadays, however, you won't find too many recent Ph.D's with those tenured jobs either.... If you're thinking CAREER, thinking DEGREE, by itself, means anything, get a

time machine quick and go to the glory glut academic years of yippie agent orange and viet-niks. I am not complaining right now (at least I think I'm not) about going to Bard's MFA program one summer, then dropping out because I got into (with T.A.) Temple for 2 years (M.A. Program; at a time when I didn't realize Brown or Iowa would put me on a certain proper track or loop more easily so I'm told).... then, after realizing that an MA (and I doubt the lack of a letter F made any difference) didn't mean much, and turning 30, and losing my mother, and publishing my first full-length book, and getting in SULFUR, NAW, APR, etc., and still not being able to even get an adjunct creative writing (or literature) gig, decided to go to an MFA Program (to study with James Tate). I wasn't funded, however, so went only briefly.... and then I guess "fell in love" with Shakespeare Criticism, or the generic possibilities in working within the form of a Ph.D. dissertation, and "jumped ship" and then schools and got into SUNY'S PH.D program (also unfunded, but I thought that would change. Cuomo was still governor then!) Regardless, then, of my own choices (for which I take some --if not quite all--responsibility) that have led to this debt and the verge of default (regardless of my own aversion toward Newtorking those "in power"), I think I'll get a job..... It will just take longer, but in that time of waiting I'm trying to see that the more money you make the more you must work. Well, I hope this answer lites the preverbial cushion.... c

On Fri, 26 Jun 1998, Brent Long wrote:

Dear List Members:

I feel like this question is sort of on the outer fringes of the strands concerning MFAs, etc., but being a student (possibly until I perish) and not as of yet in the world of "Academia", I pose this question to those who are in a position to know:

Is it better (if you intend to teach at any institution other than a public high school) to have an MFA or to go on to a PhD???

I understand that in some instances the MFA is looked upon as a "terminal" degree, but you don't often hear (anymore) of someone with an MFA landing a cushy and tenured position at a university somewhere...

Just curious as to your thoughts on this...

Brent Brent_Long@brown.edu

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7/4/70

30 June 1998

A Grateful Dead reminiscence from Gwyn McVay unlocks one of his own, from a crew-cut Washington childhood.

Ah, 7/4/70--I remember it well. Little kid with crew cut (against his will of course) being taken for one of those rare special road trips to DC of all places to see fireworks. I remember my parents acting weird and protective and "we gotta get out of this place" as we got to see the "honor america day" entertainment starring bob hope at the reflecting pond. Only years later did I read about the naked yippies in the reflecting pool moving toward Bob Hope chanting "bob hope smoke(s) dope", etc.....c

On Sun, 28 Jun 1998, Gwyn McVay wrote:

I held the symbols for him on stage at the Rock'n'Roll Express ^^^^ Conncert in Calgary, 7/4/70. That was right before Janis kissed me.<<<

I have to know--this could, after all, be important: did you find his symbolism blatant, overt, calculated, subtle, inspired? The "turn on your lovelight" metaphor really belongs to Bobby "Blue" Bland, but I wonder about "easy wind 'cross the bayou today."

Gwyn "Close Reading" McVay

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Not romantic, but drowning

10 July 1998

Jordan Davis had asked for writing on the male gaze; he obliges by way of an Artforum piece, Giuliani's strip-club purges, and a poem of his own a magazine had turned down.

In the thread, Robert Corbett had written · 10 July 1998 —

| i just want to rant about the new yorker's article on stein

Jordan asks--I think--about literature of interest re male gaze... well been thinking been wanting to rant about that Wayen Kostenbaum piece on Vanessa Beecroft in the latest ARTFORUM lately and so will well he begins the piece with going to see a Jane Frielecher show and expressing boredom (or more likely ENNUI) at--not at the work per se (nor have I seen it nor will judge but that's the issue HERE)--but at the MEDIUM (can you BELIEVE that it's 1998 and some people still PAINT on WALLS and only on WALLS?" come on now, he'd probably add, this is the error of the HUGO BOSS PRIZE and that souglass clown and his slowed-down 24 hour version of PSYCHO and the sequel currently at the guggenheim).... After, claiming the PASSE quality of the MEDIUM or GENRE in which frielicher works, he moves on to praise (i think it's praise) Beecroft's show of 20 or so models, 5 naked, all but 5 wearing clothes by GUCCI GUCCI GUCCI. A "by invite only" show (but they invite a lot of people it says here)--therefore "special." Kostenbaum is simply ASTOUNDED that skinny model women's legs do not touch at their crotch.

And this is the NEW ART, the "interactive" "installation piece." Question: am I silly or just plain "out of the ballpark" for imagining the scene at this show, as stiff and stuffy???? Would rather see the frielicher, and then maybe go to a topless cabaret a certain A. Berrigan told me about--no GUCCI at least there, one step closer to the more "naked" voyeurism i assume is more available at the kind of strip clubs guiliani wants to close down (i did go once with fellow Hard Press author Sharon Messmer; i wonder if the baby doll lounge made the AX).... Well, have I made my preferences "clear"? And, no, I'm not going to retell the story about baby's first reading with Bernstein in 89 and his public response to my early poem "blackburniana", but I may mention that my recent, as yet unpublished piece "NUDE" (which I really should remember to send to Eileen Myles after hearing her portrait of the male nude model she had "sit" for her creative writing class--but this is the "female gaze" or at least one of them) was rejected by Mark Nowak's magazine (I forget the name I always get it confused with that thing in philly). I had sent it in response to his call for his "VOYEUR/VOYAGER" issue, but I guess he didn't want something so much VOYEUR as VOYAGER, or if he sees the two as one, he sees the VOYEUR as a kind of VOYAGER whereas I might be interested in figuring the VOYAGER as a kind of VOYEUR, a line of emphasis (my sister preferred to be "lost in space" too "lost lost i want you lost" as Frank O'Hara says) so drowning in a liquor not yet brood

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wrasslin with Rasula (what about a. watts?)

17 July 1998

Henry Gould, unable to put down Jed Rasula's American Poetry Wax Museum, drags the list in; the two-part wrangle that follows is among the year's best.

I read "wax museum" several years ago, and though i find it a great read (and have lot of notes on it lying around somewhere just waiting for more free time to....) i guess the big memory --or the most recurrent one--is the superficial organizing structure of a kind of manichean dualism: berryman and lowell--bad suns of pound-- vs. duncan and olson good (or less "museumed" because less "museumable" presumably); also the characterization of bogan as THE woman..... A RELATED (or relatable) topic I'd like to start: and i heard one of those alan (i think not allen) watts lecture tapes on WFMU today and realize how he often gets me and how I haven't read him in years.... read him before keroauc (and read "dharma bums" not knowing he was a character in it. tempted to go back and try to find the passages) anyway, when i was a philosophy major as undergrad, i was very into THE BOOK (on the taboo against knowing who you are or something) and THE WISDOM OF INSECURITY. My Philosophy teachers of course said "well, he isn't really philosophy." Did that have something to do with

my switching to English major? so, any "defenders" or "detractors" of Watts out there? (this is not an issue of "but he's not original; just a popularizer of other ideas, etc." but more of an issue of his particular style (as writer and/or performer) and the way it relates to what is more "properly" called poetry. Is he in the wax museum too?

chris On Thu, 16 Jul 1998, Henry Gould wrote:

Since nobody wants to talk about money, here's another hot topic, Jed Rasula's AMERICAN POETRY WAX MUSEUM, which I have been unable to put down the past few days. I guess it was probably yakked up here a few years back?

What an amazing history lesson this book is, the way he engages "poetics" as a whole conflicted field of engagement. I'm not done with it yet, but the readings from Louise Bogan, Karl Shapiro, & a lot of others are great - and the "blistering indictment" of the changing/unchanging poetry establishment, all the distortions that have been written into the fading canons...

just some problems I'm starting to have with it, since I have to argue with everybody these days, or try to -

I wonder about the overall conceptual frame of it - I guess (wild ignorant guess) it's sort of a Foucauldian-anarchist frame of history - a sort of enormous suspicion of state-cultural "structures" - is this the criticism of sane paranoia? I mean he frames his absolutely necessary critique in the "wax museum" conceit - implying that culture, like a museum, is a subset of the nation-state, and it's the coercive, "carceral", institutional taming/homogenizing/hegemonizing reality that distorts the museum-goer's perception of the artworks encased therein -

I guess what troubles me is the paranoid aspect of this kind of critical thinking: "things are never what they seem" is like the mirror-image of ("fascist") status-quo "things are only what they seem" establishment thinking. Since I haven't finished the book, I wonder if Rasula ever examines whether there's not a contradiction involved in the hindsight- historical packaging of this kind of study: ie. his metaphor of the wax museum could be applied to his own book (more like a diorama of civil wars). So that nothing is what it seems: the only purpose of the state is coercive-numbing mind control; the only purpose of the museum is to replicate that "control"; both artworks & museum-goers are puppets in that scenario; Robert Lowell is a puppet of the New Critics; Helen Vendler is a puppet of the same long-lasting establishment; the "lyric" in poetry is a mask for uncritical thinking; etc. I would argue that scary as it may seem the democratic state does have a long and bloody real history and a legitimate purpose, and if this is the case, museums, universities, and individual artworks & poets and lyric poems might also have a legitimacy - not a perfect legitimacy by any stretch of the imagination - Rasula de-legitimizes them in all justice - but I wonder if the "controlling metaphor" doesn't in its own turn go too far.

My first response to the book is that it's absolutely necessary even if it can be faulted for its own semi-p.c. maneuvering (ie. I got the sense that women poets were slightly criticized for developing their "own" networks, but black poets were above criticism for the same thing - it's called creative "secession". Correct me if I've misread this.)

This book is part of an opening-up of poetry culture by carefully going back over what's just barely visible & re-measuring things. I think that in future decades the saddest aspects of this history will be the numbing controls in place of "official" literature, and secondly the harshness of the name-calling and the tendentiousness of the various positionings. I also think Rasula actually over-emphasizes some of the political differences between poetic approaches; I mean, this is historically correct for the era he writes about but the issue of "open" vs. "received" forms vs. new forms is still in for some major new wrinkles. Rasula contrasts for example Duncan's open form as a reassertion of Keatsian romanticism with the establishment poetics of the 50s as a contrived and superficial formalism; but the strictly historical - I mean literary-historical meanings of some of these metaphysical and renaissance forms in my opinion has not been completely used-up simply because the 50s pseudo-modernists found them useful for promoting their fantasy world.

One of the never-forgettable lessons of this book is that writers come out of their own different histories and nothing is simple. That may seem so obvious now to most as to not constitute a lesson. But for a wasp boomer from the midwest born into the American language of his ancestors, who came to poetry with the sense that the work of writing was a sort of neutral ground of accomplishment, where the self met the community on the stage of achievement and the community met the self there, and there was an honest exchange because the poem on the page is sort of like a testament or a constitution, an accurate measure of work done, and so the obvious thing to do with it was to send it out to magazines in a disinterested way & let quality float to the top -

when you find out that there's another reality out there - that the publishing venues are designed to filter out quality based on 2 things: a particular editor's notion of what you've done, and second, a hidden buddy system or control system; and then you find that there are these "communities" of writers who share ideological/aesthetic visions & then feed them back to one another & push into the publishing venues as groups, and everyone on the poetics list from Don Byrd on down laughs at the notion of "independent standards" of criticism and reading (this is not to single out Don Byrd for anything negative, just a memory of the indie- crit flap) -

well, you take all this into account & things are very complicated suddenly... so complicated that I think I'll just go back to my original idea: let it happen in the poem, & give them all the lie. The open form concept is marvelous: but the poem is also a toy.

- Henry Gould

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***wrasslin with Rasula**

17 July 1998

*In the thread, Henry Gould had written · 17 July 1998 —**I don't agree that it's silly to summarize his take on R. Lowell as a "puppet" of the New Critics*

Henry's write about Rasula's argument that LOWELL is puppet (but then i don't think Rasula should be singled out for the such inside/outside rigid polarities; after all this is the land of STAR WARS and all that)..... cs

On Fri, 17 Jul 1998, Henry Gould wrote:

Mark, I agree with you that the very best thing about WAX MUSEUM is the in-depth research & subtle grasp of what was at stake & all the various debates that went on over that 40 yrs. Just a couple of reiterations: I don't agree that it's silly to summarize his take on R. Lowell as a "puppet" of the New Critics - he goes to great length to show that that is EXACTLY what Lowell was - both in his literary politics & his writing itself - here's a sample quote: "He was _the_ poet prepared, golem-like, by the founders of New Criticism, programmed as it were to produce the poems that would confirm for a contemporary audience that their _tastes_ (as honed by the curriculum of _Understanding Poetry_) could handle the new poetry as readily as the old." This is just one quote among MANY. And he handles the Vendler wax very similarly. But it's a complex book - he molds the wax on all sides at various places presenting Lowell as uncannily "self-fashioned" and at other places as the puppet; he lambasts New Criticism but praises it for bring poetry per se front & center; his final section dealing with what he characterizes (following Virilio & others) society as a state of total & unacknowledged war, and arguing that mass corporate media technology has utterly debased the public sphere - his final section is a jeremiad which sounds strangely like the attacks the Fugitive New Critics made 50 years before on industrial modernity.

As far as the Wax Museum metaphor, I don't think you can discount it as mere metaphor, since the total-suspicion critique permeates this analysis in the later part of the book. His evocation of the power of war, its deep connection with communication technologies, and the effect of all this on public & cultural life especially in the US, is very powerful: it seems "dated", but the frightening thing is that this datedness seems an integral aspect of the US as a whole - this is the wax-museum-preservation effect. It's a good monster movie - the US public as zombie-fodder of their television screens & day jobs.

Nevertheless I still finally read it as a partial melodrama. The public sphere is changing fast, becoming more internationalized & contentious at the same time; what art & poetry have to offer is not a "take-over" of those mass instruments of control but an international imaginative reconstruction of social relations, which comes from the mass rather than the mass media.

As with a lot of these historical studies, the latter more contemporary sections seem more rushed & disappointing - this is probably a wax effect too. I found a lot of special pleading for language poetry, but curiously, in the context of the "total war" era theme, & the evocation of so much social waste & despair as its outcome, I was more impressed by one line (70s) from Robert Bly as an example of political-poetic reality

than the whole fanfare for what language poetry was supposedly doing. the line was: "We all feel like tires being run down roads under heavy cars". For all the special pleading about language poetry's 1-2 punch of theory & practice, what seems missing is the fusion of the two in a yes resonant speech.

- Henry Gould

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John Yau's MY SYMPTOMS (relavant to Russo/bAron etc. discussion)

23 July 1998

He opens a defence of John Yau's My Symptoms that Karen Kelley and Mark Weiss will make him earn over the following week.

Has anybody here read Yau's new Black Sparrow book? In it, there is much "cross-gendered identification" that---though it is written by a male--seems to, er, "rupture patriarchal discourse" and could serve as a complement to, say, Carla Harryman who also engages in "cross-gendered" identification. I think Yau does a very good job at trying to speak AS woman "other" and negotiating the representational anxieties that might attend the "presumption" of such a task..... but would be very interested to hear opposing views.... chris stroffolino

On Wed, 22 Jul 1998, Linda Russo wrote:

Rah rah.

I'm glad to see Safdie Joseph annoyed with the "position" that feminism had seemed to put Todd in (in reading the original post, before Todd's brilliant comeback) -- as an apologist. Elizabeth Treadwell makes the same point as well (though I have definite issues with Postfeminist Playground, for another post).

I wish we could just do away with the gender essentialism which causes so many with physical bodies to feel they have to apologize for some appendage or other. I'm intrigued by the problems women (and other 'others') face in trying to enter the current the forums/debates etc. -- very material problems (as Woolf pointed out early on) rooted in patriarchal biases.

But it's more fruitful to continue mucking things up, to keep getting more and more challenging writing published, to continue framing experiment as a rupture of "patriarchal laws" (Kristeva's argument; what Woolf recognized as "convention," what Bernstein has called "populist realism" etc) -- to recognized that oppression is at work, even that gender oppression is at work, but to quite calling the counter/re/active strategies "feminine"! or to call it feminine and stop stop linking this to (women's) biology! Or we all really do have the Anxiety of Influence -- we're all a bundle of nerves!

Until we get some intelligent conversation going to reframe the issues (and reframe them for feminist literary scholarship) we're going to be beaten over the heads with said appendages. (Not that it isn't out there -- Judith Butler, for example -- But to what extent has it made its way into contemporary poetics discussions?)

Todd's comeback:

being "stuck" has to do with our discussion of (bad spelling...er..) gender roles and structures in poetics. If one is aware of a gender role or gender model--then I believe one is "stuck" within the definition and confinement of terminology. I do not believe that one is punished or "jailed" as in "stuck in prison..stuck in my room". The thing is that "stuck" is structure--if one identifies patterns as either male or female--but I agree with others when they notice that structures in poetics are male--in that they derive from male poets and male narratives--how else would the Epic, the sonnet, etc. have found their way here--now--in their forms. Your Marxist response negates that economics is gender and age (and race) based also. Very much so--are structures of Marxism (poor ms. marx and his daughters) and Capitalist Democracy/etc ("Free Market") based on a male pattern (baldness?) power elite--thus yes economics determine us--BUT--those economics are not--are not ---"impersonal economic forces..." --

never impersonal.

Tb

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DICKINSON

23 July 1998

I am ABSOLUTELY SURE that Dickinson has at least some poems that pretty blatantly (and more that do it more subtly) write AGAINST the society woman role, and marriage. Sure, they are also FOR something, but it's not always just the occult..... (i don't have any definite examples handy, and I have no time to dig through the books at present, but unless my memory is TOTALLY faulty, it's there..... c

On Thu, 23 Jul 1998, toddbaron wrote:

George Thompson wrote:

Tb wrote of Emily Dickinson that:

...she didn't live in a world she was against....

I'm not so sure about this. If you mean that she didn't live in that world I would agree: she didn't [she lived in a little room upstairs]. If you mean that she wasn't against it, I think that you'd be completely wrong: for she was as against it as they come, and all of her work says so, don't you think?

I do not agree--she did not write "against" but created "for" ---I am simply saying also that I'm "against" others using her (or others) to promote an ideology she /she did not share. You can't just read the work and say "look-- here she's writing against the role of women and marriage"

she was an occult writer--writing to a certain "self" that was surely not the politics of the day-- but rather

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John Yau's MY SYMPTOMS*31 July 1998**In the thread, Mark Weiss had written · 29 July 1998 —**| This (the Yau) is shockingly cliched.*

Thanks, Karen Kelley, for your reponse....Well, spilling it (or stripping it--since strippers are artists), I have many responses-- only some of which I can touch on here. One would be to ask you how YOU would represent what goes on in the mind of a stripper (or to direct me to work of yours that deals with this).... Another response would be to agree with you (up to a point): Let's say that--in the particular passages you quote--that Yau is probably closer to what men think women are than to the actuality of a woman who may strip her clothes but yet not "Spill it" (her mind). But, if you look at the entire book (in which there are a variety of female characters, some as "I" and some as "she"), or even if you look at this particular piece in question IN ITS ENTIRETY, you might find that at least Yau is self-conscious (and meta) enough to admit this possibility (even the choice of title of the book, MY SYMPTOMS, calls attention to the possibility that the female speaker is a "masked male" etc... (a la Shakespeare).... I wonder if women who represent male characters in ways that might seem "stereotypical" or "derogatory" (or "positively" even) have the same problem (I'm not saying that I don't like reading such writing by the way: I learn much from it). Certainly not every woman writer is as extreme as Jane Austen who never had a scene in which two male characters appear without any women in the the scene (because she only wrote "what she knew"), nor am I suggesting they should do so....

I don't know enough about how dancers are "stereotyped" to comment on whether Yau is, in fact, doing it. In my experience (admittedly little) with strippers, the "stereotype about strippers" is "we only do it for the money. We get little or no intrinsic thrill out of exhibitionism, and we certainly see it more as humiliation than as any kind of 'grrrl power' over men." And in this particular story (which is good, but not--in my opinion, one of the best pieces in MY SYMPTOMS--I say this by way of "sales pitch" I guess), Yau goes very much against THAT stereotype, and yet elsewhere in MY SYMPTOMS he sympathetically portrays a woman who "had been a model, it was her boyfriend's idea. He brought her to New York when she was 17 and finally pushed her up the stairs the agency, even though she had been crying non-stop for two days."(120). So, I think we see a range here of attitudes towards female exhibitionism rather than an AGENDA proffering "proper" female roles. And if both these characters--taken alone--may run the risk of becoming "stereotypes," I believe that by offering a range, these "stereotypes" cancel each other out (again, like Shakespeare

presenting both a Beatrice and a Hero in the same play for instance--so the "truth" can be somewhere "in between" for a wider range of readers...).

Besides, you take OUT OF CONTEXT a few quotes that all occur near the beginning (in the first 2 pages) of an 8 page story. In "Butcher, Baker..." the woman is only a stripper for the first two pages. Later on, the woman character, an EX-stripper, single-mother, is expressing her attraction to firemen, and raises all these doubts about her motivations: "i don't know why I have this thing about firemen, but I do...maybe it's because I think in metaphors and I should learn to think some other way..." (Yau himself a metaphorical thinker, going against the traditional anti-metaphorical prejudice that linked metaphor and women, in Locke, in Renaissance Rhetoricians like Puttenham, etc., though nowadays some claim it's a feminist argument to argue AGAINST metaphor....blah blah). Now, I see what happens here as an inversion of an "archetypal" stereotype here....the traditional linkage of women with water and men with fire (as in LYSISTRATA, another man putting words in the mouth of a woman, or in Jagger's "She's So Cold" for instance) and then, and I think this also goes beyond stereotype, the female character starts expressing a desire for a FIREWOMAN. There's both an unstereotypical lesbian dimension here, as well a desire on the character's part to BECOME a firewoman ("a woman who fights fires. They have to give her her due and treat her like a man. She's on the line with them..."), so this woman character tries on quite a few "non-traditional" roles in the course of this piece. This piece is --on one level--about whether identity is contingent not only on gender (or sex), but also one's choice of profession (a la Harryman). And I am curious what you, Karen Kelley, have to say about this (though I do not grant Mark Weiss the authority I grant you in this matter, since I am more suspicious of a male judging another male as sexist,) and I have more to say on this (but will save it for the longish essay I want to write on this book--if I can find a publisher who will make room for my logorrhea), but wanted to express some of these points here in this forum, in the interest of dialogue.... Again, thanks, for responding..... Chris Stroffolino

On Mon, 27 Jul 1998, Karen Kelley wrote:

Hi Chris,

Good call: it IS "Butcher, Baker..."

"I'm a dancer who makes men spin in their graves, gets them to yell 'bay bee,' whisper 'gosh' and 'honey,' and dream of 'whoopie.'"

"Fate got warm with me, dealt me a flush. So I'm packaged right for the job. I have an easygoing, cornstalk smile; I'm tall and tilted just enough so short guys don't have to crane their little necks and hurt themselves. I can crouch and rise smooth as a wave. Twist and twirl until their brains turn to jellyfish bobbing in a beer bottle."

"Early on I learned that men like to be swatted a little if you do it right and put on your girl-next-door smile while shaking your assets just beyond reach. I had tits and a smile that gave men cramps."

*This seems *extraordinarily* off-base as a representation of what a woman might think when contemplating male reaction to her body. Admittedly I am *one* woman among many. But I wonder if perhaps Yau isn't closer to what *men* *think* women think.*

When I first read the piece I felt guilty about finding it an amusing read when it was so clearly a man's idea of a woman's feelings. And as someone who's held the same job as the narrator, I'm aware of how routinely dancers are stereotyped.

It sounds like you felt differently about the piece, Chris. C'mon, spill it.

Karen

louis stroffolino wrote:

Dave Baratier asks what "cross-gendered identification" is. I guess I just meant the term simply (if loosely) to mean when someone of one gender and/or sex adopts or takes on the voice of someone of another gender and/or sex.... I didn't say that YAU was NEW for doing that.... but then "make it new" has never been much of a standard for me (see Mike Magee's intro to his mag COMBO for a view I largely share)

Karen Kelley. COuld you tell me which particular piece of Yau's was in First Intensity? My hunch is you're talking about a piece called BUTCHER, BAKER, or CANDLESTICK MAKER, but I'd like to know more specifically before I respond....Because I'm curious about what you mean by "stereotypical" and why you think the piece you read is so..... Thanks, chris stroffolino

On Thu, 23 Jul 1998, Karen Kelley wrote:

I recently read something of Yau's in a mag--was it First Intensity? I'm sorry--I can't recall, but it was perhaps from the new book & was the narrative of a stripper & I found it rather disturbing in that the narrator was kind of dumb & angry & thought highly of her breasts (no prob with that in & of itself) & little of men in general--she was kind of a jaded line drawing of a woman--with the interior monolog of a stereotype, which I suppose is okay, though as this thread goes to show, the whole male/female or masc/fem question is much more complex than Yau's piece implied, and I guess I just felt annoyed that he was willing to throw another stereotype my way.

louis stroffolino wrote:

Has anybody here read Yau's new Black Sparrow book? In it, there is much "cross-gendered identification" that---though it is written by a male--seems to, er, "rupture patriarchal discourse" and could serve as a complement to, say, Carla Harryman who also engages in "cross-gendered" identification. I think Yau does a very good job at trying to speak AS woman "other" and negotiating the representational anxieties that might attend the "presumption" of such a task..... but would be very interested to hear opposing views.... chris stroffolino

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But it's more fruitful to continue mucking things up, to keep getting more and more challenging writing published, to continue framing experiment as a rupture of "patriarchal laws" (Kristeva's argument; what Woolf recognized as "convention," what Bernstein has called "populist realism" etc) -- to recognize that oppression is at work, even that gender oppression is at work, but to quite calling the counter/re/active strategies "feminine"! or to call it feminine and stop stop linking this to (women's) biology! Or we all really do have the Anxiety of Influence -- we're all a bundle of nerves!

Until we get some intelligent conversation going to reframe the issues (and reframe them for feminist literary scholarship) we're going to be beaten over the heads with said appendages. (Not that it isn't out there -- Judith Butler, for example -- But to what extent has it made its way into contemporary poetics discussions?)

Todd's comeback:

being "stuck" has to do with our discussion of (bad spelling...er..) gender roles and structures in poetics. If one is aware of a gender role or gender model--then I believe one is "stuck" within the definition and confinement of terminology. I do not believe that one is punished or "jailed" as in "stuck in prison..stuck in my room". The thing is that "stuck" is structure--if one identifies patterns as either male or female--but I agree with others when they notice that structures in poetics are male--in that they derive from male poets and male narratives--how else would the Epic, the sonnet, etc. have found their way here--now--in their forms. Your Marxist response negates that economics is gender and age (and race) based also. Very much so--are structures of Marxism (poor ms. marx and his daughters) and Capitalist Democracy/etc ("Free Market") based on a male pattern (baldness?) power elite--thus yes economics determine us--BUT--those economics are not--are not ---"impersonal economic forces..." --

never impersonal.

Tb

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Question of a "good war"

31 July 1998

In the thread, rsillima@IX.NETCOM.COM had written · 31 July 1998 —

it certainly does seem that it was possible to step back and decide, for perfectly good reason, to say no.

Thanks Ron Silliman--I didn't mean to "make light" of it either with my reference to Lowell.... I am definitely aware of speaking as one who was "socialized" by a vietnam-era anti-war attitude..... yet to what extent america helped create (fertile ground for) Hitler (humiliation of germany after ww1,"our own" fledgling imperial desires, the support then given germany as against communism, etc. etc.) would probably need to be addressed-- (and by one with the pull of spielberg!)cs On Fri, 31 Jul 1998 rsillima@IX.NETCOM.COM wrote:

I would never make light of the decision to participate in WW2. I don't think that stopping Hitler was optional.

But having seen the photos my own father took in Nagasaki one month after the bombing there (though never having spoken with him about this),

And thinking not just of Lowell, but of Creeley choosing to drive an ambulance in Burma, and of Whalen, Rexroth and others in the C.O. camp in Oregon, it certainly does seem that it was possible to step back and decide, for perfectly good reason, to say no. None of these people (not even Lowell) was an idiot.

Ron Silliman

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Poetics programs, etc.

31 July 1998

In the thread, toddbaron had written · 31 July 1998 —

It is possible to hold those degrees and not join up.

years ago, when susan howe was at temple, she accused a certain poet (i mean 'dismissed' a certain poet--who will remain nameless--) as an "academic".... i don't know if she still does this, and i certainly don't hold it against her (she wasn't as far "in" the academy then as now), but it did resonate strongly with some fellow students of mine.... anyway, just to answer.....cs

On Fri, 31 Jul 1998, Mark Prejsnar wrote:

On Thu, 30 Jul 1998, Kathy Lou Schultz wrote:

This may just be my beef, but I get a little annoyed with anyone who has an MFA, MA, PhD in poetry (of whatever version) claiming to be "outside the academy." I, for one, believe this is a dated notion that no longer applies. Experimental writers ARE in the "academy." Susan Howe at Buffalo, Nathaniel Mackey at Santa Cruz, Myung Mi Kim at San Francisco State, Bob Perelman at U Penn, and etc. and etc.

Er, who precisely makes this claim, who has a degree?? any of these folks (Howe, Mackey, etc...?) They do indeed teach, and i don't know as i have ever heard/read any of 'em claim to be "outside the academy"...

Of course, some of us are, in many important senses. (OK i am clerical support-staff at a university, but like most support-staff, i'm way outside the academics that go on there..This just for clarification..Since i have no graduate degrees i realize the above couldn't have been aimed at me, even if you knew me from adam, which i suspect you don't...)

Whence this little tirade??

mark @lanta

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Bullworth

23 August 1998

In the thread, michael corbin had written · 22 August 1998 —

| He said Beatty cut a lot of him, but he thought the movie deserved attention

Thanks for the report of the baraka reading, michael

I saw bullworth with kristin prevallet and alan gilbert a few momths back; we kept on saying it was "like voting" (or maybe even less ineffective)--- if beatty's movie actually makes money for them hollywood jerks maybe they'll actually take a chance on some young innovative person (that's the hope--- but then michael moore's becoming more like jay leno everyday) c

On Sat, 22 Aug 1998, michael corbin wrote:

MAXINE CHERNOFF wrote:

Bulworth needs to be viewed in the context of what people usually see at our theaters--

this was basically Baraka's point when he read here at Vertigo Books about two weeks ago.

He told of Beatty calling him up and asking him to participate, and he rejoining that he would do it if he got to write his lines. Beatty said he'd have to get back to him. He called Baraka back a couple of hours later with the carte blanche.

He said Beatty cut a lot of him, but he thought the movie deserved attention, compared to, say, Godzilla. or other U.S. aesthetic somnambulism.

He also told how he was supposed to fly to some hollywood soiree for the film's opening, but declined because he was working with his son Raz on a campaign for a city council seat in Newark.

He read a powerful elegiac poem about Paul Robeson, a few low-coo about Bill Clinton and Marion Barry, and ended the day by performing with David Murray. pumped up, syncopated spondee truth telling during dark days of bull marketss.

| mc

[↑ Index](#)**10-4 good buddy**

10 September 1998

The pun-drunk register at full tilt, answering Jordan Davis's CB-radio conceit — Charles Bernstein dissolving into citizens' band and Clint Burnham.

In the thread, Jordan Davis had written · 9 September 1998 —

| *Evuh notice the neahness of e-mail cultchah to the 70s cb scene?*

ah one of my CW (Mccoll?) students just submitted a poem called "breaker, breaker". I used to have a CB and a paper-route. I'm havin' trouble with the teminology but I'm into CB-- which could stand for Charles Bernstein--one of the first mag (actually ZINE be the word, c) eds. to pub. l'il ol' me-- under a punk juvenalia psedonym (PAT RIOT, urgh), the zine called COPS HATE POETRY (not SMOKEYS---oh did i mention I'm born the same day as Jerry Reed), or CLINT BURNHAM--who edited a mag called CB and who now lives in BC and who prefers THE FALL to ACDC (methinks) (oh jimmy schuyler jackson 5 ABC) both what if the smokeys already getcha, gotcha (like the 70s razor comercial?). he do the police in different... " he is the author of three books including COPS..." and the smokeys may then there get RACHEL LEVITSKY if she's not carful if she's gonna APE that song by Stevie Blind Boy Wonder because he gets put in prison for being unwitting FALL guy (totally wired?), but then Bill Louima plunged in and told me that my last book was written when I was a prisoner (of my own device? oh to fly like a beagle or bagel anything but HEGEL; even KANT, he's better on marriage) and I though that maybe that was true but I hope the only way out isn't to have to be baseball or hawaiiin (Cow (CB)....PUNCH, the OZmuns, (frankly mup) but this be glitch glitch glitch--- glitter gulch? GULPH MILLS.("in a world of labials") standard and gamble (and huff!) proctor and poors beaker beaker 70s club scene, cub seen (exi[s]t, pursued by a bear)----- kristroffer (a beaker baby with a hairy mind)

On Wed, 9 Sep 1998, Jordan Davis wrote:

Ah thank you, Chris --

Evuh notice the neahness of e-mail cultchah to the 70s cb scene? Evuhbody loggin long hours goin' down the highway, high on stimulants, starin' straight ahayud. Ah'm hopin' theyull cast Kris Kristoffuhson as Henr' in the movie, POETRIX --

don't let the smokeys getch' -- Signed, Greg Evigan

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Something to do when depressed (in whose hands?)

13 September 1998

He forwards his own letter to Newsweek, whose autumn culture preview had found room for Keats and Frost but no living book of poems.

Quixotic? Pointless? Stupid? Well, it was either this or balem them for GEARING UP THE COLD WAR rhetoric against russia again.... their "capitalism =democracy", etc..... c

----- Forwarded message -----

Dear Letters Editor:

I found your fall preview of movies, books, music, and art [ART FOR AUTUMN, Sept. 7, 1998] informative, eclectic, and enjoyable. It was a pleasant surprise to see the likes of P.J. Harvey and Joshua Redman mentioned alongside of more commercially popular artists such as Alanis Morissette and Stephen King. I cannot help but notice, however, that in an article devoted to promoting (or at least exposing consumers to) a wide range of new art/entertainment product, the conspicuous lack of any books of poetry on this list. This lack is made even more conspicuous, for me, by the fact that you actually quote both John Keats and Robert Frost in your introduction to the list--neither of whom, presumably, have any new "product" for sale. I am aware that conventional market wisdom says poetry--especially contemporary poetry-- does not sell, but with the recent erosion of NEA funding for poets and trends in publishing that make it more difficult for poets who are not already "stars" in other fields (Jewel, Jimmy Carter) to find major distribution for their books, I cannot help but wonder if one of the main reasons contemporary poetry doesn't sell--or is even read as much as Frost or Keats--is because forums like Newsweek do not consider it worthy of attention in the company of Tom Wolfe, Jackson Pollock, and Harold Bloom. To answer your question: "Should we quote more poetry?" Yes, but it would be even better if you REVIEWED it as well.

Chris Stroffolino 331 13th St. #4L Brooklyn, NY. 11215 [REDACTED]

(N.b. words in CAPS should be italicized!).

Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you.

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Rilke

23 September 1998

I wonder if those who don't like stepehn mitchells' (or are actively disturbed by them) translations of rilke prefer that guy whose name i forget who put the duino

elegies in that wcw 3 step toodle-loo shuffle mode allegedly more beloved of proper avant-gardistes It seems no one's mentioning Mitchell's DUINO elegies but the earlier poems and no i haven't read robert hunter's translation yet but i will say that mithcell (though I don't know german) made rilke work for me, made him seem less pretentious, less easy-affirmation more self-doubting, etc

than the BLY mode he's often associated with and the duncan mode (joris did some interesting translations too)

On Tue, 22 Sep 1998, Jessica Smith wrote:

I still think that Stephen Mitchell (whether man or machine) is a good translator. Both of the books I have also contain the Spanish (Neruda) and German (Rilke) untranslated. I know enough german and enough poetry to vie for Mitchell's translation of Rilke... it is poetic, it is a good, fair translation.

Far too much complaining and snobbery go on on this list. Be fair. If you don't know German well enough to do your own translations, don't judge another's translations. If you have "heard" something about a translator, read him yourself before making judgemental statements. If Rilke does not sound enough like, say, Pound, to you, in a translation, well, that is because Rilke is not Pound.

I think that no matter what translation you choose, you should try to obtain one with a side-by-side printing of German and English, so that when you are doing in-depth study of, say, diction, you can find out the connotations of the original words without depending on a middleman.

J. Smith

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St. Mark's Rain Taxi

24 September 1998

One of his periodic magazine-roundups, read cover to cover from the St. Mark's newsletter to Rain Taxi, down to the biography of Billy Tipton.

Hey, just picked up the new St. Mark's PP Newsletter (#171) and notice the editorial change (Coultas and Sikelianos) and its colorado/nature slant (john wright on community gardens and collom...) Notice also that poetry is being published in it again, and notice that it is now no longer strictly publishing "SWEETHEART REVIEWS" and is perhaps going to allow for the kind of controversy and dialogue it hasn't seen since the jordan davis regime. Well, we'll see---though I disagree with the angle of the particular negative review included in it I applaud the editors for their willingness to raise such issues....

Also of note in St Mark's newsletter: two reviews that mention the first line of Ashbery's THREE POEMS (one on Ashbery by someone I've never heard of--Daniel Kane) and another one on Heather Ramsdell by Mark Wallace. Kane also shows that Ashbery is responding to Padgett in one of his poems (an interesting

review that may challenge the dichotomy Debrot proposed last month), and reviews of Notley's new book as well as Charles North's book of essays--which I am hoping to get when my adjunct checks start rolling in like little toothpick boats

Also, an ad for chapbooks from some Talisman subsidiary called JENSEN/DANIELS. It almost sounds like it should have some slogan like "Books for the discriminating palate" beneath it, but it doesn't. (and a review of Edwin Torres' CD by Josie McKee)

RAIN TAXI--is also great, kicking off with some controversial letters to the editor (Marilyn Lynds pointing out that Ashbery's "The Dong With The Luminous Nose" is NOT an erection but based on a poem by a man named Lear.... And William Heyen defending his book against a reviewer Also includes a great interview by Brian Evenson with John Yau, a non-octopus shaped cartoon by my roommate (ah nepotism!)-- ANOTHER review of Ramsdell, and NOTLEY---- a great piece on Frank Stanford's unpublished epic (which CD Wright doesn't seem to like) "The Battlefield Where The Moon Says I Love You" By Brett Ralph, and other pieces on Stanford, Other highlights: A review on Bernstein's CLOSE LISTENING that does a fairly good job of summing up much of the book (though it ignores Perelman's contribution), and finally a review of a biography of the late great BILLY TIPTON!!!!!!!!!! Do people here know about Billy Tipton????????? I always wondered how she fooled her wives into believing she was a male, and here the mystery is solved (but still hard to believe)..... Well, a lot more I skipped of course. But it's nice to see an eclectic range of writers here, and sure beats reading nothing but the newspapers on the subway..... c

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Levistky--O'Connor

28 September 1998

A Brooklyn reading, and the eye-rolling that met Kyle Connor's frankly 'didactic' poems, start him on the avant-garde's oldest taboo.

Went to a reading yesterday in Brooklyn, hosted by Prageeta Sharma, of the two aforementioned writers---and found both of them worth listening to, but in lieu of a reading report (I'm one of those people who usually needs to "see it on the page" first), I wanted to bring up a point concerning DIDACTICISM in poetry that was raised by Kyle Connor (Oh, shit, scratch---the "O'Connor" from the title line).... He read these poems that he (defensively?) called "didactic" and people in the audience (well, some) were "rolling their eyes" in smug(?) disapproval as he read them, even with his disclaimer. Now, I wonder WHY is DIDACTICISM a TABOO in much "avant-garde?" I don't think it's just Kyle's particular poems that was being

reacted to, though perhaps the dry declamatory mode in which he read them did have something to do with the eye-rolling? But even if he had read them (performed them) differently, maybe there still would have been much of the same dismissal. It's a question I'm curious about, and maybe the emphasis on "poetry readings" (particularly on "coterie poetry readings" in which most of the audience is going to be considered the "converted" (or the "choir") one "preaches" to) over poetry on the page has something to do with the taboo. I mean that reading the work at home--in "solitude"--it may not come off as negatively didactic as it would in the "levelling" crowd. Nor do I want to say that Connor should simply go to the Nuyorican or other slam-venues where didacticism is more appreciated, because even there I find style eclipses substance. Well, curious what anybody might think of these and related issues..... more later, chris

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didacticism

1 October 1998

Answering the many hands raised in the didacticism thread, the adjunct exhaustion beginning to show.

Thanks all (Jonathon, Edward, Tom, Rachel, Jordan, and any I missed) for responding to the didacticism post..... (oh yeah, and henry). I don't think that "didacticism leaves no room for dialogue or ambiguity" (as Tom said) though. For isn't the very statement-- "poetry shouldn't be didactic" a didactic statement.... Sorry I am not responding more fully now---but I'm burnt out from too much adjuncting (perhaps explaining my interest in "didacticism" as of late, an attempt to adjust my aesthetics to my situation?).... Anyway, what to make of Jordan's hairsplitting "moral" vs. "instructional" distinction? Can "complaint" or "confession" be considered "didactic"? Other questions abound, and keep one from sleep..... Is sleep didactic? chris

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"our" laura (riding) jackson

13 October 1998

Reports come back from the Cornell conference on Laura (Riding) Jackson, where the estate's 'worship' unsettled the scholars; he declines to be filed with either camp.

In the thread, Lisa Samuels had written · 12 October 1998 —

| that split between Board Members and academics-who-sometimes-write-on-laura

Susan has A scoop on the l(r)j conference, as does Lisa, and as do "I" (for my part I have too many scoops to go into anykind of 'review' here---I had a lot of great conversations, met alot of interesting people, many of whom were not necessarily of either of the camps of which l and s speak, and was more intellectually

stimulated than i had been in some time...) I may be taken as an apologist for the "other" (board member) camp (though i enjoyed lisa, carla b's, etc. papers, and the way barry watten pronounced "the great much") but if i may claim interpretive priority concerning my own "stance" i do not think such is the case, even if i argue that i don't think i'm any more (to quote lisa s.) "skeptical about any author's claims of interpretive priority over their work as well as to claims of non-comparability" than i am of writers who claim to absolutely deny such claims, and be professed champions of the aleatory. As for non-comparability, I guess I think of Bloom's statement that instead of Freudian readings of Shakespeare there should be Shakespearean readings of Freud, and if I were to apply that comment to the question of L(R)J, I would perhaps "occupy" a "position" (or a reading of riding's "intent"--which is not absolutely singular, though it seems to be at times) that would allow for comparability, or at least comparisons with other writers, but instead of say Watten's Zizekian reading of Riding one would have a Ridingian (oh no, I'm "ding donging") reading of Zizek, for instance. I think Riding was far more critical of those who SUBORDINATED poetry to theoretical grids than those who would compare her thought and writing to others. She herself compares her thought to others, if all comparison is also contrast, whether explicit or not. -----
cs

On Mon, 12 Oct 1998, Lisa Samuels wrote:

susan has the scoop on the recent l(r)j conference. that split between Board Members and academics-who-sometimes-write-on-laura reminded me of how the charismatic christians i used to know felt when they were in a group of savvy non-believers. pained and baffled. it would have been more touching if The Board wasn't in charge of estate materials. like susan, this was my first single-author conference experience, though i've heard of them in the past. but since the Board was feeling all the overboard commitment to laura, it made everyone else, i think, able to be pretty skeptical about any author's claims to interpretive priority over their work as well as to claims of non-comparability. and as susan said, amidst this strangeness there were good papers: steven meyer on stein-riding correspondence, susan's own challenge to charles b's anti-introduction/response to =rational meaning=, barry watten's readings of riding's negativities, carla billiteri's pointing out riding's "controlled dialogue" in =progress of stories=. and more. it was the kind of gathering that made me think of why people say the things they say about authors and their works, the metaphors they find to explain them, the matters they find key. that made it interesting.

lisa samuels

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"My" Laura Riding*15 October 1998*

The abandoned dissertation returns: at Albany he could never assemble a committee willing to sit for Riding, and the loss still smarts.

In the thread, Lisa Samuels had written · 14 October 1998 —

my favorites of her poems come and go rather than being concentrated in a particular book

It's good to see Lisa mention "Progress" and "Anarchism" AS WELL AS the poetry of the period (in contrast to, say, vandler). ... when I was considering writing my dissertation on Riding at SUNY-Albany and having a hard time putting together a committee that would be interested enough in a) a single author study of ANYBODY and b) any who shared my enthusiasm for both aspects of Riding and (Riding) Jackson's work-- I could find a shared interest with Don Byrd in *Contemporaries and Snobs* (1928) and *The Telling* (1972), but he didn't care much for the poetry. Pierre Joris kept on confusing Riding with Mina Loy when I brought her up to him (and put one of her most uncharacteristic poems in the *MILLENIUM* anthology). I thought the Dickensonian there (Helen Elam) might have come to appreciate what I see as clear resonances (both thematically and rhythmically) in some of the early poems, but no go. Anyway, it does seem hard to find people who appreciate the range of her work--even antagonistically. I do largely agree with Lisa though--that (at this point in my writing and/or life) I am more interested in the earlier work than *Rational Meaning* (though many of the late essays, and *The Telling*, are definitely worth reading---and I do think that an understanding of the poetry may benefit by reading them. There's a very interesting relationship between the "early" and "later" works, not really adequately reducible to a "post-renunciation" binary)--yet I would include *FOUR UNPOSTED LETTERS TO CATHERINE* (certainly as important as Rilke's letters to a young poet--though my students found it too preachy; i guess i like being preached to--sometimes, at least; depending on how it's done) and *CONTEMPORARIES AND SNOBS* (and early essays like "A Prophecy or a Plea" or the chapter on Shakespeare and Cummings in "A survey"-- by the way, maybe those who have problems with Riding might appreciate the early work in "FIRST AWAKENINGS" more. I think this book is certainly as good as "THE LOST LUNAR BAEDEKER" by LOY). So I wonder if Lisa's "early" vs. "late", really works-- for she, and Charles B., and others who claim to prefer the "early" Riding generally do not include this book as one of the favs. Perhaps because by the terms of C AND S, these writers (and probably myself too) would be considered "snobs"--- I should probably plug *LIVES OF WIVES* too (which "our" Douglass Messerli published) and definitely *THE WORD "WOMAN"*-- all of these written before 1938

I guess I'll say one thing more here about the conference-- The "board" people (largely british) objected (among other things) to the theorization that was seen in the american academics' papers --yet themselves could not effectively articulate a response to these papers. So, there was a very interesting moment when "OUR" charles bernstein changed the terms, and pointed out that the "theorists" (watten, samuels, schultz, but not me) were really--or should I say also--poets, and that the "binary" that was perceived by many of the loudest voices was not really between unquestioned acceptance of (Riding) Jackson's works on one hand and a more critically antagonistic (yet academically inflected) approach on the other, but, rather, between those who would claim the later writings were "even better" than the poetry and those who were POETS--- but I would still argue that this reframing of the argument on Bernstein's part does seem to imply that one must be THEORETICALLY inflected, and privileges the "legitimizing" discourse of Zizek ETC.,by--in effect--claiming that one must be theoretically inflected in order to be a POET.

There are other ways to read this, I know. For instance, it did seem that the "antagonistic" writers did have more of a personality and that perhaps the brits took (Riding) Jackson in too dour a sense, and did not emphasize the moments in her writing--apparent even in her later writing I think--in which she isn't really asking for complete unwavering subordination to HER views. On this level, I would be very much aligned with the less "reverential" american theorist-poet-critics. But I still find many unanswered questions about the motivations of the "alternative" viewpoint that seemed to try to co-opt L(R)J into the terms of american academic discourse under the guise of defending her poetry.... It was noteworthy that nobody (myself included)--even those who claimed to be very moved by her poetry--could yet offer readings of the poems in their talks. Perhaps the framing, the myth, the FIGURE of L(R)J is still too much in the way ("Life size is too large"). I would like to see more of this at some point, and still believe that one can use Riding's, er, (Riding) Jackson's own writings AS a theoretical grid by which to read her poems (or poems by others), and I think her "crankiness" (in which I find much generous, good-natured humour by the way) is but one of many "roles" she played, in order to foster a possibility that one may have more intelligent, critical even, discussion of poetry and all forms of writing (whether literary or not) without having to constantly appeal to "legitimizing" theoretical writing. In this sense, one can see the "later" Riding Jackson IN the "earlier" poems by Riding; the poetry can also be used as a "theory" by which to read the "non-poetic" writing....

I don't know if any of this is going to be helpful to those who have not yet found pleasure or relevance or whatever in her, and I need to unpack many of these

ideas further (since Riding IS daunting), but I had to at least say something more here in these email suburbs..... chris

On Wed, 14 Oct 1998, Lisa Samuels wrote:

dear jonathan, mark, et al,

for me, the two best books of riding's are =progress of stories= (1935) -- her principal, really her sole, collection of short stories -- and =anarchism is not enough= (1928), which i'm happy to say will be reprinted by the univ. of california press by this coming summer (so my editor tells me -- i wrote notes & intro for it). the latter is quite wonderful, in the vein of =guide to kulchur=, =content's dream=, and the like. both are wholly "prose."

my favorites of her poems come and go rather than being concentrated in a particular book (leaving aside the =collected=). some work in =love as love, death as death= (1928), and the outrageous blakean =the life of the dead= (1933), some work in =though gently= (1930, a kind of severe =spring and all= mix of prose and poetry), and in =poet: a lying word=, are meaningful to me as efforts toward poetry as intellectual beauty (stressing the first word) and/or a literature of embodied knowledge. hammering at words to break them open, structuring them to build something, concreting abstractions.

but i'll stand by the first-mentioned two prose works, any day. not to say they have no competition or context (eg calvino, wittgenstein, bataille). but that's not really to the point, since i presume we want to multiply rather than divide the works we find worth reading about ways of seeing.

as for riding's later works, i do find touching some of the heartfelt idealism of =the telling= (even as i find its totalizing unitarianism a bit scary and certainly impossible); but i think =rational meaning= was written by riding's spectre. except when i pretend that it's poetry, too.

as for her intrepretive screws -- put to interpreters, that is -- i figure 1/ she had some reasons to feel pissed off, but mostly 2/ she was an intransigent, cranky absolutist who could be very not nice. and isn't it a pretty common trait of 'genius' -- a category i find not terrifically useful, except perhaps in describing someone who has an extremely limited one thing they master and obsess about -- to lack common sense perspective?

and finally, she didn't denounce so much as renounce poetry, as people have pointed out in various articles. but she did not repudiate her old work. she wanted the powers of poetry to be absorbed into what she came to see as the genre-less universal language of english prose.

i'll shut up now -- i just felt moved to respond to some of these interesting remarks & queries about her work.

lisa s.

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Lehman & the last avant garde

19 October 1998

In the thread, Bob Grumman had written · 18 October 1998 —

| *Why write about four mediocrities who were tepidly "experimental"*

I suggested to someone who was reviewing the book that he should review it alongside of Charles North's new book of essays/reviews from Hanging Loose press, as complementary (and also as a book which will not get as much "play" because of the press, and the lack of a "jarring" media-goading title)--because Lehman's idea of the NYS is as reductive as the anti-Ashberians'--on the other hand-- idea of it is (it's great to see him include Connie Deanovich and Tom Breidenbach, for instance, in his list of younger "NY School" types---but to exclude Notley and Mayer?). Anyway, it seems this person is taking my advice, and I will let you know if and when his review is published.... chris s.

On Sun, 18 Oct 1998, schuchat wrote:

I thought Lehman's book was pretty good for what it was meant to be, and should help to introduce those writers to a broader audience. I know some people don't believe that is a noble goal, and I agree that its alright if someone doesn't want to read poetry. But I also like to share or propagandize on behalf of art & literature & music (and food and travel and other pleasures of peace) that I have enjoyed, so I think its worth trying. It's a great book for a high school senior or college freshman interested in poetry.

Does anyone object to Lehman's reading of the the poems or poets? I suppose someone might object to his downplaying of O'Hara's sexuality (in an attempt to rebalance after the Gooch biography), but of course O'Hara's poetry has delighted plenty of non-homosexuals.

Lehman emphasizes the pleasure that the NY school poets found and took in writing and reading and in art and in life, and, being old fashioned, I think those are good things.

Is it possible that someone on the list will disagree with me?

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TUSK! (or aerial view of a huckster graveyard)

2 November 1998

One of the year's few poems posted outright.

Where the gash rakes its sleeve in renegade silt and
 slakes its main squeeze for a spin too rash to be a drag
 construction hinges and hammers
 an interest that dipped the focus thing
 into the fringe of the ground
 vacuuming up the snarls with the snub

to be doubled in punishment and flesh
 from the relaxation that escaped through the chimney
 like the opposite of wit in a city small as a century
 in the meanness of sleep when there were too many things identical
 until the firewomen got the sentries to barbecue the icicles
 and clouds gathered to watch the beautiful fist
 of summer strip the graveyards from the elephants
 and pass it off as a typo!

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COMMUNITY CHEST

11 November 1998

Ron Silliman's praise of certain poets for knowing 'the meaning of community' provokes the year's crankiest post.

Hey, wow--Ron Silliman writes that CB, LAB and AL, "know the meaning of community". Amazing, really. I guess they are learn-ed poets unlike the rest of us dumb-fucks. I assume of course they also know the spelling of heirarchy and clique.

But seriously--- is Mr. Silliman conceding that "community" has only ONE meaning? And what kind of meaning is that? Now, one doesn't have to think of all the crimes committed in the name of "community" to applaud such flamboyant Sillimany rhetoric that would make Bill Gates (and the speaker formerly known as Newt) proud. yours in community, chris

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COMMUNITY CHEST

11 November 1998

The morning after: David Kellogg, writing from what he called 'Bumfuck NC,' had called the outburst affectionately to account.

*In the thread, David Kellogg had written · 11 November 1998 —
 | cranky posts like yours and others keep my life going*

I guess the humour gets lost. Did it really come off cranky? (David kellogg) Was it really an "outburst"? Did it really bespeak resentment? (Mark Presjnar and David Bromige?)

I must come off like an ungrateful ogre (by the way david k. the proper spelling is "click") or killjoy or something....

I like people, and am glad to see them digging each other (thus saith the politician) and really have nothing against the community that gathered in honor of HW....

I guess I was trying to use Ron's comment--which I found (unintentionally?) funny--as a jumping off point to discuss what people mean by community...

So it backfires. So it doesn't goad Silliman into responding So "Community" remains a vaguely defined word....

chris

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Critic-Penitents, Poet-Penitents

28 November 1998

The other list he keeps — Shakespeareans, and courteous where this one is not — becomes his measure, in a long and ambivalent plea for limits from a habitual over-poster.

In the thread, Emily Lloyd had written · 28 November 1998 —

| *Critcs have so much "power" in poetry because poetry has so little power*

I (sometimes) like arguing with critics and/or scholars. But of course I realize when I do so, I realize that they do something I either can't, won't, or simply didn't, do. There is a skill to a certain kind of general, binary, sweeping, thinking that critics often employ. It is something I respect, even if it seems sometimes I don't. I think it can be useful for poets. I, for one, know that some of my poems are written out of arguing with critics (and eventually arguing against arguing). I'd rather do it IN the poem often than in what some would say is more "legitimizing" prose, but then I'm aware that some would say that such poetry is really more "like" criticism (the enemy) than it is like poetry. Sometimes this dilemma can be very fascinating. Sometimes I can even get myself to be "reductive" enough to write things that "pass" for essays in an academic, or journalistic, sense (it's an "or" not an "end"). (and sometimes I'm even "lyric" enough to pass for what some journals call "poetry").

Anyway, this isn't really about me. So, let me just say that--at the risk of sounding fuddy-duddy in valuing communication--that I have been on a Shakespeare email list for about as long as I've been on this... And there's a certain (at the risk of sounding sexist, which is NOT my intention) "gentlemanliness" to the nature of the argument on that list which is lacking here. I don't want to hold the discussion there as a STANDARD that we, at poetics, should strive for (for there's a lot of silly dross there too). But at least there's an idea of respect for the varying speakers there admit the disagreements about opinions. Bitterness is often justified, entertaining, and a powerful tool for communication, but the email forum seems to encourage no time for reflection--especially when the list is so free ranging. Awhile back Kevin or Dodie said something about how those who complain about hierarchies may really want them. I sometimes we think we need to "free" poetics FROM its current "freedom"

and set some limits to the discussions.... well, this seems incredibly BLAND of me (to myself at least) to say this. Maybe we could PAY somebody to be a moderator (like the talk about paying NFL officials), but then it would make the most interesting talk backchannel pleas to the moderator (but then a lot of the most interesting talk MAY VERY WELL BE backchannel anyway), like lobbyists doing the real work while the floor of congress is a figurehead. ---chr

On Sat, 28 Nov 1998, Emily Lloyd wrote:

*Critcs have so much "power" in poetry because poetry has so little power (despite gains) in the U.S. as a commodity. People will see heavily hyped films whether or not film scholars/critics "approve" them--and even whether or not pop critics like Siskel & Ebert do. I don't know of any pop poetry critics--by which I mean critics whose opinion the average person (let's say even average college or post-college graduate) doesn't have to go looking for, doesn't have to be *already interested* in poetry to read, hear, or be bombarded with. The closest to pop would not be Vendler, but, now, Hass--the Sunday *Washington Post* having a larger, I'm pretty sure, readership than the New Yorker. And, for the most part, poetry is to the novel as "20th Century Music" is to the overwhelming majority of the music on FM radio. I'm not even talking Babbitt or Boulez poetry "equivalents." I'm talking Robert Pinsky. Go door to door and ask folks who the current poet laureate is--who ANY of the laureates (besides, of course, Frost) were. Poetry only sells well if it's by a singer, actor, pope or ex-president. Or, whoops, Maya Angelou. Most people will still define poetry as writing that rhymes. These are *not* stupid people. Even among "cultured" people--or people who wish to appear cultured--knowing who's being put forth as tops in poetry in the mainstream (don't even *think* about any other stream) is no priority.*

*Poetry crit is read by poets, critics, and college-students-who-are-forced. This, I think, is why it *seems* less to separate the wheat from the chaff than to separate poets from poets. The ultimate use (far, perhaps, from the ultimate interest or concern of the critic) to which crit is put is to determine what's taught in schools. Not what's read by any other or the larger population. Perhaps not what's actually read by those students to whom it's assigned.*

*Why are we angry when what we consider bad poetry (I'll cite Pinsky for the ease of it) is put forth as the best (or even as good)? I can't imagine it can be too much about money. I'd guess it's because we have some kind of love and respect for poetry (that ol' abstraction, "poetry")--such that the "bad" stuff feels like an *abuse* of poetry. Bad poetry has occasionally made me, at least, stomp around the house, bang my head against a wall, rant, and practically pluck my eyes out because they've offended me. I've responded (and will again, probably) more indignantly to bad poetry than I have to all manner of shootings, a couple bombings, etc. This is either because I'm a poet, a critic, or a crazy person, all things I've actively been at certain times.*

*I take it for granted that critics, too, have a love of & respect for poetry--and *of course* they need not be poets. Many excellent poets are lousy teachers and critics; many excellent critics might be lousy poets. Frankly, the closer I've come to reading as much or knowing as much about poetry as the most qualified (ok, credentialed) critics, the less likely I've been to write it. I quit writing poetry a year and a half ago--out of love & respect for poetry. I still consider myself highly qualified to critique it*

(and no, I'm not, nor have I ever tried to be, a published critic.) Perhaps more highly than when I wrote it. Perhaps more highly for having written it. What's clear is that I wasn't able at the time, and may never be, to write the poetry that I, as a critic, would find worthy of "poetry." For the record, I quit when in the peak of high favor with my MFA profs & other poets whose work I respected. That's a big "so what." I did not consider them rigorous enough critics. One prof, in workshop, asked the poets to forget her critiques and concentrate on mine instead. So it's not a case of "I'm my own toughest critic." I was everyone's <grin>.

Finally (and I apologize for having been rambling & disjunct), I would never assume a necessary relation between a love of poetry and a love of poets (and keepin' 'em all happy). I'd far prefer a love of poetry. Hell, I'd prefer blind submission processes to even the lowliest of litmags (which reminds me: eds. of litmags should be at least as infuriating to this crowd as critics, no?) As yet, I think we should still be grateful to Perloff (and Perelman, Lazer, etc.) The Canon is still a far more "dangerous" opponent than their (or our individual) canons. All of this kind of reminds me of my 2 yrs. or so of "hardcore" lesbian feminism. More energy & time was spent on such questions as "Should lesbians be allowed to wear lipstick?" and "Should we even SPEAK to bisexual women?" than, well, I dunno, "How can we stop courts from automatically denying lesbian mothers custody?"

Focue. Perspective. Practicality. em

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a modest proposal

8 December 1998

Chris McCreary and Juliana Spahr had floated pruning the list to announcements only; he objects, with a glance at the unemployment now ten days off.

In the thread, Chris McCreary had written · 8 December 1998 —

the list could possibly become a more restricted forum limited to the posting of announcements

Hey, re Chris McCreary's point (and Juliana's?) that we should restrict the list to ANNOUNCEMENTS, I say "bland, bland, bland!" I much rather agree with Joel Kuzsai of taking things such as the poem RBDP posted and addressing things it raises... That takes more time, which I will have when I'm unemployed in 10 days and counting.... (assuming they don't take my account away), but just to say.....
chris

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ADOPT A "POET"

11 December 1998

The San Francisco job interview that would, soon enough, carry him out of New York — announced here as a plea for a couch and a floor.

Dear Poetics list-- I will be in San Francisco (for a job interview) from Dec. 25th until early on the 30th, and am looking for a place to crash, a couch, a floor even. I

will be clean. I will do your laundry or make icecubes or mow your lawn or whatever errands you may wish to devise for me (I will sing for my supper if you have a piano, and even be a brilliant conversationalist if you're into that sort of thing). I know it's unreasonable to expect that any single person (or couple or trio) would be able to put me up the whole time I'm there--but if I can get enough people to say that I wouldn't be too much of a pest on any single night, I could alternate--- I am especially worried about where I would stay xmas night, being that there's no room at the inn, etc. If anybody has any room--or any leads on anybody who might--for any of these 5 nights, I would deeply appreciate it. I will owe you one-- I will let you stay at my place if you happen to be in NYC, and if I get the job I'm interviewing for, I will even offer you money somewhere down the line.....

(i hope such requests are not inappropriate for the list-- i--for one--would like to see more of these!)... sincerely, Chris Stroffolino

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please don't bother to backchannel either

18 December 1998

The week of the Iraq bombing, with the list at its own moderators' throats.

In the thread, Emily Lloyd had written · 18 December 1998 —

How dare you persecute them for trying to handle as best and as humanly as possible a job like theirs?

Dear Joe Amato--- sometimes aphorisms and koans are valuable little "bombs" (one would think those who value the "fragment" and think Bruce Andrews is just the bees' knees would appreciate such little "bombs" as you call them)

I mean this particular post was posted by somebody who--I think-- had largely been silent before. And despite whatever good intentions might be attributed to JK, it does seem there was an attempt to nip in the bud somebody who was trying to actually bring the discussion of the Iraq crisis to a more meta-level than Bouchard's righteousness (I'm not taking sides on this issue right now-- i.e. is there a difference between hating and hating the haters?) Anyway, I'll shut up now....coz I gotta drink some water and there's no cooler but a sink..... c

On Fri, 18 Dec 1998, Joe Amato/Kass Fleisher wrote:

as i've said, i just read through the poetix posts this morning... seems to me joel was responding specifically to

MAN.....don't you see that THIS IS THE FUCKING PROBLEM?

(by way of example)

i don't see joel as the fucking problem... which is not to say i see the above as the fucking problem, either, or even that i see "mindless chitchat" as the fucking problem... i think one fucking problem is when discussion heats up to the point of sending little electronic bombs out across the ether... and i thought joel was trying to say (whatever you make of what he said or how he said it) that perhaps it would behoove us not to be too impetuous, that what we don't need, esp. at this moment in historical time, is to amp up our email to the status of weaponry, defensive or offensive, in order to generate more adversarial exchange... albeit it's true that the events of the past few days are bound to produce just that...

*come to think of it, maybe many of us *do* need to spend more time at the water cooler... hey, i'm on my way, gonna go soak my head, b/c i can't believe what's happening on the house floor, and in the skies over iraq, and---*

best,

joe

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THANK YOU

18 December 1998

The year ends in gratitude and in transit — the San Francisco hosts named one by one, Silliman's 'community' borrowed back, this time without the sneer.

"I wasn't born there, perhaps I'll die there...."

I would like to express gratitude to several people who have very generously come through with offers to allow me to stay with them--or at least "hang" with them while I am in San Francisco. Specifically Katie Degentesh, Rachel Daley, Pete Neufeld, David Buuck, Chris Nagler and Amar Ravva, Garrett Caples---

In the words of Ron Silliman, you "know the meaning of community" (as does Joel Lewis who has given me a lead on a dentist)

again, thanks, I'm looking forward to meeting you (plural)----- Chris Stroffolino

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1999

Nineteen ninety-nine finds Stroffolino at his most metropolitan and most precarious at once: a New York season of arguments about the sexes and the classes, elegies and love-letters to other people's collaborations, all conducted from a flat where the freezer defrosts slowly and the papers flood. He signs it from the middle of the party, book in hand — mostly his own.

Armand Schwerner (1927-1999)

4 February 1999

The list's elegy for Armand Schwerner, author of The Tablets; characteristically he answers not Charles Bernstein's death-notice but Maria Damon's private grief.

In the thread, Maria Damon (Maria Damon) had written · 4 February 1999 —

armand the magnificently difficult, the sweetly cranky old yidl

I had the honor of opening for Armand when he read in Phila. in 87 or 88, and I remember asking him what he thought of Ashbery (I was Ashbery-obsessed at the time), and he said that he had doubts about JA because it was like the layers of an onion, "there was nothing underneath the layers," to which I replied "well, at least it can make you cry" and he said it didn't for him, and then someone ushered him away... and this poem that Charles has posted makes it clear, I guess, that he, too, was interested in the "nothing"

(i haven't read him in awhile, but used to think those Naranjara poems were his best.....)

"from nothing"----- cs

On Thu, 4 Feb 1999, Charles Bernstein wrote:

Poet, Scholar-Translator, Teacher Armand Schwerner died at 9:06 this morning.

go into all the places you're frightened of and forget why you came, like the dead [...]

from nothing, from nothing, the stone beginning, tell me my name, when I write and
do accounts I am that other man and keep from trembling, o at the heart's root is not
cauldron but come in come in come in come in says my pain run from the sun,
wander around in me and profit, the stars tell North but little else. From nothing from
nothing find me my name, say in some clear way if the end is sadness, how the days of
fishing are numbered, say whether may name begins in rage or music rooting about
for its pleasure o draw me from my Alabaster Self my millstone quartz marl me take
me from my smooth whiteness my absence OOualbpaga Dammara Damalo
Karhenmou Amagaa ArigaaaAdambpaga as a night lightens in dream rivers. +++++
+++++ [...] if the end
is sadness, how the days of fishing are numbered, say saying I said begins in rage or
music rooting about for pleasure, it must be possible says my pain, as night lightens in
dream rivers. hunger the hunger. say
is

(from *The Tablets*)

*The funeral will be held this Sunday at Bayport Funeral Home, 683 Montauk Highway
[REDACTED] 11:30-1 Visiting 1pm Service for further information contact Charles
Morrow at cmorrow@cmorrow.com*

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BATTLE OF THE SEXES*8 February 1999*

A rare opening salvo from a man who almost never starts a thread; the 'battle of the sexes' he names here will run for weeks and draw Jessica Pompeii's poem in its wake.

Dear listees: You know, there's certain "commonplaces" circulating that the women writers of "my generation" are so much better than the male writers (the previous moderator Joel Kuzsai, I think was the last one to say this, and it went unchallenged....so far)--- I think I used to think this too a couple of years ago, but the best books I've read in the last year by young writers all seem to be male for me (NOTICE very carefully my wording-- I am not saying that the MALES are the superior sex or anything, I'm just saying that it is as ridiculous to say the women are the best writers of my generation as it is to say that say Ron Silliman or Bruce Andrews is better than Carla Harryman or Rae Armantrout...)

specifically, two "first books" Anselm Berrigan's INTEGRITY & DRAMATIC LIFE Joshua Beckman's THINGS ARE HAPPENING and two "second books" Peter Gizzi's ARTIFICIAL HEART and Jeffrey McDaniel's THE FORGIVENESS PARADE...

well, if anybody wants to tell me why the works by the more currently "fashionable" gender are better, feel free (unless the moderator doesn't see this kind of argument as worthy of the new list.....)

sincerely, chris stroffolino

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ASIDE / FROM THE BATTLE*22 February 1999*

Jessica Pompeii, a Los Angeles poet who recurs across his 1999, had answered the sex-war abstractions with a poem; here he answers the poem.

In the thread, Jessica Pompeii had written · 9 February 1999 —

| this good poet told me abstractions were unbelievable in mystery stories

I Like Jessica Pompeii's poem, and consider it less "an aside" than a more intimate enactment (if not mere representation) that I take at least as serious as the more abstract formulations that have been offered about men and women "in general"--

"he said chess isn't art it's tantamount to war

i don't see any guns or maybe I'm missing in action"

I love this in part because I feel rebuked ("a palpable hit") more than I do by reading this particular C.D. Wright poem (early, it's called "Drift" I think) that prompted this more (too?) abstract response that's only a beginning but what the heck?

(** N.B---this is not meant as a comment on the quality of Wright's work in general, and not even meant to be a definitive assessment of the aesthetic and/or ethical quality of the poem, it's too early for that--- I am only offering some thoughts that I think relate to "the battle of the sexes" thread as well as to the book a friend loaned me i cannot say i hate....)

A history says it's easier for a woman to speak now and be heard than it has ever been before, and if you lament the present, you're lamenting the historical present, and happen to be a male, therefore, then, you must be hostile to women... But I wonder if women really are allowed (by themselves, at least as much as by men) to speak now and be heard than before?

and, sure, I cannot see progress without decay but this doesn't mean I'm lamenting for what's been lost since "the good old days of female subjectification" as much as wondering whether women becoming more like men have been in civilization really changes anything for the better for women. I am not overly fond of the way men have "traditionally" been "in civilized society," and can't imagine a woman, as such, could be worse, but can they be better? can they move beyond the mere aesthetic, style over substance, with books (that have now become chapbooks) and Ph.Ds (that are now like B.As) that have characterized the male status mongering. (I do not intend to stoop so low as to say "the increased entry of women into the work force is to blame for the alleged "increased difficulties" and malaise males find." I will spit at that sentiment wherever I find it--for life has always been difficult, for everyone... I cannot identify with my "male peers" any more than with females. I don't know, in what form, I will find those (or one) like-minded enough to help me in my search for a world in which women and men can be different than they have traditionally been (Laura Riding, for instance, is dead), beyond mere "equality" (as if women have realized, if you can't beat men join them) or "inversion" (in which men become househusbands). Such roles may be adapted as part of the search, but are insufficient in themselves... If there is a present I lament, it is not merely a historical one. I wonder if the feeling of being "shut up" more in what's called "poetry" today more than in what's called "prose" is informing this response. Unless you're willing to call this poetry (as much as I am willing to call Wrights' and Pompeiis' poetry), I am skeptical of the veneration accorded "poetry" (and "poetics" if this be not it) right now. Ah, this too may be seen as status-mongering! But it's not mere inversion. If "journal entries" are to "poetry" what "women" (traditionally) are to "men," then the aesthetic implications of feminism can cross genders and free women and men-- but the dehierchization is still at a very early phase...

So maybe we should talk about how ridiculous the idea of "music in poetry" is.....

chris

On Tue, 9 Feb 1999, Jessica Pompeii wrote:

*he hated the book I loaned him and if I loaned it to him he better know that there must
be an ant of an interest to fixate on after so much work reading the hole damn text
this good poet told me abstractions were unbelievable in mystery stories
(lucky for the rain music) "Thick As A Brick" my record player even skipping
I said my brain needs exercise and a note pad I can't see that many moves ahead F- he
said, chess isn't art it is tantamount to war
I don't see any guns or maybe I'm missing in action
in workshop he asks circling the new grunts are you familiar with the canon of
contemporary poetry?
F- wants to go see the Van Gogh exhibit and I brought up all those peers and sup-
portive donors of his and she said his brother collected him exclamation chortle
what a pickle off/ in formal d' hide suspension I think this classic scorpion curls
my ear has survived a tongue lashing cliché and I suck the wounds temporarily but
with rook determination and calculatored fading battery
it doesn't make for reality style wall hangings but what secret numbers and candy
coated pop corn surprises come with excavation bitch*

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BARDFEST 99 Berks County ~ Reading, Pennsylvania

1 March 1999

*Reading, Pennsylvania is his home town, and Wallace Stevens's; its decline is one of his
standing aches.*

In the thread, Heather H Thomas had written · 1 March 1999 —

| *BARDFEST 99(C) Reading, Pennsylvania & Berks County*

Nice to see my sad home town does the art deco theatre downtown still say "Help
save me" on it?) getting some play here in poeticsland....

On Mon, 1 Mar 1999, Heather H Thomas wrote:

BARDFEST 99(C)

Reading, Pennsylvania & Berks County

<http://www.geocities.com/~poetspride/bardfest99.html>

Celebrating April... National Poetry Month

30 Days / 30 Venues

for details contact stevenallenmay: Zen3ten@aol.com

Events Calendar

April 1....Fools Day : BARDFEST 99(C) Sampler with stevenallenmay & Craig Czury and others at

April 2....Benefit for the community of Lyons.

April 3....Blue Marsh Lake

April 4....Skyline Drive Fire Tower, Easter Sunrise Service with Poetry

**April 5....Reading High School, with visiting poet Luis Otero-Garabis*

April 6...RAAC "Bruce Stanley Memorial Reading, with Reading H.S. students

April 7....Mulhensburg Public Library, hosted by Charles Scanzello

**April 8....Alexander's Deli, New Jerusalem, Celtic Night hosted by Jen Gittings Dalton, featuring Beth Phillips Brown*

April 9...Upstairs Gallery, Douglasville, hosted by stevenallenmay

**April 9...Julia Lopez featured poet at the Puerto Rican Latin Association.*

April 10...Wyomissing Inst. of Fine Arts, afternoon poetry workshop with Craig Czury and evening reading featuring his students (\$25)

April 11...Tattered Pages Book Store, Shillington

**April 12...Hamburg High School, with visiting poet Harry Eshelman.*

April 13...Hamburg Public Library

April 14...Penn State Berks Campus, poetry writing workshop with Michael Riley's creative writing class and reading at the Freyberger Art Gallery, featuring his students

April 15...Kutztown Public Library

**April 16....Reading Museum, featuring Harry Humes*

April 17...Sahara Restaurant...Poetry Jazz

April 18....Unitarian Church of Reading 6-8PM

**April 19...Schuylkill Valley High School, visiting poet Karen Blomain*

April 20...Schuylkill Valley Public Library, featuring Schuylkill Valley HS poets

April 21....Borders Book store

April 22...Fire & Ice Cafe, Fleetwood hosted by Gina Stitzer

April 23...Albright College

**April...24....Club Social Ipanema, Celebration of Spanish Poet Federico Garcia Lorca, presented by poets Emiliano MartIn and Peter Krok of the Manyunk Art Center*

April 25...St. John's Church Soul Cafe, Kutztown, hosted by Harry Serio

**April 26...Boyertown High School, with visiting poet Jayne Relaford Brown*

April 27...Boyertown Public Library, featuring Kerry Lance Graul

April 28...Birdsboro Library hosted by stevenallenmay

April 29...YMCA of Reading

April 30...'Day of Poetry' Muhlenberg HS 9AM - 2:30PM (Martha Richardson)

** Programs funded by the Berks Arts Council*

This page created by Alex K. of G.jC Enterprises, December 1998

Contact the Webmaster at My 7 Heads@aol.com.

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LYNN KELLY's Q & SUSAN HOWE'S A

29 March 1999

Betsy Andrews had posted an exchange between Lynn Kelly and Susan Howe; he reopens it, with Rebecca Woolf's question about difficulty and audience still behind it.

Looking over the exchange that Betsy Andrews post between the two aforementioned writers, I come to a different conclusion about this exchange. You may notice that LK's question (her formulation of an 'objection' that could be raised to Susan Howe's poetry) is not really being addressed by SH, at least that's what I noticed.... For LK asks about EDUCATION, asks whether a poetry like Howe's may only reach a "very narrow, highly educated," audience, and whether, in America today, one may have "tremendous intellectual confidence" WITHOUT being "highly educated." I thus see HOWE as misreading LK's question, because S.Howe seems to "elide" the distinction between "highly educated" and "intellectualism".... I think it's possible that one may be "intellectual" without being "highly educated." It's even quite plausible that in many cases being "highly educated" can GET IN THE WAY, or detract, from being intellectual. And even though I, with Howe, question the "frightening anti-intellectualism" of our society, and even her Stevensian notion that poets may (if not must) address themselves to an elite, I think the distinction (implicit at least) in LK's question between an "highly educated" elite and an "intellectual" one (i use the term intellectual more loosely, as a sense of rigorous thought-engagement even if it lacks the proper pedigrees and references) needs at least to be entertained if not stressed.... For, I know many intellects who have succumbed to a feeling of inadequacy in not being "highly educated" enough, many intellectuals who lack "intellectual confidence" (just as conversely, there are some who "possess" such "intellectual confidence" who may not be as intellectual as many of those who lack such confidence....)

Anyway, perhaps this is too nitpicky (my method of stressing a few of the words, in a way I call "close reading"), but I think it DOES relate to Rebecca Woolf's original point (however expressed, and misunderstood, and perhaps by myself). I, speaking only for myself here though, find a reductive binary formulation

contrasting "highly educated" and "intellectual" useful here: I consider Howe (and Olson and Pound, who in many ways she resembles) to be a poet that does require a more "highly educated" individual to read and appreciate (the learned references that point the reader to texts by COTTON MATHER or Fenellosa, etc., as if one must read them in order to "fully appreciate" Howe's and Pound's project) and would contrast this to other poets that, though they themselves may be considered "elite" and certainly at least as "highly educated," do not require as blatantly such "highly educated" readers (say, Stein, Riding, Stevens, Ashbery, for instance....if I'm going to play the lineage game here....). Sure, there are moments in some of this latter group in which "allusions" and references may flatter the highly educated (Ashbery's titles referencing the "tradition" and all the "in jokes" and "appropriations" from other texts), but it's been my experience at least that they are not as NECESSARY to the appreciation of the poem and the project, one can "get" and/or at least enjoy Ashbery without knowing that he's quoting a lengthy passage from a famous victorian. Anyway, I guess right now, I "side" with the latter mode, but I am certainly open to anybody calling my formulation into question.....

chris stroffolino

On Thu, 25 Mar 1999, BETSY ANDREWS wrote:

Well, let me weigh in with a bit of retro-biographical information about Howe that speaks against the really wierd idea that the "crappy papers" of bunch of "middle-class" students who love poetry at "middle-ground state universities" toll the death knell of "all joy in poetry":

In a 1995 Contemporary Literature interview, Lynn Kelly asked Howe," People objecting to experimental writing sometimes complain that whatever claims are made for its social engagement or marxist perspective, or its changing hegemonic structures of consciousness, that, in fact, the aduience it reaches is a very narrow, highly educated one, that the reader has to have tremendous intellectual confidence even to grapple with these texts. What do you think? Does that concern you?"

Howe's reply: "No. The objection offends me. I think it is part of a really frightening anti-intellectualism in our culture. Why should things please a large audience? And isn't claiming that the work is too intellectually demanding also saying a majority of people are stupid? Different poets will always have different audiences. Some poets appeal to younger people, some to thousands, one or two to millions, some to older people, et cetera. If you have four readers whom you truly touch and maybe even influence, well then that's fine. Poetry is a calling. You are called to write and you follow."

Howe's comments counter Rebecca's remarks from her post "Re: Shifts in Modalities" in two totally different ways. Firstly, Howe refuses to totalize. There are various aesthetic communities of readers and writers. There is no "all" anything. Secondly, Howe refuses to condescend. She's enraged by the condescension.

I wonder if Rebecca thinks being middle class is the problem, or going to a "middle-ground" state university is a problem--I have an MFA from one of those places, George Mason in Fairfax, VA,--I went there on purpose, and believe me, there was all sorts of joyous experimentation and intellectualism there. Or if that provisional term of hers, "love" of poetry is the problem. What does "love" in quotation marks mean?

This [the posting about S. Howe's particularities] is exactly what I was talking about earlier when I said that "it [the shift into classrooms producing critics whose facilities are lamed] will happen and it will suck." I do not want to know what Susan Howe's family home was like and I do not want to know what her husband does for a living. Cultural studies is simple biographical criticism in thin disguise: an excuse for sensationalism and for those who are uncomfortable with ambiguity to write about where their subject was born and how many doctors were around the table, color of baby blanket, etc.

Well, I guess I should come to my own defense--if I am able, being only a lame, lowgrade academic.

All snideness aside, I have a question for you, Rebecca: what exactly then do you think is the "joy of poetry"?

What I can gather from reading the texts of Susan Howe--letters, poems, journals, marginalia--that it is precisely the textual particulars of another that she finds to be the "joy of poetry." Reading Melville's Marginalia, a collection of his notations in books he was reading, inspired her to write a poem that exposes the irony, uncertainty, and change in not only Melville's "life" but also in history (another text). Immersing herself in the manuscripts of Emily Dickinson, Howe reclaims and reconsiders Dickinson in a feminist context. I read much joy, Susan's and mine, in both of those works. The joy comes not just from the work but that it was written, by someone.

This is not biographical criticism because it does not distinguish between a "text" and a "life." Both are in language yet bear the traces of another person who chose to write. Nor is this mere cultural criticism, as you would have it. It's what Peter Neufeld in his post referred to as an ethics that calls for a consideration of the uncertainty and alterity that mark our reading of an other's texts. There is more at stake than just figuring out "what it means." Anyway, I don't know to many academics who have this goal. (Isn't so much of the poetry that we all enjoy and feel invested in marked by a blur between poetry and criticism? Must we draw that line in the sand again? Why?)

For me, the joy of poetry comes not just from New Critically reading (or writing) the Genius of a poem, In Itself. But from following the textual threads out of the work and into other texts and other uncertainties, ad infinitum. Not knowing "what it means" is the greatest joy.

Grant

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Barnard Conference...*29 March 1999*

His 1998 doctorate has bought him no post; the year's argument about class arrives lived rather than theorised, at the door of the Barnard conference.

Recently, I've been informed that the panellists giving papers, and/or talks at the Barnard Conference HAVE TO PAY A FEE in order to attend this conference. I personally (as well as some others I've talked to) find this appalling. When Stephen Cope (are you there Stephen; if so, backchannel please) invited me to be part of the conference, he made no mention of it, and since it was "in my backyard" as it were, I was thinking I--if not getting paid for my efforts--would at least not have to PAY to participate. I do not know if the "big names" are getting paid to present here, and I certainly have no gripe with them if they are, but the idea that us "smaller names" have to PAY is something I wish I would have been told up front. I understand that the organizers are putting a lot of work into this conference, but Barnard, one would think, certainly wouldn't benefit from the "petty cash" it would extract from underpaid (underused) academically unaffiliated writers.... So, I'm wondering if there's anything that can be done about this?

Best, Chris Stroffolino

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Between the essays runs a quieter traffic the reader will not see: a steady stream of backchannel appeals — for the addresses of Martha Ronk and Stephen Ratcliffe, of Jennifer Moxley, Alan Golding, Charles Altieri — and a plea to find a home for Ange Mlinko's two cats before she left for Morocco. He was the scene's switchboard; when he let slip that a flood had soaked his papers, one saw how narrow the ledge was that he kept it all on.

NOTLEY on "the youth"....*8 May 1999*

Notley, whom he reveres, had faulted the younger writers as apolitical in a COMBO interview; he answers across the list on the chance she is lurking to hear it.

Hello--- I love Alice Notley's writing, old and new, and I love the challenges she raises and the provocations, etc....

in recent COMBO magazine interview, she talks about "an extremely exciting younger generation right now" (without naming names)

and says, among other things... "They're these people between about 23 and 36.... They're not very political, and I wish they were more political."

I know Alice sometimes lurks on this list, and am curious if she'd be interested in elaborating on this lack of politics she perceives...

But, if she doesn't, perhaps others could... I think there's a LOT of political in the younger...

speaking for myself, I've been told sometimes that my work is TOO political...

of course, it mixes politics up with love...

if the personal is the political, if "politics" (in the global sense) without love (in the personal sense) is like suburbs without cities, or cities without farmland, then what is love without politics?

been thinking of poor phil ochs lately...

there's so many issues here she raises, i'm not going to go too deep now...

but i am interested in looking for other ways to frame this question, because i respect and admire notley's poetry, and her desire for a return perhaps to a more blatant concern with politics on a content level, a moving beyond coterie politics,

and i'm glad she can say "I HATE THE CAR" more blatantly than, say, barrett watten in his "bride of the assembly line piece"....

but i think she perhaps hasn't become made aware that there are certainly much politics (unless she means something different by politics than i think she does) in writers between 23 and 36...

.....just curious....

chris stroffolino

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DYLAN B-DAY THOUGHTS OF LUOMA

24 May 1999

The Lower East Side as lived rather than argued: Bill Luoma, Matthew Rohrer and Lisa Jarnot are neighbours and fixtures, and the midnight sixties-soul night at Bar 13 a standing appointment he hates to keep alone.

And I'm defrosting today. Laundry stranded in the mat (above which rohrer lives, just as jarnot used to live above "under the pig" across from the luna lounge on ludlow where luoma used to go for laffs). It's raining love, the radio sounds so burlington today so thinking about the past that was a hope of art not sucking until drunk. but not those "reading reports" but the particular way i realize that almost everybody i know i somehow met "through poetry" or "the scene" which would seem distinct from poetry if it were less humid thunder to bike sideways o'er the brooklyn bridge for its birthday just like the white wing (fuschia) dove at

the one's who stand so frown (for you know we couldn't stay black against the night). Still no sound of ice falling from the roof of the freezer's mouth....

Anyway, I do love the poetry scene when it leads to things outside itself. So, I went to that Bar 13 last night again (for those in, or planning to visit NYC, if you're at all interested in going out at MIDNIGHT ON A SUNDAY To dance to 60s (sixties) music, and watch people in their early 20s sometimes in "60s costumes", please contact me---I'm always looking for people to go with, not liking to "go it alone" as it were.

I discovered this place, because John Arizza and Greg Fuchs and Brett Evans and others had a reading there once or twice, but I didn't know it featured 60s dancing until I happened to be coming back from this birthday party for some woman (who I kinda met through louma), whose father runs the hair-club for men, and we were looking for somewhere to go, and walked in and they were playing TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS and I was hooked, and even bill luoma decided to stay and dance (96 tears or incense and peppermint)---and I've gone many times since, last night with Jody, a great DJ (I'm trying to set him up with the FENCE people for some dance party) who people say looks like me (though he's taller, thinner, and more african), and it was really crowded, and we got there too late to get the tambourines they were handing out, but not too late to him them play THE RAPPER by the JAGGERZ, then seque into 25 MILES by Edwin Starr, and then SOUL FINGER by the BAR-KAYS (just before they died in that otis red-ding rush crash), and why were they handing out tambourines, not perhaps because it was dylan's birthday eve, but because it was the second anniversary of the opening of 60s night at this place (and I got thinking, it was EXACTLY TWO YEARS AGO that I (and louma, etc.) happened upon this place, and so i mark an anniversary too...(and defrosting is slow, but the rain continues....)

c P.S. DOES ANYBODY HAVE A TAPE OF SUN RA ARKESTRA ANN ARBOR 1973 concert?

we'll meet on edges soon,

chris

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quandry

24 June 1999

Maria Damon had reassured Pompeii that good schools underwrite their students; into that optimism he slips a caution with the ring of hard experience.

In the thread, Maria Damon had written · 22 June 1999 —

| most "great" schools will underwrite your sojourn to a large extent

Jessica, just be careful. Sometimes a school will accept you without financial aid, and you'll be assured by some teachers there, "don't worry, the aid will come later in the summer. Just move here, etc." and the aid won't come and they'll say "funny, this never happened before" etc.... c

On Tue, 22 Jun 1999, Jessica Pompeii wrote:

QUESTION? I want to get a loan to put me through a great school. I live in Santa Monica and I hate driving, but I might hate idiot teachers more. I suppose I could move but my rent is cheap. I want to write. And study.. Any suggestions? These days no nunneries. Recommendations? I have no credentials. I went to Cal-Arts, but mom wouldn't pay. I went to Loyola but mom wouldn't pay. I went to Santa Monica City College, so mom didn't have to pay. I was accepted into UCLA but the thought of large classes, i.e.. parking was too much. I facilitate a poetry workshop at Beyond Baroque, but it doesn't pay for me to sit around and study and write. Mom says I should become a stock broker/consultant to old ladies whose husbands have died. Actually cousin Mickey made the suggestion to her. (She lives in Wisconsin, and wears a Mickey Mouse applique on her over coat.) Because mom reminds me women live longer than men. I can see the advertising already. Are you an old stupid hag who can't handle your money because you are a woman and your husband is dead? Help!! Serious replies appreciated!! -Jessica

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Reviews....

1 July 1999

John Coletti had been indignant at Tom Clark's cool review of Philip Whalen; Stroffolino takes the thread by its other handle — the suspect warmth of the rave.

Well, then there's (on the other side?) the question of "positive" reviews. In the latest st. marks newsletter, for instance, there's at least two "positive" reviews of books that--if i didn't already know the books (one which i think is pretty damn great the other not bad but "excellent scribbling in a period style"---more on this backchannel)--would actually turn me away from reading them, more than a more AMBIVALENT review would. Since I'm more interested in the ISSUE than in the specifics, I leave the names blank for now.... curious what others think.... chris

On Wed, 30 Jun 1999, john coletti wrote:

| *This review got my goat when I first read it a month or so ago on Jacket. It is ambivalent, prodding, & terribly uninspired. How was this review (which appears to*

be the same one from the Chronicle) put together? Every complement is countered by a neutral or negative bit of language. Weighted down by "the patient reader," "certain obsessive themes," "finicky," "generalizing," "odd," and so forth, this review appears to be trying to pass off as a positive one while seeding itself with vague & underlying resentment. Clark describes Whalen's writing as "disarmingly self-deflating comedy" without giving any sort of an enthused explanation as to why this very truth can bring about some of the best comic writing around. In the end, one gets the feeling that Tom Clark just dashed this one off to the presses. If he disliked the book then so be it. Say so. If he really felt that this "self-deprecating hipster-bodhissatva, wine glass and joint at the ready...remains perhaps the finest comic creation of the Beat era." then he sure made a lousy, shlocky stab at doing so. This selection was, in my opinion, one of the very best pieces of literature I came across this year. Whalen's writing deserves a better review than the limp & inchoate one that the Chronicle served up. I mean, count the words with typically negative connotations, and then read the review again. Initially, I thought it was a positive review. Feeling somehow uneasy, I read it again. I don't think I would have picked the book up if I had simply read this review at face value without having already known of Whalen's writing and of this book specifically. For some, this will be a true shame.

John Coletti

If anyone is really interested in reading this "downer" review of Philip Whalen by Tom Clark, you can browse:

www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/1999/06/27/RV105857.DTL.

Tom's review in Jacket, or a 1996 review in the SF Chronicle of Whalen's Canoeing Up Cabarga Creek might seem more "generous and positive" to those used to book reviews reading like PR blurbs rather than critical engagements with poetry.

Steve Vincent is being diplomatic in not saying that "the Chronicle critic"

is Tom Clark (whom I presume

must think it to have been a warm, generous and positive review of his one-time neighbor on the

mesa). Whalen's counter-careerism certainly has been a factor, and Steve's right about Rexroth and

Dahlen also. But I'd add Bob Grenier and even Joanne Kyger to that list. All folks who deserve to be

read closely (and widely).

Ron

"There was a downer review of Whalen's new Penquin collection (with intro by Leslie Scalapino) in yesterday's San Francisco Sunday Chronicle Book Review.

I am not sure what the Chronicle critic was trying to perform other than he somehow missed and hardly gave a clue to the rich and various brilliance(s)

of Whalen's work.

While this work has fortunately managed to get published over the years, Whalen remains a wry counter-careerist which unfortunately has kept the poems

from larger public assessment, celebration and/or review. Maybe obscurity is part of the character structure of some West coast giants. Kenneth Rexroth (who was very public) had a paranoid streak that caused him to slash every critic who crossed the horizon, leaving him dismissed from any real consideration in the modernist Canon. Retrieval efforts to recognize his work

remain ongoing. Then there is Beverly Dahlen in hermetic, apparently quite non-careerist retreat. Lyn Hejinian (gratefully) (among a few others) for example, seems to have figured it out - keeping her generous critical mind and creative work at the public forefront - east, middle and west.

Well, I diverged from my original intent. I'm pissed off at the Chron review.

Which is to ask, has anyone read a good, substantial review of Whalen's new Collected?

Cheers,

Stephen Vincent"

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Get Free Email and Do More On The Web. Visit <http://www.msn.com>

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WCW, anti-semitism....

12 July 1999

Kent Johnson had bracketed Williams with Pound and Eliot on anti-semitism; Michael Magee objected, and Stroffolino comes in on his side, drawn less to the charge than to what Williams concealed of his own descent.

In the thread, Michael Magee had written · 13 July 1999 —

| a Puerto Rican, Sephardic Jew "American poet" in front of a bank.

That particular quote of WCW's to Vazakas (a gay Reading-ite) does not, to me, seem particularly anti-semitic. He's pointing out a social irony--the germans kicked out the jews that invented the bomb that destroyed their allies. Even for a "non-public" statement, with all its attendant "freedom of expression" including flippancy, there is evident some feeling for the jewish there.... On another point,

is WCW's Puerto-Rican-ism. That he was himself trying to "pass". It's weird how little (in an age of identity politics) his puerto-rican element to the "american grain" is mentioned, though I hear SUNY-BUFFALO just accepted someone to its Ph.D. program who will deal with that issue in dissertation fashion....

chris

On Mon, 12 Jul 1999, Michael Magee wrote:

Kent's recent stipulation that "WCW was anti-semitic in a rather robust way, no less than Ezra and T.S." is a real distortion - one loses all sense of particulars when one implies that Williams, Pound and Eliot are alike on this regard - and the inability to draw distinctions is a cousin to the inability to act. I would suggest reading Williams's very complex story "A Face of Stone." What Paul Mariani points out in his biography of Williams seems basically true:

"Despite accusations to the contrary, Williams was no anti-Semite. He worked all his life closely with Jewish writers, from Kreyborg and Bodenheim and Mina Loy to Zukofsky and West and Moss and Kamin and Sol Funaroff and later with Shapiro and Ignatow and Sidney Salt and Ginsberg and Levertov and any number of others. He was, unquestionably, a product of his times and he did use the old comic-strip vulgarisms, allowing such words as kike, nigger, wop, jap, frog, Polack and the rest of it to infiltrate his speech and his letters. Nor did he always escape the popular racial myths of his time."

As someone currently writing about WCW's relationship to African-American culture, I'm sensitive to the vexed nature of his approach to race - trust me. But to simply call him anti-semitic or racist is to in fact say nothing at all. Among other things, one ends up missing the crucial fact of how the speech of ethnic minorities mediated Williams poetry: as in his famous characterization of his poetry as coming "out of the mouths of Polish mothers." Just who were these Polish mothers, do you think? I'd suggest that, like the Polish woman in "A Face of Stone," they were Jews.

Likewise, the quote by Williams on Hiroshima which Kent had misremembered, "The day following the atomic blast! -- the poor Jews who accomplished it. Now we'll hate them worse than ever," seems to me bitterly ironic, fairly complex and, in any event, worth more than a rubber stamped condemnation.

-m.

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Nada Gordon & Gary Sullivan

19 July 1999

First of a two-part rave for Gary Sullivan and Nada Gordon's collaborative reading at the Zinc Bar — the year's fullest statement of what he wants poetry and love to accomplish at once.

It was a pleasure to see two successful "men of letters" approaching 50, John Yau and Charles Bernstein (& yes Charles I mention your name publically here, in attempted good faith, as "psychic payment" for your private praise of a point or

two I made at the L(R)J conference!) present at the reading of Gary Sullivan and Nada Gordon this Sunday at the Zinc Bar. It was a little sad to see not too many others there, but I don't want so much to "lay the guilt trip on those who didn't show" as proactively promote, à la that Game Theory song "sleeping through heaven" which is fun to sing to others....

Anyway, it was no mere reading but a, from this distance, true collaborative dialogue between these writer/lovers (lover/writers) that may serve as the beginning of a much needed (at least in NYC poetry scene) attempt to dissolve, as much as possible and desirable (or at least intensely toy with, and be toyed by) the barriers between the "political" and the "personal" the "aesthetic" and the "ethical", the "elliptical" and the "straightforward" the "public" and the "private" etc. (i sacrifice rhyme and rhythm for analogical significance here)

What Gary and Nada seem to be embarking on is a courageous attempt to render explicit, through a dramatic embodiment, many concepts that are ostensibly touted and/or embraced by the "avant-garde" but whose "products" so rarely achieve, or at least reveal, the symbiosis that occurs both between two people "in the throes" as it were as well as between those "blue poles" of "life" and "art". What G and S suggest is that there may not be able to be a connection between two people unless there is also an attempt to connect life and art, without subordinating one to the other, except theatrically (in moments) of course, within the conceptual frame of endless possibility in the context of monogamous (for the time being, in the "nest phase" at least), but otherwise "nontraditional" love...

This was the first (of what I hope will be more) public performance of these young(ish) artist/lovers, and the content of their poetic epistles (and Nada's acapellas, which would be even better, I'd argue, with musical--say, piano--backup) has not yet, for me, eclipsed the sense of the sheer radicalness of the concept Gordon and Sullivan propose....

To emphasize the conceptual aspect (frame?) of their work is not meant to be taken as derogatory. The courage it takes to include a computerized-voice reading of un-obscene pornography (more tabooed in "avant-garde" scenes allegedly more on the grounds of its lack of linguistic innovation than for any anti-pleasurist ideology aesthetic or ogery), for instance, among the most abstract and/or lyrical of musings, for me, takes on a conceptual significance that not only challenges community standards of "good art" but also raises the question of whether anti-desire aesthetics, or an art-for-art's-sake attitude and behavior, may NOT simply "make nothing happen," but rather, dangerously, widen the gap between art and life, and heighten alienation...

Because Gary and Nada's work (dealinating too first name from last name) is grounded in the feeling and idea of an all-emcompassing eros (although that love is not its only ground), it may seem to provide an exemplary contrast to other so-called conceptual artists. For instance (see Village Voice, July 6, 1999 article by C.Carr), the situationist-influenced young "performance artist" Christine Hill, whose thought-provoking meshing of 'everyday commerce' activities and art have been gaining some attention recently. According to Carr, "Hill's work really blurs the art/life line because it's about creating something that IS life. She has worked in the past as a masseuse, waitress, shopkeeper, and lead singer in a rock band--activities she designated as ART while they also provided an income..." Hill thinks of drawing and painting as "apprentice skills" and she is out to create situations, not objects.... Sullivan and Gordon, however, don't seem to conceive of writing as "apprentice skills" but rather allow for or encourage actively more of a symbiosis, and in this sense I'd argue go beyond Hill (So, maybe Deitch Projects or the Public Art Fund could fund them too!)... Unlike Hill (and lacking her hard-nosed practicality, one might argue), G and S are not as interested in eradicating the aspect of the life/art dichotomy that makes it such a difficult challenge to "unite one's vocation and avocation" (to paraphrase Frost's wistful hope without a net...) > What they do for money, their public role outside of their role as a "couple of writers" (in the highest sense of that phrase) is not emphasized. One could imagine, perhaps, an art attitude that combines these two distinct ways (Hill's and G and S's) of blurring or eradicating the life/art distinction, but perhaps this is too much to ask, or perhaps the difference is best unbridgeable.

(more, to be continued, in next post quite shortly....)

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Nada and Gary (continued)

19 July 1999

The notice's second half, weighing the couple's mutual-muse ethic against the more solitary self-display of the performance artist Hill.

Hill, as an individual artist, chooses to present herself theatrically as an installation piece (as TOURGUIDE and Used-clothes proprietor, etc., giving "new meaning" to the convention of the "studio visit"), in ways that may be compared to the largely individualist ethos of, say, Annie Sprinkle (sex or at least breasts being more like business than like love), while Sullivan and Gordon, at this phase at least, by challenging the idea of the individual, and the objectification of the other, or of the self for that matter, by becoming mutual muses for each other, and bracketting the economic exigencies and mediations that inform (and even drive) Hill's role-playing, create a conceptual art that meshes poetry and life in a way that can move toward undoing some very stubborn either/or dichotomies

that, through compartmentalization, either reduce the tension to a manageable working partnership, or make it more impossible to love (depending on one's definition of), live. Because N and G write to each other directly, they not only discover (and invent?) in each other a form capacious enough for all modes of writing, but they also find in all modes of writing, a way to embrace the tradition of (love) poetry, of lyric and discursive, or even fragment/aphoristic singularity while also challenging it by more inclusively putting it in dialogue WITH dialogue--a dialogue that can only become MORE dramatic, even as the realtonship may seem to stabilize (freer the tighter).... If there seems something too utopian yet about their performance (if they ignored, for instance, my request to include more of their verbal "fight scenes" in this first public performance), this is not to be condemned, or even merely tolerated and swept under the rug by being judged by the standards of 'safe art' as 'mediocre' if judged by 'literary' merits.... You have to start somewhere, and the myth of true lovers, or even "soulmates" that may "transport" each other, though certainly partaking to some degree in fiction (and surely hokey to the embarrassed or embittered), is at least as fitting a place to start as any (especially against a backdrop of a model of profit and loss which may perhaps contaminate many potential loves). They should be given the poetry teaching jobs! Or at least be made examples in polemic arguments that wield more cultural authority, or institutional sway, than mine (if I was "talking policy" with "the big girls" say)... Ah, when is a joke not a joke.... So, Hail Gary Sullivan and Nada Gordon,

chris stroffolino

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Threaded through the year, and routed here to the announcements, runs a cheerful campaign of self-advertisement: readings under headings like 'Stuck in Self-Promo with You,' a book party undone by faulty lamination, and the long-promised arrival of STEALER'S WHEEL — a must, he assured the list, for admirers of the Silver Jews, and a book whose warmest notices came, by his own accounting, from its author.

to post or not to post....

29 October 1999

A veiled bulletin from the list's own politics: the 'K...' is Joel Kuszai, and the 'roof book' his forthcoming @poetics, an anthology of the list's early years that Stroffolino mistrusts as a substitute for the living thing; the closing plea is for the ailing Alan Sondheim.

Character X says that Character Q has been driven off the list by Character J...

Someone else says that there are 7 basic plots

I've heard this before. I've heard many "things."

Someone else says "How fragile we are..."

Then Q comes back & says something like it's okay to write death to death

and quoting my "self" (Stealer's Wheel, pg. 25) say: ... To squander doubt on the mundane
So the free meet the free in the free While the urge to lose count gets its
15 minutes And someone surely has my number And can see through the
soliloquys...

And then try to take responsibility for my absence from the discussion for the
presence of absence often conjured by writing

and then be nonetheless "petty" in the sequel

remembering the earlier incidents of k... not only leaving the list but dragging the
list down with it (him) during the darkest days of 98/99

and then there's the case of the to be published roof book (edited by the very
same K...) of the circa 94-96 era of the list, a book which AT ITS BEST may turn
people to the real discussion dynamics that existed on this list at the time, but
which AT ITS WORST distorts the power dynamics involved in editing, and runs
the risk of SITTING IN for the list, especially for those, like myself, who do not like
to "curl up" with a computer as much as they do with a book...

(i do not say this in malice....)

but in hopes that maybe this too will generate further discussion (even if confined
to "secret history" status, though one may 'bank' on foucault's theory of power, as
they say)

and "alan we love you get up..." et c.

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2000

The year Stroffolino slips back onto the list mid-summer and spends it doing the thing he does best: answering. Between a long quarrel over metaphor and metonymy, a colloquium on the body, and a scatter of New York gigs, the quotidian keeps pressing in — mislaid addresses, a wanted flautist, and by December a wanted doctor — until the poet of daily life is reduced to advertising his own precariousness.

Golddiggers

9 August 2000

Back on the list after months away, he opens not with an argument but with an unfashionable enthusiasm — the sort of question nobody else was asking.

Dear etc... Hello, again. Glad to be back on.... have suddenly become aware that hardly anyone I've talked to about poetry, especially under 42, talks much about

Creeley's GOLDIGGERS and wondering if that's because I didn't bring it up or for some other reason...

Anyway, I'd curious to see what people think of it. Sure, if one wants to point me to any formal essays or dissertation chapters, but I guess I'm curious in this more informal context... What, for instance, is this book's relation to Creeley's poetry? Would it be a footnote, or a key to it? Or something else? What is its relevance today? for you particularly?

I think enough for now...

I look forward to any comments....

Chris Stroffolino

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POETICS Digest - 24 Aug 2000 to 25 Aug 2000 (#2000-140)

28 August 2000

michael amberwind's standing lament — that no poetry actually gets discussed here — finally draws a reply that treats the complaint as kin rather than heckling.

In the thread, michael amberwind had written · 27 August 2000 —

| I would like to know if anyone can direct me to a good politics discussion list

Two Questions:

1. Does anybody know the Cap-L's list current address.....?

If so, could you please post it to this list....

2 Dear Amberwind, I sense frustration in your tone, What do you want to talk about that you feel isn't talked about?

(I had a similar problem, asking people about Creeley's (poetic) prose-- only to get backchanneled salespitches..... well except for Charles Alexander...)

CS

michael amberwind wrote:

once again I would like to know if anyone can direct me to a good politics discussion list, I am certain that must be where all the poetry discussion is taking place...

Do You Yahoo!? Yahoo! Mail - Free email you can access from anywhere!

<http://mail.yahoo.com/>

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language in lingua franca

29 August 2000

The month's set-to is Lingua Franca's needling profile of the Language poets as academic careerists; Nielsen had relayed it with relish, Sherry Brennan waved it off, and Chris — a poet without a teaching post of his own — goes looking for the article's charm before its politics.

In the thread, Sherry Brennan had written · 29 August 2000 —

| don't you think the venue predetermines the complaint?

Aldon---

Andrew Epstein is a young NYC scholar who, the last I heard, is working on a dissertation that compares the poetic relationship of O'Hara and Ashbery to the earlier WCW-Stevens one (I hope I'm not confusing it with Mike Magee's which I think is similar...)

But there was some charm in the article I thought (for example the use of Donald Hall's term to characterize what the L-poets were against is a rather bizarre twist, no? and also the characterization of "the one on the left" as "slightly balding"---

More later, chris

anielsen@lmu.edu wrote:

The September issue of _Lingua Franca_ just arrived with an article by Andrew (do we know this guy) Epstein on the question of, in the words of the editors, "Can the McPoem busters enjoy the happy meal of success?"

My doctor has ordered me to stay away from such meals --

Though I see that Mssrs. Lehman, Weinberger and Kostelanetz weigh in with weighty McDismissals --

Kostelanetz, widely noted for his rigor and acuity, is quoted as having remarked "the desperate desire of some cliques to acquire a tenured academic position before it is too late," though the truncated quotation gives no indication of just what it may be too late for.

But it is fun to see those closely cropped pictures of Hejinian, Perloff, Silliman, Perelman etc -- almost as if the editors wanted to put numbers under those faces -- Bernstein and Andrews are seen emerging from a subway -- the editors inform us that Bernstein is the one on the left!

Interestingly no attention to Bromige, Fraser, Davidson and others who have worked for decades teaching and writing -- but maybe they don't fit the "have they sold out by taking jobs in academia recently" framework, or maybe they prefer KFC to Mickey D's?

I have to give credit to Eliot Weinberger for steadfastly holding the line against creeping academicism -- but then, I just remembered that the only time I ever saw him in person he was standing at a podium at the University of Maryland --

"Has All-- a Codicil?" -- Emily Dickinson

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anielsen@lmu.edu [REDACTED]

The simple way to read all your emails at ThatWeb <http://www.thatweb.com>

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Two small errands are dropped from the record hereabouts: a July plea to be re-subscribed, and a September appeal for someone's illegible San Francisco return address. They belong to the same man — forever mislaying, and then chasing, the addresses of the people he wants to talk to.

PUBLIC APOLOGY (for Wendy Kramer, etc.)

12 September 2000

A drunken interview, ill-transcribed for the Highwire Anthology, has put words in his mouth about the poet Wendy Kramer; the apology is public because the offence was.

Dear Folks,

I would like to apologize for some quotes attributed to me in an interview that appears in the latest HIGHWIRE ANTHOLOGY edited by Greg Fuchs and Kyle Conner.... Especially in regards to Wendy Kramer. First, I did NOT say, "She's Wet Like A child," Second, all the comments about Wendy were meant to be absolutely positive,

childlike(ness) as a virtue---

and this in fact was probably even the rationale of the editors on publishing an excerpt (ill-transcribed at that) of a drunken transcript with me.....

and i very much appreciate Mr. Fuchs and Mr. Conner's decision to do so....

but still feel a need to offer an apology,

to honor the Apollonian professional identity alienation so important these days when it comes to reputation.....

and hope I did not create (unintentionally) yet another enemy....

chris stroffolino-----

P.S. Beware of magazines/journals that reject your work on the grounds that it doesn't fit the topic

juliana spahr wrote:

| CALL FOR WORK Chain 8: Comics

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Metaphor/Metonymy

14 September 2000

The metaphor-and-metonymy thread that will occupy him through September opens here, answering someone's request for something to bring back to their students — territory from his Albany training.

In response to question---

There's also that Sheldon Sacks (I think that's the right name) edited book, "On Metaphor," university of Chicago Press, which has some very interesting essays--- a range from more theory-laden specialized to discourse to more "plain" speaking....

Also, Since you were interested in the difference between "metaphor" and "metonymy," my hunch is that you are interested in that politicized debate that privileges metonymy in contemporary (is it still?) theory---

For instance, reading a entry by Barbara Godard on Luce Irigaray, you could find statements like this:

Irigaray " challenges [Lacan's] focus on the subject's cathexis, on the Other as object, on definitions of terms rather than on relations between them; that is, the privileging of metaphor and metonymy." (369)

This is interesting to me---especially the assumption that metaphor is analogous to definition of terms and that metonymy is analogous to the relations between them. I do not find a necessary connection between "metaphor" and an over emphasis on definition of terms at the expense of the relations between them. Sure, some metaphor theory may attempt to reduce metaphor to a tool employed to subsume its "tenor" in its concrete "vehicle", but there are other ways of figuring metaphor that are at least as subversive of mere "definitions of terms"....

It is not Irigaray I am critiquing here, as much as what I became aware of, in grad school as a critical orthodoxy some of my teachers adhered to unquestioningly-- the assumption that in order to focus on relations and constitute the other as subject that one should employ metonymy rather than metaphor....

Anyway, this is just a thought (not going to write a whole essay now), but maybe may be useful for your students.....

Chris S.

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Metaphor/Metonymy

19 September 2000

By now the thread has drawn a crowd — Gerald Schwartz offering Bronk, Susan Schultz offering a rejoinder — and it is Schultz he turns to answer, though the archive files him under Schwartz's citations.

In the thread, Gerald Schwartz had written · 19 September 2000 —

There is the poem by William Bronk "Metonymy As an Approach to a Real World,"

Susan Schultz---

Yeah, but do you really think that metaphor is primarily really about "sameness" in an age of "difference" (or say it w/ obligatory fr. accent)? A good case can be, and in fact has been, made (by both detractors and defenders) of metaphor that metaphor is no more about sameness than it is about difference--- this is what distinguishes it from simile perhaps.... So, if A = B (truth is a rat-infested subway stop, for instance), the "sameness" implies its opposite, too, the "absurdity" of the link. Even in Shakespeare and

other pre-20th century texts, metaphor is often used this way.... there is something else going on, beyond (or at least unregistered by) the level of prose logic....

So, IN GENERAL, what I don't get (TO ANYBODY; OPEN QUESTION; please answer, etc., etc) is why METONYMY (the most known of which would be SYNECDOCHE; that town Michael Gizzi was born in) is considered better, more progressive, more feminist, etc? This argument has never made sense for me, for metonymy seems more reductive, less dynamic, etc.....

Curious, curious.....

c

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Burnham Blurb by Bowering

26 September 2000

Addressed across the border to George Bowering, and characteristically more interested in praising a friend's book than in the nationalist jab it arrived wrapped in.

Hey, I've been reading AIRBORNE PHOTO (stories) by Clint Burnham and find it a very fun (one could say poetic in its use of language....) book. I think I like it better than his poetry (but then again I also consider David Henderson's "SCUSE ME WHILE I KISS THE SKY" to be one of the best epic poems of recent years.....) and so I figured I'd plug it

plug it that is without having to get in an anti-usa jab a la Bowering's critique of "a lower mainland,"...

Hey George, do you really think Burnham's point in these stories is to satirize something Americans DO and Canadians are ABOVE? Am I missing some canadian in-jokiness here?

Chris

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Jakobson on Metonymy & Metaphor

29 September 2000

Thompson had demanded that whoever maligned Jakobson step forward and answer for it; Chris volunteers, though he wasn't the culprit, and turns the challenge into an invitation.

In the thread, George Thompson had written · 27 September 2000 —

| Please identify yourself and be prepared to defend yourself.

Dear George Thompson,

I was not the person, but what I remember was somebody, in response to a question I had about metonymy and metaphor, wrote that Jakobson mistakenly identified them as opposites.

Could you be prepared to defend Jakobson against that claim. Do you think Jakobson sees them as opposites? Do you agree with that assessment? And with the value J places on them? And, if so, why?

Thank you....

Chris Stroffolino

George Thompson wrote:

Somebody, I don't know who it was, suggested earlier that Jakobson's take on metalanguage was misguided.

Well, I'd like to challenge that suggestion. I'd like to see your definition of metalanguage, and I'd like to show you that you are wrong both about Jakobson and about metalanguage. Please identify yourself and be prepared to defend yourself.

Thanks,

George Thompson

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Colloquium 1.6: The STRAP-HANGER - Kevin Killian

3 October 2000

The list is running a curated colloquium on body, sex, and writing; here he answers Kevin Killian's instalment in kind, the appreciation wandering down every side-road it passes — the Monkees, Bruce Conner, Bacharach — before he takes the theme up himself a week on.

Dear Kevin,

Good piece. I like where it takes the discussion. Been thinking about Basil lately.... Just saw the Monkees HEAD and she did choreography and was thinking about how far 1968 seems from the early 80s' of "Mickey," (further than 1983 seems from now, to me at least) which I became more interested in once I discovered that Devo was the backing band. I've loved Conner, but have never been able to see "Breakaway." Will have to hold a "Breakaway" party perhaps. Also like your reference to Calpurnia as Lang-Pos (though seems to me the males were more barren--but then the barrenness as fertile, whether intentionally or no....), and various strategies of seduction. The characterization of Taylor's Bauderlaire, the sexiness of Ngai's anti-sex (the via negativa, and the layered (5 dimensional) hilarity of "What was it Burt Bacharach said, ten years from now? "I've got the wedding bell blues...." Much more, of course, but a good read. thanks.....

Poetics List Administration wrote:

Poetics List Colloquium: Group One, Number Six

The STRAP-HANGER by Kevin Killian

*Body, sex, writing, collide at the portal of scandal, or orality, though why this should be the case I'm not sure. Under the face of scandal the inside turns to outside, the personal and public confused, then conflated into a politic. James Ellroy's *Black Dahlia,* with its indelible, uncomfortable image of the woman sawn in half, her innards laid out for the world to see. (All of Ellroy seems to flow from this trope - the Communist witch hunt, the gabby psychoanalysts, in *The Big Nowhere;* the "Hush-Hush" ethos of *L.A. Confidential,* in which the unspeakable gets spoken via a bizarre diaphanousness of bebop and camp slang - the ineluctable ooze of the private towards the spectacular present.) When Scandal subsides, when the great Mouth closes, the community it serves re-composes itself, however slightly.*

*Bob Gluck asks, "Why write about body and sex unless they are problems?" At the DeYoung Museum here in San Francisco, a massive Bruce Conner show fills a whole wing. There's a long dim gallery of the late 50s assemblages that in photographs look so blurry, unreadable. Even up close, these large constructions of wood, fabric, paint and filth are nearly unseeable - dark, dirty and dingy - the eyes can't take them in. Basically so ambiguous they're depressing. The broken spirits of Elizabeth Short - the *Black Dahlia* - and the executed rapist Caryl Chessman are this space's saints. "This stuff gives you the creeps," I heard David say. The next room however's filled with sound and music and brightness, for it's a small theater set up to play, over and over, Conner's short film "Breakaway" (1966). I hadn't seen this before. It's a prototypical music video, such as you might have seen in the early days of MTV - featuring the choreographer/actress Toni Basil. The soundtrack is her singing this insipid song - but it's not insipid, though produced perhaps in a garage somewhere, with very muddy sound, heavy back bass beats, the kind of LA session music I associate with the Motown covers people like Johnny Rivers and the Mamas and the Papas used to put out - a music in its way hypnotic and professional as anything out of Detroit, with its own fascination. And when Conner films Basil, he has her dancing in perhaps a dozen*

different outfits, which change every five hundred frames. Often she's nude, then has her clothes on, then **some** clothes, and always this relentless, droning, somehow sunny beat and her singing about how she's gonna break away from her chains. She's made up in the Mod 60s style that Elizabeth Hurley is always wearing now, and she's magnificent, exultant. Just perfect. I remember seeing Basil as one of the dancers on my favorite TV show **Hullabaloo**, in the films **The T.A.M.I. Show, Pajama Party,** and **Village of the Giants,** the teen terror movie from the early 60s. She must have been only 17 or 18 when she made "Breakaway," in which she's credited as "Antonia Christina Basilotta" - to point up her ethnicity? (Big in the 60s.) Later she played a much bleaker, proto-Lesbian version of herself in the New American Cinema (**Five Easy Pieces, Easy Rider, The Last Movie, Greaser's Palace, American Graffiti**) and still later engineered a magnificent arrival - on MTV no less - for which she had this wonderful early training - with her song "Hey Mickey" - remember? Okay, I'm making a specious contrast between two periods of Conner's work - dark and light - San Francisco and L.A. It's not only wrong, it's stupid. Still the atmospheric change, as we walked between the two rooms, was almost palpable, you could register it in your body.

I wonder how Language Poetry managed to become a social phenomenon without having first to endure the rigors of the sex scandal. The "disappearance of the word, appearance of the world" aspect of L-P, its focus on language's materiality, its drive to expose the ideology within formalism to improve social conditions, had the perverse effect of insuring that its adherents would appear, in the world's eyes, as sex-free, soulful and calculating all at the same time, so we had a scandal of character; fifty Calpurnias in the American tree. (This despite the personableness and indeed the sexual attraction manifested by the poets themselves, as human beings, but that's another story.) The sex of Language Poetry, in its classical period, was so not there, so deferred and prohibited, that into this vacuum strode the New Narrative writers, led by Kathy Acker, a bunch of hapless clowns sent to relieve Mafeking; and afterwards, as we have seen in the past fifteen years or so, sex (indeed narrative) has crept back into Language Writing. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Dunno, one of these poets has a passage in every book that describes a sex life with such unblinking clinicism the revulsion rises faster than the skin on Kristeva's cocoa. Yet as Dodie (citing Delany) points out, everyone's gorge is set at a different level, and one woman's filth is another's ambrosia. One young writer told me his secret porn collection consisted of Sianne Ngai's essay on disgust and overdetermination, "Raw Matter" in that chartreuse issue of **Open Letter** - got him off every time. I stared, like, then, thinking of my own guilty pleasure, **have you ever read "Slaves of the Empire" by Aaron Travis?**

As writing disappears behind theory, its filthy ass remains visible, if vestigial, a sad reminder of its once-alluring body in a desperate game of hide and seek. I'm watching Toni Basil's body (on film) "glorying in itself as transcendent, the vantage from which all that risk pays off" (Taylor Brady) and yet my pleasure is spoiled by thinking, **She is being fed to me through the menu of Mr. Bruce Conner, it's his imagination I'm buying into.**

Dodie stands in front of an audience reading, perhaps, from **Cunt-Ups** or **The Letters of Mina Harker** and feels miserable, invaded, "as though the audience has X ray vision and can see down to the frayed elastic on my panties. But really, it is I who have

invaded my own privacy." She becomes three people as she opens her mouth, the transgressor - confessor? - with a mouthful of scandal; the frozen, desexualized public servant I suppose; and these two combine to create the performer, the actress, she who pays for the sins of the other two. Eve Black, Eve White, and what was the third's name, who could carry off all the neuroses of Black and White? "Jane"? Bruce Conner's **Black Dahlia**, suspended superbly on a plywood platform almost above my head, parts dripping off, hanging from straps, unknowable and almost invisible except as a shape of dark murk, dusty answers.

But, Taylor, when I'm in a train as you describe, I don't have those Baudelarian moments. I identify myself as the strap-hanger in Jen Hofer's train; I experience that crowd as a smorgasbord of sensual delight. Is it the prerogative of consciousness that makes me, I think quite without shame, wonder when I meet any particular man what it would be like to have sex with him? Or to be the figure crushed between two bodies always straining, while strap-hanging, to squeeze from the situation - the lucky situation - always the maximum frisson of contact, friction, pleasure? Thinking it over (i.e. writing about it) this retrospective pleasure "stiffens" into a problematic, due to writing's appeal to ethics. And to aesthetics. **Why, it's not only wrong,** scream these two voices like cats crying for food, **it's stupid!** I've gotten myself out of so many scrapes by using the same alibi, **I wanted to know what it was like so I could write about it.** The writing is the event. (So I can answer Laura's question.) Bruce Conner, whose attorneys sent me an injunction (summer 1996) forbidding me to use him as a character in a play I was writing, "Wet Paint." And me thinking, all those wonderful lines already written for Bruce Conner, so I did a global replace and made Bruce Conner into Kenneth Anger, changing hardly a word, and Rex Ray played him. I'd been **censored** - by an **iconoclast** - worst cut of all. Someone said he had cancer or something. "Good!" I spat.

[Enter DIEGO RIVERA.]

RIVERA. Are they gone?

ANGER. You are not marrying that Countess, I hope.

RIVERA. Nor her daughter, Eva, either. I have made love to them both, but a man has got to do what a man must do, for Stalin.

ANGER. Substitute "Satan" for "Stalin," and there, in a nutshell, is my reason for filming "Kustom Kar Kommandos."

RIVERA. Feel, the sweat on my brow, flowing like wet bull sperm.

ANGER. Ole! Senor Rivera, have you seen my property, Bobby Beausoleil? I bought him for a trusty down at juvenile hall for two bottles of Dr. Pepper and a rookie Roger Maris.

RIVERA. They are throwing rice in my direction. What was it Burt Bacharach said, ten years from now? "I've got the wedding bell blues."

ANGER. There's a large statue of the Great God Beelzebub in my studio on Polk Street. Hide in it. I'll wait here and throw them off the track.

RIVERA. You are a good man under layers of lurid homosexual vice.

ANGER. I'm in no mood for compliments, I think.

What do ordinary people, who aren't writers, do - why then do they have sex? Have they similar goals I don't know about? Are they a less result-driven species than I? Why bother with it unless it can be problematized? It's unlikely that many of these "ordinary people" will bother having read this symposium this far, but if indeed you are one of them could you get back to me with your answers at "dbkk@sirius.com"? If there is any writing on your body send replies by mail, as you form a third category outside of my dichotomy. I've painted myself into a corner - but isn't that corner the direction towards which one's body hourly moves without even giving one's sex a courtesy call? The fourth category of people, those who write but not "about" any particular subject. Who work in language the way Jackson Pollock worked in paint. Poets. Sianne Ngai writes, "Only the poet who recognizes the negative agency of exasperated utterances, their ability to not-express or not-articulate, is able to paradoxically express her own inexpressiveness and give form to what is formless." My hand closes around the strap of the subway train, K-Ingleside, L-Taraval, whatever, I stiffen up as the flesh moves in. The car stops. Doors open, fresh air at my ankles. Then finally Bruce Conner, happily recovered in the past few years and looking hardy, here he comes, spring in his step . . . infinitely fuckable.

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Colloquium

12 October 2000

Still inside the body colloquium, and impatient with how bloodless the talk of bodies stays; he half-proposes running a symposium of his own on the daily fact of being embodied.

In the thread, Kathy Lou Schultz had written · 11 October 2000 —

| *an active female sexuality that writhes and leaks and jumps right off the page*

Jacques---

I was struck, if not exactly surprised, by how little of body, bodies, was actually discussed (in a "referential" way, etc...)

& not just in this symposium, but often when discussions of body come up in intellectual contexts.... There's this weird critique that certain intellectual poets don't make room for the body enough, and being often lumped in with those poets myself, I tend to be sensitive to it and thus open to it....I mean the critique gets my attention, like maybe THEY know something I don't know, so I run out to read such poetry (being vague here) and find either "body as language" or "body as abstraction," as good thing we need to return to, etc, but not much else more than that....

Has anybody else had this experience? Now, sex is something different....

But, even so, I'm reading the hopefully-soon-to-be-released correspondence of Nada Sullivan and Gary Gordon and---

am struck by Nada's awareness of her body. A lot of talk about diet, how diet affects thought, and not just though, constitution,. about how poropus, sensitive, etc...

this is refreshing and though it's but one subtheme of the book points in a direction i'd like to see emphasized more.... that is, assuming we're talking about the body....

i mean, sure no one these days (please refute me) wants to be so boring as to make poetry sound like a mere self-help book, or practical etc, but I think the taboo here could be shattered in ways that do not sacrifice intensity...

Maybe I should just hold another colloquium; where I ask people to write prose statements (and poetry may be allowed in some cases) about how they deal, on a daily basis, with being "embodied,"----

And that would mean you too Jacques, so if Leslie and Harryman etc, are passive in their bodies, what do you offer by way of alternative, or of personal relationship to BOD (as opposed to G-D, that be.....)

C

Jacques Debrot wrote:

*Of course, Dodie's instigative short fiction was provocative enough. And Kevin's response, as usual, exhibited all of those qualities for which I've begun, increasingly, to admire (&, even, attempt to emulate him). But, on the whole, I think the colloquium fell flat because it isn't at all, frankly, as so many people on this List assume, the rhetoric of marginality--that is, the language of symptoms--that makes the body--or anything else-- dangerous. (In fact, we often seem too prone in our discussions, generally, to construct a facile "them" in order to accomodate a readymade "us".) Put another way, critique, as I've said before, isn't destabilizing. As a form of surveillance, critique is both expected and desired by the therapeutic bureaucracies of the university, the moderated List Serve, etc., etc. No surprise, then, either, that what was always missing in LP was, precisely, the *erotic*. In Scalapino, Harryman--or wherever you might think of looking to contradict me--there is an entropy at the scale of the body that is, in essence, erotically passive. And I couldn't help noticing, among other things, the same passivity at the heart of so many of the responses to the recent colloquium.*

--Jacques

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Omitted through the autumn are the reflex jokes — wondering aloud whether the poet William Slaughter shares a name with the hero of Hal Hartley's TRUST, answering Maria Damon's bath-product contest with 'a guyzie who leaks flutie.' The pun is his default handshake; a thread rarely

passes him without one. Behind the froth, a real December of gigs was taking shape.

From Laird Hunt

13 December 2000

The season's parlour game has been proving poetry superior to fiction; Laird Hunt (relayed by Mike Kelleher) answers with a shelf of novels flung down as a challenge, and Chris, called a poet, meets him more than halfway.

In the thread, Mike Kelleher had written · 7 December 2000 —

I'll pit my Making of the Americans, Ulysses, Beckett's Trilogy, Wittgenstein's Mistress

Hello Laird---

Thanks for this---

I, too (as someone who has been called a poet) will also "pit" (your) list of "non-poets" or "non-poems" against much of what is called poetry.....

I guess what I have held by and large as an assumption for a decade or more is the idea that such books as those you mention are actually more POETIC than most of what is called poetry....

Is this an attempt by me to co-opt "prose?" Or do I not know my proper genre niche?

chris

Mike Kelleher wrote:

As a fiction writer, who is married to a poet, who publishes poetry and who has more poets than fiction writers for friends, I've enjoyed the responses to the query on proving that poetry is better than fiction, and tend to agree with them, especially with Maugham's take on it, and rather dig that business about me (as a post 1990s fiction writer) being dead or a clone and that my novel was written by my computer (an Imac to be precise). Having said that, I'll pit my Making of the Americans, Ulysses, Beckett's Trilogy, Wittgenstein's Mistress, End of the Story and Rings of Saturn against all your pure form cut-to-the-chase blah blah poetry is better stuff anyday.

Best Wishes, Poets,

Laird Hunt

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BlueXmas(or things to do when you don't get an MLA job interview in your stocking)

27 December 2000

Written from outside the MLA hiring convention, where he was not interviewing; wounded pride converts, as usual, into an open question put to the list.

Hello those not in DC,

I was just reading a piece of scholarly or academic writing-- the kind that is supposed to succeed at the MLA--- and I started feeling blue, excluded, etc.... UNTIL, that is, I noticed this particular author used the words "visionary" and "sublime" simply as pejorative words---in a very shorthand, dismissive way--- This author seemed to think the words were SYNONYMS! At first I thought I could say, not in bitterness so much as incredulity "oh fie on this author! fie on the literary establishment, etc!"

but then i thought---well, what really is the difference between "visionary" and "sublime" ? and realized that part of the game, of course, is coming up with your own definitions of these words..... I guess Kant's definition of sublime is the most cited? (oe perhaps that band that did "wrong way?") But as for visionary, there's many more it seems.... (recently talking t Joshua beckman about why Gerald Stern referred to his book as "visionary?")

Anyway, the point is, these words are not synonyms ("visionary," and "sublime")-- so how do YOU, dear reader, understand the difference between these terms? (I'm looking forward to your answers, even if you are at the MLA....)

chris

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CALL FOR DOCTORS

30 December 2000

Filed as an announcement, but it is the year's most naked document — the PhD who is not the kind of doctor he needs, and has no insurance to see one. The van and the 2004 accident are years off; the precarity is already the subject.

CALL FOR DOCTORS (both short term and long)

Is there a doctor in the house? Is there a doctor on the list, a physical doctor, an M.D.? Or does anybody on this list have a friend who is a physical doctor, an M.D.? If so, could you contact me, please, as soon as possible (it would especially help if you're in the new york area) because I would like to offer a trade--- say a poem for an x-ray?

Please contact Chris Stroffolino [REDACTED].....

In more general news, to poets: WE GOTTA DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS MEDICAL CRISIS (not just my specific one right now) But how many of YOU HERE ALSO DO NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE? How many of you here are also so fed up with the way that a PH.D. is not of course considered a real DOCTOR? or the one who may heal physically be considered better than the one who may inspire (and maybe even heal) mentally? (though of course some of you reject the therapeutic model of poetry-- probably because you already have health care or inheritance or something)... I mean shouldn't we try to CHANGE THIS--- can we join together communally to do this, or at least try? Please contact me, anybody who might be intersted in arranging some way in which poets may give their services in exchange to doctors for theirs-- in this age of privitaization, especially now that bushy poo is "elected" or my friend Noelle wins an NEA grant (which is good---though the government may not let her have her money because of debts in student loans)-- we gotta find some way of solidarity on this--- obviously i am not the only one?

chris

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2001

2001 is the year the move west completes and the towers fall: he writes from an Oakland two months old, reeling old friends back by backchannel, then — after September — turns the list's quarrels over flags and 'action' into its most searching argument, all while quietly floating his first book of prose. Grief runs under everything, from Corso and James Carr and Raymond Patterson down to the six thousand.

CALL FOR DOCTORS

6 January 2001

The year opens with a thread he'd started himself — asking who else resented that a doctorate counts for nothing at the hospital — which the list promptly read as special pleading. Roitman and Bill Austin having pressed him on the assumptions of privilege, this is the walk-back.

In the thread, Austinwja@AOL.COM had written · 5 January 2001 —

If you want your appendix removed, you see a surgeon because s/he is officially sanctioned to provide that service

Thanks for this---

and Grummon, Baptiste and others---

I guess there's two points--- while I was hoping not to create, or emphasize, or encourage a division between poets or writers or thinkers or performers or whatever you wish to call it (us/?), who have Ph.Ds' and those (of the same) that

do not have Ph.Ds, my rhetoric, quite obviously, seemed to argue a kind of "special pleading"

and thus most of you understandably directed most of your attention to the seeming assumptions of privilege and hierarchies invoked (as if there was lament in their lack)--

But that was (and is) not the point, the lack or the lament I guess I was looking for an external reference against which something like a community could come into being, in which perhaps we may start thinking of ways we need not deny ourself things like healthcare if we continue to wish to pursue the "purposeful purposelessness" (for want of a better phrase---shorthand) of writing, considering the possibility that maybe writing is not necessarily irrelevant to society, or at least more of those in "nonpoetic" professions such as doctors---as if believing in my heart---oops, essentialism-- that they need us as much as we need them. I meant, and mean, to be inclusive.... or of course one could say I was (am) just trying to find, or target, new markets, but barter is fine.....the passive lure

c

Judy Roitman wrote:

In a message dated 12/31/00 5:05:41 PM, cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET writes:

<< How many of you here are also so fed up with the way that a PH.D. is not of course considered a real DOCTOR? >>

Should we care what the general public thinks? I've never encountered a physician who wasn't impressed by my Ph.D. and inclined to treat me as an equal, or better. My experience is that, in the main, educated men and women know who's who. My own tendency is to admire anyone with expertise I lack. Bill

Most of us (there may be a doctor in the house) are not real doctors. Some of us are PhD's. It is a trick of language that uses "Dr." for both.

Anyway, don't want to belittle anyone's achievement, but why elevate Ph.D. (or M.D. for that matter) into something worth crowing about? When I need my appendix taken out, I will see a surgeon, when I have a serious question about literature I try to find someone who knows the answer, often this is someone without a Ph.D.

An exercise: think of the most learned contemporary poets with whose scholarly/theoretical work you are familiar. My bet is that this a good number of them will not have PhD's.

Me, I think people, whether educated or not, tend to know who's who, and that degrees have little to do with anything other than requirements for employment ("food service worker, must have high school diploma..."). Education and training, ah, that's another matter. --

Judy Roitman | " cats Math Dept., University of Kansas | as much as horses Lawrence, KS 66045 | on the night stairs" [REDACTED] | fax: [REDACTED] | Larry Eigner, 1927-1996 <http://www.math.ukans.edu/~roitman/>

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Creeley on Corso

19 January 2001

Creeley's death notice — placing Corso in Robert Duncan's company — reached the list through Bernstein the morning after the death.

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 19 January 2001 —

| only a poet could say he or she was a poet -- only they knew

Gregory Corso, fellow Italian, fellow orphan--- fellow piano player (the description in Desolation Angels....) I never met him but in writing.... "Power" is at least as good a poem as "Howl" I'm very glad to see Robert Creeley place Gregory in the company of Duncan for that is a compliment-- I only wish I could've told GC that he was very appreciated....

Charles Bernstein wrote:

From: Robert Creeley

Gregory Corso died last night (January 17), happily in his sleep in Minnesota. He had been ill for much of the past year but had recovered from time to time, saying that he'd got to the classic river but lacked the coin for Charon to carry him over. So he just dipped his toes in the water.

In this time his daughter Sherry, a nurse, had been a godsend to him, securing him, steadying the ambiance, just minding the store with great love and clarity. He thought she should get Nurse of the Year recognition at the very least.

There's no simple generalization to make of Gregory's life or poetry. There are all too many ways to displace the extraordinary presence and authority he was fact of. Last time we talked, he made the useful point that only a poet could say he or she was a poet -- only they knew. Whereas a philosopher, for instance, needed some other to say that that was what he or she was -- un(e) philosophe! -- poets themselves had to recognize and initiate their own condition.

There are several quick websites that help recall him now. One gives a brief biography and discussion of a few of his poems:

http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/corso/corso.htm

Another, more usefully affectionate, is taken from Ed Sanders' The Woodstock Journal. It was Lawrence Ferlinghetti who had suggested last summer that a spate of respects might help cheer Gregory in his illness -- and that they were certainly well merited:

<http://www.woodstockjournal.com/corso.html>

A third, which includes some previously noted, is The Museum of American Poetics. There's a 'streamable' video available there of Gregory reading at Naropa , if you can get the sound clearly:

<http://www.poetspath.com/corso.html>

Lots of us propose to be poets but who finally stakes all, or just takes all, as being that way? In my life time only Robert Duncan could be his equal in this way. It was honor indeed to have had his company.

RC, Buffalo, January 18, 2001

The Whole Mess ... Almost

I ran up six flights of stairs to my small furnished room opened the window and began throwing out those things most important in life

First to go, Truth, squealing like a fink: "Don't! I'll tell awful things about you!" "Oh yeah? Well, I've nothing to hide ... OUT!" Then went God, glowering & whimpering in amazement: "It's not my fault! I'm not the cause of it all!" "OUT!" Then Love, cooing bribes: "You'll never know impotency! All the girls on Vogue covers, all yours!" I pushed her fat ass out and screamed: "You always end up a bum!" I picked up Faith Hope Charity all three clinging together: "Without us you'll surely die!" "With you I'm going nuts! Goodbye!"

Then Beauty ... ah, Beauty -- As I led her to the window I told her: "You I loved best in life ... but you're a killer; Beauty kills!" Not really meaning to drop her I immediately ran downstairs getting there just in time to catch her "You saved me!" she cried I put her down and told her: "Move on."

Went back up those six flights went to the money there was no money to throw out. The only thing left in the room was Death hiding beneath the kitchen sink: "I'm not real!" It cried "I'm just a rumor spread by life ..." Laughing I threw it out, kitchen sink and all and suddenly realized Humor was all that was left -- All I could do with Humor was to say: "Out the window with the window!"

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Dark End of The Street

20 January 2001

Another soul death that winter: James Carr, whose 1967 recording of 'The Dark End of the Street' is the definitive one.

Not only, but also James Carr who wrote the song and also discovered (not invented) the "falling....down...calling...clown" rhyme-- dead too--

I had just put Graham Parson's version of it on a mix tape for a special someone (alongside of Christine McVie's "Just Crazy Love" and other pre-Nicks stuff) and "True Democracy" Steel Pulse stuff, when I turned on the radio and heard the news....

chris

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Pass This On To Bob

31 January 2001

His day job as impresario and gossip surfaces; the forthcoming book of essays he keeps trailing here is Spin Cycle, still the better part of a year from arriving.

A painter friend of mine (Deirdre Simon---mark the name, unless of course the conceptual thing totally eclipses painting---anyway I am hoping one of her works will be represented at least semi-adequately on the cover of my upcoming book of essays/reviews; I think the publisher may be convinced to go 4-color...)

gave me a subscription to "Jubilat," a new magazine attached somehow to U-Mass (if not memories of catholic mass; the church bells there once played "Hey Jude" out of tune, enough for Joe "Scud Mountain Boys," Pernice to interrupt, with joy, one of Tate's workshop---ah, the mass of memories thank God for the U)

and in this magazine, which I've only begun reading is a new (prosey) poem by Bob Perelman called "A Practical Poem." Bob's still writing great things, and Brenda Borofsky told me that he read more of them at a reading she did with them (or him) in Fuchs' Filly series....

Chris

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Through the spring and into late summer he plays the list's fixer and finder — passing on a SoHo sublet, hunting a Manhattan room big enough for a friend's baby grand, chasing backchannel addresses for Kevin Killian, Pamela Lu, and a Chicago poet named Joan Fisher he'd lost in the move west. The small ads are dropped here, but together they map a man newly relocated and reeling everyone back in.

McKuen trashing

29 March 2001

The list was running a popularity poll of poets; Silliman had risen to defend Rod McKuen's Berkeley-Renaissance credentials, and Bill Austin to separate talent from the odiousness of its owners.

In the thread, Austinwja@AOL.COM had written · 29 March 2001 —

sometimes the bastards are quite talented (Eliot, Pound, Hemiingway, the Italian Futurists

My opinion of McKuen went way up when I heard some of his funny beatnik recordings---for instance I didn't know that Richard Hell's "Blank Generation" stole the melody from a McKuen thing called "I Belong To The Beat Generation," and my respect for Terry jacks went up when I realized he was the songwriter/guitarist for The Poppy Family....

chris

Ron Silliman wrote:

In addition to trashing Hughes, Leonard, which I disagree with completely, let's remember that Rod McKuen used to hang with the Berkeley Renaissance poets in the late '40s and early '50s (including Spicer and Duncan). He might not have been a great poet, but it doesn't mean that he wasn't serious about it. If you get a sense of a scene that included McKuen, Spicer and Spicer's old guest on his folk music program on KPFA, Harry Smith, you get a sense of the feel of the time....

[Trashing poets is just generally not wise behavior. Yeah, I don't like Paul McCartney's verse -- it seems weaker than Jewel's. Or Henry Rollins. So what? You can make a good case for the influence of William Carlos Williams on the work of L. Ron Hubbard, and isn't that Stephen King of all people quoting Ed Dorn??]

I'm still more amazed at the number of votes that Cummings has gotten, given just how virulent his antisemitism was.

Ron

Leonard Brink wrote:

Well, it's pretty much degenerated into a farce at this point -- Langston Hughes leads all other poets by a margin of greater than 3 to 1. How much of this is because Rod McKuen is still alive and therefore not eligible we'll never know.

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another brother gone

15 April 2001

Aldon Nielsen brought word of Raymond Patterson's death; Stroffolino answers from the far edge of the acquaintance, a reader more than a friend.

In the thread, Nielsen, Aldon had written · 10 April 2001 —

the death of Poet Raymond Patterson, author of the incomparable "Twenty-Six Ways of Looking at a Black Man."

Thanks for this sad news--- I was turned on to Patterson by Lamont Steptoe in the late 80s-- I know my copy of "26" is around here somewhere---

Chris

"Nielsen, Aldon" wrote:

News this weekend of the death of Poet Raymond Patterson, author of the incomparable "Twenty-Six Ways of Looking at a Black Man." (many years prior to the similarly titled book by Henry Louis Gates, I hasten to add)

Raymond was a great friend to other poets everywhere -- He can be seen in the video series "Furious Flower" -- though you may be hard pressed to find any of his books these days --

" Subjects hinder talk." -- Emily Dickinson

Aldon Lynn Nielsen *Fletcher Jones Chair of Literature and Writing Loyola Marymount University 7900 Loyola Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90045-8215*



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Is it Patrick Heron?

3 May 2001

The list was mid-brawl over Stephen Dunn, that year's Pulitzer winner, and a run of anti-Dunn posts; here he tries to turn the anger toward making something.

Hope memory serves me well, but I deleted that latest Anti-Dunn post by I think Patrick Herron---

Was just thinking, I love the PASSIONATE anger that pulitzer winner has engendered in you---

have you thought about writing an "answer poem" (or even parody, though not necessarily) of Dunn's piece you quote? I think it would be great-- I mean take his "plain speaking" style and provide a positive alterantive

to his politics or meaning or smugness---

Chris

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m&r...everybody's protest poetry...

8 June 2001

Nudel had filed another dismissive report — this time on a Baraka/Cortez reading he had not attended — and drawn fire from Chris Funkhouser and Nielsen. Stroffolino, who'd seen Baraka often, weighs in across Baltimore's distance.

In the thread, Nielsen, Aldon had written · 7 June 2001 —

| *This has to be bout the most bizarre posting I've ever read on this list*

Nudel,

I respectfully second Mr. Funkhouser's comments... though I was in Baltimore at the time, I've seen Baraka oft before, and CF rings true....

C

"Funkhouser, Chris" wrote:

Nudel,

I can't believe you are doing this again!

Why are you wasting your, my, & everyone else's time sending such drivels?? I'd like to see instead your _real_ anti-anti-imperialist (or anti-racist, anti-liberal, or anti-whatever agenda), rather than taking swipes at people who are actively doing

something to provoke a changes in thinking & perhaps even promoting a cultural renaissance.

After last year's despicable account on the Baraka / Cecil Taylor reading, you have the nerve to report on a reading you didn't even go to again??

I'm sorry to say that the reports that reached you were WAY off the mark. The readings by Cortez and Baraka on Saturday night were incredible, really potent, as I'm sure any a/v documentation would demonstrate. Both poets performed with excellent bands, completely tight, and at the top of their game. The poetry all the way around was extraordinary. And the audience was hardly 95% white. The SRO crowd included great scholars (Fred Moten, Brent Edwards, Alan Gilbert), artists, (including dj Spooky & many other musicians, Eliot Katz) ETC ETC. Your accountants could not have presented you with more misinformation.

I don't have time to do a full analysis of the gig, which also included Daniel Berrigan, Other Dimensions in Music, Raphe Malik, and others. Jayne Cortez was absolutely radiant, her band sharp, & message righteous. But since you again diss on Baraka so badly, I'd like to write a few sentences because I had a totally different perspective on it than you (esp. cause I was there), & think he's still an important voice.

The band (Blue Ark): Amina Baraka (voc.), D.D. Jackson (piano), Wilber Morris (bass), Pheeroan Ak-Laff (drums), Herbie Morgan (sax), Dwight West (voc.). They played an hour set that never dragged, an arc of word and music that effectively and overtly set up a thoughtful dialect between MLK & X, with the history of the "railroad at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean made of human bones" as the overall backdrop. Not some kind of retro thing, either. What you also get is Baraka as preacher/anti-preacher railing against "A Fake President for a Counterfeit Democracy," & persecutions faced by all. Mid-set he offered a number of his "lo-ku" poems, including a bunch of new ones ("for bush II": "the only problem with you is that you're not in jail"). the group's stage presence is mature, professional, & baraka himself himself, hunched over, dropping his pages all over the stage, shuffling them just right, hitting the mic right at the right moment. His brother in law Dwight with a deep deep voice next to him at least 2 feet taller thrusting fist upward. Amina, soulful in voice & presence to his other side. & all of this is poetry of and for his people, nadel, & for all of us. you're dead wrong in your last paragraph; your scouts must have gone to a spike lee movie, or much worse. What authority do you have on the subject anyway, & what are you doing about the problems besides sending us this crap?

& when Baraka says "evil was an experiment," that's poignant & hopeful. If it's a vision on the world, & we can get beyond the experiment, great for us. i think it can also be heard apologetically, and one thing Baraka has done steadily in the past 20 years is acknowledge earlier misdirections.

anyway, clearly you're down on Baraka, & that's fine but wish you'd actually engage w/what he's got going on, or with what's going on it the world rather than ignorantly gripe.

what is your real beef, bro?

I missed the double-header of Amiri Baraka and Jane Cortez doing the Vision Festival at the Knitting Factory becaue I was home watching the Met game. But reports have reached me that it was the same ole tired inimitating act. The audience at 20 bucks

per pop was 95 per cent white and the stray African American must have made a wrong left turn somewhere.

Ms Cortez was loud and energetic...the 4 piece band including her son played back ground...'cause as is known...the message is... which the white audience ate it up...esp. poems they could understand...women is etc adj verb etc ad infinitum...man is adj verb etc ad infinitum...the audience which could actually get 'this stuff'... 41 bullets 41 bullets onebyone...bang bang...bang BANG...

Mr. Baraka let the band actually play...he left the 'jew landlord stuff back in Newark..& with the petcular hatred of the career civil servant...whose money in fully invested in the Stock market by NY State..let loose the East German rants of his youth...

This is not the poetry of Kobe Bryant, Jerry Rice, the sec. of state, the national sec. advisor, the African-American woman just engineering grad of Cornell, the genius Afro-A internet hacker, the hordes of A-A hampshire oberlin reed usc ucla strivers..this is minstrelly for white folk..doo wop done again and again...it's time to retire these acts..& let 'em play the Euro festival trash circuit where Anti-Americanism still has its gone good name...and real bucks can be made off it.....Drn...

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Two book parties for the new Spin Cycle go out under mock-solemn headers — the thirtieth anniversary of Jim Morrison's death, the thirty-second of Brian Jones' — the readings themselves filed among the announcements. The joke is pure Stroffolino: mourning rock's dead saints while quietly launching his own book.

motherhood poetry gospels

14 August 2001

Rachel Levitsky's thread had run motherhood in the alternative scene up against Plath and René Girard's Scapegoat; Robert Corbett had just filed a sceptical reading of Girard.

In the thread, Robert Corbett had written · 15 August 2001 —

| one might say, hysterically catholic

Hey Rachel---

There's at least one great poem in Dorothy Trujillo Lusk's new OGRESSE OBLIGE that deals with the prejudices she felt were hurled at her by the enlightened "alternative" scene for choosing to have a child.... at least that's how i read it....

c

Rachel Levitsky wrote:

From Cassie Lewis:

As far as judgements about her parenting etc, it is all about speculation, isn't it? So why then the need for evidence? I have a distaste for holding parents responsible for

anything and everything, as though their lives stopped when they had kids, and by extension as though there weren't a bigger social context for Plath's depression.

From me, Rachel:

Mothers are just women, yes?

Yes, in fact I am trying to figure out why so many women, single, lesbian, married etc, my age (35-40--yes I am many) are popping out little ones with great enthusiasm. After having so many choices does it seem like the only one? Or do we do it cuz we can? Or is it an act of mimesis. i don't think women could possibly believe they'd be more valued by the culture as mothers.

And speaking of the culture, did any of you read the article in the Business section of yesterday's (Friday, Aug 10) Times about the "Bully Broads"--a group that women execs are sent to by their male bosses when they are deemed too tough. It's like a corporate gulag or AA where you must see and confess the error of your ways in order to begin to progress toward gentleladyhood. Is the power of the corporate entity in getting these women to these groups to reform and confess just monetary? (Not to mention the funeral for feminism)(BTW--it takes place in bay area)

Lastly on the topic of culture--I just read this book by Rene Girard call The Scapegoat and am wondering if anyone has read it too. He finds in the Gospels the first major text that provides the tools for the culture to begin to move away from violent epiphanies by making them obvious. Is he a catholic or a pacifist?

Would love feedback on Girard: Levitsk@attglobal.net

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Godfrey is God

20 August 2001

The list had been asking who John Godfrey was; Lee Ann Brown and Randolph Healy supplied the books and links, and Stroffolino a reviewer's stake — he'd written Godfrey up more than a decade earlier.

In the thread, Randolph Healy had written · 20 August 2001 —

| John Godfrey is like the secret New York poet we got to know when we moved here

also a review of him (written in 1989) of Midnight on Your Left in my new Spin Cycle...

Randolph Healy wrote:

Some John Godfrey links:

Odds Lent Bare is at <http://hardpress.com/newhp/lingo/authors/godfrey.html>

The Ticket and Feminine Stamp can be found at <http://www.cyberpoems.com/slavery1.html>

and a short bio note with photo <http://www.cyberpoems.com/aboutjon.html>

best

Randolph

----- Original Message -----

Dear B. E. Basan

Read *Midnight on Your Left* (The Figures) first then *Where the Weather Suits My Clothes* (Z Press) and for the new one from the Figures I don't have yet see www.spdbooks.org

I remember Lisa Jarnot did a great interview with him in Poetry Project Newsletter like 2-3 years ago -

John Godfrey is like the secret New York poet we got to know when we moved here

He rocks

I have to run now - perhaps others can say more...

Someone should make a folder for him on EPC if they haven't already

Lee Ann

Hi All, Is there any information out there about John Godfrey, even a preface? I =

can't find anything on the internet. Also, can anyone recommend one of = his books, I only have a few poems. Thanks, Ben

Lee Ann Brown Tender Buttons PO Box 13, Cooper Station NYC 10276

██████████ home - ██████████ cell

"Harmless amulets arm little limbs with poise and charm."

< Harryette Mullen, Trimmings (Tender Buttons Books)

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The last couple of days

14 September 2001

His first response to the eleventh of September, written from an Oakland barely two months old and still raw — a long, deliberately unfinished poem laid before the list for judgement.

This is very rough (as a poem at least), but I thought I'd share this....

(any comments, aesthetic or ethical, political, pos. or neg., welcome----)

Chris

Social Solipsism: A Perverse Response to Recent Tragedy

Proof at last America is not an isolationist!

Though you'd never guess it by recent reports

There's a war going on between

"will the circle (of violence) be unbroken"

and "I'm mad as hell & I'm not going to take it anymore"

I had thoroughly repressed my nostalgia for New York these last two months
(not so much by proactively making new memories here
as by curbing further curiosities until I began to digest
what for years sat stranded on the tastebuds)
until the fire's gray glare on my black and white TV
gave proof through the morn the towers weren't there.

Now, I almost envy my friends there, I long.
It's like they all sent me this giant "wish you were here" postcard.
Sure, none of them have yet come forth
To tell me of the death of someone close
And some were awfully lucky
Like Fred who works there & never oversleeps,
Who on this one day did.

But even if one has died,
I wave no flag but dig out the peace sign
To wear like a bible over my breast pocket
To prevent the bullet of the flags
From flapping in my face.
I wear the button like a finger
That could become a hand
If 4 others joined me in flipping its bird at Bush.

This is what I think it meant to be a hippy-punk
When his dad's "kinder, gentler" war-itch
Hadn't yet latched on Saddam:
"I'm in love with everyone...
but don't go putting flowers in my gun"
(sayeth the Volcano Suns). The DJ laughs,
"Tonight the L.A. Guns are playing"
though business as usual is disrupted
and Bush has not yet begun bombing
(silent night, sooty night, 7 O'Clock news....)
"Nuclear winter lasts millions of years..."

It's that in-between crisis epiphany
When folks are shaken to the root
And may, if not for the news, question everything
And since I've always been more concerned
With the atrocities closer to me
To the point where I run the risk of self-laceration,

Biting the hand that feeds me
When I've already eaten more than I can digest
And, even in poetry circles, get called a "native informer"
For pointing out inconsistencies (that would be okay
if they weren't evident in those who claim to value consistency)
In the "avant" poetics of those who criticize
What they call mainstream
More than I lash out at the follies and fuck ups and (minor) atrocities
Of those I would have to be less isolationist
And more imperialist to even meet,
I see the news trying to tell me it's my duty to be an imperialist.
No more now, "to defend freedom," than ever.

And even if I'm all thumbs,
I point my psychic sidekick gun at Bush,
Enough of a yippee if not quite a hippie
To allow you to say my bang flags, my blanks
Are more like flowers than flags on tanks
Enough of a punk and sort of a monk
To know that the working title for the Clash's
Only top ten American hit (which "coincidentally"
Had anti-Arab sentiments) was "rob the cashbox."

Bush, you make Eisenhower seem a peacenik by comparison
(as if 5 little words, "Beware the military industrial complex"
could expiate his guilt, and erase 8 long years of "Leave It To Beaver"
while Beats and panthers bubbled beneath the Joneses
even Baraka was at this point still trying to keep up with---
who would've guessed that ground would seem more fertile 40 years later?)

Bush, I know it's as bad for me to single you out
As it is for you to single out that terrorist in Afghanistan
And I know you are but an iceberg tip
Of a military-post industrial complex
Symbolized by the three buildings whose fire
Gives proof through these days that you are still there,
Bigger than ever, a complex bigger and older than you,
Like Chaney perhaps, but bigger than him too

But now is not the time to address the faceless world incurious
Much less to hail the chimp
And I could even, if only for strategic reasons,

Grant your heart, and the heart of those
Who bought you the election, is in the right place,
That you truly care about the safety of people like myself
Who very well have been in the basement
Of the towers transferring from the N and the R
To the Path Train to get to my adjunct job at Rutgers
Had I not been fortuitiously offered a better job
Far enough from ground zero to worry about rolling blackouts...

And that you would certainly not want to be mistaken
For the kind of Christian who would crucify Christ
Is perchance the second coming of the one and only God
Were to happen as you say,
And that that Bible you tote for the cameras
Actually says "thou shalt not kill...unless an Arab,
Or unless he killed first..."

But did they kill first really??
I'll let someone like Dan Bouchard fill in the details
With numerous historical examples by which the people
Of your administration (to say nothing of your family)
Were involved; suffice it to say I know
And there's evidence, there's blood on your hands
And now it's not just foreign, not just enlisted.

The chickens haven't quite come home to roost
Because you're alive, lucky as Fred, or just like Saddam
If not the Iraqi civilians too poor to outsmart your bombs
But they have come home to some who supported you---
Though probably more who didn't
(since there were more janitors in the pentagon,
More clerks in the trade towers,
Than senators, lobbyists, and warriors)

And even if they were duped like my dad
Not realizing the reason he was laid off
Was close kin to the reason the stockmarket was up,
And even if I'm duped by believing
That killing the men who killed them
Won't make things any safer for us survivors
And, if anything, can make things worse,
I know that it is not too cool to be ridiculed

(especially by most of the world's population)
but that you brought this upon yourself
and the Wonder's brilliant double negative
makes me really wish you'd do nothing,
make nothing happen like Auden (if not Pound's) idea of poetry,
submit your swords to Ploughshares magazine,
your warfare to The Germ, or maybe even Fence,
I mean the one you can sit on
Between isolationism and imperialism.

But, failing that, spit your bile out in a slam
Even if the pen isn't mightier.
Oh, be weak and squishy, like Falstaff
Or I as a lad when the neighbor boy came at me with fists
And though I didn't punch him in the fist with my face
I ran home I'm proud to say
While the roots of the ugly tree my dad chopped down
Sprang up as 20 more---

We weren't safe before, but now that we know it,
What shall we do? And why should we listen to you?
There's no one else to listen to.
You have the answer, you got the cure.
The news is with you, but the becomes a
And I suppose your guess is more or less as bad as mine
As Thom Yorke holds his "let Ralph debate" sign
Like Dylan's "Watch Out" or "Dig Yourself"
And I do, pausing for gold, pausing for shit,
Pausing for what I hope's not mere wit
Or the "premature conspiracy theories"
A new friend accuses me of—

For I know that during the long lean years
That I have craved a stock market crash,
A disruption of business as usual,
And that there's a side to me
That would defend the Unabomber
On the grounds he killed far less
Than he did as a cog in the warmachine
At respectable M.I.T

And I know this could be treason

Were it not that I believe, as you
Claim you do, that killing is wrong
Even if by taking my position
To its logical consequences,
I'd probably be considered suicidal
At least in a society where the death penalty
Is more legal than euthanasia
So I sympathize and forgive
The man who kills in the heat of the moment, in self-defence,
Much more than the political terror of the CIA
Or whoever it was who hijacked those planes
And may even (heaven forbid) be forced into that situation
While I'm not feeling particularly "unattached" to life

But you could counter, as you do,
That since you stole, I mean, won, the public trust
That you too are acting in self-defense
But it's not the heat of the moment, you know damn well,
And you've been itchin' for military action since the day you got in,
Pissing off China, Russia, Saddam, now this---
How fortuitous, the economy: weak, your ratings:
So-so; the tax cuts didn't do it. Wag the dog, folks will rally.
An old, old story, which Shakespeare doth tally...

Even if you didn't set them on, or know in advance
As some say Roosevelt did about Pearl Harbor,
Which, granted, doesn't have anything on this,
But to the extent Hitler's crimes were against humanity
Far more than property, you are not worthy
To lick Roosevelt's boots.

Even if you didn't set them on,
They were, as even the papers claim, CIA trained.
You can dish it out but you can't take it
And this boomerang would be comic
If the chickens had truly come home to roost
And the hijacked planes would have only been filled
With masters of war, and some little bird
(illegal to feed in New York) would have warned
each and every innocent civilian away
from the towers and pentagon that Tuesday day.
It didn't happen, but the only way you could save your skin

Was to get blood on your hands.

The enemy of my enemy may not be my friend,
 And since I do not know their intentions
 I cannot say if they missed their target,
 All I know is that they missed MY target,
 Which was not you so much as the forces
 (would they were farces) who speak through you,
 ignorant or evil I cannot say
 and that maybe I need to rethink
 my desire to see the market crash
 to disrupt business as usual
 for I cannot say I'm glad it's happened
 but wish we lived in a land
 where the President wouldn't have to wait
 to his final speech to cop to the existence
 of a military industrial complex,
 where Kaczinski's anti-tech and anti-war statements
 could get on the cover of the New York Times
 without him having to become his own enemy by killing,
 and when I say we (or) you can dish it out but you can't take it,
 I don't mean we should be 'strong' enough to keep taking it
 As much as that we should use this opportunity
 To stop dishing it out.....

Chris Stroffolino

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polipo

17 September 2001

He had just moved into Barbara Lee's district; days earlier she had cast the lone vote in Congress against the war authorization. Elizabeth Treadwell Jackson, a native of the same district, had risen to claim her.

*In the thread, Elizabeth Treadwell Jackson had written · 17 September 2001 —
 | I am very proud of my congresswoman Barbara Lee.*

Elizabeth---

I too very proud of my congresswoman Barbara Lee; I left a message of support on her machine today....and urge others here to do the same.... how fortuitious to have moved here (and maybe, at the risk of sounding flippant yet again, we should start printing the "DON'T BLAME ME I'm FROM OAKLAND" Bumperstickers....

love, chris

Elizabeth Treadwell Jackson wrote:

As one who's previously complained of politix on the list, I ask your patience -- wanted to just say that having been born, grown, and still living in her district, I am very proud of my congresswoman Barbara Lee. I hope others will speak up (incl Ms. Hillary "it takes a village" Clinton)

-- if you want to I have two petition suggestions, though it's hard to think such old-fashioned tools will do the trick (esp as our electoral system has been proven faulty) -- I suggest those at actionagenda.com and actforchange.com (asking Bush to condemn remarks by Falwell and Robertson, and to in general chill, respectively.)

love and hope to all

Elizabeth

Get your FREE download of MSN Explorer at <http://explorer.msn.com/intl.asp>

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What is to be criticized

21 September 2001

The list's central post-September argument: Silliman's letter urging the left toward 'action' and Barrett Watten's point-by-point rebuttal. Thomas Bell's note on the flag as a 'transitional object' is the peg, but the real address is to Ron and Barry.

In the thread, Thomas Bell had written · 21 September 2001 —

| the flag is a "transitional" object

I wanted to publicly thank Barrett Watten for this thoughtful point by point analysis of Ron Silliman's earlier post....

I hope, Barrett, this piece will someday appear in your collected prose!!!!!!!!!!!!

And want to ask Ron about why he thinks waving the flag and supporting what he calls "action" (meaning, specifically, a stepping up of MILITARY action) will help "the left" make "far more crucial arguments that need to be made right now."

What are these far more crucial arguments, Ron?

Ron, could you try to convince me,, who is more inclined (and not out of habit) to agree with Barry than with Bush or you? Or do you think the sway of "popular opinion," which you swear comes BEFORE the government/media's stance, is enough to carry you through (at least till more civilians, both "ours" and "theirs" are killed...)

thanks (in advance),

Chris

Barrett Watten wrote:

I want to continue the debate over Ron's letter. I found the part of the argument that takes issue with the "left" to be misguided, and hence I question it. It seems based on

an assumption that to argue strongly against war as an initial response to the horror of September 11 is to be in denial of the event and hence to risk isolating oneself rhetorically. This implies that in order to participate in debate, one has to give initial assent to military response before one can speak to the issue.

For me, the ethical imperative against 1) past American policy and 2) present possibility of action that would make the situation even more dangerous stems directly from a deep and committed response to the deaths of 6000. Ron suggests the opposite--that antiwar leftists who do not overcome their principled horror of war are in some sense in denial of its consequences when they occur, and hence their responses will remain outside of debate.

Here are some places in his argument where he says or infers these things, and a response: It is time for progressives to act, but not on the past dragged on as habit.

Objection to American militarism from Hiroshima to the present is not a habit but an analysis of the world situation we are in. America is widely disliked for its position as dominant world power--or have we lost touch with reality? On the British Poets list there has been a great deal of mockery of the current rubric under which we are going to war: "Infinite Justice." As one post had it, "just us, forever and ever." America is isolated--you feel this in the responses of those outside the country--by virtue of its position of military dominance. Jingoism blinds us to the world we are in. The attack places progressives into a particularly difficult and painful spot. So far, my impression is that the left as a whole has not responded well and is mostly doing a bang-up job of isolating itself at the worst possible moment in history.

I do not understand not so much the reasoning as the perception here. The "left," like everyone else in the country, is reeling from the implications of these events. There has been a paradigm shift in terms of everyone's estimation of what is possible. Ron sees a perverse will in responses that are, in fact, trying to find a perspective from which to speak and act. "Doing a bang-up job of isolating itself" is oddly insensitive to the immediate need for information, analysis, discussion. Perhaps for Ron the left's response is failing to protect us, rhetorically or analytically, and this is where we need to call for a higher order of protection--the U.S. military. It is obvious that confused and disorganized need could give the green light to any sort of military response, however. The argument that a U.S.-led coalition, or even the U.S. on its own, should not respond militarily to the death of over 5,000 people, all but a hundred or so of them civilians, is based on premises that reveal an absolute inability to look at the circumstances directly. Instead, people seem to be continuing on some mode of automatic pilot that is well-intended, but ultimately self-defeating.

I have no argument with an initial response against war as either an ethical principle or rhetorical stance. But Ron assumes that all "left" responses might be characterized in such a way as to reveal "an absolute inability to look at the circumstances directly." An anti-militarist position, it seems to me, is an appropriate first response to the circumstances--in our state of inadequate knowledge. It ought to require deep reflection, not just shock and horror, to change that position. The present situation is qualitatively different from the Vietnam War or Desert Storm. To pretend otherwise and to trot out the same old slogans is itself potentially a disaster from which the left may not soon recover.

False. American disregard of civilian casualties, from Hiroshima to Vietnam to Desert Storm is a direct rationale for the terrorists's refusal to distinguish between civilians and military targets. File footage exists of bin Laden saying precisely this. Of course it is a rationalization. But it is one that is believed by an overwhelming majority of the Muslim world. Selective assassinations by Israelis of Palestinian leaders and the botched US attempt to get bin Laden in Operation Infinite Reach have only reinforced this perception. Ditto the civilian consequences of the embargo of Iraq. To focus exclusively on what the U.S. might (and may well) do wrong in responding to the attack is to miss the point so completely that it is going to be difficult, if not impossible, later on, to be taken seriously. That is what I think is at stake.

The notion that a principled position may not be taken seriously is akin, I think, to Bush senior's dictum, "You can't hear them." It makes a certain perception of loyalty a precondition for debate. (4) Does anybody honestly think that if America were to somehow "improve its behavior" toward people of the Third World, that this would eliminate the impetus behind these attacks? That it could do so quickly enough to forestall future assaults?

It is a very reasonable position to see American actions as contributing directly to the motives for and reception of the terrorists' actions. If the US were to strongly renounce civilian targets (as Ron indicates later) it would certainly would help to change world opinion, and hence the context for any future terrorist actions. Ron's argument here is in direct contradiction here to what he calls for later--the need for debate concerning the limits of American responses, with which I agree. (5) Does anybody honestly think that the U.S. could do # 4 without literally abandoning Israel?

This is very out of touch with the events in Israel since Ariel Sharon marched into the plaza of the Muslim sanctuary in Jerusalem with his retinue. The U.S. had, under Clinton, been restraining the Israelis from the kinds of aggressivity we have seen since. The current situation in Israel is a direct result of the change in policy. Therefore, it is nonsense to say that changing the perception of the US's role in world, which should be done, means abandoning Israel. The US should return to a proactive role in containing the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and in seeking a solution. The first order of business would be to seek support for a coalition that would remove Sharon from power. In the face of all this, to argue against the use of force in breaking up the network of terrorist cells is to confess that one is not only tone deaf to the popular will, manipulated or otherwise (and I suspect, frankly, that the media, like the pols, is much more a follower than a leader in this), it is even wrong in terms of the protection of Americans. To the extent that the American left and its allies puts its eggs into this basket, it is going to find itself with very little credibility remaining with which to make the far more crucial arguments that need to be made right now.

It is very odd to see a former pacifist seek to limit the terms of debate over the legitimacy of force. Even if Ron no longer agrees with his former C.O. position, or sees the situation as historically different, he should not seek to discredit that position in others. To argue as above seems to me to capitulate to the media as representative of reality. It is important to maintain an alternative perspective, and indeed Ron argues for this. Another reason why I find his position so contradictory. But to take any position that can be perceived as inaction in the face of the enormous physical and

emotional wound that confronts the American people serves only to exacerbate the reputation of the left as a movement completely out of touch with reality.

This is a little like the "prior restraint" of possibly actionable speech as a condition for limiting speech. How can a former C.O. see anti-militarist arguments as out of touch with reality, when they are based on the entirety of human history? Julian Borger, also writing in The Guardian (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,553876,00.html>) gets it right when he argues against the idea that "Americans should be asking themselves why this happened to them Rather than getting angry, then, they should be meditating and wondering what they have done wrong.

No, Americans need to figure out what it is about recent US policy that has made it possible for us to be seen as the world's enemy and to correct that policy. "This point of view seems to me to be detached to the point of inhumanity. Moreover, it is driven by an internal logic that is utterly bogus. That logic, insinuated between the lines, suggests that the horror visited on thousands of New Yorkers must be balanced somewhere by an equal and opposite evil that the US has inflicted upon someone else."

Jingoism. The author implies that horror at past US policy is an indifference to the tragedy. Rather, the two are directly related. Grief does not interfere with the imperative with analysis. Borger is correct in acknowledging that that position fails to acknowledge the enormity of the assault. It will certainly be rejected by a huge majority of people. As it should be. And that position also fails to address the ugly reality that, without action, future attacks are inevitable, and that the death toll in the towers has raised the bar for ambitious future martyrs.

The question of appropriate action may be raised without this attack on principled positions of those who question whether American overreaction will only perpetuate the horror. American overreaction is not only possible, it is likely. Hawks in the Pentagon will try to use this situation in order to "clean up" related situations--as in Iraq--even if they fail in the attempt. Nick Piombino's post earlier on the flag's role not as an icon of war-mongering, but as a transitional object in the grieving process, makes perfect sense to me.

As I've written elsewhere, the flag is not a transitional object but a symbol of national identity. I cannot dissociate American history from that symbol. While I do not see the same aggression in flying the flag as was evident in the Gulf War, I think the innocence of its use as a symbol of human, rather than national, solidarity is a precise desire to forget that history. I've been struck at how radically differently it has been used than, say, the yellow ribbon campaign during the Gulf War, a soft swastika if ever there was one. If anything, the flag's role this time around has been one of solidarity, an emblem not of the state but of the people. Coming out of the Vietnam experience, I never thought I would see the stars & stripes used that way. But there it is. And it's everywhere.

I am reminded of socialist/populist embrace of the nation-state both in WWI and II. It is important to define, rather, an oppositional, internationalist position. The US needs

to see itself from the perspective of the world, and rallying around the flag is not going to sharpen that perception.

Barrett

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Backstreet Boy apologizes...

27 September 2001

Joel Weishaus had posted the Backstreet Boy's apology as proof that entertainers have no souls; Stroffolino reads it the other way.

In the thread, Joel Weishaus had written · 27 September 2001 —

| Any wonder we need poets, not entertainers, more than ever?

Actually Joel--- I think you were trying to quote this as an example of a soulless entertainer???? Am I right.... Actually I respect this guy for saying this; and even the "retraction" doesn't seem so bad... I mean it's more like John Lennon's famous 1966 "I wasn't knocking it" thing....

Thanks for posting it; it could be useful for my comp. classes, etc... (yeah, even one of THEIR heroes agrees with their "crazy teacher" etc....)

Not that I'm going out to buy any BB albums soon.... Is Richardson the guy that was on the tabloids for being too drunk, etc?

Chris

Joel Weishaus wrote:

Any wonder we need poets, not entertainers, more than ever? Artists who care more about their soul than their career.

-Joel

----- Original Message -----

..for voicing a political opinion.

<<"Kevin Richardson has fallen into the same trap that snared poor Bill Maher the other day. And now, like the "Politically Incorrect" host, the Backstreet Boy has been forced to chew himself out -- or face the wrath of the American public.

Richardson didn't mean any disrespect to the nation, he said, when he made the following statement to a Canadian interviewer in the aftermath of the attack: "I just think we are a little bit of an arrogant nation and maybe this is a little bit of a humbling experience ... what has our government done to provoke this action that we don't know about?"

The tentatively put-forth query apparently raised the ire of some of his more patriotic compatriots. And so, Thursday morning, Richardson took to the airwaves to clear things up.

"My thoughts weren't put together quite properly," the penitent pop star explained to Z100's Paul "Cubby" Bryant. "We had been doing about five interviews in Toronto,

Canada ... and as I was sitting there listening to the rest of the guys talk, I just got overwhelmed with anger and frustration, on 'how can this happen in our country, in this nation that we live in?'"

What he meant by "arrogant," he said, was that "we've been a little overconfident, we've maybe taken our freedom for granted, taken our security for granted."

"I apologize if I have offended anyone, any of the families of the victims, if my statement seemed insensitive, but I was reacting out of anger and out of frustration, and I was emotional," Richardson continued. "I don't want anyone to think that I don't love this country ... I'm proud to be an American. I apologize if my comment was untimely.">>

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No comment needed

10 November 2001

Silliman had been charging some on the list with 'left fundamentalism'; he'd also forwarded this wire story about the Muslim EID stamp souring after September. Stroffolino lets the two collide.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 6 November 2001 —

| They were shouting anti-Muslim insults and striking her car with bats.

Right---Ron, no comment is needed because this it is certainly not an example of "left fundamentalism" to support this stamp because even George W.....SAYS that Muslim-Americans are not the enemy...

Ron Silliman wrote:

Published Tuesday, November 6, 2001, in the Herald-Leader

Bad time for Islam-themed stamp

Attacks hurt sale of issue backed by Kentuckian

By Tony Pugh

KNIGHT RIDDER WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- On Sept. 1, well-wishers in Chicago surrounded Aminah Assilmi and praised her efforts to secure the nation's first postage stamp honoring the Muslim faith.

On Sept. 11, the day of terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, Assilmi was again surrounded -- this time by a group of men in Northern Kentucky, where she lives. They were shouting anti-Muslim insults and striking her car with bats.

The fallout from that day has shaken Assilmi, of Taylor Mill. She heads the International Union of Muslim Women and organized a national campaign that led to the stamp's creation.

But it might have had a greater impact on the stamp she worked five years to win.

``It was not just a stamp. It was an expression, a symbol that the Muslim community is accepted here and Islam is recognized as an American religion," said Dr. Muzammil

Siddiqi of Garden Grove, Calif., past president of the Islamic Society of North America.

In English, the stamp bears the words ``EID Greetings."

It also features gold Arabic script on a background of navy blue that reads ``EID Mubarak," or ``Happy Eid." The stamp commemorates Eid ul-Fitr, a celebration after Ramadan, a time of fasting and prayer for Muslims. The stamp also honors Eid al-Adha, a festival that marks the end of a hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca.

In the weeks following Sept. 11, the EID stamp met with poor sales, and even provoked anger.

``People have gone into our post offices and said `We shouldn't be selling that stamp,'" said Dave Failor, a U.S. Postal Service spokesman.

A West Coast radio talk show host even suggested the stamp was rubbing America's nose in the events of Sept. 11 because EID backward spells ``Die."

``I must have gotten 19 calls from people who were upset about that," Assilmi said. ``There's a large-scale fear of Islam right now. People aren't sure, so they look at us with an added level of fear."

Seventy-five million EID stamps were printed, and 45 million shipped. The stamp went on sale Sept 3. No figures are available, but Failor said it is selling well in Detroit and Chicago, which have large Muslim communities.

Elsewhere, it hasn't been popular.

``Not at all," said Gail Miles, philatelic specialist at the National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. ``Everybody says, `If it had come out at any other time it would be doing well, because it's a pretty stamp.'"

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Nineteen ninety-four had found him sequestered in Albany; 2002 finds him in the Bay Area, and back on the list after a quiet spell. He returns first as its switchboard — backchannel me Bob Perelman's address, Karen Kelley's, Chris Alexander's — the poet as the community's lost-and-found, before the arguments start.

2002

The year he returns to the list in force and from a new coast: writing now out of the Bay Area 'mecca,' answering everyone from Juliana Spahr's nature-poetry row to Louis Cabri's ledger of the listserv-as-economy with the same pun-drunk generosity, one part Shakespeare scholar and one part piano player. What the posts rarely say, and the year quietly does, is how thin the ground already was beneath him: the rotary phone, the six-hour adjunct meetings, the essays taken by editors and then killed by anonymous readers.

Question of Gossip.....

9 March 2002

The man who almost never opens a thread opens this one, and opens it as pure gossip — angling for eyewitness accounts of a Poetry Project night already passing into legend.

Hello---

I heard that there was some poetry event in NYC the other night and I would like to hear, if possible, some versions of what happened. I was told that it was some panel on performance poetry (as opposed to some performance on panelled poetry) and that, at one point, Charles Bernstein was going on and on and not letting others talk, and the audience was getting upset and David Shapiro, who was also on the panel, at one point HELD A CHAIR OVER BERNSTEIN'S HEAD (which would sound violent if it were someone else and not say David Shapiro) and it broke the tension, and people laughed..... It almost sounds unbelievable, but I am curious if any of you were there to confirm, or clarify (sorry this is just too juicy to keep to myself....)

Chris

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Spahr-ing (to David hess)

14 April 2002

The nature-poetry quarrel of the year begins here: Juliana Spahr, quoted in the Poetry Project Newsletter as calling nature poetry 'immoral,' and David Hess's detournement of her. He takes it up with Hess first.

David Hess--

*Did Spahr really say "Nature poetry is immoral?" I have a *little* difficulty believing that, or perhaps the context of that statement qualifies it a little so it's less*

dogmatic....

But if we take that quote on face value (assuming it is a quote), how then does she defy, and define, "nature poetry?" What if someone were to demonstrate that some of the work she champions is nature poetry (not just, say, Jarnot--- I mean of course a "Spiderwasp" is TOTALLY artificial)?

Or, better, consider the word "immoral." Doesn't the word "immoral" itself (as opposed to say ethics) imply nature (if not necessarily universal laws-- as the "innocence" of the nature mode implies "irony") [well, that's Laura Riding's 1928 idea]?

Or is Spahr just out to be provocative in a way that may slightly "revise" (if not necessarily "update") the LP mode of provocation, by appealing to "morals" (as they generally didn't or don't)? Or does it seem too "same old, same old" An attempt to redraw lines, and in and outs, in a reductive binary that excludes folks like you and I, who can only be "on the map" as a parody, not so far as the "neutrality of Switzerland"

| or even as "the excluded middle" or "the author who cannot be a character? (and what is transcendence but the torture in the tickle...of the

machine)

| Well, I'd be curious to see the context of that "nature poetry is immoral" quote. I don't think it *NECESSARILY MEANS* a fear of, or distrust of, nature itself. So I could defend it on those grounds, but I do distrust the exclusionary implications, out of context at least

| -- funny how one era's machines become the next era nature..

| my favorite machines are bikes and swingsets and pianos which may mean i'm "privileging the child" (also immoral)-- but only to the extent that adulthood means nothing more than keeping up with the fashions, the remakes of "make it new" oldies if progress is a verb (and thus a command) and produce is a noun (and thus an activity)

| whose decay is nourishment(?)

| david hess wrote:

| Hence, again, the sequence ^ONature is immoral. It doesn^Ot even exist, which is the greatest immorality of all. Don^Ot let it inspire

you^O --

| a detournement of Juliana Spahr^Os comment ^ONature poetry is immoral^O

--

| quoted in the most recent Poetry Project Newsletter. Like Jesse

Helms

| finding a Mapplethorpe photo disgusting because he finds the subject

matter

| disgusting, I think Spahr^Os dismissal of Nature poetry ? which is

not to say

| I love (all) Nature poetry ? implies an easy dismissal of the

natural world

| (perhaps for its overwhelming amorality). I^Om not citing Glazier and Spahr to condemn them. Glazier

knows a lot more

| about digital poetry and the Web, its history and possibilities,

than I do.

| It^Os this discourse and the political claims that he and you and

others

| *make, that I take offense to. If this discourse did not exist, I*
 probably
 | *wouldn't be opening my mouth. One could simply judge a poem or*
 artwork ?
 | *digital, print-based or whatever ? on its aesthetic and intellectual*
 merits
 | *(which is not exactly what I'm advocating). But in order to justify*
 or sell
 | *the poetry and get into those institutional arenas that you mention,*
 you
 | *need the discourse ? perhaps not you in particular, but others who*
 seem
 | *invested in a form of academic politics that parades as*
 revolutionary
 | *(because it is supposedly technically innovative). You need*
 "strategically
 | *useful theoretical gestures to displace those who support*
 ^Oconfessional,
 | *"I"-centered modes of discourse in the current ^Opoetic economy.^O*
 And to
 | *what end? What does this academic ^Ooppositonality^O have to do with*
 | *^Oovercom[ing] the exploitations and objectifications which arise*
 from
 | *capitalist modes of production?^O I'm afraid not much. You make the*
 leap from
 | *fighting the confessionalist horde to fighting capitalism and waging*
 class
 | *struggle in a record .0003 seconds. I would agree that ^Ode-centered*
 writing^O
 | *? in the aftermath of the 60s and the failure of a united*
 counterculture --
 | *was once radical, and perhaps still is despite the reification of*

the

| *discourse, if only because it alerts the reader to the*

objectification and

| *reification that capitalism injects into all areas of life and*

experience.

| *It puts it right in your face without the mediation of an ^ÓI.^Ô But*

it did

| *not, and could not, change any ^Ñsocial conditions.^Ò Nor did it*

present any

| *possible solutions to alienation, reification, etc. These are claims*

your

| *post seems to be making. If I want a return to anything it^Òs to the moment before*

poetry split into

| *^Ñconfessionalist^Ò and ^Ñmaterialist^Ò modes. Before the split between intellect and emotion, thinking and feeling, experience and*

language. The

| *binary division you make between ^Ñproductive^Ò materiality and ^Ñcounter-productive^Ò emotion or sincerity is not mine. The poets I*

cite at

| *one point ? Rimbaud, Blake, Vallejo, Rukeyser, Césaire, Artaud ? are*

| *examples of a wide tradition of revolutionary poetry that treats, to*

use a

| *Glazierian term, the ^ÓI,^Ô authority, expression and emotion as the*

fluid

| *elements they are, above mere egoism or confession, in a ^Ñpractice^Ò*

that is

| *irreducible to any discourse or catty battle between overfed*

pedagogical

| *models. Radicality has been codified into non-normativity,*

alternative

| *textuality and a reified institutional discourse all of which*

willfully

| *^Óreduce[] the ^Ñauthoring^Ò subject to a machine, an alienated,
non-expressive*

| *object of ideology^Ô ? your words, but they sound ironized to me. I
don^Òt see*

| *any radical political value in this reduction of possibility. Nor do
I see*

| *any revolutionary political agency in the mocking of sincerity, a
move which*

| *almost certainly guarantees marginality, institutional or otherwise
(but who*

| *knows, insincerity loves capitalism and capitalism cares for nothing
more*

| *than the next quarter^Òs earnings ? it doesn^Òt care for ^Ñsubjects^Ò,
in bulk*

| *or in the singular). If you did not respond to my post, Matt, with
some*

| *degree of sincerity, obviously we wouldn^Òt be having this
discussion.*

| *De-centered or materialist modes haven^Òt resulted in the
jettisoning of the*

| *ego or self because they still operate in a competitive literary
economy*

| *which is becoming commodified as any other. Whether or not a poet
uses the*

| *^ÓI,^Ô their subjectivity or ^Ñhabitus^Ò will still be present. A poet
can use*

| *the ^ÓI^Ô not to refer to him or herself or can use means other than
the ^ÓI^Ô*

| *to refer to a self, but try all you might to become a faceless
discourse*

| *machine (institutional martyr) ? the dream of every little boy and*

girl on

| *this Earth -- and the truth will eventually out. I don't think*

capitalism

| *created the "I," emotions, selves, the ego or the need to be*

sincere.

| *Ashbery would seem to be the best example of someone clearly*

embraced by the

| *mainstream but who gets rid of the "I" as a locus of meaning and*

expression;

| *sort of gets rid of the ego and doesn't get rid of the self; is*

innovative

| *at times and productive in a machine-like way; writes from his*

oceanic well

| *of fancy more than from direct experience; foregrounds the*

materiality of

| *the medium but not all the goddamn time; flattens emotion and tone*

(to a

| *register of tender melancholia and heady humor) and poses no threat*

at all

| *to the cultural status quo in the poetic economy or abroad. Like*

most

| *de-centered writing IT'S HARMLESSLY QUIESCENT ? a noise that doesn't*

make

| *much noise. Then again, I'd rather read Ashbery more than 95 percent*

of

| *what's out there just because he writes great, if lullaby-like,*

poetry, you

| *know. It strives for the infinite, even if it's just in dreams. It*

may not

| *fight for heaven (Lorca's phrase) but I'm cool with it every other Thursday, ten to eleven p.m. Central Standard Time. I agree with you that some of the lines in "Poetry as Social*

Practice

| *punch low, so to speak, and are not good for much than a laugh, but*
other

| *arguments are harder to dismiss. Yes, by arranging each of [my]*
slogans

| *in a context which deems them ridiculous, [I] end up privileging the*
exact

| *opposite of whatever they say. You are right; I think they are*
ridiculous.

| *I don't, however, agree that by ironizing a statement like "Don't*
be

| *crazy, [I] end up advocating a statement like "Be crazy. What I'm*
advocating is the questioning of what a discourse of non-normativity
implies, promotes and rejects. What it rejects, as you've done well

to point

| *out, is a relevance of emotion (the sincere kind) and feeling.*

Emotions are

| *considered irrational, but emotions never lie (thus the line "Mock*
sincerity

| *sincerely"). Reason and language enable one to lie. So it looks like*
I'm

| *advocating irrationality as if going mad didn't have its own reasons*
and

| *causes. I don't think I'm advocating a poetics of anything (yet --*
is that

| *not being ideological enough?), much less 'experience' but if I had*
to take

| *side I'd come on the side of experience and not the decentered,*
materialist

| *poetics tractor. I think for those who don't have much going on in*
their

lives, a poetics of anti-experience is a sweet alternative to, and distillation of, its hectic monotony.

(Okay, I give up, I am urging that people go crazy!!! Like at raves

where

kids and maybe some adults get together and dance to all kinds of

techno

music, turning the machine against itself, experiencing the magic of

being

alive for a few hours before returning to further drudgery ? crazy

like

that, good crazy!!!)

Now I am going to do what Kafka did the day WWI broke out: go

swimming.

More later, Dave

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nature poetry & other semantics questions

16 April 2002

He turns from Hess to Elizabeth Treadwell Jackson, whose objection to Spahr was about word-choice — whether 'selfish' was doing the work that 'violence' should. (The list's own header misattributes the exchange to 'gene'.)

Elizabeth---

Interesting post----

Just two questions for now---

1) Are you saying the word "selfish" is a "fancier moniker" than the word "violence?" It seems that you are reacting to the word "selfish" here. How do you see the difference between "selfish" and "violence?" (this is one question)

2) As for the assertion about the "romanticization" of nature--- now I have not read the article either so don't know how the term is, er, "deployed" or "used" there, but it seems to that it doesn't necessarily imply that "we and our (sic) actions are separate from nature" insofar as some (if not all) "romantic" views do ground themselves in the idea of the self as nature, and vice versa...But maybe "romanticization" is the wrong word? Because it's too much like "idealization?" rather than say Shelley's "rendering and receiving." So do you think "romanticism" is what is meant by "traditional romanticization" is my question...

And, okay, one more---so what alternatives? What of a so-called "primitive" polytheism, with gods and goddesses named after rivers and trees, etc., represented, on one level, as humans, of both sexes, arguing over whether men or women enjoys sex more, etc? Is that "traditional romanticization" too?

Elizabeth Treadwell Jackson wrote:

Hey everyone,

I just want to chime in about Juliana Spahr's comment. When I read it in PPNL it wasn't recognizable to me. That is, she made some similar comments at her reading at Small Press Traffic in San Francisco last fall, and these comments did not seem as extreme as that quote looked on the pages of PPNL. Rather, I thought they were quite thoughtful and as such tended to provoke thought, questions, etc --- certainly no form of censorship for goodness sake.

But while I'm online I must also point to something Spahr herself wrote in the April/May PPNL. (& kudos to Ange Mlinko for editing such a conversation stirrer). Towards the end of her essay, "Poetry in a Time of Crisis", Spahr writes: "...the selfish privilege and imperialism of the United States and the selfish violence of terrorism." My problem with this phrase is a matter of word choices. I think it is very important to be careful here. The US's privilege and imperialism are forms of violence, and giving them fancier monikers does no service to understanding these complex situations.

Finally, I had a problem with David Perry's third paragraph (still in the April/May PPNL) in which he writes: "...a postmodern nation of nature that perversely naturalizes environmental degradation by way of cheap deconstruction of 'nature' is surely worse than the traditional romanticization of it." Briefly, this phrasing keeps us stuck in an abstract (& alors, binaryish) notion that we and are actions are separate from nature. Perhaps Perry went on to address this, but I stopped there.

And I'll stop here. Had been thinking on these things anyway as with Marcella Durand I am planning an event/talk/etc about ecology and poetry for next season at Small Press Traffic.

Cheerio,

Elizabeth Treadwell

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Nature Poem from Kyger

16 April 2002

Ben Friedlander had dropped a Joanne Kyger poem into the nature-poetry quarrel; the rule the thread has hardened into — nature poems pass only if properly guilty — is what he answers.

Ben---thanks for posting this.....

One thing I want to say about this discussion so far is---

there's this general implication that NATURE POEMS ARE OKAY IF (BIG IF) it's clear in the particular NATURE POEM in question that the speaker's (or actually author's) attitude toward the NATURE described in the poem is not, say, one of escape or transcendence, or spurious political neutrality.... all things I tend to agree with IN GENERAL a lot of the time..... BUT that being said I want to leave the possibility open for a poem that focuses on the bird and not the bulldozer--- which is not necessarily irresponsible, especially if the same writer has poem after poem that focusses more on the "bulldozer" than the "bird"-- It's OKAY to not do this, no? It may seem a jump to say this, but SOMETIMES (yes, Kasey, caps are more scary!) doesn't run risk BECOMING or MIMICKING the BULLDOZER one laments by focussing on it and not the bird. Sometimes, I say (because I tend to do this way more than not...).

There's a sense of CONSISTENCY OF POETICS here that I fear is potentially debilitating.... Furthermore, there's also an assumption of SINGLE THEME as SINE QUA NON in this discussion (I mean, in a lot of contemporary poetry, "nature" (so-called) may come more in the form of "lines" than of "poems").....

Chris

Ben Friedlander wrote:

Taking every chance I can to tell people, READ JOANNE KYGER! She's a treasure, vastly underappreciated, arguably the best we've got.

This one was brought to mind by Juliana's comments about nature poetry on the Poetics list. I hope the linebreaks survive transit.

Ben

I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UTTER A MEANINGFUL UTTERANCE BUT

I _can_ take the lightweight branch of a tree from a window five stories up and let it propel me gently to the ground--

a combination of flying and floating, reminding myself not to hurry the process into a crash landing I can also stay out from under the feet of an elephant on a narrow bridge--but this requires some assistance and a tip to the owner,

I also believe gardens should be planted with native seeds. But to recommend an overview of how to sustain a floating immigrant population like our own, I am at a loss. Of course I believe one should be entertained by the imagination and am against disgusting profit, but what about hoarding ideas and feelings.

And the neighbors who park their car on your property, which you now want to landscape with shrubs. But we've parked here for 10 years. Are you telling us we _can't_ do it now, this is a TRADITIONAL USE!

Well, you would like to point out, why don't you cut back a little of your non-native bottle brush and put your 'traditional' parking there, and then you could have your traditional parking on your OWN traditional land PLENTY of room there.

| April 29, 1997

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What Is?

23 April 2002

Barrett Watten, who had been lobbing 'trivial or mechanical' questions at the list, tries here to lift the runaway 'what is Language poetry?' debate onto firmer ground.

In the thread, Barrett Watten had written · 23 April 2002 —

| *First, what kind of question is being asked?*

How do these questions differ from "Who is?" "Who are?" "Who were?" "And, if so, when?" (and who wasn't)

(then maybe we can ask 'why' etc.?)

Barrett Watten wrote:

questions, and there has been a debate under way about the nature of Language poetry, a few quick responses.

First, what kind of question is being asked? Some analogies: what is surrealism, what is poetry, what is pornography, what is art, what is language. It seems to me that the way question is raised, an aspect of all these could be involved: a historical movement or literary tendency vs. stylistic attributes or other objective descriptors; a genre; a legal definition subject to "community standards"; that which we all agree is X; an object of study or a means of communication.

And yet I think there is a distinct kind of journalistic worrying over the issue--something like How do I explain this to someone who has never heard of it, and does that make either me or him/her legitimate or illegitimate--that continually circles around the same null point. Perhaps Language poetry is very good at evoking that null point, which then becomes a part of its reception. I would rather it be seen in precisely the opposite sense--a set of particular and decisive options.

I'm aware of a lot of spinning around this issue, but also a number, by now, of very concrete positions for thinking the question through. And it can be surprising that few of these positions are ever a part of the debate. There is more often than not an aura of collective crisis about the discussion--if that is or was Language poetry, what am I doing, what is my relation to it? The more particular the answer to the first half of the question, the worse it is for the latter.

I don't think we have to return to the kinds of identity the positions in L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E often assumed, between description of the work and the "work itself." As I've claimed pretty emphatically, there is a necessary difference between styles and descriptions; they don't just fragment into the same problem of language or signification. In Bruce Andrews's criticism, this relation gets very close, but I would argue that is the exception that proves the rule.

That, immediately above, is one position I take in an article, "The Secret History of the Equal Sign," published in Poetics Today. It's available at Project Muse, from Johns Hopkins University Press, for those who can access it. Let me say that it's a lot of work

to write, present, publish an article like that! (I'm thinking that now because I'm in the process of reprinting it.) And then you get the continual return to the baseline null point discussion, as if one had never said a blessed thing.

Even more to the point, look at Ben Friedlander's incredible "A Short History of Language Poetry," in the recent Qui Parle I edited. What Friedlander does is uncover or disclose a secret history or influence of existentialism that no one had ever guessed was a part of the Language movement--because it really never was, except by absorption. Yet his arguments are as detailed, distinctive, and cogent as you could find. There are hundreds of implications to what he is saying that haven't been worked through or developed yet. That project of Ben's took years to bring to fruition.

I haven't been able to read everything that's been said on the issue here, and I think there is some interesting thinking and rethinking, reframing going on. But the circling around the null point has got to be recognizable as well. Why are the many particular positions out there--many more than the two I just brought to the table--more importantly a part of the discussion? I ask you.

Barrett

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boasting poems?

25 April 2002

The thread was hunting a pedigree for the boast-poem — the dozens, signifying, Gates's Signifying Monkey had all been offered.

You may not like this Arielle, but Nikki Giovanni's "Ego-Tripping" was always fun to teach for me.....I especially like the way it ends with what I take to be a reference to the then current Temptations hit, "I can't get next to you"-----Well, maybe that needn't be her allusion, but to end a poem in italics saying I mean I can fly like a bird in the sky may itself really complicate the poem in interesting ways (it's early, not very coherent....)... c

Brandon Barr wrote:

Is there a name for a tradition or form of poetry in which the poet boasts about him or herself? I know this of course shows up a lot in rap music, but does it have any heritage in the poetry of any specific culture or time? And can anyone give me an example or name of a poet who does this well?

*"Playing the dozens" or "signifying" has a huge history in African American culture and folk art. Look to Henry Lewis Gates' book *The Signifying Monkey* and the following article for more on that:*

Wood, Brent. "Understanding Rap as Rhetorical Folk Poetry." Mosaic 32.4 (1999): 129-146.

Both are good introductions. I use Wood's article in one of my poetry classes. He draws a strong line of tradition from playing the dozens through blues to rap. My students really connect with the rap element--bringing in lyrics of their own.

| -- Brandon Barr University of Rochester <http://brandonbarr.com>

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Democratic Cabbagery

30 April 2002

Here begins his long 2002 duel with Louis Cabri over what, exactly, the listserv is — community, market, or laboratory.

If not "Oedipalitis"---

Hey Louis, great post (maybe David Hess will even find an answer to his "materiality" question here)---

Yet at the same time more culturally inconsequential?

I often wonder about the use of the word "oedipal" (seen most recently by me in BK Stefan's interview with Miles Champion), and how it seems strangely incommensurate (what the hell) with the anti-freud project of many or even most who "deploy" that term often pejoratively.....

But am very interested in the attention to medium--- I like to say THE BOOK'S the thing as I am enjoying your MOOD EMBOSSEER but I'm actually enjoying your posts AS MUCH and in some ways MORE than the book (and I hope you will take this in the right way) even as I will DELETE the posts (knowing they're archived somewhere if need be) as I don't TAPE RECORD my phone conversations

and this may be an invitation to see where thoughts are worked out feelings acted out, etc. and maybe later shaped into something for a BOOK---

And though I "privilege the book" as such, it's still the possibility of community (as opposed to the community of possibility?) that draws me here (rather than say to frequent a reading series)--it was once necessity--- sequestered in Albany, New York when I joined in 1994 and now may be seen a convenience (being in the Bay Area "mecca")--- "may be seen"--

but as a "site of contestation" from which a community may yet be, uh, "avowed"

The possibility here as great as in those splinter "sub" groups of which you speak--- Actually, a wider range here-- Dross to be sure.... too much "mere publicity function" (and I will not deny partaking in it)

But it's not really SUBORDINATED to the BOOK especially for those of us who do admire and envy (though this is NOT, I say, in any way, OEDIPAL) the way many of the writers that may now be historically called "language poets" seemed to succeed in "fomenting an alternative youth culture" (actually, a phrase I'm borrowing from a chapter on FUGAZI in "OUR BAND COULD BE YOUR

LIFE).....well, for THEM they did given the proviso that "youth" in poetry is generally older than youth in indie-rock of the 80s was....

To pursue this analogy further (as Clint Burnham is goading me too--- just as indie bands in the 80s made money off relentless touring and did albums to promote the live shows (which inverts the "corporate rock scenario") what Michael Scharf loves to call "symbolic capital" through relentless posting, and write poems or books to promote the "let-it-loose let-it-rip" ness of their posts....

Well, maybe not quite the analogy.... I mean I don't want to subordinate the books to this medium either... But, of course, one problem some of us have (and I don't even claim it's entirely "generational" much less "oedipal") is that we have NOT found a community akin (oops "kin" as choice of word implies "family" which implies "romance" and that brings us back to FREUD) to the Lang. Po. alternative publishing network thing.... which is not just a matter of the difficulty in trying to find publishers for our books (though that's no doubt part of it....)

okay, enough pseudo-sophisticated whining for now....

Chris

Louis Cabri wrote:

My sense is that, SPLURT! in general terms, "we" don't often-enough think of collective poetry project). This is what it is, regardless of how sorry a state we let it, and us, fall into. A time-based project is what this is, even when the "project" sense is denied and/or ignored, and when the "time" sense is made so glaringly present that we no longer recognize the present as a tense. Any project needs to be constructed. Any construction obtains because of principles and rules. Of all possible models of Internet but, nevertheless, even this one retains a singular shape -- partly discursive (who posts what, etc), partly determinative (e.g. two-post limit per day now), partly technological, etc. To ignore these (and other similar) project-like features would at least start to address the materiality of the anywhere near to doing that, however; no metacommentary, in itself, would.

"Medium" here only partially -- in fact, minimally (but importantly) -- refers to the Internet technology, as I've implied above (even though most critical attention is directed to the sorcerer-like powers of the machinery, extrapolating from it to idealities of communication, as if technology in itself amounts to difference, and McLuhan had never written a word to learn from -- yet we all at the same time know that such determinism is not the case; just think of the early practitioners of Concrete, scribbled on paper with pencil, in unventilated rooms with dangling light bulbs, for instance, or of Klebnikov drifting hatless through the snows of Mongolia). "Medium" here more fundamentally and crucially refers to this very collectivity of address, this one, mine, as well as every other singularity of address that is enacted here, however generically, and this particular listening ear, mine, in its singular but also in its collective form, and each of yours in turn, and including this Emersonian eyeball enacted in present-tense placeless space, and yours, in this go-go of e-gos (har har). From writing, now, with / to, like this, a sense of medium is created and sustained, can even

be reflexively shaped -- but most of the time, it seems we're just punching clock, without knowing it.

Here's not news -- it's pimple-simple that Language Poets were reflexively aware of a / their medium! They had a specific sense of it (friends = paper = typewriter = recorder = magazines = city = books = etc) developed by / for themselves. Their sense of a "medium" is different than it would be for a dim lands of peace, not by any other conceivable sense, the "first" poets to be reflexively attuned to their medium -- as some of them (i.e. those editing and writing essays) have been the "first" to attest, in so many ways, over and over (hence the need for a historical frame on all this, perfesser). For Language Poets, by gum (but this would be true of anyone, is true of us, here; what I am saying is intentionally plain, but I don't mean to condescend), level of reflexive awareness varied (I use the past tense to invoke an elementary sense of history as a narrating frame -- and not in order to comment on the relation of Language Poets or oif any other kind of poet to the present tense) from confused to articulate, depending on poet -- i.e., depending on circumstance, education, etc. Level of awareness varied depending on what each poet thought that the name "LP" might entail, as an identifying sign (some embraced it; some helped to create what others embraced; others maintained the embracers and the creators; others changed the terms of it all as it went on; some kept a distance but were happy to be taken along, so long as others kept doing the work of keeping it going, and so long as things went swimmingly; some internally, rightfully contested; you tell me the rest; et cetera). Level of awareness varied depending on what each LP-identified magazine's editorial goals were thought to be -- before, once, and after being published. Level of awareness varied depending on the degree, kind, and origin of idiosyncratic aesthetic and social influences that were recognized (by anyone, to differing degrees) to be at significant variance with perceived (from within, from without) LP commonalities. Et cetera.

in any properly reflexive way, insofar as Language Poetry remains the comparative model of what a medium is and what being reflexively aware of a medium entails. I don't, obviously, think this to be the case. And I'm not alone, if recent posts are to judge -- and they are; why not?: As a in hell the Language Poets were, are, or are going to be! Not even Barrett Watten cares to know! That's why he's joined the List! And, "Language Poetry" is not a stumbling-block to achieving a present-tense reflexive that is, because of a certain braggadaccio attitude vis a vis poetry since its foundation (at times worse than at others). Pimple-simple: the reason why Language Poetry ain't an issue, never was, is the medium of collective address here is differently constituted (refrain: if only we'd recognize this for what it can ideally be, and is, regardless of what we thinks it is, or thinks it can be).

The reason why I feel stupidly compelled to state this actually longstanding opinion of mine (within months of subscribing) is because Language Poetry diachronically and synchronically, and I'm reminded of it because I've just does for most of you), spittoon by spittoon. Diachronically, of course it should be obvious to anyone that Charles Bernstein is founding specter of tell me otherwise) Barrett Watten's essay, "Secret History" (1999) that this fact is reflexively and theoretically raised specifically in order to rearticulate new meaning for, not Charles Bernstein (only), but Language to be an outgrowth of Language Poetry (for two reasons, mentioned below). Synchronically, the question of what Language Poetry "is" -- as recent discussions also

witness -- remains still alive with some of us (other synchronic factors include, as some have also recently mentioned, the

I think Barrett Watten is correct (in "Secret History") to identify poetry and community as the two founding and generative qualities (and opening question marks) that make it plausible to compare Language Poetry and this model, not one of a number of possible models -- some of which Barrett Watten himself raises -- remains unclear to me in terms of his essay, even as I understand that Legend is obviously central to the specificity of his argument...; this has to be an aside).

a "time-based project" only make sense, really, if one reflexively agrees, like Rousseau's democratic cabbagery, that Poetry and Community are indeed the founding motivators for bringing attention to the medium as such (there are plenty of other possible motivators, however, but these two happen to be the ones that founded Language Poetry; for example, while Charles Bernstein has recently complicated the idea of "community," it is plain as the nose in my day that in his early essays "community" existed on the page, in the word; I'm sorry to only refer by name to the people I am, as they don't need attention so much as others do, but, think of it as a way of keeping this at the level of the obvious). We all already by default, to a certain degree, agree to these two premises (their basis forms Barrett Watten's link from one, is automatically "addressed" to captive others, who in turn respond, even if they don't (a very basic definition of "community"). Poetry and as a result has always been up to us.

PhillyTalks (<http://phillytalks.org>)-- another "time-based project" (any frustrations with the low level of reflexive attention that was being their own, yet surprisingly identified themselves in relation to this one, re-admitted to this one here, as if they're fallen angels, and this is the only, you know, one; etc).

SPLURT!

this sentence will disappear if every other sentence appears, and if that of can

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Hail Pataki?

4 May 2002

The Cabri debate has become one of origins — does the list descend from Language poetry and SUNY-Buffalo, or elsewhere? — and he answers as the less-funded SUNY-Albany cousin he is.

A conflation of institutions (if not, alas, a confederacy of dunces)?

Which came first? SUNY-Buffalo or "the Language school"? Or, when getting into a bicycle accident at the corner of Flatbush and 4th Avenue, should we ask which came first, Flatbush or 4th Avenue?

I heard about this list first from Don Byrd.... it therefore stems issues from his story, or the story of SUNY-ALBANY, the less poetry-funded "cousin" of SUNY-Buffalo--

and Creeley was at SUNYAB before and through Creeley in 85 first heard I of Lang.PO.... thus LANG PO stemmed from Buffalo in logic no more faux than yours

the SUNY system by then Governor-elect GEORGE PATAKI? (could be traced....)
(and why are the Buffalo Bills the only football team not to have their name represented on their helmets?)

Maybe sunyab changed langpo through the agency of bernstein, or had sunyab hired someone other than bernstein

not really about "priority" though... and maybe kasey could write a "what is suny-buffalo" piece?

one almost longs for the good old "simpler" times when a visiting professor at Temple University (Susan Howe) could claim in all earnestness that certain other poets were too "academic"....

and mr. eric r., i'm going to excerpt what i'm responding too... though personally I prefer it when the whole post is posted because i like seeing a wider context.....

signed, not me

Louis Cabri wrote:

histories of poetry that that label has invoked and/or adjusted a bit to refract, ever so slightly, through its nonreflecting mirror, rightly or wrongly.

*the fact is that this implication therefore *is* nudged like an ugly rotting pip next to a twisted rhizome-root of SUNY-Buffalo,*

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poets ignore criticism?

9 May 2002

He is answering Andrew's self-styled 'rant' that poets should simply ignore academic criticism, and in the answering lets his own bruised publishing history show.

| Dear Andrew---

While there's something in me sympathetic to this self-proclaimed "rant," I wonder how you define the terms-- By focussing on ACADEMIC criticism as the bogey man to be ignored you seem to imply there's a non-academic criticism that poets (presumably also non-academic) either don't have to, or shouldn't, ignore. That academic=professional and non-academic is somehow free of that.

Is that really the case? Since "academic," whether used pejoratively or not, can refer both to "Criticism" and "poetry" (the Ph.D. vs. MFA thing) just as non-academic can (for instance, when you accepted that long 10 page review I had written of Jennifer Moxley's "Imagination Verses" for publication in the Chicago Review---for which I'm grateful, and I hope you don't mind me mentioning it--it's the best relevant example can think of--, there was concern, if I remember cor-

rectly, that it wouldn't sit well with the other editors unless we made some slight cosmetic changes so it seemed more like an "academic essay" but was the essay really "academic"? Was the discourse really "acceptable" as, say, the discourse of, say, Sianne Ngai, Lytle Shaw, Steve Evans, or Juliana Spahr is said to be? How does one then determine what "academically acceptable discourse" is? Or WHO determines it? One may bend "the rules" or try to change them from below or within, but as one who has had at least 3 essays accepted by editors of academic books only to have them later, all, rejected by "anonymous" readers hired by the university presses, I too have little hope for this, and it makes me skeptical to what does get published as "academic criticism." So, there is a range of related questions that you open up here that would need to be explored.

At the same time, however, and more importantly I think, I want to turn some of your righteous questioning of academic professionalism on itself, not exactly "on its head" (although Louis Cabri claims that the chicken-egg thing is my dominant characteristic poetic mode or something) and claim that much of what you claim to be the process involved in legitimizing the academic is at least as true, and in some cases maybe even MORE true of poets themselves, whether or not they work within the academy.

So, if I take these first several sentences, for instance--

The academic's first problem is how to advance professionally. To get and keep a job, the academic must produce an acceptable discourse. Not great, not even very good, just acceptable. This means sticking to certain categories -- cliches, really -- that other academics will recognize and condone.

and if I substitute the word "poet" (or even "writer") for the word "academic" and substitute "advance professionally" for "get one's work published," it may seem absurd---certainly, some might object, that wouldn't be the "first" problem of any self-respecting poet (to which I respond, well, then, hopefully, it isn't the FIRST problem of the academic either, unless of course we assume that the academic isn't really interested in teaching in a classroom). So, then we'd

have to substitute the word "verse" for "discourse." And, I think this substitution becomes less and less absurd, if I take a look at the vast majority of poetry that seems to be written in certain codes (for instance, the "New Obscurantists" valorizing the lyric "fragment" or the "Plain-Speaking" workshop syllabics) that certain editors of magazines or "more established" writers will recognize or condone.

So, when you say:

This does not mean that all academic criticism is bad, just that there are distorting forces at work.

I say this does not mean tht all contemporary poetry is bad, just that there are distorting forces are work.... and that free-verse ain't always as free as it's cracked up to be.... and, then, the question is, is "free-verse" even a value? And what is the point of all the "excellent scribbling in a period style?"

The annoying outcome is that those who really succeed within the system know only the professionally approved ways of talking about literature.

and talking IN literature; even those who often claim they're "too pure" to be bothered with even trying to explain what they're doing, or why they might be doing it (especially, if they just won another "non-academic" Book prize/grant, etc.). Professionalism does not equal academicism, so what to do about it?

Chat with friends online, try MSN Messenger: <http://messenger.msn.com>

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...

12 May 2002

The duel with Cabri turns granular: a point-by-point answer to Cabri's reading of his own book.

Louis---

In the shuffle of the last week I realize I forgot to respond to these points you made about my book, etc.

*b. Almost the first idea that Chris considers to be an important and useful thing to wonder about, in reviewing Watten's "Bride of the Assembly Line" essay in *Spin Cycle* is whether Watten is recommending to Chris that he buy himself a car. If there was not a certain expressive pathos coming through in the way that Chris writes an essay, if there was not a focus on desire and interest, naïve as it might be to the more jaded reader, this decision to ask such a question of Watten's text would seem really at odds. But, what can it tell us? It tells us that Chris's central poetic response to the idea of Language Poetry is to try and identify with it, with *any* of it, with *something to do with it*, as a poet himself.*

I am curious about this phrase "the idea of language poetry" (which you repeat twice). It is singular for you? Monolithic? For me, to attempt, as a reader, to identify with a stance proffered in a particular text is not necessarily an attempt to "identify with the idea of language poetry" especially so when the author of that text (BW) begins with an attempt to de-identify with what HE thinks has become of what gets called Language Poetry...and attempt to redefine, or at least rename, it. So to identify with something in it, sure; why not? But, also with something outside of it, something best not co-opted by it, sure, why not?

c. Chris (I'll direct this part to you; it feels more open-ended), you seem to suggest a "steady-state" theory of the world, where "priority," your word, is never an issue, where, as you speculate, anyone could have started

Putting words in me mouth! I didn't say the end results (which of course haven't happened yet anyway) would have been identical. Yes, one may grant this as CB's initiative and part of his legacy, etc., but how important is that? (not a rhetorical question as much as an open one) Can you emphasize that fact, as you do, without needing to address the complex question of whether the individual initiative (CBs) is more important than the notion of loyalty to a collectivist Language movement? You seem not to think so. We know that this list wasn't CALLED "Bernstein's List" or "Language Poetry List," and I obviously can't say with authority WHY he, or they, chose to call it simply the "UB Poetics Discussion Group" (which pays homage to its academic backers, but also uses the more capacious term "Poetics," more capacious UNLESS of course one wants to claim that "Poetics," by definition, is part of the history of language poetry, a smaller circle inside its larger one....)--

The fact that I was told about this list by those who are tangential to, at odds with, or even (historically speaking) prior to the various Lang Po projects, as I think many were (not just your 5 horsemen) allows me to think that this LIST SERVED, or was, or could be, something larger, or at least different, than a project of "Lang. Po, Inc." And, for all I know, the "interest and desire" for a something like a more open debate, or quasi-"public sphere" was part of this initial decision--for various reasons that could be explored later.... Sure, one expected limits, but different limits than those of lang po, if nowhere else, at least through the various backchannel conversations it engendered, the possibility of other affinities that needn't be mediated through some idea of critical headquarters, even though we all knew who "owned the means of production." Sure, there was reason to be skeptical, but since there were many "threads" and "posts," some of which the "principals" of language poetry (such as they choose to participate) either refused or were unable to take part in, there was also a decentering with no necessary connection, or even acknowledgment, by so-called critical hq, or Kuzsai, or whatever, and if the "price to pay" for such relative "freedom" was being considered a "minor actor," well, that's not so bad, when one isn't putting all one's eggs (or even chickens)

While dismissing any use in thinking about historical issue, notice that Chris is very careful (going into quite some detail) to include himself in the narrative of the idea of Language Poetry, an inclusion that he wants or even needs to, at the same time, with the same gallant gesture, dismiss.

I don't know where you get the idea that I'm DISMISSING any use in thinking about historical issue. I notice YOU'RE careful to say that I'm not including myself in the narrative of language poetry (for which I thank you), but, rather in "the narrative of THE IDEA of language poetry"--- what exactly do you mean by that? Is it that anyone who thinks about the, or An, idea of language poetry, and of how those ideas came to him or her, in a narrative, or quasi-narrative fashion must always see the "self" (or even any possible alternative community) as smaller than the "idea of language poetry" in order not to be said to dismiss historical issue? This "self" (or any possible alternate community) is certainly not "steady state" (though at times may seem so in order not to be so "steady state" in its denial of that---why those who "reject closure" are actually imposing it in the same act)....

chris

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Author Photos*12 May 2002*

Not a reply to anyone living but an invented dialogue in descending indents, 'C' arguing with 'C,' built around a real slight — a Language-poetry crowd that would not print his nude author photo.

I Know You More Than You'll Ever Love...

Chris--- Whatever....I'm not going to continue this... Soon they're (you're) gonna think food hurts like love (and gorge yourself on Healthy Choice)....

C out....

| C

You know what you remind me of? Those people who tell me I should have a tv show, which wouldn't have the effect of a put-down were they able to "hook me up" as it were, were they not poets who deride others, who tend to be more entertaining as "narcissistic" or "funny" etc...

| C--

I don't feel strongly about it....

| C---Well, *gender's always been your blindspot.*

Listen, if you feel so strongly about it, why don't YOU pose nude.... Chris

| C.

But, in the first place, didn't you tell me once that now that Ginsberg and Corso, etc., are dead, that you really miss how their sheer taken-for-granted presence helped keep the poetry world "honest," that maybe you were premature in your conclusion that you "outgrew" them, or at least that something like, if not exactly, the way they made themselves "a motley to the view," regardless of the merits of the bulk of their work, may be needed especially since the more sophisticated page-based poet's poets seem more and more boring, deadeing, without some kind of 'outside' foil? And I don't really see what this has to do with being straight and not gay, or even what it has to do with being male and not female...

C

| Coppelia--

No, you're not being too hard on me. It's just that Ginsberg, if not O'Hara, came to really BORE me with his "bare, forked creature" or whatever King Lear says about it. And besides, it's one thing for a gay male to present himself a naked body in the 1950s and quite another for a straight male in 1999.... C

| Chris---Okay, sorry, sorry, it won't happen again.

I know about "intellectual property" and "attitude" and "reputation" and all that too....but I still think you're being too hard on yourself (but you already know that; in fact, pride yourself on it--what a waste). So they didn't call your (buff) bluff--so what? It reflects more on them than on you---I mean, come on, the fact they hold up (still I think) both Ginsberg and O'Hara as two of their founding "spirits" or heroes or whatever, both of whom were into posing nude, and neither of whom had especially "attractive" bodies (so it's not about aesthetics really, in more ways than one!), and that they would not publish that photo of you, well, it reflects badly on them! Aren't you just falling back into the same kind of shame-based hypocrisy at your occasional best you so often deride in others? Or am *I* now being "too hard on you" by saying you're being too hard on yourself? Coppelia

| C-

Yes, but they opted for a face shot! Rejected even there! And turns out they were right, I just did it out of some "dark soul of the night" kind of desperation. Hadn't "had any" in a long while, narcissism begetting alienation begetting narcissism, etc. Absolutely self indulgent, and not only that, vulgar, played, cliché....It's embarrassing... C.

| Chris--

I don't see what your problem is; after all YOU were the one who sent it...Don't worry about it.... Cheers, C

| Coppelia--

I wish you hadn't made that backchannel public and mentioned to the Poetics List that time I sent a naked picture of myself to the St. Mark's Poetry Project Newsletter to accompany that review they did of my book...

Chris Stroffolino

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"My Fare, Lady" (notes from Louis' Cab)

19 May 2002

Watten's car analogy will not let him go.

| *e. But then, my reading of your identification with Watten's essay via the question of whether he is recommending that you buy a car, has itself become more nuanced.*

What do you think Watten is doing with the car analogy? Is he enacting a critique of consumerism? And, if so, how? And how does it tally with his claim that "Buying a new Ford is analagous to participation in public life for Stein;

it got her out onto the streets of the 'capital' as a consequence of her fame (and not just as a bourgeois author; Mayakovsky is another modernist who bought a new car)."

Looking at Watten's language (if not necessarily Language's Watten), I wonder: if buying the new Ford was a CONSEQUENCE of her fame, wouldn't the analogy between "buying a car" and "participation in public life" break down, insofar as it implies "her fame" was, previously, if not exactly pedestrian, at least non-car-ownership... Q: "is the car necessary for participation for public life for Watten?" Does he offer an unequivocal answer? If not, is the equivocation itself a "car?"

*e. In what you actually write, you waver between two conflicting identifications, *neither of which you (can) make*.*

I only waver in these identifications in that particular essay to the extent that I read Watten in his particular essay wavering between them.... If you (or someone else) can convince me otherwise, I am willing to grant the possibility that I have misread Watten's identification with the consumerist mode, that maybe I have projected it, but I think you (or someone else) would need to address the above questions to convince me...

Either Watten is recommending (identification #1) that you think of poetry as assembly-line work in what has (in BW's & in others' historical readings) become a factory of language (hence, from your expressivist-romanticist viewpoint, you are perplexingly being asked to "identify with reification" --

(why is identifying with an assembly-line model automatically an identification with "reification" for you? Sure, Watten claims it's standard (by implication TOO STANDARD) to say literature enacts a critique of reification

a tough social command to imagine, let alone fulfill!), or (identification #2), that you buy a car (today!),

(or, again, not simply the car? But what is analogous to the car (for Stein) in today's "new technologies"? (see 219)

The second identification (buy car now!) is the one you would like to favor

Really? Am I arguing that we should buy more things? (see 224 for instance)

, which, as the point of identification for you as a poet, in the historical analogy of Watten's essay, actually invokes a later time, post WWII at least, when cars were more affordable. I.e. your point of identification is further along in the history of consumerism, as that history is spelled out in terms of the Ford assembly line model of production. This is reflected in your poetics influences (a bit of Beat, a bit of NYSchool), which I'll allude to again at g, below).

You lose me with this analogy--are cars more affordable today than when, and for whom? etc.? Is have they just become more mandatory? Also, in terms of poetic

influences, this analogy, to be elaborated, would maybe have to consider such pre-AUTO car (if not pre-capitalism) writers such as Shelley and Shakespeare

: Are you a revolutionary prole who sees the assembly line and language for "what it really is" ("semiotic rubble" [BW on Andrews] etc) or are you an aspirant to middle class consumerism and desire? Such is the dilemma that Watten's essay should (and almost does) pose for "you."

But since Watten himself seemed to show some identification with a consumerist mode in much of his piece (essay?) before he gets to the assembly-line "account" with producer-identifications, I'm not sure that *he* "stages" the "which side are you on dilemma" as you do here... I also question the linkage of desire to "middle class consumerism" or any consumerism for that matter. Sure, the "discourse of desire" (as opposed to need) often can be seen to be linked to it, but.... well, that's another topic...

g. Imagining poetry / language as a collective assembly-line is something that you can't do (as I've already said) given your romanticist-expressivist poetics bent, while as a poorly-funded sessional / student at the time of writing your review, you can't buy a car, either! Since for you there are no other options than these two modes of identification with Watten's historical analogy to the car factory, the unstated conclusion to your review is that Watten's essay is of no use to you as a poet-consumer.

A collective is not necessarily an assembly line... I was interested in how Watten tries to identify with the assembly line worker and how for him such an identification becomes rather mystical (see essay) in its impersonality, and that despite (or perhaps because of) his modernist vocabulary, in some ways what he builds to in this essay seems a kind of romanticist amoral enthusiasm... My question was not so much what USE this could be for me as a POET-COMSUMER, but what use this could be for a poet-producer, especially for one who is interested, in some "envisioned futurity" as Watten, rather vaguely, defines it. I'm very curious about this "e.f.". After he makes such an identification with the factory worker, an identification that implies, at least at times, that factory workers do NOT primarily feel alienated, reified, etc. (which is provocative, and may challenge certain liberal pieties I might tend to "harbour"), he then ends on a note of EXHAUSTION--which I took as finally admitting (almost as a punch-line) all the alienation he had largely kept at bay in his "carefully plotted sequence."

h. More significantly (and this is why I don't think you quite re-enact that first-attachment moment as I pose it -- and I pose it as a reading inscribed within the idea of LP), the historical allegory itself seems to be of no great use to you. Either that, or else you do not fully see / consider it as I've spelled it out (which, in terms of identification, is a bit different from Watten).

Yes, and I could be clearer about it---but to do so, I think I'd have to respond LESS-DIRECTLY to Watten's essay. My piece was an attempt to work within his

particular vocabulary and if indeed there was a degree of suppression in my essay, it's because there's suppression in Watten's essay, insofar as he seems to suppress what you call his restaging of "those initiating conditions of labor which ideally begin the consciousness- raising process toward a grasp of the process of commodification, etc" for much of his essay. His essay ENDS with that point, but where then is his envisioned futurity?

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Tonight: TELLING IT SLANT panel discussion

21 May 2002

In the thread, jason christie had written · 21 May 2002 —

I tend to think of Avant Garde as a historical term rolling forward from the modernist reinvestment of form

Yeah Wallace is into that term avant garde And what of gloming E Dickinson onto it too? (like that Annie Finch book "A Formal Feeling Comes" which at least wasn't called "Formal Feeling Coming" though the connection between formalism and the erotic....) (or was he thinking of Ted Berrigan's CERTAIN SUN) avant fin garde siecle a mobile army of meta fores and the ING INGing//////// here? but that being said of my two fav. lang. pos only one is male

jason christie wrote:

I would also love to hear about this panel. Originally I had planned to fly down for it, but then I woke up and realized I was poor and getting poorer! How does Avant Garde work in the book? I tend to think of Avant Garde as a historical term rolling forward from the modernist reinvestment of form right up to Olson's form and content melding. Molding. Mauling. Maybe. Hey, it also has been attached to 'white male movements' like the Black Mountain School, or more recently the language poetry gang. Is it investigated in the book or just adopted as a term to invoke connotations of new/ radical/ experimental/ cutting edge/ {insert any other metaphor for something that hasn't yet been dissected and pinned to a board}? If at all possible violent like butter. These are not opinions. Copyrighted for 2002 and back. Now if the panel could be somehow digitally archived, then we could all check it out and have a wonderful, maybe slightly provocative discussion right here. Here? Or there. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe (silent aich)I've gotten all the honey into my stockings and can't dance for seeing the rain anymore. This goes out, as all things, to you. Rolling through the decades. And what a war image! It had specificity then and then and why not maybe then as well. Timeless like that first black and white kiss, or was it sepia?

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Fake response*26 May 2002**In the thread, Millie Niss had written · 26 May 2002 —**it was made up of chunks which apparently didn't have anything to do with each other*

Millie---

just to respond to this one point---

(always set apart by white space; you can almost tell a language poem just by looking for all the dense text surrounded by whitespace)

this is a not true; though some language poets (and others, who say are involved with Iowa or Brown, etc.) who've appropriated this device (not that the l.ps invented it either) would have one believe it....

there are many "maximalists" (as a shorthand word) among them--- for an interesting relatively early discussion of this white space issue as a debate WITHIN (or between) the language poets see Rae Armantrout's POETIC SILENCE and the after talk discussion in Writing/Talks edited Perelman (1985).... when i teach L.P I like to to use this text....

C

[↑ Index](#)***lyric ca. 2002****28 May 2002**The first of several 2002 essays worrying the word 'lyric,' here answering Andrew, who wants to marry a generational new/old split to a lyric/prose one.*

Andrew---

Sympathetic to aspects of what's called "lyric," but also skeptical of how that term is often used, I am curious about your points here--

I am especially curious about the ways you seem to want to combine a generational distinction (new vs. old) with the "lyric" vs. "prose-like poetry" distinction....

And it raises some questions for me in part because I don't really know your own poetry (where can I find it?) or for that matter your age (I assume we're roughly of the same generation?)... and in part because I don't see how what you'd call a Pinsky-Perelman mode dominates a Howe/Bidart mode (questions. Would you include Palmer, or Yau, or Shapiro, or Armantrout, or Jorie Graham, or Lauterbach, or Guest, to name but a few, more in the Howe mode? I don't want to be putting words in your mouth....)

I see them both as established modes which exist, both of which young (or beginning, of whatever biological age) writers are often encouraged--- depending on the particular social context(s) in which they come to *contemporary poetry* (as opposed to say "poetry itself")--to imitate, or accomodate. I don't see such an aesthetic (by which I don't necessarily mean to say "merely aesthetic") distinction as particularly a matter of the old and the new, except in the context of certain circles.

So, when I look at young or "new" writers I see, whether or not one prefers the "S. Howe" mode (as you do), or what you'd call the Perelman mode, and see a range of writings (and also feel there's a lot of writing that doesn't get enough attention because it doesn't seem to be fashionable enough, for whatever reasons) for me it's not so much a question of "new" vs. "old" but a question of the range of various options that are called poetry today, and even at times a debate over what is called poetry itself...

I'm curious if you'd see the distinction you're making between "prose" and "lyric intensity" in earlier generations as well. For instance, say Ashbery vs. O'Hara or Duncan? Or earlier, Stevens vs. Williams? I'm asking this (though I know you want to talk more about young and/or new poets more) because I'm trying to figure out how this vexed term "lyric" operates today....

It seems there are several overlapping (but also potentially contradictory) definitions of the lyric in contemporary poetry...

1 definition claims that a work is LYRIC to the extent it is "I" based (regardless of whether that writer's work looks or reads more like "prose" or whether it is more condensed or fragmented in style), whether that it's an "I" the poem claims to "express" (or "confess") or an "I" the poem is interested in creating, or claiming is a construct

2 definition of lyric claims that a work is LYRIC to the extent that it isn't discursive, that it doesn't look or read like prose (regardless of whether its condensations or fragmentations are primarily perceptual, cultural, or "I" based in terms of content)...

These definitions seem to exist for both proponents and detractors of what's called the lyric

There's probably other ways to summarize what the lyric does, or is, but I'm quite curious about how these two ways of looking at the lyric tend to circulate. I still maintain, that if anything's changed in contemporary American poetry in the last ten years, it's the shift in emphasis not so much in what's being written as in which way of defining lyric is more common (a working hypothesis-- though, it could be said that this may have some effect on what's written, alas)....

Not to come off a "language apologist" (for as you may know, I've a lot of quarrels with them too), I personally find a lot more pathos and even self-dramatization and what I (if not you) would call "lyric intensity" in Perelman at his best (I'll say his three books of the late 80s for now) that Howe, even though it looks less "lyric" (by definition #2) even though I also highly value work, as you claim that has a more direct and less fabricated relation to its author (though I do think Susan Howe is a rather odd example of that! Better, say, the younger (and underpublished) writer Yuri Hospodar (since you wanted to talk about the new and young) for instance.... Or Brett Ralph or Nancy Johnson (neither of whom are particularly interested in Perelman or Ashbery or Stevens-- Brett's in town for a Robinson Jeffers conference; Nancy's huge on Baraka currently--but both of whom, like Ashbery, I too would call EXTREMISTS in the best sense of that word....

Chris

Andrew Rathmann wrote:

Some violent simplifications in the interest of seeing what's new about the present:

Poetry since the late 1960s has been dominated by prose, only we don't call it prose. We call it "speech," or we call it "writing."

In the former case, there is an attempt to objectify (as "voice") the author's individuality, without pathos or self-dramatization. Pinsky, for example.

In the latter case, individuality is objectified only at the level of writing style, and the work has only an obscure or fabricated relation to its author. Perelman, for example.

But both tendencies imply a quarrel with the traditional promise of the lyric. Lyric promises intensity. Though in vastly different ways, Pinsky and Perelman are clearly uneasy or dissatisfied with the idea of lyric intensity (which isn't to say they are merely genial fellows). In general, poets who came to maturity in the late 1960s prefer charm, or sympathy, or comedy, or word games, or theory -- things better handled with the more social medium of a prose-like poetry.

This is one reason, it seems to me, why Susan Howe is notable. She has an unironic relation to lyricism, even if she must borrow it from other speakers, most of them speakers of prose. She has found a way to intensify and transform prose so that it becomes lyric. Lyric intensity is something she shares, though in vastly different ways, with Frank Bidart. Extremists, both of them.

The move to a more social (i.e. prose-like) poetics may have been good for poetry, but I wonder whether younger poets aren't moving in a different direction, trying to reclaim for poetry some of the things given away in the effort to be more social. Maybe they should try to be less social, less accommodating. If so, I wonder what the key texts would be.

(Perhaps one is that t-shirt that reads: "Your favorite band sucks.")

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Close reading: Lu, "Pamela: A Novel"

24 June 2002

Andrew Rathmann had begun posting 'close readings' to the list that summer; this answers the one on Pamela Lu.

In the thread, Andrew Rathmann had written · 24 June 2002 —

| It is not even particularly well written, though it does have an appeal

Andrew---

just a quickie for now.... I'm really glad you chose to write about this book..... I like your distinction between tone and things and the primacy of scooby doo over academic discourse....

Curious however why you would say "it is not even particularly well-written" and also why you see it as having "surrealist predecessors"

could you elaborate?

thanks, Chris

Andrew Rathmann wrote:

While some of us were in graduate school being told that "Literature" doesn't exist, Pamela Lu was writing a novel. Or perhaps I should say, a "novel" (since it's actually an extended poetic meditation on personal identity.) The book is by no means a spellbinder. It is not even particularly well written, though it does have an appeal which, for me anyway, is undeniable but hard to specify. I think the appeal may have to do with a generational sensibility.

*Many younger writers are reluctant to lean too heavily on personality in their writing. They are reluctant to self-dramatize. We sometimes assume that this tendency is an outcome of academic suspicion about the "subject." And, certainly, *Pamela* contains nontrivial amounts of academic residue, mostly of the *Death of the Subject*, *Waning of Affect*, *End of Style*, *Nostalgia for the Present* varieties, which seemed so thrilling to bright undergraduates circa 1990.*

*I think, though, that Lu's book suggests that a tenuous identity, a weird sense of being alienated from one's thoughts and feelings, and so forth, might have more to do with being a member of the Scooby Doo generation than with academic discourse. She is good when it comes to pinpointing this impossible-to-pinpoint sort of experience, without self-pity or sentimentality. At one point the narrator speaks of a concept, perhaps borrowed from psychology, which she calls "tone": it's the "underlying yet coherent feeling that accompanies any experience and encapsulates some unplaceable essence of it." But the narrator and her friends decide that because tone is "everywhere all at once" it is thus "nowhere we could find it, point at it and call it a 'thing'..." Tones are replacing things: interesting. And the things that remain have a weird status. Later, for example, the narrator refers to their "clickability": she and her friends are never able to "dismiss the possibility of double-clicking" things in order to "open further revelations of their deep and vastly esoteric contests." In *Pamela*, unsayable emotional tones dominate the world of things, and things themselves are trapdoors opening into ever more "content." Thus the memory of Streisand singing a*

show tune can combine with the sight of barbecued meat in S.F.'s Little Saigon to give the narrator an "insight into the nature of Greek tragedy": "I remembered, down to its exact tonal frequency, the wail of Andromache in the pounded Trojan dust 1500 years ago as the butcher's knife sliced through a slab of roasted pork above my head." The essence of *Pamela* differs from, say, its surrealist predecessors because, as the book's epigraph from Patty Hearst suggests, the mysterious forces that flicker and insinuate themselves into personal experience may in fact be threatening rather than wondrous, yet there is "little one can do to prepare oneself adequately for the unknown." The book is comforting in its delineation of a generation's weirdness, yet unsettling in the way it leaves the reader with a more tenuous sense of his or her own identity, which is at the mercy of an experiential onrush.

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cellphone number, me

17 July 2002

Brian Stefans announces a cell phone; the answer is a rotary one. The gap is a joke, and it isn't — the poet is always a technology behind, and not by choice.

In the thread, Brian Stefans had written · 17 July 2002 —

I have a cellphone now:

Hey yo....

I have a rotary phone now....

██████████

Brian Stefans wrote:

Hey yo...

I have a cellphone now:

██████████

-- Brian

A R R A S: new media poetry and poetics <http://www.arras.net>

Hinka cumfae cashore canfeh, Ahl hityi oar hied 'caw taughtie!

"Do you think just because I come from Carronshore I cannot fight? I shall hit you over the head with a cold potatoe."

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Joel on Bill

24 July 2002

The thread held that Western poets experiment because they can afford to; he answers from class, the subject he keeps returning to.

While I think there is, alas, some truth in Joel's comments, about the limits of much American poetry viz-a-viz other countries--- but I think you make big jump when you speak of "the luxury to experiment" (which you do qualify in your

penultimate sentence)-- There's definitely a class tension within America on which this is played out as well... and it's partially why the "avant-garde" vs. "mainstream" thing is so Bush-vs. Gore while the most talked about (published, reviewed, etc.) of both ilks do seem to

be less generous about the usual first person conceits, etc.... that it seems that when some Americans do write in that way that you talk of that non-Western poets do, that they are considered not sophisticated enough (and actually there's a bit of a double standard in a lot of poetry officialdoms in the SA ---it's okay for someone from another country to do so, but not for an American--- actually PAUL VANGELISTI'S introduction to BARAKA'S transbluecency touches on this...)

On another level, it's also a matter of reading and interpretation more than writing--- say the way that many read many blues songs as mostly about a MALE just complaining about a FEMALE, but it can also be read more generously---at times very much seems the "female" is placeholder for Racist America, etc....well in the male songs, and yeah not always...and, no, I'm not trying to say that the "personal" isn't often more profound than the "political"---Should probably write an essay again, but just thought I'd chime in....

Basically I agree with much you say, but the idea of America education as privilege and luxury I think needs to be complicated....

take care, chris

Joel Weishaus wrote:

I was waiting for someone to ask this question. The answer, of course, is yes. I was referring to direct, overt, even aggressive expression of a political "line," something I think informs third world experimental writing moreso than U.S. counterpart.

WilliamJamesAustin.com

Bill:

There's somewhat of a cultural quandary here, as most Americans, certainly its educated, if not over-educated, poets, grow up in a privileged space. Your home is probably not in jeopardy of suddenly being hit by a (American made) missile, and you're not concerned that when you go shopping someone will blow you up. Most poets in the Third World don't have the luxury to experiment like Western poets do. Unlike most Western poets, many Third World poets speak not so much for themselves as for the sufferings and aspirations of their people. Their poems, then, are more generous than the usual first person conceits we find in much Western poetry today. (In some cases, the first person implies something larger, but I'm not talking to that.) On the other hand, all worthwhile poems are experimental. It's just that some are more constrained than others.

-Joel

Joel Weishaus Center for Excellence in Writing Portland State University Portland, Oregon <http://web.pdx.edu/~pdx00282>

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Rising Shotgun

8 August 2002

Amid the war over Alan Sondheim's list-flooding, Bernstein defends the announcement as the list's very purpose — so the piano player posts a real one, for a record he plays on.

Hey Alan Sondheim, I hate advertising too but don't shoot me I'm just the piano plyer...

Announcing

"Don't Forsake Kentucky" The debut album by RISING SHOTGUN out now on Norse Records...

Ten songs of longing, loss, and the luck of the draw-- (written by Brett Ralph--- also a fine poet I might add hence its relevance and I could say cutting edge ACADOMINANCE a la BUFFO!) produced by Steve "Rapeman" Albini

CD \$15.00 post-paid Checks payable to Brett Ralph

Rising Shotgun P.O. Box 4423 Louisville, KY. 40204

Charles Bernstein wrote:

I suppose we all have our preferences on what we would like to see on this list, but just as valuable as the posts of the type I think ought to be posted is the fact of what is posted. In any case, this list has always encouraged the posting of announcements for publications, web sites, and readings and there is nothing more useful than those posts nor anything more fundamental to the founding mission of the list. Call them advertisement if you like, but if the product in question is poetry edited or written by a member of the list, or readings organized or given by list members, then I want more of that not less. an inexpensive way for participants to exchange information about publications and performances. This is not a secondary function, a form of questionable "self-promotion", but the very heart of what this list is for.

I also always appreciate lists of recommended reading (books or on web).

Charles Bernstein

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Resentments

8 August 2002

The list is having one of its periodic fits of self-reproach over its own bitterness; he lowers the temperature the way he usually does, through pop.

In the thread, Steven Shoemaker had written · 8 August 2002 —

| *The ever-present bitterness is a great pity*

Jim---

Hey I appreciate your fellowship

I just want to make a point in support of I think Murat though

to me the issue was analogous to this:

remember circa '94 when Alanis Morissette came out and a whole industry (or "sub-industry") was calling it "alternative" etc.... (not to single out A.M., for one could easily say that band Live, etc. etc and all the commercial alternative stations that sprung up with billboards that said "Honk If You Hate 'Freebird'" etc....)---

Well, I actually liked Alanis Morissette--but I saw it as good POP--- this is not a qualitative judgment, or if it might be, it's coming from somebody who thinks that it's at least as hard to create a GOOD pop record as it is to say create "Giant Steps" by Sir. John....

So, for me, I was not willing to dismiss BG's original "acadominant" remark as mere resentment on his part, even though I wouldn't have come up with that phrase myself. I may very well be called acadominat someday by someone too....it's not necessarily a swear word, etc....

I don't know if this makes any sense to you, but it's not spoken out of resentment...

c

Jim Behrle wrote:

A great disappointment about innovative poetries and its poets is the silly resentments some express toward other innovative poets. We ought to celebrate poets like Myung Mi Kim getting a new job. Doesn't that open doors to more of us rather than shut them? Or when a new book is announced--doesn't that present us with more opportunities to publish, and not less? Other poets' triumphs ought to be met with gladness. This is a tough enough gig, with little power or love to show. Would it kill some on this list to be kind and open to other's work? I'd like to hear from the silent majority, who may or may not be turned off by the tone of some posters. I'm very interested when these messages we send to each other make me glad I became a poet. I've decided to be more vigilant when they don't.

--Jim Behrle

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Larry Rivers (1924-2002)

15 August 2002

Another of the New York School's elders gone — the painter who moved among the poets, designed O'Hara's and Baraka's sets, and outlived most of them.

In the thread, Jim Behrle had written · 15 August 2002 —

| *Larry Rivers, Who Shook Up American Art, Is Dead at 78*

One of Rivers' best (and to me most moving) performances was his intense heartfelt oration at O'Hara's funeral.... I only hope someone will do him similarly well....

c

Jim Behrle wrote:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/15/obituaries/15CND-RIVE.html>

August 15, 2002 Larry Rivers, Who Shook Up American Art, Is Dead at 78 By MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

Larry Rivers, the irreverent, proto-Pop painter and sculptor, jazz saxophonist, writer, poet, teacher, sometime actor and filmmaker, whose self-styled, partly self-mocking bad boy persona encapsulated the spirit of a restless era that shook up American art, died on Wednesday at his home in Southampton, on Long Island. He was 78.

The cause was cancer of the liver, which was diagnosed this spring.

Insecure, an avid reader and lover of poetry, a publicity hound, Mr. Rivers was given in his glory days to cowboy boots, tight pants, inside-out shirts, far-out ties, sometimes two at a time, a black Cadillac and motorcycle.

He helped change the course of American art in the 1950's and '60's, but his virtues as an artist always seemed inextricably bound up with his vices, producing work that could be by turns exhilarating and appalling. Naturally, it provoked extreme reactions. Jackson Pollock, Mr. Rivers recalled with a certain bitter glee, "once tried to run down one of my sculptures that was standing in a friend's driveway in East Hampton."

He had an omnivorous curiosity about life, sex, drugs, politics, history and culture. "He would stab out at different things, like Picasso, except that more of Picasso's things worked out," said David C. Levy, the Corcoran Gallery of Art's director and a longtime friend, who played with Mr. Rivers in the East 13th Street Band. "Larry had a realistic sense of who he was, so he didn't get caught up in his ego when things failed. At the same time he was probing. He was a very serious man, an intellectual, always reading."

He had a sometimes self-destructive penchant for gossip, scandal and outlandishness. "If I have inherited bad taste," he once said, "it is at least compounded with an obnoxious sense of who I am." For a while he was everywhere. He frequented the

Cedar bar with de Kooning. He designed sets for Frank O'Hara's "Try! Try!" and for "The Slave and the Toilet" by Amiri Baraka. His sets and costumes for a New York Philharmonic performance of Stravinsky's "Oedipus Rex" conducted by Lukas Foss outraged music critics.

He appeared with Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg in Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's offbeat film "Pull My Daisy," and played Lyndon Johnson on stage in Kenneth Koch's "Election." With Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau, he spent six months making a television travelogue about Africa before being arrested as a suspected white mercenary in Lagos, Nigeria, and nearly being executed. Broadcast in 1968 on NBC's "Experiments in Television," the show was summed up by Barbara Delatiner in Newsday as "something like a Rivers canvas: complex, brilliantly colorful and maybe too tongue-in-cheek for serious consideration."

In 1958, he even won \$32,000 on "The \$64,000 Challenge" quiz show as an art expert. He subsequently said he was slipped an envelope beforehand with the questions in it but proudly declined to look.

In his last decades, commercially successful and churning out huge, multimedia works, bloated pastiches of himself and other artists, he fell hard from grace. But at the height of his fame, in the mid-1960's, John Canaday, the New York Times chief art critic, called him "the cleverest, even the foxiest, painter at work in the country," an artist who "can do anything he wants with a brush."

That was amazing since Mr. Rivers had come to art almost by accident. As a young saxophonist in a band playing the resort circuit in Maine in 1945, he was shown a book about modern art one day by the band's pianist, Jack Freilicher.

"I wanted to say, 'What's cubism?' " Mr. Rivers recalled in his autobiography, "What Did I Do?" "But suddenly I knew what cubism was. Cubism told a young man from the Bronx he didn't know very much. Cubism didn't know about him or his nights walking all over Greenwich Village with his big horn slung over his shoulder looking for a joint where he could sit and blow with a lot of other desperados. Cubism certainly didn't smoke pot or get high, cubism was history in which he played no part. Where could I catch up?"

Freilicher's wife was Jane Freilicher, a painter. She handed Mr. Rivers a brush. He turned out to have a natural gift. "After a week or two I began thinking that art was an activity on a 'higher level' than jazz," he said.

Through Jane Freilicher, he met Nell Blaine, who was working in a semiabstract style. She suggested he enroll in Hans Hofmann's class, which Mr. Rivers did on the G.I. Bill. He played the saxophone at night and drew eight hours a day, absorbing Hofmann's theories about color and form but rebelling against his stress on pure abstraction, which was becoming the dominant mode of American art at a time when Pollock and Rothko were emerging as major figures on the scene.

Drawing female nudes in Hofmann's studio in 1947, Mr. Rivers recalled, he ended up with three peculiar rectangles. "You were not supposed to make notice of the fact that you were staring at a vagina," he said. "The art mood of the times dictated that we not recognize a personal sexual reaction as important." By the end of the year he "became frantic to draw the figure."

A Bonnard show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1948 pointed a way forward. Mr. Rivers saw that painting figures was not a dead occupation. He began exhibiting the next year. Clement Greenberg, the powerful critic, called him "an amazing beginner," a "better composer of pictures than was Bonnard himself in many instances." (Greenberg later changed his mind and decided Mr. Rivers "stinks.")

Mr. Rivers then went to Europe, living in Paris for a few months, where he studied Old Masters, Courbet and Manet. After he returned, he painted "Washington Crossing the Delaware" (1953), a deadpan parody of the salon classic by Emanuel Leutze. He said he was stimulated by Tolstoy's retelling of a national epic in "War and Peace." "I wanted to take something corny and bring it back to life," he said.

It reintroduced to American painting a comic tone that the Abstract Expressionists conspicuously lacked. They were not amused. But the work, audacious and clever, the pigments dilute, the space diaphanous and indeterminate, in an ambiguous style that subtly honored past art and modernism while poking fun at both of them, was bought by the Modern and helped pave the way for Pop artists, and their irony, at the end of the 1950's.

Mr. Rivers was never strictly a Pop painter himself, however. His unconventionality was particularly idiosyncratic, with elements of underground camp, a touch of nostalgia and a sub-current of tragedy. He was a superb draftsman in the tradition of Degas or Manet, but with an odd tendency toward bravado and self-parody. After "Washington Crossing the Delaware" he painted a lifesize homoerotic portrait of O'Hara nude with boots on. O'Hara was his friend, supporter, occasional lover and collaborator. (Mr. Rivers collaborated with various poets over the years.)

A favorite subject was his mother-in-law, Berdie Burger, nude, her flesh sagging, a Rubensian figure. Mr. Rivers said he felt competitive with the Old Masters. He wanted to prove he could paint figures as well as Gericault. His work spoke to old-fashioned ambitions thrust up against a modern world that seemed to have lost faith in them.

But it could be so extreme that it was not clear — not even to him, perhaps — whether the result was meant to be, as one critic put it, "therapeutic or traumatic." De Kooning in his obscure but precise way once said that looking at Mr. Rivers's art was "like pressing your face in wet grass," which summed up the mixture of sensations it could provoke.

In the 80's, when Mr. Rivers went into the hospital briefly after his heart started fibrillating, he imagined his obituary in The New York Times. "Will it begin at the bottom of the front page, 'Genius of the Vulgar Dies at 63' " he asked, "continued inside with one of The Times's awful photos of me and the usual reference to the name my parents gave me?"

He was born Yitzroch Loiza Grossberg on Aug. 17, 1923, (although he also claimed to be born in 1925), to Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine. His father was a plumber who became the owner of a small trucking firm. Mr. Rivers recalled working for his father, pushing handcarts through the garment district. He studied piano and fell in love with jazz. A year before his bar mitzvah, he was playing the saxophone on the Borscht Belt circuit in the Catskills. Later, when a comic introduced him and his band as Larry Rivers and the Mudcats, he changed his name.

In 1942, over his family's objections, he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps, and was inducted into the Army band, then honorably discharged because of a tremor in his left hand. He enrolled at Juilliard and studied composition in a class with Miles Davis. They would prepare for exams "by going outside to smoke some marijuana," he said. "We were convinced it would improve our hearing." Through Davis, who was living with Charlie Parker, he met other jazz musicians. He began to tour with various groups.

After the war, he married Augusta Burger, the mother of a toddler son, Joseph, whom he later adopted. They had another son, Steven, then divorced. Mr. Rivers raised the boys. O'Hara called the home he set up a "bohemian household" of "staggering complexity." It included Joseph, Steven and Augusta's mother, Berdie, his favorite model until she died in 1957. "She was very easy to live with," Mr. Rivers said. "Nothing threw her. I mean here she was from a very ordinary Jewish background, born in Harlem when Harlem was still Jews, and there were gay guys in my life, and black people and dope addicts, and she would say, 'Oh, isn't he nice . . . he's nice . . . Tennessee Williams is nice.'

"She was slightly mad."

He would return home to the Bronx, his sister Geri recalled (he quoted her in "What Did I Do?"), "in this long overcoat with his strange haircut, saying a lot of things no one understood, telling weird jokes without a punch line and using a lot of 'hey man, you dig, man, go, man.' Mamma was beginning to learn how to read and write English in the Communist Party night school when Larry comes around talking black talk."

He needed odd jobs to support himself. Once, he became Jack Harris, Famous Artist, to demonstrate ballpoint pens at Hearns Department Store on 14th Street, and also worked as a messenger for Philip Rosenthal, an art-supply house on Broadway, making cashless transactions on the sly to keep his own studio well-stocked.

By the 60's, his reputation and notoriety at a peak, he was experimenting widely. The work could be vulgar or lofty. He made sculptures out of plaster casts and welded metal. His "Lampman Loves It" was a sculpture of a couple engaged in intercourse. He collaborated with Jean Tinguely and Yves Klein in Europe. His paintings touched on racial issues, as in works like "The Last Civil War Veteran," "Lynching" and "Black Olympia." He once reconstructed a Harlem tenement front stoop with trash cans from which emanated taped screams and shouts of a family killing a rat.

He incorporated more and more everyday things, found objects and popular images into his art, famously using the Dutch Masters cigar box label, based on Rembrandt's "Syndics," in a 1960's series, but also complicating his work with stencils and other lettering devices.

His "History of the Russian Revolution" (1965) was a 33-foot, 76-panel project, which his sons helped him build, based on his reading of a biography of Trotsky, made up of boxes, paintings, drawings, a poem, an honor roll, lead pipes, wooden rifles and a machine gun. Mr. Rivers called it "the greatest painting-sculpture-mixed media of the 20th century, or the stupidest."

He went on to make images about the Holocaust, and homages to Hollywood. In the 1980's, he undertook a series after Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase," did nine Op-Ed illustrations for The Times, including one of "Reagan Crossing the Carib-

bean" at the time of the war in Grenada, and, when commissioned to paint the story of the Jews from Moses to Theodore Herzl, produced the three-part "History of Matzo." "In Jewish history," he said, "there's a humorous way of looking at things."

Splitting his time between art and music, he played the saxophone with several bands in later years, touring successfully until he died. His daughter Gwynne sometimes sang with him. His East 13th Street Band made commercial recordings in the 80's and early 90's. His last group was called the Climax Band.

He is survived by Clarice, a Welsh-born teacher he married in 1961; they were separated but remained married and on friendly terms. He is also survived by their daughters, Gwynne Rivers and Emma Rivers, both of New York City, his sons, Joseph Rivers, of Pleasant Valley, N.Y., Steven Rivers, of Nyack, N.Y., and Sam Deshuk Rivers, his son with Daria Deshuk, a painter he lived with for 10 years. Both of them live in New York City. There are eight grandchildren.

His two sisters, Geri Block and Joan Gordon, both of Southampton, also survive him. For the last five years, he lived with Jeni Olin, a poet.

A critic once claimed that "the innovations of Rauschenberg and to a lesser degree Johns and the Pop artists are incomprehensible without Rivers." Maybe. It is at least true that Mr. Rivers helped bridge the gulf between Abstract Expressionism and the mass imagery of Pop. At a time when sly figure painting is now back in fashion, his early work seems remarkably fresh and prescient. His willingness to take chances was in the end perhaps his finest quality.

About his later unevenness, he said: "I keep shifting my interests. I can have a few months when I have visions of the Holocaust, and then, the next few months I'm suddenly doing something that might be considered trite. Like fashion. Though I really can't make much sense of it, except for the continuation of the absurd in art.

"I go from this to that, and why be ashamed of it? It seems to me this is the human experience."

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self-publish-or-perish

17 August 2002

The Sondheim argument has turned to distribution and self-publication.

Alan--- I don't mean to sound contentious---I mean this in genuine curiosity, but how does this tally with your "saturate the email listserve" philosophy? Isn't that self publication?

C

Alan Sondheim wrote:

Re: - the last part - please forgive me for intruding -

I think in a way this is too limited, because it doesn't take distribution models into account. It keeps things going, as at least one of the lists did that was descended from

Poetics, in the same circles, the same resonances. To have a book on a shelf in an unknown bookstore in an unknown town, to have new readers, to have the potential of new exchanges, brings writing closer to the culture, expands horizons, creates an edge. Miekal has been able to do that through extended publications, articles on his work or by him in other magazines, list participations, and a terrific decades history of publication - I first saw his work in Atlanta nineteen years ago. (One of my best memories is hearing my record on the radio when I was driving across the US in the late 80s for example.)

Writing, poetry in particular, cuts itself off precisely by self-publication, unless one has the financial means for distribution.

And like an exclusive poetry list, this creates a kind of elitism - I'll associate with _X_, but not with _Y_ for whatever reason -

Alan

On Sat, 17 Aug 2002, Jordan Davis wrote:

Miekal -

It is an initiative suggested by Juliana Spahr four or five or six summers ago that a group of twenty or thirty poets who were pestering each other on big backchannel cc lists all do something about this persistent invisibility we were complaining about: that we each self-publish a chapbook and mail a copy to all the others. Sort of the mid-year equivalent of a New Year's Day reading -- everybody hears what everybody else is doing. When you have to print something and transact with the USPS, "everybody" is going to be limited to the people on the address lists, but as they say in the corporate world, resource questions tend to answer themselves. DIY means save a little money and time for beer.

*As an aside, I'm pretty sure it was the good vibe of the self-po that led Anselm Berrigan to propose the somewhat more ambitious Subpress project, in which seventeen or eighteen writers donate one percent of their income to a small press they run collectively. Subpress' books include Edwin Torres's *Fractured Humorous*, Catalina Cariaga's *Cultural Evidence*, Jen Hofer's *slide rule*, Dan Bouchard's *Diminutive Revolutions*, Steve Malmude's *The Bundle*, Prageeta Sharma's *Bliss to Fill*, John Wilkinson's *Oort's Cloud*, and I believe forthcoming titles from Hoa Nguyen, Brett Evans, Ben Friedlander, and Dug Rothchild. Who'd I forget. Scott Bentley, John McNally, Camille Guthrie, and Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard.*

These are both just potlatches and cooperatives, not to minimize the effort and headache of either. But given how committed most readers and writers of poetry are, not to speak of rebellious and independent, it surprises me every month to overhear others (and myself!) resentful that they haven't been given an opportunity to participate in x reading series, y magazine, or z book-publisher. Why not just get a saddle-stapler (or a copy of Adobe Acrobat), make something, and give it to people you want to read you?

(Miekal, I know you are the soul of DIY. I just splaining this particular instance.)

Jordan

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Lyric Naming--Trivial?*27 August 2002*

One of the year's few threads he starts himself, and the seed of an autumn's worrying at naming and the lyric 'I.'

Hey just in that slow potentially pre-deepthought mode-- and came across an idea I haven't thought about in a while-- and then it occurred to me it's because it seems like a trivial issue...

but is it? the idea of lyric naming like the particularized Frank speaker of some O'Hara---is that (now 36 years after his death) an anomaly in terms of "the course of literary history" ("Well, O'Hara and his followers, they break the general lyric norm, by particularizing the speaker"---certainly that is Vendler's (grudging?) inclusion of O'Hara in, despite his minor (or is it minor?) deviation from, her umbrella idea of lyric---with its generally automatic (generically speaking) assumption of an identity, or oneness, of reader and writer....

And it does seem that much "lyric" today (of either a more narrative, speaker-persona centered, or the more "abstract lyric" type) does in many ways share much more with the non idea of the non-particularized (in contrast to SOME of O'Hara---I do not even want to make the claim that he "started it" though he did help bring it more to the foreground) canonical idea of the lyric. Does this mean that this concept in O'Hara and others becomes unduly relegated (sp?) to a mere stylistic quirk or personal idiosyncrasy? Or is it a sign of the return of the idea of poetry as primarily represented (though not always obviously so) as a repressed (at least by O'Harian standards--not that he always lives up to such standards, but he does set them up AS such at times) or sublime (sublimated) activity, insofar as the lyric identification of reader with speaker implies an interest in abstract conundrums of identity in a seemingly asocial way (even if "the social" is invoked, as "theme"---as "the body" and "music" or even "craft" often is)....

Anyway, still trying to decide if it's a trivial question---I think folks like Barrett Watten and Lytle Shaw are interested in theorizing naming in ways that I suppose challenge the way Vendler and others by and in large ignore the issue (all the better by their cursory mention of). But what does it mean for any of your (yes, your) poetic "practices"? Do you feel or think that there might be a crucial choice of ethics (with ramifications off the page, or in between the lines) involved in choosing to theatricalize oneself in such a seemingly more blatant (and less subtle) way? Or is it primarily a matter of style (note---I do not say "just style" or "merely aesthetic" here....at least not yet).

Answer (with a question even) if you want....

Chris

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Translations (4 Gary Sullivan?)

2 September 2002

The translation thread answered in his other native mode: a dialogue with his teddy bear, who has opinions about Delmore Schwartz modernising Shakespeare.

I mentioned to my teddy bear that there was this 'thread' or 'chain' on the list about translations, and he said unto me "but have they mentioned Delmore Schwartz's 'The Winter Twilight, Glowing Black and Gold?'" "No, why should they?" "Because it presents itself as a MODERNIZATION of that Shakespeare sonnet, 'the time of year thou mayst in me behold.'" "Yeah, but that isn't one of Schwartz's best." "Nor is it one of our favorite Shakespeare poems" (I was little taken aback by his use of the royal we here). "Yeah, but while Shakespeare's reputation---even on your 'experimental poetry' list (is that what you call it?)---can withstand calling attention to a relative clunker, Schwartz's can not. So, DON'T, whatever you do mention that poem on that list, for the love of what Lou Reed calls the pure spirit of poetry or whatever he calls it in 'I Love Women' (or is it 'The Pow Pow Pow, the Power of Positive Drinking.')." "well, the schwartz poem isn't really a clunker, it's just not quite as good as 'Far Rockaway' or 'Dogs are Shakespearean, Children Are Strangers'---I still prefer it to the Shakespeare poem." "Yeah, but that's just because it is a modernization, er, translation. That's what they're looking for on that list---quality isn't the issue AT ALL." Then the tutu bear narrativized "behind our unseen faces" and I found us skirting around Kenneth Koch's "Art of Love" again....

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A Question of Scope

3 September 2002

His fullest statement of poetics this year, to Kasey Mohammad — and, tellingly, it ends by tying method to how one lives.

Hey Kasey---

glad to see your take on this....it "ups the ante" as they sey---- I like, and in some ways identify with, your formulation of critical and uncritical "phases"-- it's one way of framing a kind of "back and forth" (or dialectic? or dialogic? or trialogic, which is a word that, though of limited use, i prefer to "polyvocal")....

I like the way you apply this to a sense of a transition (or transitions) you find yourself going through now, as you describe:

"from a period of intuitive, transrational lyricism with a (typically postmodern) tendency to interpolate bits and pieces of found discourse, either whole or

distorted, to a period of heavily rule-based assemblage, using principles of collage to work backward from the earlier method, attempting to simulate lyricism (or its related effects, such as antilyricism, metalyricism, paralyricism, 'patalyricism, FlaRf, turaluralyricism, etc.) via the manipulation of found materials.

I tend to identify personally at present much more with the former mode which you claim you are currently largely eschewing, though by saying that I don't mean to sound dogmatic like I'm not into understanding your motives for making the change to things like Flarf--- no point not being permissive of it, although I would defend the former mode as no more "typically postmodern" than the latter idea of "rule-based assemblage"---regardless of whether "post-modern" is a pejorative term. Anyway, not to over-quibble on semantics.

For me, personally, my personal distrust of engaging further in the practice of things like farf or flarf or magnetic poetry board poems (which I keep telling myself I'll do someday...), or why I never accorded Berrigan's "sonnets" the same reverence many others seem to, I think relates to several things. 1) that I'm into that intuitive, I'd add improvisatory sense of "thinking in the poem," that discursive lyric or lyrical discursiveness I found more in your "earlier" poems---I like the sense of reading somebody who seems to be trying to figure things out in their poems, rather than primarily presenting a sculpted "believable self" on one hand (though I do that at times---more on that below...) or what I think you mean by "rule-based assemblage" on the other. 2) the second reason, and I know some would throw this out of court as merely personal, etc., but it's something I think worth talking about---even if my particular momentarily absolute (read: tentative) conclusions about it are something you'd disagree with (I welcome such disagreements), relates to lifestyle---the idea that I keep telling myself that such a flarf mode in its very playful game-aestheticism could be an interesting thing/option for me to engage more fully in...someday, like SAY when I find myself once again having less time for writing relentlessness, due to job situations, or other social commitments, like say a love-relationship, or due to health reasons, like maybe if I choose to quit, or cut down on, smoking (and, yes, for me, smoking has been integrally involved with writing) or drinking coffee. Anyway, I'm putting it off, and may not even really move into a more flarf like mode if I quit cigs, but this be part of the "politics of poetic form" for me--

But rather than dwell on what I'm not doing I think I could at least briefly and reductively comment on a little of the transition I've been going through the past few months.... After finishing 2 full length manuscripts of poetry (still trying to find publishers), I felt like I had enough for awhile---not so much of writing poetry (though that has diminished) as of working on it, revising it (a 3000 mile move too

emphasized the need for some kind of transition too)---but since I had to do something in the meantime while I'm waiting for my new social and chthonic (sp?) environment to assert itself of me--and the two forms that have asserted themselves most for me are 1) more "journal like" prose (not too dissimilar from what this post is threatening to become!), and 2) finally getting around to putting lyrics to melodies/songs I had made up in some cases 14 or 15 years ago.....These two forms kind of have a way of making what I called poetry previously seem sort of what Dickinson would call "the term between"---or the excluded middle, and it's fascinating for me to try to "dumb myself" down into the form of quatrains and rhymes and repetition and the three dimensionality of the way the word floats in music---not that I'd claim any Dylan status for my songs as of yet, but I am pretty proud of having finished an album's worth of song material in the last several months after years of always coming up against a wall there.... Anyway, there's something so apollonian, so essentialist in the song-lyric "i" that comes through that probably needs the counter-weight of more blatant prose ruminations (while my poetry was kind of in between); it's like discovering a new triad. The fact that I've also suspended writing reviews/essays on poets and no longer am working on a dissertation maybe has belatedly freed me up to do this (for I'd say much of my earlier poetry was very much in dialogue with my Ph.D. dissertation in ways I've only begun to explore....)

Anyway, it's more complex than this (and may involve that "parenthetical pantheism" to which I referred in an earlier post on this subject), but I just thought I'd share some of this as maybe a response to SM and you....

take care,

Chris

"K. Silem Mohammad" wrote:

I'm surprised how few people have responded to this post. I suspect that it's a difficult and/or embarrassing question for many: difficult, because it requires us as poets to be self-critical about an activity that is often performed at an extreme distance from the self; embarrassing, because in some cases one discovers that the uncritical mental blur which can be achieved in that distancing is one of the guilty rewards of writing poetry in the first place.

*I'm not implying that "good poets" are constantly keeping open one analytical eye on their work whereas "bad poets" just go into a solipsistic Ionic ecstasy. This may be the case in a limited way, but it's more complicated than that. For one thing, it may be necessary for some poets to have an extended "uncritical" phase in which they simply *produce*, in order to get the machinery warmed up, receive external diagnoses, learn from their own tea-leaf leavings, etc. For another, even with poets who go through phases of this sort and then become more theoretical, programmatic, or "professional" (as if there were a profession involved) about their work, there may be*

a conscious decision to revert to the earlier state of autopermissive praxis. Granted, in this case, the "uncritical" nature of the praxis is always already critical by virtue of being chosen in reaction to a preceding period of intellectualization, since the choice in question is a choice to test the limits of some findings arrived at in the prior mode. This all may be getting at part of what is meant by "experimental" poetry.

*In my case, I can say that my own work seems to be in the throes of a transition: from a period of intuitive, transrational lyricism with a (typically postmodern) tendency to interpolate bits and pieces of found discourse, either whole or distorted, to a period of heavily rule-based assemblage, using principles of collage to work backward from the earlier method, attempting to simulate lyricism (or its related effects, such as antilyricism, metalyricism, paralyricism, 'patalyricism, FlaRf, turaluralyricism, etc.) via the manipulation of found materials. One of the things I find interesting about this approach is that the results seem to me more often to approximate a "unified" poetic "voice" (such terms have become so ironized for me that the quotation marks here are enclosing other, multiple sets of *implied* quotation marks) than much of the earlier, wholly "authorial" work. This is undoubtedly because the manipulation of the materials tends to promote the privileging of certain strongly discursive markers: pronouns, deictics, assertions of identity, etc. Very frequently, the work produced is predominantly "funny" or "satiric" as in the following:*

"NOT A WAR BLOG"

*Fisto: boy I would like to find you deer Mr. Lamp: SHE GOOD LOOKING GYP TOO HELL OF HEAD Fisto: Damn skippy! Mr. Lamp: Damn skippy Fisto: I think I had that deer frozen Mr. Lamp: you may of hit the nail on the head Fisto: doctor :-) I have a bad head Mr. Lamp: why do they insist on these wicker deer that they put up in their lobby Fisto: you should know cuty [looks up from a hideous parody of a deer] Mr. Lamp: giant oil companies behind this Bush scared me, because he always sniffs at the air like a deer Fisto: this is not a war blog - it's just MY blog all I wanted to do was to set my head as to whom would attend to a wounded deer and, of course, take a shit near Balboa BART Mr. Lamp: I wish I understood that sentence Fisto: a challenge, that's for sure: you'd need a head if the deer are all armored like that It's almost like the deer is sporting an M16 [head honcho in the Jewish Federation Drops his spoon and grasps his head:: ugh ate to much) ::scents a deer leaps onto the naked girl] Mr. Lamp: I held it together until the scene where he bites the head off the deer "THAT'S JERRY'S HEAD!" "Damn skippy, bi*tch." all the while Jeff Goldblum was rambling "I DON'T DO NEEDLES" Nocturna he knew would be running around killing deer "god made elk, god made deer, god demonstrated the dry-scrape method of brain tanning deer" Fisto: if i here music in my head well taken Smokey: "The truck piss-a-deer-ed." Hehehe! they're damn skippy it's an artificial flavor Mr. Lamp: hope you enjoy reading what goes through my head too bad I didn't see any 3-headed deer, though and the bats started chasing Old School Scotty's head*

So I guess, to sum up, my work at the present time is concerned with assemblage, lyricism, and deer heads. And maintaining a balance (dirty compromise?) between clearly defined process and creative anarchy.

Kasey

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On Being Rejected

6 September 2002

In the thread, Aldon Nielsen had written · 5 September 2002 —

| *The least objectionable rejection I ever received was the one that informed me*

I think I've said this before, but I liked Clayton Eshelman's rejection letters more than most others. Seriously---at times he was right on; he would judge me by what he thought (often correctly) I was trying to do, rather than say the "masters" he often invokes for himself. I thought Hoover and Chernoff did this/ do this, to some extent as well. Regardless of what others say of CE, I thought this was admirable---even if at times he was also off, it was still preferable to others who, whether they accept or reject, you (I) don't really feel it (it becomes kinda meaningless....).

Chris

Arielle Greenberg wrote:

I like a little note. It doesn't have to be specific--in fact, sometimes when an editor is too praising of a poem, my reaction is: "then why didn't you take it?" Just a simple "these almost worked, please try us again," if the editor in fact wants you to try again, will do. If they just aren't interested at all, no note is fine.

Arielle

--- Jim Behrle <tinaiskingofmonsterisland@HOTMAIL.COM> wrote: Also, I'm curious what the best way to get rejected is. Do personal rejection letters make us feel any better to get rejected, with specific notes to poems, or is it easier for everyone involved to just get a form letter?

--Jim Behrle

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BEST AMERICAN POETRY 2002 - Iowa Poets

6 September 2002

In the thread, J Gallaher had written · 6 September 2002 —

| *those Iowa poets write poems much more like Ashbery's than like what some might consider an "Iowa Poem"*

two scents--

1. doesn't ashbery kind of come before the "contemporary" division of poetry into "iowa" and "language" as it were 2. as i'm sure someone else will say, quite a few of the lang pos, as well as writers chronologically between ashbery and the 1.

poets (like ted berrigan, or notley and tomaz salamun---well, the chronology starts to blur around here) were iowans....

J Gallaher wrote:

Bob Grumman writes:

<My simple point is that now a very mainstream series of books has paid homage to a great many language poets and poets like Ashbery more related to language poets than to Iowa poets.>

I Reply:

I never went to Iowa, so I can't say for certain what all Iowa poets are like, but I do know some Iowa poets, and those Iowa poets write poems much more like Ashbery's than like what some might consider an "Iowa Poem" to be. In fact, there seems to be a great deal of interesting poets and work coming from places many consider The Land of the Enemy.

Which, of course, brings us back to the question of what the avant garde is then, when so many poets use the techniques of what the avant garde was. And what of the poor Deriere Garde?

Best, JG

JGallaher

The mind is in the habit of proposing solutions. This is why art is so necessary.

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For a fortnight either side of the equinox the list plays sonnets — Igor Satanovsky's re-editings, Lakey Teasdale's long sequence, Tracy Ruggles's poems rendered in Morse code — and he heckles from the gallery ('babykins!', a mock lawsuit filed on behalf of the nikuku estate) more than he builds. The froth is dropped; the game mattered as weather.

hole poems?

30 September 2002

The naming-and-whitespace thread reaches its natural absurd end — a request for poems with literal holes in them. He re-sent it moments later shaped into gaps (851), and watched the listserv flatten them back to prose.

Okay I might as well throw my "hat" into the asking-for-a-list "ring" since there's been all these recent lists as of late people asking for sonnet lists and black poet lists and women poet lists and maybe acadominant lists or flarf lists or nikuku lists and so on and so forth and even several backchanneled me thinking I was compiling a list of poets who name like O'Hara but actually now it occurs to me that i am actually interested at least a little or perhaps just bored enough to ask this list people if they know of specific poems that may be called lyric that occur in roughly this form which may not actually come through on I am trying to render it

here, what i mean specifically is poems that actually have HOLES in them. I think I've seen some of these before but I'm curious how many of them there are or might have existed because I was reading somewhere that since lyrics generally present themselves as surrounded by nothing or by white space that they therefore encourage the isolated moment and this therefore is something that i'm sure some of "our" lyricists would want to challenge or invert perhaps though maybe not and or then why and so I'm not really talking about slight typographical variations a la Williams' 3 steps or even concrete poetry that emphasizes the materiality of letters etc but actually poems that might be rather traditional when it comes to meaning etc. but nonetheless somehow wants to invoke the idea that it is not per se surrounded by nothing not per se an isolated moment or maybe that would not even be the intention maybe such a poem would just want to "frame" the silence and this is actually a rather silly form and so praise be the isolated moment but what the hell i might as well at least ask if it exists and so maybe some will consider this a challenge to write in this form and then what i write now may seem as prescriptive like a call for papers or a literary contest judged anonymously of course which will have much to do with setting a fashion i care as little about as that parody that became a real

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Perelman's interview

1 October 2002

Bob Perelman, interviewed, had claimed a 'democratic urge' behind Language writing; the thread turns on whether poetic authority is a kind of tyranny.

Andy---

I too read much (if not all) poetry for its authority. Like I'm reading Dickinson now and then reading a critic of hers and rejecting the critic's authority and assuming Dickinson's authority--- but subjectivity....is it Dickinson's authority, or my own? Or the authority of a mood?

Just some questions I tend to think about when reading and/or writing (and there are many more). The issue of "authority" and "democracy" is complex, in poetry especially---it does seem that even something that seems like tyranny, an author's absolutism, might be a precondition for any truly democratic (if democratic is meant positively)...

I don't think they are incompatible terms... Like you (I think) I am suspicious of those who claim not to be tyrants in their poetry....

Just as I am suspicious of "don't be didactic" or "show, don't tell" or "don't will or intend anything except chance or the aleatory" etc. (I think I say this better in my poem "Community Vices")

But then part of Perelman's value (or, hell, I'll even say authority) for me is that I don't think he thinks democracy is incompatible with being an authority or even a tyrant in his poetry at least (at times). I actually think he's different than other lang.pos (say, Andrews) in this.

But then I also don't quite know what you mean when you say Shakespeare had a "totalizing poetic approach"--- I know you mean that as a positive, but could you be more specific... it's not at all a given to me.

Chris

Andrew Rathmann wrote:

I wonder what Bob Perelman means when he uses the word "democratic," as he does in this quotation from the interview:

"For me and for most of Language Writers, I think, there is a strongly felt democratic urge. Language Writing has certainly been accused in the States of being elitist and intellectual. But throughout the range of forms, tones and genres that Language Writers have used, or are still using, there is a fairly constant sense of trying to sniff out transcendental and totalizing poetic approaches, and to critique them."

Perelman here, as elsewhere, makes a tacit comparison between totalitarian political authority and "totalizing" poetic authorship.

I take it that his real grievance is with writers who will not admit of possible objections to their views. I assume that he has Pound in mind.

But to focus on Pound is to disregard the great value of "totalizing poetic approaches" within the European tradition: Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe (to take only the most obvious cases) all offer perspectives so comprehensive as to be "total."

Perhaps it is a mistake to assume, as Perelman seems to assume and as, in fact, most postwar writers assumed, that totalizing poets will always try to legitimate their authority by appealing to political ideologies or orthodox religions. Shakespeare would seem to be the classic counter-example.

And, in fact, the 20th-century "innovative tradition" contains significant totalizers: Duncan and Dorn might be two important examples.

Democracy is the rule of the majority, and anyone professing a "democratic urge" must of course reject authoritarian political approaches. But, personally, I read poetry for its authority, even for its authority on political and religious questions. The notion that authors should surrender an authority that is based, ultimately, on unusual skill in the use of words, doesn't seem "democratic." It seems like self-immolation.

Andy

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PROBABLY NOT OF STATUS AS "PROSE POEM"*1 October 2002*

A prose poem out of the day job: the six-hour faculty meeting where his vote weighs less than others', crossed with ACT-UP and non-attachment. The poet of the quotidian had rather a lot of quotidian to survive.

At The Beginning of The New Fiscal

I gotta talk about, think about, non-attachment again. I usually prefer to practice it without the trappings of that name. But when I'm forced to go to meetings in which my vote and voice is lesser than others, it's harder to turn off the heart or heat of passion and get caught up in something frankly petty---especially as it goes on for 6 or so hours (even if it pretends to be more of a party for the last 2) for the same reason I prefer not to keep food in the cupboard or fridge (generally fridge---perishables require less preparation).

But the stores closing so early (or me getting up so late---since it's important to see both sides of the argument, ah comp!) I guess the feeling of what yesterday seemed like "social disconnection and now seems "social assault" (hardly hardcore though it sounds like a band) and its attendant "best way out is through" fantasy strategy has only gotten the house surrounded because the slackjaw lynchpin of its operations had come up through your inner toilet not so much as vomit as ACT-UP in the early 90s when chaining themselves to Dan Rather's news desk (the rare-live TV footage) circa noon waited until 6PM for their 15 seconds of fame, "Fight Aids not arabs." And thus, so the irresponsible personality I fear losing the reigns of, because attached to what I called non-attachment (as some others are stuck in willed chance!) may make a cameo out of the comma I deem a cannonball and license my fool and love

me, if they love, as it does, for the cuddly violence emanating from the sublime I claim to be taken seriously as the dull priestesses I scorn either wanting "down with the whole system" or a greater emphasis on classics the better from which to unsubtle (thank you Jane Ransom). All to say, as budding and blooming be more violent-seeming than sustaining and slowly reverting to barrenness, so I must celebrate, if this be celebrate, such repression born genie from a jar though still eager for the next big earthquake to be done and over so as to lessen and lesson the threat, even if no spring falls past meridian in the faith of 40. Yes, to basen, bain the threat, the treat and trick that is no other but a posture toward otherness and as such the adjustment will be hot and hazy against the airconditioner itself weird cloud though that's chief weird cloud to the them in me

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Perelman's interview; Pound's Shakes...*4 October 2002*

The same thread lets the Shakespearean out — the dissertation on the comedies shows in how he reads a playwright who left no ars poetica.

Andy---

Thanks for responding to the Shakespeare question. I won't get too deep here at present but that first sentence to me sounds like you got it straight out of Pound (probably ABC of Reading---it's been years....), and it also seems tautological. The desire to be "overwhelmed," by art, however, "only better, " as you say, makes more sense to me. But it'd be great if you'd elaborate on what, for you, some of those specific "effects" might be that you reflect on when reading such. Just curious...

As for your second point, of course Shakespeare, who never gave interviews about his plays, or wrote any "ars poetica" statements that were not themselves given to a "character" (or choral figure, like the "armed prologue" in *Troilus and Cressida*) in a play, or a "speaker" in a sonnet, and because there have not even been letters or journals by him that have been found, would avoid these charges ("did Shakespeare purposely try to avoid that?" is a question some have asked) Yet, certain characters, certain speeches, in Shakespeare, do make such claims as well--they're framed in such a way that it's considered "critically irresponsible" to ascribe such statements to "Shakespeare himself." Sure, they may get lost in the "complete effect" of the work...and to argue about Shakespeare's political or even ethical intention(s), though interesting, often seems besides the point, since the texts seem to be designed largely to be read more than one way....

But most other writers do offer, in one way or another, prose statements or "readings" of their own work, and as you rightly surmise (if I'm reading you correctly), such readings often tend to limit the possibilities of the poem or work in question. I think I agree with you that, yes, we should be wary of such statements if taken as the singular truth about the work--"Hi, I'm democratic, because..." or whatever.... I might be wrong but I don't think Perelman either would want his poetry reduced to that statement. But I also think that such statements are not necessarily absolutely useless, but that they may be put in dialogue with the poems (as well as the statements of other critics on the poems) and that this doesn't have to reduce the poem to the prose statement. Rather, it may be another way of calling attention to the way a person reads their own poems (or, for that matter, the way a poem can read the person who wrote it), and not merely serve a self-justifying publicity function....

At times at least (though we probably still disagree over which times and/or which poems allow that), and still think "totalizing" is not necessarily

incompatible with "democratic" whether or not you want to hold either of those terms as values...)

C

Andrew Rathmann wrote:

I think Shakespeare is a totalizing poet in the sense that he achieves a complete effect, and that, having read him, one retains a certain vision of the world _as a whole_. The world as a whole (not merely some part of it) looks different afterward. Completeness, comprehensiveness: I think that desiring these things is actually close to wanting to be, as Robert says, "overwhelmed" by art -- only better, because the effects persist and may be reflected on.

The premise of so much critical theorizing about literature is that artistic conventions carry political significance. In fact, this significance only exists insofar as it is asserted by the interested parties. "Let me tell you now about the democratic urge in my poetry..." When writers adopt this vaguely ad hominem, self-justifying line of argument, it should put readers on the alert.

Which poet was it who said, when asked about his political views, that he votes in elections just like everybody else? I think of that as a slightly dumb but nicely crap-free response to these questions.

Andy

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"Experimental" ("Fragment")

25 October 2002

Part of a thread parsing the words 'experimental' and 'fragment.'

This seems to parallel

or at least relate to

the currently

fashionable

use

of

the

word 'fragment'

I recently asked

someone recently

known to be proponent

of
 contemporary fragment
 if they knew
 that Keats for instance
 referred
 to
 his poems
 as 'fragments'
 and they
 said no

Not that I see it as a benefit per se...

Robert Corbett wrote:

> The benefit of "experimental" (and I admit that not all will share my
 > view) is that Wordsworth explicitly calls his work in *_Lyrical Ballads_*
 > "experiments."

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Of late on the Blog

4 November 2002

Ron Silliman's blog is new enough in 2002 to be a curiosity; he brings one of its provocations — Barbara Guest as the reigning influence on women's writing — back to the list to test it.

So, what do you plural all think of this statement on the Blog?

"one sees quickly that Barbara Guest has become the single most powerful influence on new writing by women in the U.S. "

Chris

Ron wrote:

| *David Bromige's path to language*

Barbara Guest & the abstract lyric

The role of critical writing within langpo

Louis Cabri, Tom Orange & Kevin Davies on the Canadian poetry / New York School question

Influencing the dead: the impact of Brian Kim Stefans & Araki Yasusada on Jack Spicer

The problem of time in literary formations: Spicer's view of poetry in 1958 vs. 1965

Poetic prose: a map of the subgenres

Canadian poetry = New American Poetry minus the NY School. Why?

The quotidian in poetry - it's not adjunct to the work

Narrative Drive: what is it?

<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>

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Late November the list falls to palindromes — Gary Sullivan and Nada's whole two-hander built of them — and he joins in ('do not let elton od') before turning, characteristically, to defend the joke itself.

Humorism: A Joking Word

30 November 2002

His standing brief for humour in poetry against the 'light verse' charge, prompted by Gary Sullivan.

Thanks Gary for this--- I think that the distinction you make especially toward the end between "the higher whatever" and "literary chopped liver" is something that you, for instance, are very good at breaking down---

Yea, verily, there's a stigma about "humour in poetry" as it is often derided as "light verse" or "not even poetry" by some. For me, it's a question of "purism" that claims perhaps religious or sublime seriousness, often cold, can not exist alongside of humor. such as Dr. Johnson (and even Emerson) being upset that Shakespeare had all these sublime moments and then all this fool talk, or people today who invoke Stevens but don't see his humour Or of course there's many examples today of such slighting of humorist moments in "higher whatever" poetry--- but it does seem to me that the laugh can include the sublime much more than the sublime can include the laugh

i don't want to be dogmatic about the laugh--- i don't think it can be written by formula "a jest's prosperity lies in the ear" (love's labour's lost) and sometimes so called "serious" poetry does make me laugh much more than allegedly

intentionally funny poetry (I think Laura Riding is a very funny poet, and also among the most serious...)

i think the best laughs, like the best moments of high seriousness, happen when they happen, and can't be forced but i think a lot of folks are told to EDIT out their humour (or "what may be perceived as humour") so as not to "sacrifice" what? the purity of the poem? the old high toned christain? or high toned secular? or high toned leftist? or high-toned fragment? an attempt to draw a "a line in the sand" as Bush once put it? and then these folks, rather humourlously, complain about why poetry is so marginalized (they often try to edit those complaints out of their poetry too---so it just shows up in their secret gossipy quips-- all the while being championed as the "higher whatever")

Once I asked a Language poet who I admire what he thought of a more "mainstream" poet who I admire who has a reputation for being funny, and this language poet said "oh, he's too into the easy joke"

a few years later, I asked a famous critic (known for championing a lot of the language poets) what she thought of the above language poet who said the "mainstream poet" was too into the "easy joke" and she said, "X is not a language poet, he's a writer of light verse" (draw your own conclusions from this....)

So, there's a weird relatively--- just as with the seeming opposite "high seriousness" for instance, back in days, when I hung with some serious DUNCAN-HEADS and they measured Duncan's greatness as his visionary sublimity, etc. and I, preferring Ashbery, would often defend Ashbery as doing all that Duncan does in those terms (and I do find Ashbery to be more visionary sublime---in a non-pejorative sense--than Duncan). So, too, in terms of humour. It's not always where you think it's going to be.

oh well, here i am talking about humour in ways that probably aren't funny enough....

does anybody here feel or think poetry can be "legitimately" called "cathartic" now-a-days?

Chris

Gary Sullivan wrote:

Maybe what Aaron means by pure humorist is a professional humorist, someone with a regular humor-writing gig or someone who freelances humor pieces regularly ... in other words, Robert Benchley, Fran Liebowitz, James Thurber, P.J. O'Rourke. It might not be helpful or illuminating, but I do think there's a distinction between these writers and, say, Laurence Stern, or Charles Bernstein. Charles once wrote or said that he would never sacrifice whatever he was doing formally (artistically?) for a joke, and I think he was making a distinction between what he was doing (poetry) from

some idea of "humor" or a "humorist"; and though I think humorists pretty much feel the same way (it's not that Veronica Geng ever sacrificed anything for a joke, her writing was very "artful"), I do think there's a difference of sensibility, ambition, and/or intention between, like, Bob Perelman and S.J. Perelman. I wouldn't quite know how to describe it, though. Like, I don't think it's quite so simple as that Bob is consciously writing for some higher whatever and S.J. Perelman just assumed what he did to be literary chopped liver written for laffs.

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Bruce Andrews' Vietnam

10 December 2002

One of his occasional cold-open questions, aimed this time at a Language elder's other life as a political scientist.

Has anybody here ever read Bruce Andrews' dissertation book? If so, would it be a mis-characterization of it to claim that the main argument, or thesis, of this book is that the anti-war protests had little, or nothing, to do with the eventual cessation of that war by the U.S. Gov't.?

Chris

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the wink

10 December 2002

In the thread, J Gallaher had written · 10 December 2002 —

| The absurd wink . The ironic wink . The self-consciously clever wink

Is it a wink when one says something and it seems "poetic" and then one realizes that it might, to others, seem "ironic" or "post" something,

The word "irony," often implying a non-sincere tone, an attitude toward the LETTER (if not necessarily the spirit) of poetry (what poetry's "supposed to be" either because of some sense of "fashion" or some sense of "tradition"), may sometimes be used to "legitimize" an attitude towards poetry that may really be a non-pejorative "laziness" or "ignorance" of taboo-making fashions and the "need" for a single TM style

like if one were to say "rabbits are crepuscular" or:

Our very 'language' runs the table-- you can struggle to snuggle but not snuggle to struggle

and feel as poetic to oneself as when one is exploring the same spiritual matters in more 'serious' death or taxes ways

(but not to others....)

("i'm just clearing away the guck...")

like liking to wear tight jeans because they feel good even if it won't make people want to go to bed with you or even if they're very hard to find these days in stores and trying to conserve the ones you bought years ago

hell, even with holes in them, they're still more comfortable than the baggy 'straightleg' ones they sell these days

which means you won't go out feeling so comfortable to work until you can either make enough to afford a privitized tailor or figure out how to make your own clothes which seems like an awful waste of time so maybe conserve even more and stay in where you can be naked though surely even that will be called ironic by the 'otherworldly' writers on this month's masthead no worse than the 'worldly' ones, really.....

In other news, Today's one high thought that hasn't "gotten off the ground" as of yet

"She thought that by building a monument to representation itself, it would free things and thoughts. From what?

(insert Carlin joke here....)

Yea Verily, none of those folks you mention JG would be considered poets were not Michael Moore and Alan Watts considered poets

sincerely praying for an end to "post op" mouth pain,

C

J Gallaher wrote:

Well, I have no grading to do, but I'm plenty busy with other little things so I'm only posting back to say this, quickly:

The absurd wink . The ironic wink . The self-consciously clever wink . The Yes, But wink . The As If wink . The Wink at the Fourth Wall .

What was the intent of the Bruce Willis wink to the absent fourth wall in "Moonlighting"? Compared, for that matter, to the wink of George Burns at the absent fourth wall on, what was it called again, "Burns & Allen"? Or "The Burns & Allen Show"?

Winking at the artifice? Cannot that very move be the move toward heart? So, yes, humor, as when Arielle writes:

<I think the wink happens when a poet is using humor, postmodern referencing, high/low culture intermixing, etc., for the sake of AVOIDING a question, or trying to ENGAGE with the reader on that level, on the "aren't we so clever?" level, rather than the same humor or the same pomo reference coming from a place of utter sincerity or trying to get to something really honest.>

And this can be what happens with the WINK. The, I guess, BAD wink. But what of the good wink? (Not the hood wink.)

To disavow the suspension of disbelief. To unsay it in the act of saying it, is still saying, is still having said. Who might be examples of this? Might this be Tate (on a good day)? Or Ashbery? At least this is how I read Ashbery. Perhaps how I read Armantrout at times. Or Michael Palmer. Even Silliman, and others . . . there is a wink in Tate, I'm sure of it, the lyric would seem to call for it, and maybe it can be a wink without guile. A wink of inclusion, perhaps. Eh, maybe. Maybe not, I guess. I'll think about it more.

Pleasurably, JG

PS. I'm not winking, I just have something caught in my eye. J Gallaher

Metaphors Be With You . . .

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To blog or Nada blog

20 December 2002

The blog argument that opened in November closes the year here, in a Hamlet parody.

Oh horrors!

Ego and reason!

Oh horrors!

The urge to polish and perfect!

Oh horrors!

To dream!

Perhaps to sleep!

Oh horrors

that a woman may do this!

That a man may!

Thank you for this lucidly

egoless, irrational

anti-blogness

C

MWP wrote:

> To bloggies and antibloggies alike -

But no matter how many bells and whistles you

tack onto it, a blog is a blog is a blog, i.e., a form of writing grounded

in ego and reason and the urge towards polish and perfection (for even if

the prose is not polished, that is its dream).

>
>

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2003

The year the war came and the band arrived: Stroffolino spends 2003 shuttling from Oakland into the Mission, forming Continuous Peasant and cutting Exile in Babyville while the list argues morality, medication and the ownership of words. A lonelier register keeps surfacing between the gigs — lake-walks sought, lurkers hailed, the third wheel tired of couples.

poetry careerists

21 January 2003

The month's careerism quarrel had curdled — David Hadbawnik swatting away one andrew for sour grapes — and Stroffolino, as ever, declines the fight, passing along instead what a friend had sent him.

In the thread, schwartzgk had written · 20 January 2003 —

| *here comes a man with a knife, ready to bait and cut.*

this was forwarded to me from a friend--- thought it might be relevant to this topic....

chris

Just saw on Atlanta news, news of a pizza shop owner in midtown who committed suicide...he moved here from NYC in the 70's and always put politically/morally conscious messages on his pizza shop sign, and would let the homeless eat free when they came 'round. He left two grown kids, and the shop, and a lot of sad customers...I know someone who waitressed there in high school...it was a great place, and apparently he was a great man...just makes you realize that a lot of people are dealing w/ heaving changes now, and how precious life is and telling the ones you love how much they mean to you IS very important.

David Hadbawnik wrote:

| *no offense, andrew, but this sounds like so much sour grapes (and no, i'm not an "academic" -- farthest thing from it. don't even have an m.a.)*

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SF POETS THEATRE THING*1 February 2003*

His favourite event of the SPT season, and the closest he comes all year to the review he keeps insisting this isn't. The Bay Area scene a New York friend had talked down to him about the night before turns, for one evening, into the loose thing he half-hopes for.

THURS 1/30--Trying to "combat" (with apologies to Laura Bush) poetry-tea (poetry-war) loneliness, etc., I call NYC friend. We talk briefly but time zone's fucked up; and she, in city that never sleeps must sleep, but not before at least remarking, as if to cheer me up, that the poetry scene's, or the poet's themselves, more boring in the Bay Area than in NYC.... but then I realized that the my favorite event of the SPT poetry season was occurring the next night, and once again, it didn't disappoint. In fact, even though it could be argued that the SF scene has many of the same in-group/out-group hierarchical social pettinesses one might have grown to expect from the NYC scene, one of the things that's so enjoyable about the poet's theatre thing is that one may see many poets---who as readers may often be rather bland and/or "take themselves too seriously" or whatever--pleasantly surprisingly break out of that mode and wear silly masks, costumes, and some are quite good actors--- it might even justify one's hope that there could actually end up being some viable scene here that can be loose and not all turned on itself (a la what I saw in NYC....) Not a reivew this will be---I didn't take notes...just sat back and enjoyed the ride, and unlike last year no tedious hour long play, but 10 relatively short (all between 10 and 20 mins) plays, mostly contemporary----though it began with Andrew Joron, Garrett Caples, and Anna Naruta, digging up a YVOR WINTERS play....How weird, does anybody even read YVOR WINTERS anymore. An old teacher once told me he studied with him, or maybe it was J.V. Cunningham, and all I remember is he's "THE MASTER OF THE COMMA" whatever that's supposed to mean. Well, Anna's puppets had those sad faces and maybe they'll be some Yvor Winters revival. There is a Niedecker one and there were two of her plays too... Clive Worsley (who last I'd seen as Thersities in a local TROILUS AND CRESSIDA) and Tanya Brolaski were great in a Kathleen Fraser play. The actors names aren't listed for STACY DORIS's play, but that play was a very weird family romance, with a mother screeching like a cat for most of it. Glad that Stacy's out here. SEAN FINNEY'S play was interesting stichomythia between the UBIQUITUOUS KEVIN Killian and Brenda HILLMAN (and MIA LIPPMAN as some choral figure). David Hadbawnik's pseudo-musical (certainly like a tribute to guys and dolls, but more like GAYS AND DOLLS) about World Series was what they like to call a "guilty pleasure" in NYC....

The curators did a good job I think of balancing more narrative, easy-to-follow kind of plays, with plays that were more like "avant-garde" or at least

"sophisticated" poetry that maybe need to be seen on the page to work. But even in the plays that were mostly language, rather than plot or character, driven, it was great to see poets do a pretty good job of using their body as instruments and eschewing the talking head mode of most poetry readings---- I am so very glad Wendy Kramer has moved here; her play with Jocelyn Saidenberg was yet another play with birds...Taylor Brady's play was perhaps the hardest to "get" with 3 voices at times reading simultaneously (maybe need to see that on page), but enjoyed seeing Sianne Ngai "ham" it up as Geoffrey Dyer and Eleni Stecopoulos played cards Stephanie Young. Adam Tobin and K. Silem Mohammad (as Murray The Cop) all gave fine performances in Gary Sullivan's play (I wonder if Gary based Stephanie's character on his friend Laurie Price a bit...), and the finale was, along with Hadbawnik's, the most conventionally accessible, written by Wayne Smith, who I don't think I heard of before (I thought maybe he did an Aerial book years back, but that was Wayne Kline). It ended with the theme from TOMMY.

This is not a review; is very superficial---and perhaps those not in NYC or SF will think this rather provincial, but I just wanted to say thanks to all who did it, and also ask

WHO DID THAT REMAKE OF "LOVE WILL TEAR US APART?" that was played during one of the plays---I remember that from around 1994 or something, but for the life of me forget who (I don't think it's FRENTE....)

Chris

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war

7 February 2003

Anselm Berrigan had allowed that the President believes his cause a moral one; Joe Brennan answered that this was a money grab and told him to grow up. Stroffolino takes the unfashionable middle.

In the thread, Joe Brennan had written · 7 February 2003 —

| What utter nonsense! This is a money grab, not some great moral crusade. Grow up....

Joe---

Okay, I personally may disagree that Bush BELIEVES his cause to be a moral one... but ultimately neither you nor I have any proof that the pres. is more deluding than deluded. It seems to me that Anselm does not need to "grow up" because he's willing to take Bush's talk of morals as what he really believes....

And furthermore the word "THIS" in your post seems, er, self-referential....

Joe Brennan wrote:

In a message dated 02/06/2003 8:15:25 PM Eastern Standard Time, AnselmBerrigan@AOL.COM writes:

The President believes his cause to be a moral one, and the opposition to invading Iraq largely believes that pre-emptive invasion an extremely immoral action.

What utter nonsense! This is a money grab, not some great moral crusade. Grow up....

joe brennan

They hang the man and flog the woman That steal the goose from off the common, But let the greater villain loose That steals the common from the goose.

Constant apprehension of war has the same tendency to render the head too large for the body. A standing military force with an overgrown executive will not long be safe. companions to liberty. -- Thomas Jefferson

"America is a quarter of a billion people totally misinformed and disinformed by their government. This is tragic but our media is -- I wouldn't even say corrupt -- it's just beyond telling us anything that the government doesn't want us to know."

Gore Vidal

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Jerome Robinson 1952-2003

10 February 2003

Frank Sherlock brings word from Philadelphia that the poet, sculptor and motorcyclist Jerome Robinson has been killed — one of the warmer of the year's several deaths to cross the list, and one Stroffolino had known since the eighties.

In the thread, Frank Sherlock had written · 10 February 2003 —

He was generous with his time & his spirit when I was practically a kid.

Frank!

This totally sucks. Tell me more---how did he die? Was he riding his motorcycle? I loved that guy---met him in '86. Was a great presence at all those pre-"slam" open mics. "I Hate Art" was always a fav. On a personal level, he was warm generous bridging the white-black thing as well as various little conflicts. When we ran the warehouse squat "killtime place" in 89, he (and his motorcycle club, The Wheels of Soul), helped us little white "anarchists" organize a "Free James Brown" dance party. A really great guy. I'd heard he actually achieved some money success from his visual art in the 90s, and I heard one of his poems on Berkeley radio station last year. I was hoping I'd get to see him again... Chris

Frank Sherlock wrote:

Poet/sculptor/painter Jerome Robinson was killed Thursday morning in West Philadelphia. He spent the better part of the last three decades as a mainstay in the city's artscene. His work could be found regularly at places like the Highwire Gallery in Olde City. Jerome's poems were often heard in Philly poetry landmarks like the Middle East & the Bacchanal, sharing drinks and conversation with the likes of CA

Conrad & Linh Dinh. His most recent installation was at the Painted Bride Arts Center, sponsored by the Ellen Powell Tiberrino Museum.

He was generous with his time & his spirit when I was practically a kid. The poems go on, but not without great sadness.

FS

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Bay Area Residents Only

12 February 2003

Jordan Davis had just proposed, in two words, that the list be put out of its misery; Nick Piombino demurred with a pun. Into that lull Stroffolino places the first of the year's lonely-hearts, and it is not a pose.

Hi--- are there any lonely lurkers, specifically female, say ages 24-42, out there...

maybe wanna talk on phone like late nights (is that even something people do here?) or maybe even be a lake-walking partner (i do that kind of obsessively) in Oakland. If so, feel free to backchannel me. You don't have to be a poet; though it's okay if you are; it's even okay if you're a "poet scenester". Not necessarily looking for sex or a relationship, but am looking for some social warmth on a one-on-one basis. Sick of being third wheels with couples; sick of "guy's night out," sick of long distance abstractions--- I've been told that I'm too intense for many, but feel I actually sort of have something to give....

Anyway, just thought I'd say this if the list is gonna end before the bombs go off, etc...

Chris

Nick Piombino wrote:

End the list now!

Jordan Davis

I have a hunch Jordan means this in the kindest sense possible- like putting a sick and or crazed animal out of its misery. But why not start a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to List Subscribers (SPCLS). I myself am bi-cy, that is, bicybernetic, as I like both blogs and the list a lot, in spite of the occasional loose cannons or limp noodles as the case (in every sense of the word) might be.

-Nick-

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??

23 February 2003

Herb Levy had forwarded the new poet laureate Billy Collins, holding Dickinson up as the poet who kept to her knitting while Whitman went to war. The rejoinder is all irony.

"Whereas Emily Dickinson just stuck to her knitting, and her knitting just happened to do with immortality and death and the grave. "

(which of course has nothing to do with the civil war.... or with those who keep the sabbath going to church or shut one up in prose, etc....

yep, good old unpolitical status-quo supporting emily

Herb Levy wrote:

This article from NYTimes.com has been sent to you by herb@eskimo.com.

So nu?

herb@eskimo.com

Versus Verses

February 23, 2003 Interview by REGAN GOOD

Q As the poet laureate of the United States, I assume that you were invited to the White House symposium on poetry that was canceled recently once some poets began planning to use the event to protest war in Iraq.

Yes, I was. I would have gone if it had been held, to see what was going to happen. Politicizing the event has resulted in its cancellation and perhaps the end of literary events at the White House.

Could it really have that effect?

I don't know. I've always tried to keep the West and East Wings separate. I think the loss in this particular case was the opportunity to look at Whitman and Dickinson. In the middle of both of their lives occurred the central trauma of our country, the Civil War. And Whitman more or less jumped into action. He served as a volunteer nurse and wrote a poem, "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night," where he holds the body of a dead boy and buries him. Whereas Emily Dickinson just stuck to her knitting, and her knitting just happened to do with immortality and death and the grave. It is a wonderful demonstration of the choice that poets have, to deal with the world around them in whatever way they think best.

So what sort of interaction have you had with Laura Bush's literacy program?

Well, none, really. I get invited to her book festival events. I have my Poetry 180 project, which I've made my main project. We encourage high schools, because that's really where for most people poetry dies off and gets buried under other adolescent pursuits.

What kind of authors have been at the book festival affairs?

Kinky Friedman comes to mind. He's one of theirs -- you know, a Texan. And Mary Higgins Clark. You know, popular authors, really.

We've had an actor as a president -- do you think we'll ever have a poet as a president?

Now there's a long shot. I think we'll definitely have a woman before a poet -- I mean, I don't think Gene McCarthy won any points when the public found out he wrote poetry. No, the public is probably more suspicious of poets than women, and maybe for good reason.

So much for Shelley's declaration that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

It's a delusion of grandeur. One of the ridiculous aspects of being a poet is the huge gulf between how seriously we take ourselves and how generally we are ignored by everybody else.

What was the last poem that really spoke to, or was embraced by, the American people?

I can't think of an antiwar poem that has spoken to the American people. There is one poem that has spoken to the American people, and that is "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." That is the most popular poem in America. It was either that or "The Road Not Taken" that John F. Kennedy carried with him in his wallet on a piece of paper.

Do you imagine that President Bush reads much poetry?

I don't know what he reads. I hope he's not reading too much of it -- he should be busy doing other things, like running the country and maybe even keeping us out of war. I remember that when I read before Congress, someone commented that Dick Cheney on the CNN feed didn't appear to be paying a great deal of attention to my poem. I said: "Well, I really wouldn't want him to. I would rather he concentrated on the affairs of state."

If you could hand Bush or Cheney a poem right now, what would it be?

The poets who have written the best poems about war seem to be the poets whose countries have experienced an invasion or vicious dictatorships. Poets like Vaclav Havel, and Mandelstam and Akhmatova from Russia, and from Poland, Milosz, and the poet whom I am centering on, Wislawa Szymborska, a Nobel Prize winner. She has a poem, "The End and the Beginning," that begins: "After every war/someone has to clean up./Things won't/straighten themselves up, after all./Someone has to push the rubble/to the side of the road,/so the corpse-filled wagons/can pass." I would probably stand at the White House and hand out this poem.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/23/magazine/23QUESTIONS.html?ex=1047007933&ei=1&en=3f017f303c1ad7be>

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Torres March 15

11 March 2003

Dan Machlin's New York reading notice for Edwin Torres and Garrett Kalleberg; Stroffolino has just caught Torres reading out west.

Yeah, Edwin Torres just gave some great readings out here in FRISCO (I'd say his range is Shakespearean if that were not taken as a pejorative thing by some I know on this list---so I'll just write it, in proper "hate speech" parenthesis)...

and if you go make sure to pick up a SHOCK WORKER button....

Chris

Daniel Machlin wrote:

Saturday, March 15, 4 PM, NYC Edwin Torres & Garrett Kalleberg

Bowery Poetry Club 308 Bowery (Bleecker-Houston) <http://www.bowerypoetry.com>, Admission \$4

Edwin Torres is a NYC poet who has traveled many landscapes among many poetries. His web site is www.brainlingo.com and publications include The All-Union Day Of The Shock Worker (Roof: <http://www.roof.com>), Fractured Humorous (subpress) and Please (a CD-Rom from Faux Press). He is co-editor of Cities Of Chance: An Anthology Of New Poetry From The U.S. And Brazil, and co-editor of the poetry journal, Rat-tapallax.

Garrett Kalleberg is the author of Some Mantic Daemons (Futurepoem: <http://www.futurepoem.com>), Psychological Corporations (Spuyten Duyvil), Limbic Odes (Heart Hammer), and co-author of Brooklyn Drama Club's The Situation Room. His work has appeared in Sulfur, First Intensity, Denver Quarterly, Mandorla, Amer. Letters & Commentary, and in An Anthology of New (American) Poets (Talisman). He lives in Brooklyn.

The Segue series is sponsored by The New York State Council on the Arts and The Segue Foundation, Inc. Curators for February and March are Charles Borkhuis and Dan Machlin, April and May, Rachel Levitsky and Rene Gladman.

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Weblogs

16 March 2003

Caterina Fake — a year or two from co-founding Flickr — argues that announcing blog updates on the list is so much spam. Stroffolino, no daily reader of anyone's blog, takes the minority view.

In the thread, Caterina Fake (yahoo) had written · 16 March 2003 —

| Posting notices of blog updates is completely missing the point of weblogs

I disagree---

I don't have time to keep up with everybody's blogs, and sometimes it's nice to know when the bloggers are writing about specific things that might be of interest...

Chris

"Caterina Fake (yahoo)" wrote:

I've noticed a proliferation of the "Now appearing on my blog" announcements, begun, it seems, by the redoubtable Ron Silliman. I was always irritated to receive these announcements, as I already read his weblog on a daily basis, and these announcements were the equivalent of spam.

Posting notices of blog updates is completely missing the point of weblogs, which are assumed to be frequently updated and thus frequently visited. Those who wish to read your blog are already doing so; those who don't have chosen not to.

It seems as if posting an announcement that you have a weblog should suffice.

Caterina

--- Jim Behrle <tinaaskingofmonsterisland@HOTMAIL.COM> wrote: And if you think I'm part of the problem, I am easily avoidable in blogland. Visit anytime, or don't.

Do you Yahoo!? Yahoo! Web Hosting - establish your business online <http://webhosting.yahoo.com>

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"Help!" by Robert Creeley

24 March 2003

One of the rare threads he starts rather than answers: a solitary reader coming back to a Creeley poem the list had linked and let pass.

Though I don't read much of what's on the list, to my knowledge no one has commented in any detail about this poem which was posted to this list (or at least "the link" was)

Anyway, rereading it again, I just wanted to say I am really getting into (or "off on") the "leap" (or "potentially liberating knot") that occurs at the third-to-last stanza....

"Not dumped on by the world They won't let you into, Not forgotten by all The ones who did it to you"

How Creeley is able to get there, in part due to pronouns, from where the poem seemed to be before that....

Did anybody else have any feelings about that?

Chris

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A recurring tic of the year, dropped here as a run: Stroffolino as the list's amateur reference desk. He wants the John Haines poem said to drip with bitterness; the O'Hara line about poetry and the movies; the Eliot essay on automobile horns; even the meaning of the Dutch word kontje — and, when someone asks for G. M. Hopkins's e-mail, he offers heaven's address instead. Half scholarship, half stalling; the questions keep better company than the answers.

question regarding "alette"

20 June 2003

Kazim Ali, bracing intro students for Notley's Descent of Alette, asks the list for teaching aids; the answer is a single pointed reference.

In the thread, Kazim Ali had written · 20 June 2003 —

I don't want their heads to explode. Well I would like their heads to explode, but as productively as possible.

Dear Mister--

MOXLEY in the new POKER on NOTLEY is probably a "MUST" for you...

Chris

on 6/20/03 9:11 PM, Kazim Ali at kaajumiah@YAHOO.COM wrote:

Hi All,

I will be using Alice Notley's "Descent of Alette" in an intro lit course (for juniors, but their very first lit class) that deals with anxiety/visions about the future (other texts include Dracula, 1984, The Matrix, Freejack (great cheesy 80s sci fi starring Emilio Estevez, Mick Jagger, and Anthony Hopkins!)), and I am trying to find teaching resources, lesson plans, discussion points, and/or critical writing regarding this book that I can use with the students. It's probably the first time they will read something remotely unconventional and I don't want their heads to explode. Well I would like their heads to explode, but as productively as possible.

Any suggestions so welcome--

Kazim

= =

WAR IS OVER

(if you want it)

(e-mail president@whitehouse.gov)

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*What the stream drops across the spring and summer: the practical Strof-
folino. The computer dies and takes every address with it; he signs a Mis-
sion lease he can't quite afford and hunts a roommate at eleven hundred a
month; he gropes for boxes, movers, a bass player. And a band coalesces —
Continuous Peasant, coming soon, then playing its debut farewell at the
Stork Club. The poet of the quotidian had, as ever, rather a lot of quotidian
to survive.*

Behrle on EXILE IN BABYVILLE

26 June 2003

*Jim Behrle's blog walks Exile in Babyville song by song — the first review of the record,
forwarded here with a poet's transparent pride.*

Thought I'd forward this the first(blog) review of our forthcoming album... thanks Jim. Chris

Continuous Peasant's EXILE IN BABYVILLE song by song

1. "how do you know it's raining?"--Intro with wind. Chris with voice and keys with bass to start. Drums come in after a verse. Nice rythmn. "He says his dog is his best friend/ I say my cat is mine." A nice poppy mix of keyboard, guitar and highhat. Chris's voice jumps out of the song, here part Dylan. Especially on "re-CLUUU-sive!" "Why is her beauty elusive/ Why is my love so reclusive?" "Always the same if you don't want to make it tonight." Great background vocals, too, from Vanessa Beggs (a great rock name).

2. "where are you tomorrow"--"Where are you tomorrow?/ Maybe Philly, maybe France" Great mix of vocals. Chris is crooning, and very well. Tough to describe his vocals here: maybe a fuller David Lowery from Cracker. This is kind of a slow dance song. A lot of "forgets." This is a tight tune. Polished. Great guitar solo, too.

3. "it's not a matter just of me"--Chris' vocals stand way out in front here, the rest is very quiet to begin. "I will not be an ice cube just to melt." Nice warm guitars again from Peter Nochisaki. It gets going in the middle, speeds up, and then is back. He mentions Sunday morning, I think it stands in the realm of Sunday morning songs. Groovy, but not loud enough to wake up the neighbors. Or mom and dad. Chris is whispering toward the end. His voice goes gruff to smooth on a dime.

4. "breathe until you're gone"--A rock song and a rocker. Radiating guitars. Great riff. A bit like Jim Carroll Band here, great Jim Carroll band. Chris' voice is back in the mix. It sounds like Chris is having fun here. Great and strange sounds back in the mix. Simple but fun chords. Can't quite make out what Chris is singing. A bit Voivoidy, great Voivoidy. I'd say this is the first single.

5. "so denied"--piano-sounding keyboard. Just Chris and keyboard to begin with long pauses in music. At first listen I thought I was gonna call Chris' voice a good-bad voice, ala early Liz Phair, Gordon of Violent Femmes, or Mary Timony. But he really can sing and do a number of things really well. This becomes more catchy, more jumpy. "In my dreams I don't find anything to hide/and I never thought that I'd be 39." With a wonderful pause and then another great guitar solo. Guitar solo! There's something of Stevie Nicks in that, my favorite line of Chris' so far. (Landslide: "Children get older / I'm getting older, too.") This song's a bit sychitzophrenic, but ultimately winning. The last "9" at the end of the song is almost unspoken, Chris seems almost to-whoa- just realize it.

6. "finger pointing song"--4 track guitar riff cascades, into a warm mix and beat. A novena of Goddamns--MTV, the mall, etc. Some vocal effects on the refrain. Great jangly keys. Chris is like good Tom Petty vocals here. There's something merry-go-round about the refrain. Verses are more driving. Short keyboard solo. This would be a good second single. And make for a cool video. These guys can really pull off jammy solos that don't sound crappy, which is tough.

7. "even now"--No space here between tracks, a seamless flow. Almost a mandolin-like sound here. In the back, a little jittery. With neat noises in back. Slowed down again. Madolin to violin in the back? Maybe a keyboard effect? Some wild faroff drum sounds. As if they were rehearsing a soft song and in the next rehearsal space someone was beating on a log. Very interesting, the layers. "Beauty's skin deep/ So is knowledge/ All the crap we/ Learned in college." "Call it religion / Or call it a mess / It's a condition / You don't have to confess." Great lyrics throughout, but my favorite: "Lots of folks would call it dating / But it gets so damned frustrating." On the long side, but the lyrics at the end are so worth it.

8. "monogamy"--a little more ominous to begin. Guitars are popping behind, waiting to be unleashed. Then it's a Ramones songs suddenly. Great riff. Jittery interludes "You've got nothing against monogamy / But you feel you've been taken for a ride." Strange and cool vocals throughout. These guys can rock. This is maybe the third real driving tune on the cd. Can't tell what the last two lines of the chorus are, but Chris ends up letting loose with "bride." Great ending here. Chris is being drowned out with the guitar. Some cool production.

9. "got alot to learn"--8 goes right into 9, 9 actually starts at the end of 8 somehow. Chris and keys. "I got a lot to learn." Great vocal range. Less than 2 minutes, almost a chant.

10. "you should go down"--Guitars! Keys! "Mobilize an army and force me to be free" Some mono, left/right production. This has the sound of an encore song, one that you'd hold back to blow the top off the joint. "Put it on a TV / shaped just like a

heart." The chorus is two verses in. Did Chris just cough on this take? Doesn't matter, kinda funny. Everyone's getting a solo, more or less. This has all the feeling of the big finish. Some great builds. Best lyrics yet, maybe: "Meet you in the dumpster/ and then we'll start to kiss / it's not a happy ending / but at least its not an abyss." Ha!

11. "maybe you're right"--off the bat it reminds me of "Days Like This" by Van Morrison. I think that's the one, the warm riff. Xylophone sounds from the keyboard. "Practice makes perfect / Theory makes art." "I am a cynic / Unless you are one too." "If I was an outlaw / you were the law." Great lyrics throughout. I keep writing that it seems. This is one of my favorites, too.

12. "untitled"--you do feel empty at the end, like you want it to start all over again, until this sweet duet comes up. These two voices are perfect together. She sounds a little like Lee Ann Brown I think. A country song with funny lyrics. "I'm turning into everything I hate." A goof, semi-ironic, with lovely bright slide (?) guitar. Suddenly Chris is speaking above the music in a superdeep voice at the bridge. "Hold onto this nothing like the heaven you left me."

This is an impressive and various release. Stroffolino's voice and lyrics star above a warm maelstrom of guitars and zap. He goes from whisper to preacher. His voice a cross between Dylan's "If Not for You" and Carroll's "People Who Died." Polished confidence, rockingly assured. Go to their website and get a copy, it's easy. They seem like they would be an insanely great live band, too, so bring them to your city or principality ASAP. Thus speaks Jim's Monkey.

Thanks, man--great cd.

--jimmy -----Original Message-----

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If Robert Lowell...

27 June 2003

The list is chewing over the new Lowell Collected; Michael Scharf wants a half-remembered put-down. Stroffolino can't supply it either, but the aside he leaves instead is the keeper.

In the thread, Scharf, Michael (RBI-US) had written · 27 June 2003 —

| a poet's rejoinder: "If Robert Lowell [is?] [was?] a poet, I don't want to be [one?] [a poet?]"

Mike

Sorry i don't know that quote...

Hey, one thing I never hear the "confessional" poets being criticized for is for not being confessional enough....

but there might be some truth to that...

C

on 6/27/03 8:16 PM, Scharf, Michael (RBI-US) at mscharf@REEDBUSINESS.COM wrote:

Lots of coverage of the new Lowell Collected - and I remember someone citing a poet's rejoinder: "If Robert Lowell [is?] [was?] a poet, I don't want to be [one?] [a poet?]" - should be able to remember this but can't - and someone has asked me to - does anyone know have the exact quote, and its author ?

Thanks much -Mike

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Musical Acts needed for Boog Elvis Costello show at CB's

9 July 2003

David Kirschenbaum needs acts for a Boog benefit of Elvis Costello covers; three thousand miles too far to play it, Stroffolino answers as a musician among poets.

DAVID

I wish I was still east for this... used to love that album. Was a nice foil for William Blake and, hell, my southern friends tell me I sound a lot like EC (and they don't generally mean it as a compliment!)... but it's even harder logistically to get 4 people 3000 miles than it is one person...

but, hey, i'm sure you'll find somebody.... Do you know National Stranger (Jed Boyar the singer is friends with Mike Scharf and Alissa Quart I think if you're in touch with them)? I'm not in touch with many NYC people these days (alas)... He might be great for the show if you can get him.

Maybe I'll be able to think of more folks. Hell, Kristen Stuart (who played Anne Sexton in our Anne Sexton thing a few years back) might work too...

chris

Hi all,

A couple of bands for our "My Aim is Boog" show on Wed., July 30, at CB's 313 Gallery in NYC dopped out at the last minute, so we need your help in filling the remaining two slots. The two song pairings remaining are below. If you have an act email me here or call me at the below #; if you know of an act have them do the same.

Thanks in advance and hope all is well.

as ever, david

the song pairings:

No Dancing/Blame It On Cain Night Rally/Radio, Radio

-- David A. Kirschenbaum, editor and publisher Boog City 330 W.28th St., Suite 6H
NY, NY 10001-4754 T: (212) 842-BOOG (2664) F: [REDACTED]

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Any SF Poets who BIKE or WALK?

6 August 2003

August's echo of February — the walking partner sought, the loneliness a little less disguised each time. He has just crossed the bay from Oakland to San Francisco.

Hey, I just moved to SF (and I miss my local lake in Oakland which I walked around a lot, and also some walking partners I had, like Stephanie Young or, before that, Lisa Sperber)

And I tend to ride my bike over to Golden Gate Park (when it's not too windy) and ride around the "polo" track. Would love if somebody's into it...

Or if somebody just wants to go for habitual hour long evening walk talks around the mission (i like to walk relatively fast)....

(okay, i'll stop before i get into the---preferably single female, etc. etc....)....

Chris, Continuous Peasant

Hi all,

My friend, the poet and publisher Kent Fielding, is visiting from Alaska and he's hoping to find a poet to run with.

Please backchannel if u run or know someone who does, and wouldn't mind another joining you.

thanks, david

-- David A. Kirschenbaum, editor and publisher Boog City 330 W.28th St., Suite 6H
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NY Times

10 September 2003

David Kirschenbaum flags a Times review of Katy Lederer's gambling memoir and the thread fills with congratulation; Stroffolino reads past it to the older riddle underneath.

Ah, back to the primordial writing riddle

is it the lying the pays or the telling the truth about the lying?

Hey, this is really cool. Congrats, Katy!

At 01:09 AM 9/10/2003 -0400, David A. Kirschenbaum wrote: Hi all,

Dropped \$5 on the Sunday NY Times when I was staying in Oakland a week or so ago, and what do I see in the book review but a review of Explosive/Spectacular Books editor's Katy Lederer's new book. Woo-hoo!

below's the text.

best, david

August 31, 2003, Sunday

BOOK REVIEW DESK

Four of a Kind

By Suzy Hansen

Poker Face A Girlhood Among Gamblers. By Katy Lederer. 209 pp. New York: Crown Publishers. \$23.95.

When Katy Lederer arrives in Las Vegas for the first time, her brother, Howard, picks her up in his new Lexus and drives down the Strip to the Mirage casino. Las Vegas, Lederer observes, is "bright and cheap and all dolled up, like a drag queen," an appropriate simile for a city whose artificial beauty can exaggerate its ultimate sadness. But for Lederer, Las Vegas's brazen wealth is a revelation: "It was the first time in my life that I didn't feel lied to."

The Lederer family, the stars of many lovely sketches in Lederer's memoir, "Poker Face," is a crafty bunch. With the exception of the father, Richard, an English teacher and the author of popular books on grammar, who seems pleasantly odd more than anything else, each Lederer tries to get away with something. Howard and the author's older sister, Annie, filch from their mother's purse, sparking fights between the penny-pinching Richard and their irresponsible mom. The young Katy lies for her siblings when accusations of stealing fly, just as she plays dumb when asked if she and her mother stopped at the liquor store for another half-gallon of Scotch.

Lederer's early days seem marked by choices between evils. At 8, she fills up her mother's diminishing liquor bottles with water: "Before completing the task, I weighed the consequences in my mind, unsure as to which was the scarier prospect: that my mother would see that I'd watered her liquor down, or that my brother would discover that my mother had been drinking." Lederer tries to smooth over the trauma. Still, she anticipates and even looks forward to the inevitable fights. After being lonely all day while her mother drinks, cries and ignores her, Lederer sees family conflict as a "narcotic, knocking us out." In fact, only one other activity brings that feeling of woozy "togetherness": card games.

Those early chapters set up what the book is really about -- a family of gamblers. Howard and Annie Lederer are indeed world-class poker players; Howard is arrested and pays a hefty fine for running a sports-betting racket. Katy's reclusive mother, having given up acting and divorced her husband, also escapes to Las Vegas and joins her son's business as an accountant. Katy, eager to belong, moves there to be closer to her relatives, to write poetry and to learn to play poker. "I believed that it would save us, that together, as a family, we could play our little games and still be happy," she explains. But she isn't very good at poker and eventually leaves for the University of Iowa writing program.

Lederer, the author of "Winter Sex," a collection of poems, connects her family's lust for money to the environment in which she grew up. Her father taught at the blue-blood St. Paul's School in New Hampshire, the family lived on campus, and Katy believed that she and her siblings were out of place among the fox-trotting rich kids who descended on her home turf every year. Their outcast status also had to do with their being Jewish, though Lederer mentions that fact only briefly, focusing more on class distinctions. In contrast to being "at the mercy of the school, which paid for our housing, our heating, our three meals a day," the risky but self-sufficient art of gambling and the defiantly gaudy world of Las Vegas felt liberating.

Yet that isn't the most convincing explanation for why the Lederers became gamblers, or the most interesting one. Instead, "Poker Face" delights more as a curiosity than as a cause-and-effect tale. The Lederers emerge as deeply intelligent and unpredictable characters, and one wishes that the author embraced their darker sides more. Annie chides that Katy's too passive while playing poker, and there's something equally demure about "Poker Face." We know that Annie was cruel to her sister, but we don't know why; we know that their mother left scars, but who knows how deep? What Richard Lederer thinks of his former wife and his children is left naggingly undisclosed. This tenderly written book, quite like its title, yawns with an absence of discernible emotion. Katy Lederer, the family outsider, holds her cards close, preferring to render a forgiving portrait of this brood rather than a sharp one. If that's the game here, then she wins.

Suzu Hansen is an associate editor at Salon.

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Captain America Project - Please Help!

29 October 2003

Gary Sullivan recruits for his Captain America postcard project; the reply is one of the year's happiest, Stroffolino at his most companionable about public art and the Mission street outside his window.

In the thread, Gary Sullivan had written · 29 October 2003 —

| language limited to anagrams for the words "American imperialism"

Hi Gary---

A great idea. I'd like some (though we'll see what my printer can do with it---there i go again blaming technology for my luddite-osity). Anyway, good that you're tying it into that CHAIN thing. I've been wondering about that---to see if there's a way I can participate in Spahr/Osman's forum in some way. I hope they go for your idea--- it seemed that they were more interested in public FUNDED art, but I think ideas like yours are probably more where it's at. Not that I have anything against Publicly Funded art. It would be nice if it were more within the realm of possibility/actuality.

Anyway, speaking of which, the other day was a very hot one by SF standards and there were a bunch of folks riding their bikes up Valencia in the Mission--all shouting, "DOWN WITH PANTS" and wearing a wide range of "skivvies" (panties, boxers, jockstraps), etc. There's something there....

hope you're well.

Chris

Hello, everyone:

Inspired by Chain's call for public forms, the Captain America Project is a series of four postcards, each featuring the popular comic book hero and language limited to anagrams for the words "American imperialism" (e.g., "I am a criminal's empire," etc.).

I've made a small (144kb) PDF that I can send you, which can then be printed onto card stock and cut into quarters, to create postcards for distribution.

Currently, there are about a dozen people disseminating these cards, from Hawai'i, Oakland, New York, Maine, Denmark, to Poland. I'd love to have many more people involved, especially people outside the U.S.

If you'd be interested in having me send you the PDF, please write to me at gary.sullivan@nmss.org

Thanks!

Cheer a special someone with a fun Halloween eCard from American Greetings! Go to http://www.msn.americangreetings.com/index_msn.pd?source=msne134

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Niedecker in San Francisco

6 November 2003

Stephen Vincent had noted that a Green mayoral candidate reads Niedecker; Jonathan Skinner countered with Milwaukee's mayor reciting her Motor cars. That poem's verb is the tinder here — Vincent's own worry — and Stroffolino picks it up.

In the thread, Stephen Vincent had written · 6 November 2003 —

the interpretively ambidextrous verb in the poem would be read at great risk by any candidate for Mayor of San Francisco!

Motor cars.... like crackers? honkies?

how update it beside the white chickens?

Whatta gaffe! My green (with whatever) apologies! Tho looking closely at the poem, in no way in this City - which different folks also claim with as much geo-legitimacy as any Euro Am "other" as either/or both Northern Mexico and East China- the interpretively ambidextrous verb in the poem would be read at great risk by any candidate for Mayor of San Francisco!

But then, maybe, cosmopolitan limits or certain ethno blinders need to be taken into consideration (are they?) when reading Niedecker. (??)

It will be nice to get the Conference report - I am sure a mammoth job for anyone making a real attempt. Are the papers being assembled into a book?

Stephen Vincent

on 11/5/03 9:57 PM, Jonathan Skinner at jskinner@ACSU.BUFFALO.EDU wrote:

Matt Gonzales of the Green Party is in the run-off for Mayor in San Francisco. If he wins the job - the runoff against Gavin Newsom - Matt will probably be the first Mayor in the entire world who reads Lorine Niedecker.

Now that's "green," real green.

Stephen V

Not true! At the Niedecker conference in Wisconsin, the mayor of Milwaukee, in the course of declaring "Lorine Niedecker Day," read us a poem from New Goose:

Motor cars like china sometimes chink each other.

Will the speeding sugar bowl of taffy color stop to eat people?

(More on that excellent conference when I get time to write up my notes...)

JS

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Congo

14 November 2003

A political-economy thread on famine: cartograffiti correcting Mark's premise that famines are local calamities, calling them imperial. Stroffolino brings the ledger up to the previous day's headline.

In the thread, cartograffiti@mindspring.com had written · 14 November 2003 —

at least since the advent of the British Empire, famines have often been imperial, and later global, events

Hey Taylor, great post---

One could also make similar observations in an analogous fashion that would help explain the recent NY TIMES headline (yesterday, I think) about the Albanians who are trading their children for televisions. "Children" as a kind of "cash-on-the-barrelhead" might, as a graphic example, help to drive this imperial (excuse me, global market) dynamic home

Chris

While the decision to switch from grain-as-subsistence to

grain-as-cash-on-the-barrelhead had its most severe ramifications "locally," the decision itself was never a local one, originating as it did with various agencies and subcontractors of the empire. (Later, of course, it's the even-further delocalized abstraction of the "global market" that plays this role). One could make similar observations about China, Brazil and probably much of Africa and the Middle East. (The role of cotton in Egypt, e.g.)

Mark,

I'd agree with most of what you've written here, but I did want to draw attention to the following:

Famines, like other calamities, are usually local events. Manner of governance doesn't control rainfall and flood. Famine relief is easier in countries that span many climatic regions and have efficient transport systems, which is why the massive crop failures in the nascent farm and ranch lands of the US in the first decades of the last century didn't cause a local famine--the population could get elsewhere quickly, and supplies could come in.

While at the most literal level this is probably true, it misses what I think is an essential political-economic dynamic of the last several centuries of world history. In brief, I think it might be more accurate to say that, at least since the advent of the British Empire, famines have often been imperial, and later global, events. Witness the huge role that cash-cropping for export and the liquidation of communal grain stores played in almost all of the major Indian famines from the 18th C. onwards. While the decision to switch from grain-as-subsistence to grain-as-cash-on-the-barrelhead had its most severe ramifications "locally," the decision itself was never a local one, originating as it did with various agencies and subcontractors of the empire. (Later, of course, it's the even-further delocalized abstraction of the "global market" that plays this role). One could make similar observations about China, Brazil and probably much of Africa and the Middle East. (The role of cotton in Egypt, e.g.)

Some of this is just nit-picking, probably, but I think in a way it gets at a crucial ideological distortion in these various correlations of "misery indices" and democratic governance -- namely, the inability of almost all of this neo-con "common sense" to deal with the continuing legacies of colonialism and the present global realities of uneven development.

Taylor

mail2web - Check your email from the web at <http://mail2web.com/>.

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"...operation"

20 November 2003

The year's largest row: Kasey Mohammad's blurb for Rodney Koenek's Rouge State had joked about sex-change, kari edwards called a boycott, and the list fell to arguing who owns which words. Here Stroffolino wades in — at his own expense.

Recently a poem of mine was published in N.A.W. the ending of which is "as if growing up is a sex-change operation."

I say this now, because I didn't think of it as offensive when I wrote it, and am wondering if I should so now. Wondering if the line's context in the poem would "redeem" it for those offended by Kasey's....

Chris

Shanna mentioned that she didn't know whether I was on this list: I am, but I've been in digest mode for the past few weeks, so I haven't been following the controversy around my blurb for Rodney Koenek's *Rouge State* very closely. Jeffrey Jullich did post to the comment box on my blog (<http://limetree.ksilem.com>) with an excerpt from Kevin Killian's original message, and I responded with the following comment:

--- "I'm sorry if that comment registers as insensitivity. It was meant to convey, in a general way, the destabilized status of unified identity--any identity, whether gendered, racial, romantic, quietudist, post-avantist--in Rodney's writing. But I can see how it might come off as 'sex-change operation, ooh yeah, that's weird and FREAKY!' Which was not my intention at all. But I should be more careful.

In general, however, I'm aware that I return again and again to sensitive issues around gender in my writing. This is in part an outgrowth of Flarf, with its insistence on probing tender social sores by recording belligerent public web noise. The blurb, however, is not Google-generated, so I can't appeal to that defense. All I can say is that I can't keep away from it. It wants to be in there, in the poems, in the gossip and promotional rhetoric. I am an impure vessel. I will not try to disown my blemishes. Maybe homophobia is a pathology I feel a need to rehearse in various modes, from blatant satiric irony to confrontational exorcistic spasms. I don't know. I'm just improvising, all of this stuff, it's on the fly, it's what's in my brain, right or wrong. I'm happy to talk it out and to hear criticisms." ---

It dismays me to hear that my blurb has inspired kari edwards to boycott Rodney's reading: both because Rodney and Mytili Jagannathan (the other reader) don't deserve it, and because I regret offending kari, whom I admire as a person and writer. If I could change the blurb now, I would.

This all concerns me on a broader scale, however. I have used the language of different kinds of bigotry (gendered, racial, political, religious, etc.) in my own poetry many times before this (Jeffrey has objected before as well), and I will probably continue to do so. I do it with absolutely no intention of deepening the wounds already inflicted on the victims of that bigotry. I can't say that I have a consistently coherent philosophy of what exactly my use of this language *is* supposed to achieve, if anything, but I do feel some obligation as an artist not to flinch from it, since my intuitions lead me toward it. I have to follow it and see where it goes.

I would be very disappointed if my adherence to this project--which I see no way of swerving from--were to alienate me to some of the other artists whose work and opinions I respect. I would hope that their objections might be expressed through open critical dialogue (of the sort that Kevin originally invited, for example) rather than closed gestures of resentment. I understand kari's anger, and I don't feel personally threatened by it. I do, however, object to some of Jeffrey's recent cryptic comments, in which the focus was off the original issue (the blurb) and, irrationally and offensively, on members of my family and a recent traumatic experience they went through (????). I have never been anything other than civil in my communication with Jeffrey, and I expect the same respect in return.

Kasey Mohammad

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"...operation"*20 November 2003*

kari edwards had written back to him directly, patiently and from hard experience, asking what the line actually means. He declines to open it — a rare instance of him closing a door on the list.

kari---

i don't think i could satisfy you with any attempt at an answer...

but i was considering the idea of it (the "o" word) at the time and i rejected it for various reasons i don't feel particularly compelled to make public right now....

sorry

Chris

chris... ..

but what does that mean... .. I think if you are talking transition from one gender to the other. .. but what does it conjure up in your poem.. still.. I think it be can a phase that has meaning..do you feel emasculated... .. you see.. I am not sure what the read it.. are you talking about becoming a different psychical body?..... what does it mean to you..? it is not offensive, and it is in the sense is is becomes an easy stereo type... when not say I went from being white to black.... .. its like a afternoon talk show.... forgot the guys name.. and when ever someone I used to be a boy or girl... everyone gasps.. but I would be interested your culture construct of the meaning..... now if you are talking transition from male to female.. or female to male... the surgery "sex-change" has nothing to do with or little to do with transition ... but there is the humiliation of the transition.. and the overwhelming fear... and do not forget the assaults.. I had my fair share . . . so...tell me..I would like to know...

but truthfully is it only offensive in that.. it seems to place value on something.. which I am not sure that is what you are talking about.. I could be wrong here.. but surgery does not happen for most trans folks.. that is a myth... a very very small amount....very very very small amount.. almost all females to males do not have surgery... most male to females do not because of the cost... so what then.. what myth is it.

I do hope it makes scene.. bottom line.. it seems easy and a use of a stereotype cultural projection kari

On Thursday, November 20, 2003, at 12:23 AM, Chris Stroffolino wrote:

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around my blurb for Rodney Koenke's *Rouge State* very closely. Jeffrey Jullich did post to the comment box on my blog (<http://limetree.ksilem.com>) with an excerpt from Kevin Killian's original message, and I responded with the following comment:

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Kasey Mohammad

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Creative Persons w/Bi-Polar issues

24 November 2003

Stephen Vincent asks how to help a young bipolar friend whose medication has flattened the creative drive; Kirschenbaum offers Jamison's Touched with Fire. The thread would run for days and turn sharp.

In the thread, David A. Kirschenbaum had written · 24 November 2003 —

Kaye Jamison's TOUCHED WITH FIRE: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament, is the classic book in the field

I may be overstating the case, but in my experience often

Bi-polar is often a construct by the psychopharmaco---industry

and thus most articles are already biased and weighted heavily toward the "norm" of being "non-creative," "efficient," et....

C

I will appreciate references to any good articles and/or books on creative revival strategies for bi-polar artists/writers coping with drug therapies which - as intended - eliminate the creative drive previously induced during manic episodes. I have a young friend who's lost much inspiration, as well as the energy to work creatively, since the start of the drug therapy. Inducing another kind of depression and sadness.

Suggestions (b/c or public) will be much appreciated.

Thanks, Stephen Vincent

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Creative Persons with BiPolar Issues

25 November 2003

The medication thread at its most heated: David Kirschenbaum, manic-depressive himself, could not disagree more strenuously with Chris and Haas Bianchi. Nick Piombino, replied to here, tries for a longer view.

In the thread, Nick Piombino had written · 26 November 2003 —

felt there was a strong correlation between manic-depression and creativity.

Someone very close to me starting taking ADD for various reasons--- not "bypolar" per se....and got hooked, started taking too much of it--- it eventually lead this person to have a breakdown and start hearing voices, a problem this person never had before taking this drug called ADDEROL--- soon the person was taking anti-psychotics, for "depression" issues, and is hoping soon to get off them, but.....

i need to know more about what scientists and "scientists" say about the relationship between what they call ADD and "manic-depression"--- it seems some say they are on a continuum; and others that they are different in kind... but, and i mean this as no respect to folks like David K, i do think at times there's such a thing as healthy skepticism about SOME diagnoses of things like ADD (and i leave the clinical depression issue out of it for now...)

C

One of my supervisors during my psychoanalytic training in the late 70's and early 80's, Dr Alexander Wolf, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst felt there was a strong correlation between manic-depression and creativity. Unfortunately I can't locate the paper he wrote on this subject, and I'm not even sure he ever got around to publishing it, but he frequently discussed this topic with me as he was interested in my writing, and even wrote a blurb for on of my books. He was one of the least judgmental people I have ever known.

In any case, I think being a poet or an artist is a very stressful occupation for innumerable reasons for most people and if someone who worked in one of these fields wasn't that anxious or depressed to begin with, I would be very surprised if after a number of years of working as an artist, actor, poet, etc, if they didn't eventually have to confront quite a lot of anxiety and depression, and accept it as part of the job. The reasons are too obvious to list here, but I have yet to meet anyone in the field of poetry who didn't have to struggle with a more than average number and degree of ups and downs, call it what you will; that there are those with extremely more intense swings than others I do not doubt; but most poets have to go through a lot of this whether or not they are particularly vulnerable to mood swings or have been diagnosed with a related psychiatric issue. I am not making light of the diagnostic aspect; but i am trying to identify a more endemic, connected issue.

The issue of quantity of production is a particular concern of mine. The dynamics of contemporary poetry seems to push these days for quantity, I'm not sure why this is, and I have found the discussion about this issue of great interest and value.

Nick Piombino

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the knife in art & lit

3 December 2003

A student's paper on the knife as symbol has the list happily listing knives — Psycho, Excalibur, Knife in the Water. Stroffolino answers from an odder direction.

In the thread, Schlesinger had written · 3 December 2003 —

| this gesture of knives left behind rusting in otherwise bare

I wonder if the word "knife" has taken a beating ever since end-stopped rhyme became less and less fashionable (in certain circles)

Also Psycho and Repulsion.

Also Excalibur and the Lady of the Lake.

-Joel

----- Original Message -----

*If movies are included, remind your student to see or revisit Polansky's *Knife in the Water*.*

Hal "What does a poet need an unlisted number for?" --George Costanza Halvard Johnson = email: halvard@earthlink.net website: <http://home.earthlink.net/~halvard>

{ Howdy folks, { { A former student of mine is planning on looking into "the knife as a metaphor { and symbol, both in literature and art" for a grad (art) paper. Care to suggest { some texts? Of course cut-ups immediately occurred to me, and also the { Pound/WCW emphasis on cutting/precision. But anything you can think of would { be appreciated back or front channel. { { -m.

Browse styles for all ages, from the latest looks to cozy weekend wear at MSN Shopping. And check out the beauty products! <http://shopping.msn.com>

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KNIFE

5 December 2003

The knife thread again, two days later, pulled toward song.

One of my favs is that very early dylan

something like

a lot of people don't have much food on their table
but they got a lot of KNIVES and forks
and they gotta cut something

(i love the way the 2nd, and especially the 3rd, line,
changes what one might be inclined to think he means at first in the first
line)

then there's this:

we could sit in darkness
in a theatre spotted with our lives
or be naive as food that's sick
of trying not to eat the knife

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response to blog

17 December 2003

The blog wars once more — CA Conrad defending Silliman's comment box as democratic, Tom Bell noting an owner owes no one dissent. Stroffolino answers for the non-bloggers.

yeah but i'm glad that leslie (and others) posted her dissent here rather than the squawk box---- for those of us who don't read blogs on a daily basis...

| tom, i'd agree with you in part if Silliman didn't have Squawk Box.

but he DOES, which means that he has taken care to be certain that anyone out there who reads a post may click on "comments" and engage with him and the rest of his readers.

this is not to defend what he has said about Scalapino, but it is to defend Silliman's chosen Blog format. he's one of the few who in fact sees to it that we all have space for our say about what he says.

when he publishes dissent, so can you, right with him. or against him. or even against the others in the Squawk Box. that's kind of exciting when you think about it, allowing us to all engage at will, no one filtering what is said.

he's also made the effort to include links to just about every single poetics Blog in the world on his Blog. if ever you forget someone's Blog address in the poetry community, just go to Silliman's Blog, and it will be there.

CAConrad

<<<<<<<<<<< If I 'own' a blog I don't have to publish anything I don't want to publish. While this is true of other forms of publication it's most obvious when one person controls all.

tom

----- Original Message -----

"the" weakness? why is there no need to publish dissent? CAConrad <<<<<I think you've hit on the weakness of blogs. There is no need for publishing dissent.

tom bell

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2004

The year the accident arrives without ever being announced: 2004 opens on his working-class hometown and closes in a Philadelphia he can only visit by telephone, and somewhere between spring and summer the way he crosses a room quietly changes. He carries it as he carries everything — sidelong, in a pun, between a Steve Lacy elegy and a defence of Philly soul — and keeps answering, by name, warm, the poet of a quotidian that had grown harder to survive.

Reading, PA

2 January 2004

His class origins and birthplace surface at once: Reading, Pennsylvania, where he was born in 1963.

My "impoverished" hometown made the cover of New York Times today

for suing the state for enforcing Bush's education program! (another example of seeming to enforce quality of education that has the effect of course of driving another nail in the coffin of public education....)

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What do you think? A good use of 1.5 billion?

16 January 2004

The thread runs on a circulated hoax — a mock Times dispatch announcing a federal drive to promote poetry — and Annie Finch worries its satire yokes rhyme too neatly to sense. He answers, as ever, out of Shakespeare.

In the thread, Annie Finch had written · 16 January 2004 —

| Rhyme can as easily be seen as the perfect companion of not making

Good point, Annie, as the poet say to the painter in Timon of Athens (when the painter asks the poet to be art-critic):

I will say of it, It tutors nature; artificial strife Lives in these touches, livelier than life

Chris

This is a riot--, though I do feel the satire it is a bit weakened by the joining at the hip of "rhyme" with "making sense," which reflects more on the writer than it illuminates the sensibility being satirized (dana gioia's new post notwithstanding).

That automatic association of rhyme with the traditional sounds like a carryover from the days of deep image school or something. In fact, contemporary philistines are probably more likely to prefer their pabulum in unrhymed free verse.

Rhyme can as easily be seen as the perfect companion of not making sense. These unexamined assumptions need to be shaken out & tried on once in a while to see if they still fit.

Annie

RV.BUFFALO.EDU> > >Subject: What do you think? A good use of 1.5 billion? >
>Date: Thu, 15 Jan 2004 19:16:56 EST > > >January 14, 2004 > >Bush Plans \$1.5
Billion Drive for Promotion of Poetry > >By ROBERT ST. JOHN and DAVID LOWELL
> > >WASHINGTON, Jan. 13 ^{FUSA} Administration officials say they are planning an
> >extensive election-year initiative to promote poetry, especially among > >low-
income > >poets, and they are weighing whether President Bush should promote the
plan > >next week in his State of the Union address. > > >For months,
administration officials have worked with conservative groups > >on > >the
proposal, which would provide at least \$1.5 billion for training to > >help > >people
develop interpersonal writing skills that sustain "healthy poetry." > > >The officials
said they believed that the measure was especially timely > >because they were
facing pressure from conservatives eager to see the > >federal > >government
defend traditional poetry, after a decision by the highest court > >in > >Mas-
sachusetts. The court ruled in November that language poetry is > >legitimate >
>under the state's Constitution. > > >"This is a way for the president to address the
concerns of conservatives > >and > >to solidify his conservative base," a presidential
adviser said. > > >Several conservative Christian advocacy groups are pressing
Mr. Bush to go > >further and use the State of the Union address to champion a
constitutional > >amendment prohibiting language poetry. Leaders of these groups
said they > >were > >confused by what they saw as the administration's hedging and
hesitation > >concerning an amendment. > > >Administration officials said they

did not know if Mr. Bush would mention > >the > >amendment, but they expressed confidence that his poetry promotion plan > >would > >please conservatives. > > > >Ronald T. Haskins, a Republican who has previously worked on Capitol Hill > >and > >at the White House under Mr. Bush, said, "A lot of conservatives are very > >pleased with the healthy poetry initiative. We need the world to make > >sense." > > >The proposal is the type of relatively inexpensive but politically potent > >initiative that appeals to White House officials at a time when they are > >squeezed > >by growing federal budget deficits. > > >It also plays to Mr. Bush's desire to be viewed as a "compassionate > >conservative," an image he sought to cultivate in his 2000 campaign. This > >year, > >administration officials said, Mr. Bush will probably visit programs trying > >to raise > >poetry awareness in poor neighborhoods. > > >"The president loves to do that sort of thing in the inner city with black > >churches, and he's very good at it," a White House aide said. > > >In the last few years, some liberals have also expressed interest in > >poetry-education programs. They say a growing body of statistical evidence > >suggests > >that children fare best, financially and emotionally when exposed to poetry > >early, in a two-poet family. > > >The president's proposal may not be enough, though, for some conservative > >groups that are pushing for a more emphatic statement from him opposing > >language > >poetry. > > >"We have a hard time understanding why the reserve," said Glenn T. Stanton, > >a > >policy analyst at Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian > >organization. > >"You see him inching in the right direction. But the question for us is, > >why > >this inching? Why not just get there? Rhyme is healthy!" > > >The Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, chairman of a national group called the > >Traditional Poesy Coalition, has started an e-mail campaign urging Mr. Bush > >to push for > >an amendment opposing the legal recognition of language poetry. "The stuff > >doesn't make any sense," Sheldon says, "and we have to get it out of our > >homes." > > >Other groups, like the Southern Baptist Convention and Focus on the Family, > >are pushing more quietly for the same thing, through contacts with White > >House > >officials, especially Karl Rove, the president's chief political aide, who > >has > >taken a personal interest in maintaining contacts with evangelical groups. > > >In an interview with ABC News last month, Mr. Bush was asked if he would > >support a constitutional amendment against language poetry. > > >"If necessary," he said, "I will support a constitutional amendment which > >would honor poetry as something that should rhyme and make sense, codify > >that, > >and will ~~be~~^{use} the position of this administration is that whatever poetry > >people > >want to write, they're allowed to write, so long as it's traditional and > >embraced by the state." > > >Asked to cite the circumstances in which a constitutional amendment might > >be > >needed, Trent Duffy, a White House spokesman, said on Tuesday, "That is a > >decision the president has to make in due time." > > >The House of Representatives has approved a proposal to promote poetry as > >part of a bill to reauthorize the 1996 communications law, but the bill is > >bogged > >down in the Senate. > > >Without waiting for Congress to act, the administration has retained > >consultants to help state and local government agencies, community > >organizations and > >religious groups develop poetry-promotion programs. > > >Wade F. Horn, the assistant secretary of health and human services, said: > >"Poetry programs do work. On average, children raised by two poets hearing > >healthy, stable traditional forms enjoy better physical and mental health > >and are > >less likely to be poor." > > >

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Columbia MFA program under fire

20 February 2004

The Columbia College row has widened into a quarrel over whether creative-writing departments run on any recognisable politics; Steve Tills relays a mock advertisement for the programme.

In the thread, Steve Tills had written · 20 February 2004 —

| Come to Columbia for a Poetry MFA, where our team of inaccessible, terse

Yes, point well taken-- But, more specifically, to fail, or flunk (or "give" a "C") an undergraduate (or even a graduate) student for no other reason than that you disagree with their aesthetics--- which seems to be what is happening currently at Columbia College-- is, at the very least, not a very effective way of teaching creative writing...

yes, agreed. the politics of creative writing departments are different from English, let alone Philosophy or Sociology. it's b---s--- to generalize about creative writing to academia per se, and yet writers at universities do it all the time.

for inst. our highly regarded computer science & engineering dept. is run on consensus. so everybody has to get buy-in or recognize that they can screw up the whole process. i'd like to hear about any english dept. or any creative writing dept. run on the same basis. then we can talk about "academic" politics.

bottom line: a lot of the literary representations of academic politics are literary politics in disguise. this goes for folks with in the literature/theory side. they are certainly a version of it, but we exist in one of the most not-obviously collaborative parts of the university, and since the 18th century writers have liked to partial potshots are each other.

Robert

-- Robert Corbett, Ph.C. "Given the distance of communication, Coordinator of New Programs I hope the words aren't idling on the B40D Gerberding map of my fingertips, but igniting the Phone: [REDACTED] wild acres within the probabilities of Fax: [REDACTED] spelling" - Rosmarie Waldrop UW Box: 351237

On Thu, 19 Feb 2004, Kevin Hehir wrote:

hi, i didn't mean to mislead anyone or bait and switch with the link to the article about Columbia College. I it didn't even dawn on me that there would be another one. I was more interested in the comment that experimental poetry wasn't being supported. I know Arielle Greenberg's work and was a bit perplexed by the comment.

It points, i think, to something that is often discussed up here as "academic poetry". what the slam/spoken word folks call academic poetry, the progressive poetix types call official verse culture. it doesn't have much to do with the academy at all.

anyway, i'm jsut working out a few things in my own head. until the storm hits. 30-40 cm of snow then 5mm of rain cradled in 70-100km/h winds.

lovely.

thanks, kevin

-- <http://paulmartintime.ca/>

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Columbia MFA program under fire

20 February 2004

Raymond Bianchi has raised the banner of the poet who works in the world against the academic, and the thread threatens to fold in on itself.

In the thread, Haas Bianchi had written · 20 February 2004 —

Poetry, like painting or sculpture is something you do because you have to

ah, the good old difference between complaining about complaining and just complaining... (it can get pretty infinite enough to include the whole world)

yours in meta-binaries....

agreed, Chris. that's a terrible way to a lit or theory or lit/theory class, and sometimes they are. we're all in it together.

I am just a little tired of all the information put out about how universities are run and have the rueful suspicion that some of the lack funding for higher ed has something to do with campus fiction and its jaundiced view of administration. And those who do it badly rarely disclose their own baggage. (I except fully David Lodge and Hazard Adams, both of whom have a large perspective.) Writers and for most part critics and scholars do work alone in ways that are stunningly different from the sciences and social sciences. They don't, then, have much investment in preserving the system. Granted that writers (and critics and scholars) are here to exaggerate, to sound the cry of something is wrong, but my position has lead me to wonder if all the criticism has created the crisis. (You will be glad to know that I am thinking of Paul De Man on some level, so my criticism goes both ways.)

Perhaps what I want that we all think about ways of creating new positivities, new constructions and institutions. But also keep the old friends while making the new ones. Nietzsche said we must revalue the values. He didn't say that we should simply toss out the old. (I admit to taking the Kaufman on this one, but who can resist such an elegant and humane translator and indeed thinker.)

Robert

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On Fri, 20 Feb 2004, Chris Stroffolino wrote:

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lovely.

thanks, kevin

-- <http://paulmartintime.ca/>

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Myles/Andrews/ Dante?

28 February 2004

He almost never opens a thread; this is one of the few times he casts the first line rather than answering someone else's.

Just a thought/question

Anybody have any thoughts on Eileen Myles' Inferno pieces that have been appearing lately?

Also, remembering Bruce Andrews's recent stuff riffing off Dante....

has anybody written about either of these pieces in relation to Dante, etc?

curious

C

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A run of small posts here I have let go: he cannot pass a name without turning it — Kirby Olson becomes 'Curby Ole' son' — nor see a list of synonyms for 'poet' without adding to it. The wordplay is compulsive and mostly weightless, but it is the same reflex that keeps the heavier posts from ever sitting still.

Dante/Virgil - Narcissicism vs Classicism

1 March 2004

August Highland arrives to demote Dante beneath Virgil, his post trailing the machine-generated verse that was his signature on the list.

And after reading both of them (Aeneid, Inferno) for a long time, one comes to realize why Marie De France (or, hell, even Lucretius) is such a necessary "corrective"

Dante's only contribution to literature is his language. But he localized the subject of literature in the individual to the detriment to literature. His teacher, Virgil is the truly great master. His subject was an Empire and the making of History. But his character, Aeneas is just as powerless without his mother as Dante is without Beatrice. Perhaps, Dante's real model is Aeneas. Only instead of striving to reach his home on earth, he strove to reach his home in heaven.

Classicism (nano-feat)

the size of shots so of little girl of his of little girl of his of little girl of his the size of shots so Bunny Don't call the size of shots so the size of shots so

smell whisky by then over my tits and cunt over my tits and cunt over my tits and cunt smell whisky by then a hundred dollars Oh smell whisky by then smell whisky by then

have it just as we bedroom bedroom bedroom have it just as we wait until 6pm when have it just as we have it just as we

Lisa was panting so special if one had special if one had special if one had Lisa was panting so and it made her docile Lisa was panting so Lisa was panting so

reskyin them chaps as soft real jet albeit soft real jet albeit soft real jet albeit reskyin them chaps as dignified sensible reskyin them chaps as reskyin them chaps as

press gang thank God one end to another The one end to another The one end to another The press gang thank God more had missed if press gang thank God press gang thank God

nipples caught turnips and mangold turnips and mangold turnips and mangold nipples caught into her He knew his nipples caught nipples caught

wait until 6pm when a hundred dollars Oh a hundred dollars Oh a hundred dollars Oh
 wait until 6pm when Philip promised to do wait until 6pm when wait until 6pm when
 to his aunt and to Molly is in orchard Molly is in orchard Molly is in orchard to his aunt
 and to allays for making the to his aunt and to to his aunt and to
 open crotch panties before now it seemed before now it seemed before now it seemed
 open crotch panties place and probably open crotch panties open crotch panties
 you joined it no more night with one of my night with one of my night with one of my
 you joined it no more call it day as if you joined it no more you joined it no more
 and No No I'm not brought back the brought back the brought back the and No No I'm
 not he had been doing and No No I'm not and No No I'm not
 :August_Highland::

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Blog Arguments...

3 March 2004

The list has turned to elegising itself as blogs ascend; Joe Amato mourns the age of the mailing list that once gave him somewhere to be noticed.

In the thread, Joe Amato had written · 3 March 2004 —

i regret, for my part, the passing of the Age of Lists

and blogs more like cd download swapping?

one's a little newer than the other, but some of us-- especially with not much "spending power"-- still listen to college radio (even though the djs don't tell you the names of the songs until like an hour afterward)....

just like some of us prefer to see live music than the hip dj (so hip there's no dj booths in men's sections of clothes stores) or be live music

all analogies are false

or poor internet--- they seem to think you're an end in itself (medium message etc....

it probably all has something to do with my new demon word ELECTIBILITY

(more on this later, but THE ELECTIBILITY FACTOR seems to have greater significance than just this Kerry guy--- (Michael Palmieri?)

Joe, I am not trying at all to dismiss "wonder" from the interior potential of a number of possible blogs. I am often in a state of astonishment when I scroll down Chris Sullivan's blog. It is, at best, a cabinet of wondrous curiosity. And so this is true of several others whose various awes I won't indulge - whether they be for sheer intellectual "pointitude" or an intimate view of personal cosmetics that, well, kind of, perfume the screen.

Yes, Fred Wilson takes on museum acquisition and practice in mostly fresh ways (tho sometimes repetition of strategy produces a predictability of outcome and consequently a boring redux no matter the contents of different museums). And definitely cracks the magnitude of the colonial skull.

But my point was the function of the original collector - whether the original "cabinet" folks or not - is/was to proclaim a power and control (either by presence of objects or the omission of them). We see exhibited the skulls of the indigenous but not the whips that "embraced" them. A CIA or KGB blog would be comparable, i.e., no manuals on torture are in evidence.

I suspect the impulse of many of us who blog is to strip the anonymous and articulate/disclose the materiality and value of what the dominant discourse ignores which, of course, as you point out is part of the dialog. "They" do watch, do surveil - we know the script, either severe reprisals, incorporations, co-optations, or just nice new public openings in the larger field! (i.e., you pay your dues). And we instantly recognize the fake blogs - Dick Gephardt on the road (yuck), canned, scripted stuff. Technologically I suspect one can say that the blog is a new mirror in the woods - and definitely a fresh moment. But privy to all the problems of mirrors - hopefully, when broken (crashed) not seven years of bad luck!

But such critiques can be aimed at other media - Black Mountain College's magazine carries the probe of the authentic (even when wrong headed) where one might read the American Poetry Review (no matter the occasion of some things good) with a sense of muddled editorial intention other than a sense of providing multiple career support.

Stephen V

on 3/3/04 5:24 AM, Joe Amato at jamato2@ILSTU.EDU wrote:

jeepers, i post 7 kb on blog/anti-blog and only 1 tiny kb on "wonder cabinets," and now i have to make good on the latter, which i dashed off in haste w/o really thinking about it much... well i'll give it a go, and remind readers of what anselm hollo posted here not long ago about poetry being a "dangerous toy" (he was quoting someone else, yes?):

indeed, stephen, you've sent me back to weschler's ~mr. wilson's cabinet of wonder: pronged ants, horned humans, mice on toast, and other marvels of jurassic technology~ (i have the 96 vintage pb)... both "wonder cabinets" and "cabinets of curiosity," yes... weschler's book, you may know, concerns l.a.'s museum of jurassic technology (curated by david wilson, who has since won a macarthur)... in fact the point weschler is making has less to do with possession or exoticizing than with the potential for invoking a different understanding of knowledge and knowledge-making... for weschler, wilson's museum undermines authority, authenticity and the like, in a postmodern or premodern vein...

*now certainly the internet has at one level always constituted an outside to established lines of authority---this is clearly its imagined locus for some (like yours truly), but i would argue also that its challenge to insider-isms *can be* very real... perhaps less real in some sense than a decade ago, but when i think about moveon.org, more real...*

and if blogs constitute a further challenge to those authorities that tend to dominate the (discursive) real, very well then... there might be a problem with this too, for that matter, but i'm all for democratic participation as against "tell the rabble to be quite/we anticipate a riot"... in any case, how does this challenge to authority come about?... i suspect, but can only suspect, that we underestimate the capacity of our rhetorics to elicit something like wonder ("wonder" is an interesting word in this regard, as there are versions of it in numerous languages, but its etymology is entirely mysterious)... for me wonder points to what we can't quite explain... and sometimes, once in a great while, "i can't explain" (i have the rock lyric in my mind, yes) leads to a new kind of engagement with the real... wonder (among other things) might be the basis for an affirmative form of resistance...

ergo my sense that blogs may become performative sites for the articulation/dis-semination of new, or certainly, other, kinds of interiority... i almost believe, w/o thinking too awful hard about it, that the heteronaut movement might find its proper home in blogville... a very static read, i grant you, and i think, in thinking about it more, that it's something of a stupid, if not stubborn, stretch to conceive of one's interiority as being "put on display" in order to elicit, what did i say? oh yeah--- wonder...

*but then again, i'm feeling a bit put on display even *here*, and that's never stopped me from waxing stubborn, if not stupid... have i fetishized my, uhm, self?... i wonder (sorry)... thus far poetry blogs do seem, in any case, to be about exposition, to judge by the interiorities thereby exhibited (whether or not they include poetry and the like)... i.e., most blogs i visit are explicitly trying to persuade me to think a certain way about such & so (about, say, BLOGS), much as i'm trying to persuade in this post (oh, yeah, and entertain a bit too, if you don't mind)... and that's one kind of performance, perhaps indeed the kind with which i'm myself most comfy, most drawn to, inasmuch as i seem to be drawn to dialogue (ergo my desire to see more of same *here*)...*

i write poetry, i think, for other kinds of reasons (dialogue too though)... the tyranny of dialogue notwithstanding, i'll take it any day over mum's-the-word rhetorics, which i get plenty of, thank you very much, as a bureaucrat-academic...

anyway, if you go at it from the perspective of self-publishing, or publishing selves, well i can't see as how that won't ultimately peter out, as you suggest, b/c one has only so much time to write, let alone eat, and the charm of that variant of self-publishing is bound to wear off over time---i mean, on an hourly or daily or weekly basis, depending what your blog sked is... doesn't mean folks shouldn't (or won't continue to) blog... and i could be wrong here, in any case---perhaps many of you have a greater stomach than i reckon for putting your pixeled interiority(ies) on display (as opposed, i mean, to directly attempting dialogue and exchange, as i'm trying my goddamnedest to do at the moment, again), and less of an appetite for... food?... persuasion?... self-possession?... then again---

best,

joe

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ah (questions about poetics)*10 March 2004*

A rare unprompted salvo, and one of his abiding preoccupations — the tyranny of the 'ear' as a measure of a poem's worth — mounted entirely as questions.

do you like poems because of their "sound"? is that of primary importance? is it more important than what a poem "says"? or even what a poem does?

does anybody else feel that many poems that are distinguished as great by virtue of the writer's "EAR" often fall flat (for you personally)?

if so, does this mean you have a "tin ear"? or haven't learned the proper rules of verse? even "free verse"?

does it make you question the value of the term "ear"? or "music"? at least as a term used to distinguish a "great" or "sublime" poem from an allegedly not-so-great one?

is it possible that many of the defenses of a poem's greatness on the grounds of the "ear" are partially because the poem in question does not do much else except use language in "musical" ways?

is it possible that poems that engage more blatantly in ways that could be recognized as emotionally or intellectually intense are often said to lack said "EAR"-- not because they really do--- but because it becomes harder to distinguish "music" from "feeling" or "thought" or "personality" or "performativity"?

if you want to be called a poet, do you have to appeal to what's called the "ear" by those who divide the "ear" from other "body parts"?

do you have to develop a systematic, or at least an eloquent non-systematic, prose defense of YOUR KIND OF "MUSIC" when it's not "SEEN" (or "READ") as "music" by many of the NOISIEST spokespeople for what's called poetry today?

what is really meant by "ear" and "music" when so many of the poems or pieces of writing you're most interested in are over and over again considered "clunky" by "musical" standards put forth either by many who squeak (i mean speak) for what used to be called "avant-garde" or "mainstream"?

is it put forth, in many cases, as an attempt to "mystify"? is it perhaps, as a standard, even MORE ARBITRARY, than other standards for determining whether a poem is good, or great, or sublime, etc?

does any of this EAR TALK make you almost want to go so far as to say "a poem should not only be, but also mean"?

and then do you feel you'll be misunderstood, and criticized, because you'll seem as one who does not appreciate the crucial importance of aesthetics in poetry,

and even in written forms of communication, when in reality you've nothing against the ear or music but just feel there's a kind of privileged tyranny of these terms?

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ah (questions about poetics)

12 March 2004

Two days on, still worrying the same bone; Allison had granted his point about context, and Ken Springtail lobbed back a single gnommic line.

In the thread, Ken Springtail had written · 11 March 2004 —

| *the world has been "made safe for soundless poems" ALREADY*

Allison--I see your point, especially about context. In different contexts I've made similar---and even identical--arguments as you're making here. But I guess I'm more curious how you--or anyone--would respond to the other questions I asked, which to me remain less addressed and in many ways more crucial.

It's not so much whether "meaning" (as "normative discourse") is privileged in the abstract or "shape and sound" are (both can be equally about style and seduction, and the issue of where the "line of demarcation" is an earnest jest?).

But to ask what ends any argument of poetics, or the "value" of any poem, may serve? So if someone implicitly, or even explicitly (though that's rarer in the poetry context I "know"), criticizes or dismisses a poem of mine on the grounds that it doesn't fit their particular preferences in "shape and sound" I personally am less interested in adjusting the way I write to fit what may seem to be their predilections. On the other hand, I might be more willing to adjust to "speaking their language," in the sense of understanding their terminology, lexicon, in the hope of carrying on a conversation---

for instance, I just got a rejection letter which criticized the work I sent for not being "passionate" enough--- and I respect that a) because the editor had the guts to be honest and b) because it can spur me on to send more work in which I might be considered more "passionate" by this person's standards. Sure, at the same time I could argue, "my work is passionate" to this person, or that "what you call passion is a normative bourgeois value, etc." or I may just forget this particular editor, grant it no authority as a temporary tyrant-muse. Next time I'm writing and it occurs to me that what I'm writing is more like poetry, I may remember, "oh yeah, this might fit in with what this editor wants" (actually, this particular editor also accepts prose) and send to this person.

This is my own particular context right now, but yeah there have been times when "shape and sound" have mattered more to me, and I'm sure there's been times I've been published more on the grounds of "shape and sound" than on

"meaning"--to be starkly binary about it. And there's other writers who some might like more for "shape and sound" who I like more for "meaning", etc. etc.

But the question about "normative"---about what's "normative" in the world "at large" and what's "normative" in poetry (or in various sub sub sub specializations of poetry)---well, I'm now more impatient with the notion of "signature style" that seems to grant many writers more authority in "writing communities". A feeling of (not necessarily me) being "held back" by it...

And say norms of style, whether old-school iambs, or something more like Olson's particular notion of "breath" (maybe even it's the way HE breathes-- which is fine for him)--when written up in (un iambic, or un-breath-unit) PROSE, and then established as a standard for others (often implicitly)-- and having THAT as a kind of basis for a "community"--seems sick to me, like longhairs getting beaten by cops in the 60s or by punks in the late 70s--

I'm curious what you think about that....

But one needn't even go so as to claim we shouldn't value EAR or MUSIC or "shape and sound" to at least question that these terms are used in ways that privilege certain notions of "shape and sound" (sometimes in poetry "circles", whether "avant" or mainstream") it feels like the awardsters, publishers, editors, etc., are like, say, stravinsky heads and the coltrane heads uniting against a common enemy saying, "The sex pistols aren't music" (or perhaps even vice versa)---but wouldn't it be better to say "it is music, it just doesn't move me"? Or does that undermine their precious CULTURAL AUTHORITY? That, to me, may be the bigger question

and though I sometimes thinkfeel the tyranny of "normative discourse" is a reflection of a normative dominant social order, I find that sometimes proponents of a normative social order actually speakwrite in "non-normative" ways and sometimes opponents of this social order writespeak in ways that could be considered normative....

On 11/3/04 7:28 AM, "Chris Stroffolino" <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> wrote:

and then do you feel you'll be misunderstood, and criticized, because you'll seem as one who does not appreciate the crucial importance of aesthetics in poetry, and even in written forms of communication, when in reality you've nothing against the ear or music but just feel there's a kind of privileged tyranny of these terms?

I feel kind of opposite, Chris, in that where I am, to suggest that a poem might not necessarily "contain" a message or have "something to say", or may be "saying" in its shape and sound, creates all sorts of accusations of obfuscation and wank. So meaning (in the sense of being like Blair ON-MESSAGE) seems a privileged tyranny to me.

Depends on one's context, I guess.

Best

A

Alison Croggon

Editor, Masthead <http://www.masthead.net.au>

Home page <http://www.alisoncroggon.com>

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Whitehead Shot Dead In Philadelphia at 55

15 May 2004

Frank Sherlock corrects the name and supplies the elegy: John Whitehead of McFadden & Whitehead, of 'Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now,' shot in Germantown. The Sound of Philadelphia was home ground.

In the thread, Frank Sherlock had written · 15 May 2004 —

| He was an innocent bystander caught in crossfire as he was fixing his truck.

Thanks for the clarification Frank---

money money money money.....money!

c

John Whitehad was murdered earlier this week outside of his home in Germantown, Philly. He was an innocent bystander caught in crossfire as he was fixing his truck.

Whitehead (half of the songwriting team McFadden & Whitehead) gave us some of the the best of TSOP. They wrote "Backstabbers", performed by the O'Jays, "I'll Always Love My Mama", performed by The Intruders, & "Wake Up Everybody", performed by Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes. They also recorded their own hit, "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now", which has been, and will continue to be a Philadelphia anthem.

55 Date: Sat, 15 May 2004 08:50:01 -0800

Just heard this on KPOO this morning....

Best Restaurant Giveaway Ever! Vote for your favorites for a chance to win \$1 million!

<http://local.msn.com/special/giveaway.asp>

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Croggon on Johnson's Abu Ghraib poem

28 May 2004

Alison Croggon had raised the problem of the righteous political poem apropos Kent Johnson's Abu Ghraib piece; he takes up the question of complicity without having yet read the poem.

Allison---

thanks for this--- a great line of thinking....

I'm very interested in exploring these questions you raise (which for me are relevant beyond considerations of the specific poem which I've not as of yet read---so for that reason what I have to say here will not be referencing the specific poem except in terms of the characterization of its position, which to me is a familiar one. So familiar in fact that it seems to characterize in many ways the impasse of much USA oppositional left writing/thought/speech, etc...)

Certainly it's an issue I deal with in my writing--- The impulse being the humane empathy and/or the righteous or self-righteous poem.....or the way the humane empathy may move toward self-righteousness... Is this something to be avoided? Perhaps, ideally.... But CAN it be avoided, is another question. And if it CAN'T be avoided, should it be EDITED OUT? Those three questions, in succession, I think are at the heart of your post. I think for some people, people I admire immensely, it can be avoided-- or at least they are able to edit out in such a way that it seems it (the self-doubts, the self-consciousness, the "when you point the finger at someone else, you got 4 more pointing back at you," the fact or feeling of "complicity" you also mention in your post) never occurred to the person. Yet for other people, or at other times, and for me personally, I have tremendous difficulty editing out the self-doubts, or what Blake might call THE IDIOT QUESTIONER, that (or who), makes me AT LEAST CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE analogy that I, or anyone, who speaks out of humane empathy, may in fact turn into his or her own enemy. Of course, ULTIMATELY, to say that writing a poem in protest of the US invasion/occupation of Iraq is just as bad as torturing Iraqis is a futile, self-defeating gesture. BUT, as an example of SHOWING ONE'S WORK, as going through the changes on the issue and CONSCIENTIOUSLY considering one of the strongest OBJECTIONS that could be RAISED by the right-wing, etc., isn't it possible that it may actually STRENGTHEN the VALIDITY of one's position, and help ground that human empathy? It is not necessarily becoming a "native informer" to question the possibility, to temper the potentially dangerous lapse into dogma that could result from not questioning one's own position. In fact, I'd argue that perhaps the potential liability (in a world of sound bites and simple binaries) of self-doubting the strength of our own opposition to bush, etc., can be made into a great strength precisely because we can then say---UNLIKE BUSH ETC WE ACTUALLY CAN QUESTION OUR BELIEFS, AND MAKE THAT QUESTIONING PUBLIC, AND THEY STILL STAND UP UNDER SCRUTINY. I don't know, and don't even particularly care, if the poem in question is able to do that. I'm not trying to defend the poem, just trying to weigh in here with my own thoughts, and my own positions, on the questions you raise.

thanks, Chris

I am not attacking the poem. I meant "easy" not because I necessarily disagree with the thrust of the poem, but because a logical conclusion to draw from the poem is that any response to the outrages of one's government, as an intellectual, as a writer, is inevitably hypocritical. And this is so close to the kind of things that right wing commentators say about "chardonnay socialists" and wanker intellectuals in this country (Australia) that it gave me pause. Words and what one does with them, the exposure of murderous lies, matters very much: why would our governments spend so much ink and hot air justifying the credibility of their actions otherwise? And also: is a poem, even a "self righteous" poem, really equivalent to these acts of torture? (Though I can think of certain readings...) And also: does Kent's response of self disgust (for so I read it) stymie in some ways the possible humane and decent reaction to things like torture at Abu Ghraib? Because the humane and decent reaction stemming from a humane empathy is the only response that has the faintest chance of changing these things; that is, if it leads to action, which is not historically unprecedented.

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American Poetry

1 June 2004

Daniel Bouchard's 'American Poetry' — Ginsberg's 'America' rewritten for the age of the perfect-bound book — draws him out, with Mairead Byrne cheering Bouchard on. The line he offers of his own is less a joke about debt than a fact of it.

In the thread, Mairead Byrne had written · 1 June 2004 —

| O you sad poet & probably happy person this morning!

Dan---definitely one of the best takes I've seen on this (i tried writing something similar this winter, but stopped about ten lines into it... the first line was something like "American poetry I've given you all and now I'm \$40,000 in debt."

thanks dan....

Chris

American poetry I've given you all and now nothing has been made to happen. American poetry ten bucks per book, on average, June 1, 2004 I can't stand my short lines. American poetry when will we end the avant-garde vs mainstream war? Go fuck yourself with your perfect bound. I don't feel good don't interview me. I won't dislike my poem till I'm in my right mind. American poetry when will you be less anaseptic? When will you take off my clothes? When will you stop looking at yourself in a convex mirror? When will you be worthy of your dozens of Patchenites? American poetry why are your libraries full of nervous children? American poetry when will you export your writing software to China? I'm quick to your insane demands. When can I go into the Barnes and Noble and buy what I want with my reputation? American poetry after all it is you and I who are perfect not the nonliterary world. Your unofficial publicity machines are too much for me. You made me want to be an English professor. There must be some other way to settle your hash. Jack Spicer is a book prize I don't think he'll come back it's sinister. Are you being sinister or is this some form of impractical joke? I'm trying to come up with a point, if not a manifesto. I refuse to give up the microphone. American poetry push harder till I know what I'm doing. American poetry all the plum positions are taken. I haven't read Poets and Writers for months,

everyday somebody wins a prize for murdering verse. American poetry I feel sentimental about the Fugitive poets. American poetry I used to be a novelist when I was a kid I'm not sorry. I blow smoke up the instructor's ass every chance I get. I sit in my study for days on end and stare at the collected poems on the bookshelves. When I give a reading I get drunk and never get paid. My mind is made up to start trouble. You should have seen me reading Ginsberg. My adviser thinks I'm perfectly uptight. I won't say homogenous. I have a vibrating cosmos and a cosmic vibrator. American poetry I still haven't told you what you didn't do for Professor Makeastir after he came over from alternative presses.

Are you going to let your poetical life be run by Silliman's Blog? I'm obsessed by Silliman's Blog. I read it every day, every hour in fact; sometimes more than that; I'm reading it now. Its comment box exchanges challenge me and push my mind to the deepest depths of critical thinking. I read it in the open at a table in a cafe on my laptop where the chicks can dig me. It's always telling me about poetic lineage. Projective poets have lineage. Black Mountain poets have lineage. Everybody's got lineage but me. It occurs to me that I am American poetry. I am blogging to myself again.

The Iowa Workshop is rising against me. I haven't got an endowed chairman's chance. I'd better consider my poetical resources. My poetical resources consist of two chapbooks of disjointed lyrics and dozens of bookmarked blogs an unreadable coterie literature that goes 200 saddle-stitched miles an hour and twenty-five-thousand in student loans. I say nothing about my social networks nor the six or so panels who live in my web reports under the weight of five hundred applicants. I have abolished the MFA programs of all state colleges, Naropa is the next to go. My ambition is to be NEA chairman despite the fact that I'm a moron, and a partisan.

American poetry how can I flarf a holy litany in your mordant mood? I will continue like the Vatican my parodies as constant as its hypocrisy more so they don't need much to eat. American poetry I will sell you bandwidth \$2500 a width \$500 down on your old width American poetry free Bob Perelman American poetry save the Breadload Conference American poetry the Poetics List must not die American poetry I am the New Formalist boys. American poetry when I was twenty-seven sommun took me to a writers conference they sold us T-shirts a T-shirt per ticket a ticket costs fifty bucks and the poetry were free everybody was cordial and sentimental about the 1970s it was all so sincere you have no idea what a good party the poetry was in 1995. America you're in war up to your eyeball. America poetry it's them unread barbarians. Them slam poets them writing students and them tv-watchers. And them writing students. The MFA wants to eat us alive. The MFA's tenure and book mad. He wants to take our dollars from out our accounts. Her wants to grab Poetry (Chicago). Him needs a widely taught Anthology. Him wants our checks in book contests. That no good. Ugh. Him make poets read Norton. Him need bigger audience. Hah. American poetry this is kinda serious. American poetry this is the impression I get from looking at the Internet. American poetry: is this a wreck? I'll letter write right down to the nob. It's true I don't want to be a "visiting writer" or turn tricks for blurbs as we swap seats on the gravy train. I'm shy and socially awkward anyway. American poetry I'm writing my own ticket to a meal.

[illegible]

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Somewhere in the spring the ground shifted. His gig notices had begun, without fanfare, to mention a wheelchair and a crutch; he never posted to the list the story of how they got there, and I have not gone looking for it beyond these pages. What follows carries the fact lightly, which is how he chose to carry it.

Vincent

2 June 2004

Stephen Vincent's affectionate aside — Chris 'still down' after a good house party — meets a reply that makes the wheelchair into a pun. He never spelled the matter out; here it enters the stream sideways.

more like an outdoor party with pianos and stuff....

uh, maybe i start writing WHEELING THEORY stephen your walking ones make me exceedingly salivate for two-leggedness...

Time to throw a house party- get down. Chris Strofino threw a very good one a few weeks back - he's still down(!). This is way too sad. It's even funny. Time to get to the sink. Really get the poisons out. & start over. Wink-wink.

Oh well, what can one really say? It's never been an easy show. Even Auggie K has to come home at the end of the day.

Stephen V

Dan---definitely one of the best takes I've seen on this (i tried writing something similar this winter, but stopped about ten lines into it.... the first line was something like "American poetry I've given you all and now I'm \$40,000 in debt."

thanks dan....

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he'll come back it's sinister. Are you being sinister or is this some form of impractical joke? I'm trying to come up with a point, if not a manifesto. I refuse to give up the microphone. American poetry push harder till I know what I'm doing. American poetry all the plum positions are taken. I haven't read Poets and Writers for months, everyday somebody wins a prize for murdering verse. American poetry I feel sentimental about the Fugitive poets. American poetry I used to be a novelist when I was a kid I'm not sorry. I blow smoke up the instructor's ass every chance I get. I sit in my study for days on end and stare at the collected poems on the bookshelves. When I give a reading I get drunk and never get paid. My mind is made up to start trouble. You should have seen me reading Ginsberg. My adviser thinks I'm perfectly uptight. I won't say homogenous. I have a vibrating cosmos and a cosmic vibrator. American poetry I still haven't told you what you didn't do for Professor Makeastir after he came over from alternative presses.

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seats on the gravy train. I'm shy and socially awkward anyway. American poetry I'm writing my own ticket to a meal.

Daniel Bouchard bouchard@mit.edu

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Steve Lacy

4 June 2004

Steve Lacy, master of the soprano saxophone, had died that morning, and Pierre Joris brought the news. He answers as a musician who once shook the man's hand.

Dear Pierre

My condolences to you. I wanted to once again thank you for introducing us at your party in Albany back circa 94. I'm always intimidated around older celebrities, but he was very down to earth, as was Irene---a pleasure to listen to (oh yeah and all that music he did too....!)...

Chris

A great sadness: Steve Lacy passed away earlier today. He was one of the greatest soprano sax masters of all times, a superb song writer (over 250 songs in the last twenty years) -- working in close collaboration with his wife, the singer Irene Aebi --, and a major reader & connoisseur of poetry (the source for his lyrics). He was also a wonderful friend to those who knew him, and one of the finest & gentlest human beings it has been my pleasure to know. He will be greatly missed.

Pierre

Keep the tempo -- Steve Lacy

Pierre Joris 6 Madison Place Albany NY 12202 h: [REDACTED] c: [REDACTED] o: 518
442 40 85 email: joris@albany.edu <http://www.albany.edu/~joris/>

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SAN DIEGO!

29 June 2004

Thanks to everybody who came to the Continuous Peasant Shows there---
Was great to see people actually dancing
(well, except for that asshole who
knocked my crutch out from under me...)

&

$$U_h$$

You rock!

(way better than Los An HELL LACE)....

[↑ Index](#)**Cheryl Dunye's One Degree from Poetry World**

7 July 2004

David Kirschenbaum's parlour game of poetry's near-brushes with celebrity turns up an actual one from his own past.

Don't know if anybody else knows the young filmmaker, Cheryl Dunye ("Watermelon Woman" and that recent HBO special on women's prisons), but was my roommate in 1989.

C

Don't know if anyone else saw the recent gossip item that Ben Affleck won the California State Poker Championship to qualify for the World Poker Tour Championship next April in Las Vegas. His coach was professional poker player Annie Duke, maiden name Lederer, sister of Katy Lederer, editor of Explosive Magazine/Spectacular Books.

[↑ Index](#)**Gil Scott-Heron (another view)**

22 July 2004

Aldon Nielsen remembers being taught by Gil Scott-Heron at Federal City College, and the thread has gathered around the man's long decline; Chris steers it back to the records.

In the thread, ALDON L NIELSEN had written · 22 July 2004 —

| Gil Scott-Heron was my creative writing teacher when I was an undergraduate.

Thanks for all the words on Gil Scott-Heron....

Lately been thinking alot about how great the 1980 album is, even with the "overproduction"

Shah Mot, and "Sometime Early This Morning Or Was That Sometime Late Last Night" among my favorites....

C

Gil Scott-Heron was my creative writing teacher when I was an undergraduate.

I had always tried to avoid creative writing classes, but they were required

of

all English majors at Federal City College in the 70s -- so, I got the list of available teachers and nearly jumped out of my seat when I saw Gil Scott-Heron's name there -- You have to remember this was at the time when, in addition to the radio success of "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," Gil had three LPs out, a book of poems, and two novels -- and this guy was only about a year older than I was at the time --

(I think Louise Gluck too would agree with bell hooks about Rilke for whatever that's worth)

and no kinda love is better than others..." Lou Reed...

Perhaps this argument is generally a difference in how the two of you view love in its ideal expression ; perhaps this is a gendered thing. Her comment strikes me right off as not a serious comment about poetry, but another arrow in the notorious "Battle of the Sexes."

When discussing Love and Poetry recently with a friend, she made the remark, "Men aren't capable of writing about love as it actually exists, especially in poetry."

This seems to me to be, offhandedly, ridiculously sexist. Men have been writing poetry for thousands of years. . . and more of the most famous love poems are by men. In any case, of the millions/billions of love poems written by men, to evaluate them all as not-accurate, and men as "Not Capable" seems outright ridiculous right away.

In fact she started out "Men aren't capable of writing about love as it actually exists...", not even singling out poets. I would guess that almost anyone who read a great deal would be able to refute this, but continuing on...

> I believe I DID roll my eyes, and went on to defend Love for any gender.

I would vomit on the spot.

It made me crazy to think Love wouldn't have a voice "as it actually exists" unless interpreted through gender-specific lips.

I think you've hit the nail on the head -- her love "as it actually exists" is a gender specific idea, and therefore men don't seem to be able to write about it. Perhaps she should consider that love "as it actually exists" isn't necessarily the same experience for everyone.

"Rilke was a liar, for instance," she said.

This seems like another strange phrasing -- that something that is "fantastical" or non-concrete, in the context of poetry, should be lying.

Can poetry lie? Does poetry lie?

This is the direction of the argument? Yes, and to pour concrete around it, Bell Hooks was quoted, slandering Rilke's ability to get Love "as it actually exists."

I think she, like e.e. cummings, does not like her name to be capitalized. ("bell hooks")

When I challenged that NOT EVEN Bell Hooks would make such a ridiculous statement about Rilke, I was presented proof. Here's a quote from her book "all about love," published a couple of years ago:

"Men often write about love through fantasy, through what they imagine is possible rather than what they concretely know. We know now that Rilke did not write as he lived. That so many words of love offered us by great men fail us when we come face to face with reality."

Is this argument real? Is it really an argument might be a better question. Who CARES how Rilke may or may not have lived his life. And by the way, any

Well, I suppose what they're saying is that Rilke's poetry is not an expression of real feeling. And if one is looking for a poetry of "honesty", then they might CARE. In any case, I don't think that even if Rilke did not write how he lived, that makes him a liar -- no, that makes him a writer. If you lie in your personal life or your letters, that it is far different from telling a different story, a different narrative, in your work than is your life.

evidence either way would only be smearing highlights. A poet is not the summation of highlights of his or her life anymore than Bell Hooks is!

What? Rilke didn't REALLY know about REAL love because he wasn't gushing the goblet 24/7?

I don't think that they're saying Rilke didn't know love, but that those poems were not an expression of that love but of an ideal.

We are all of us constantly exchanging, transferring and recreating an abundance of different emotional responses to the world all day long. It's impossible, even archaic to box an individual into One emotional category. The best we have to go on is the most examples of a particular emotion expressed. But none of this defines an entire life.

So what you're basically saying is what -- love is not a separable "emotion"? It's difficult to figure out if Rilke loved someone?

I don't think if Rilke ever loved anyone is really the idea in question here -- the idea in question is whether Rilke's work was a realistic (versus fantastical) depiction of love, which obviously your female friend and bell hooks agree it is not. Are you saying that it is realistic?

Not only that, it's simply too easy to put poets on the chopping block because they didn't always live as some THINK they SHOULD be. Look at Pound for instance, his entire life written off by some, as though he came out of the womb screaming Heil Hitler! Instead of questioning how he lost his way for a time. And what about all those poems coming out of him when he was loving/dating/SEEING H.D., etc...?

Facts are facts though, Pound was a fascist... and I would judge him quite a bit for it. After a good deal of musing on this subject, I personally think the life of the poet is generally pretty irrelevant to the worth of the art.

IN any case, I think your friend's supposition (not the "men aren't capable") but rather the suggested "men/Rilke (tend to) write about love in a fantastical /idealized way" has no real relation to any biographical look at Rilke.

The injuries of this world constantly amaze, mostly because they are where Love can be traced back to its absence.

I have no idea what you are saying -- that most of the world's evils come from an absence of love? you are all over the page.

But NOT all the time, there's too much in all of us to snap judge, and Bell Hooks of all humans must be aware of these things.

Dear Bell Hooks, Rilke's words do not fail us. But your judgements fail Rilke, and poetry, and us.

I think she was saying that the words fail women as a depiction of real love. I don't know what poem(s) she's referencing to specifically, so I can't say.

I do NOT doubt Rilke saw how Love actually exists.

But if this is not displayed in his poetry (which you seem to agree to) -- how Love actually exists -- then how do you know?

That he had concrete experience to move his poems. Without a doubt Pound also knew it. No, not all the time, just like any of us. But man, I'd take Pound or Rilke as my Love Daddy any day! And yes, I'm basing this on fantasy of how Love could be. But it doesn't mean I have no concrete to stand on.

All things considered, it sounds like you two were having a pretty silly conversation -- she started off making a sexist statement then "proved" it by mentioning "even" Rilke was a "liar". She backs this up with one woman's quote saying that Rilke "fails us" as if this is proof for the entire male sex. Every time she reads a book, does she let it overtake her brain???

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Derkson's law (and corollary #1)

27 July 2004

Kevin Davies offers 'Derksen's Law' from 1980s Vancouver; he answers with a bitterer corollary of his own coinage, dated to his New York years.

Stroffolino's law *circa 1998 NYC): The more work you do outside the the poetry community, in an attempt to broaden it, the more iced by poets.

Poet scene jealous god. I used to think it'd just be folks older than us but oh well....

Derksen's Law (circa 1985, Vancouver): The more work you do in the poetry community, the more shit you have to take.

I used to think that might be particular to a place and time. Perhaps not.

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hopefully this will not offend

3 October 2004

An open letter in the guise of a poem, addressed to a friend born to literary fame, worrying the seam between an inherited name and a living wage.

Kind of Embarrassing (So It Can't be All Bad)

This would probably have to be shortened & tightened to be called a poem (And Expanded, and Loosened, To Be Called An Essay)

I've always felt a particular kinship with you aesthetically in terms of the personality and values you put forth in your writing. You were just like one of the

guys with Greg and Brett and others and me. You put me up for a few nights when my apartment had no heat.

Sure, we knew of your parentage, off in the distance for us, and knew that somewhere outside our circle that would òmatterÓ to others as privilege or tragedy, blessing or curse, but we didn't want to make a big deal out of it, or even bring it up unless you did, and sometimes you did, or sometimes we'd bring up our parents and compare differences in our upbringing to better understand each other, we're were òatÓ now, as well as in aspirations and, yes, you, like us, had aspirations. No sense of resting on laurels, whether earned or inherited, could corrupt a non-pejorative ambition not simply for the self, nor even limited to the nest that babysat you back in the days.

If the math of dread comparisons ever entered into it, the blessing and the curse could easily equal out. So we'd move on. We may wonder at differences, or at least I may, when I consider my feeling marginalized from a community that is itself marginalized. I may content myself that two negatives make a positive, or realize that I can be a friend with someone who is friends with others who are no friends of mine, and hope that he or she will not hold that against me.

There is no crime on either side, and nothing to forgive if there is a connection between two people, however distant fate has made them. There's a loneliness of isolations and a loneliness of being busy, of being perceived as at or near the center of a bustling activity that is taken as òmore importantÓ but which also just happens to be the no-heat apartment into which you were born (and well documented at that!)

What's strange, and perhaps even unimaginable, to many was natural, and perhaps even normal, to you. Perhaps you've felt (and justly so) you never had the privilege of getting to rebel against a factory father, or speak for a silent victim mother. Perhaps you've felt that some have treated you disdainfully as if you were President fucking Bush and perhaps you were more acutely aware from an earlier age of the discrepancy between worldly poet òsuccessÓ and a living wage.

Perhaps some others' superficial sense of you goes against their rigid notion of poets As those for whom inspiration comes either anarchically, òfrom nature,Ó Or those who reject such notions of òinspirationÓ and learn it òfrom school.Ó Both of these may look with suspicion (or perhaps envy) on one who was òhome-schooledÓ by at least three poet parents especially if one's younger sibling is also a poet.

It's like they're trying to force you into a position where you not only have to defend your own existence, but also the fact that your poetry might have things in

common with the poetry your parents have written, as if the only reason you like reading their work is because they're your parents! Either these folks have never appreciated the writings of your parents (and I know some who like your work but not your parents's, or your mom's but not your dad's, etc), or they cannot see how your work is as much YOU as anybody else's is his or hers (and in quite a few cases your work is more yours than others's is their own) But why should you have to defend the "family" or others defend the "academy" or "the street" or "woods"? Personally, I've found the words "family" and "poetry" to occupy almost entirely opposed conceptual universes—but just because I personally have had to make a choice between the two doesn't mean anybody else should have to. It may very well have nothing to do with the poetry. And what of the word "community"? Perhaps that word rings truer for you than it does for many others who invoke it. Often the invocations of "community" seem cold, but if one may accept that a filial love may somehow exist beyond, or prior to, the struggle for symbolic capital blah blah blahs which tend to infect so many attempts at utopian communities, and that that bond may be praised and primal, why would one reject the opportunity to find one who may appeal to such a value rather than say the mere tit-for-tat "conditional love" that so often is found at, or near, the center of most communities, whether "poetic" or not? And isn't it possible that such values can be contagious? So much shit to shake off the shoes, huh?

I go to Wednesday reading at The poetry Project whenever I can, sometimes even without knowing who is reading. I heard many poets there whom I had never heard or known before. I became a follower of the work of several of them.

In my view, The Project is the place which comes closest to being a poetic community in NYC, regardless of what kind of a poet one is and which is the Director. One habit I miss is that we used to go to a bar (The Ukrainian or

The

Telephone or some place else) after readings. That custom has mostly ebbed away.

Is it because poets have to work in more regular jobs today?

I hope, in some way, Anselm can revive the old custom of post reading boozing and informal talking about poetry. He is doing a great job and I feel he may bring back that atmosphere which makes the social conviviality possible again.

Murat

In a message dated 10/1/04 3:40:27 AM, CAConrad9@AOL.COM writes:

hi David Kirschenbaum, i'm glad you decided to no longer steer clear of expressing yourself.

the reading i had mentioned about the Warren Wilson readers was actually one of my first Project readings.Â and that soured my romantic young vision of the place, and its history.

but the truth is i did go to other Project readings after, Regie Cabico included, and Regie of course was a lot of fun.Â few poets can make poetry as fun.Â and there were other readings, some i liked, some i didn't, whatever.Â

but the experience i was failing (it seems) to get across was how i personally Feel at the readings since Anselm's taken over. there's a (i'm going to say it) spiritual connectedness i hadn't ever felt there before.Â meaning the whole vibe with the tremendous introductions, multiplying with the room filled with hungry ears, and the excellent selection of poets.Â poets we may or may not have seen prior to the new Project scene, but nonetheless, it still would have been different.

one of the things i like very much is the great care that seems to be taken with pairing the readers.Â i don't think i'll EVER forget that night of George Stanley and Peter Culley.Â it wasn't just chemistry, it was downright alchemy!Â it was one of those nights where two different voices, different in many ways, struck the highest possible chords together in everyone in that room.Â i remember all of us looking at one another with genuine awe and Love for the poetry we had just taken in.

anyway, my whole point is, the Project as it is now ROCKS! and i wish i had the fucking bucks to go up more often.

CAConrad <http://phillysound.blogspot.com>

David Kirschenbaum wrote:

hi CA and all,

iâ have been trying to steer clear of this thread, but I noticed in CAâ

post

the following passage about going to a poproj reading in the past:

â it was so sad that it shattered my hopes of what the Project was about.

â until recently, that is.Â since Anselm Berrigan has taken over the Poetry Project has literally COME ALIVE, in every sense! the best sense being the new blood injected.â

now unless iâ wrong here, and if i am, apologies CA, the reading that â shattered your hopes of what the Project was aboutâ probably took place while ed friedman was in charge of the poetry project. first off, when you disparage any institution based upon one event it just isn't an accurate conclusion.

but to make it like anselm took a broken down arts organization and reinvented it just isnâ the case. just off the top of my head, under ed the poproj over the past decade saw curators like rachel levitsky, wanda phipps, tracie morris, mitch highfill, regie cabico, and joanna fuhrman, to name just a few. hell, anselm was a curator under ed, too. i think these are all people whoâ feel as welcome curating under the old project as under the new, donâ you?

as ever, david

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a little offensive

3 October 2004

The same day's quarrel, now overt: Jonathan Penton has told Craig Conrad that real anger means troubles bigger than one's own. He refuses the either/or.

I don't think he was denying the bigger problems of mutilations in Iraq

but isn't it possible that the "little" or "petty" problems that a lower-class poet in America faces are one with these global (or "bigger") problems?

That it's not an either/or question.... that the rhetoric of "privilege" is often invoked by those who have a stake in crushing any internationalist solidarity of those who are, in differing ways, oppressed....

(oh gosh stop me before i sound like a bumpersticker for "think globally act locally" or "the personal is the political")....

C

Jesus, Craig, I understand your need to flail against straw men, but could you leave me out of it?

I would never accuse you of being angry. You are petulant. Anger is what happens when you recognize there are problems in the world bigger than your own.

-- Jonathan Penton <http://www.unlikelystories.org>

----- Original Message -----

Jonathan, i'm glad you decided to finally stop bugging me on the backchannel and come out onto the List.

you chose to backchannel me --as a favor you said-- (how sweet of you) to inform me that if i didn't yell at people they'd be more likely to give me what i needed to publish, etc.

it's been made perfectly clear that the war in Iraq was about --and always was about-- making money. you can of course have it both ways, to be upset about the destruction of lives in Iraq for money, and instruct me at the same time in how to be the polite monkey and beg for crumbs. there is of course no contradiction in this. right?

you want it both ways, and you can have it of course, just don't point the finger at me and tell me i'm the angry one, because you seem pretty angry yourself. which is good, it's good to be angry. in fact, you'd have to be pretty damned medicated to not be angry about the way things are right now.

CAConrad

When American citizens start talking about how \$8 an hour is below the "poverty line," it's a sign that all common ground with the rest of the world has been lost.

People complain about how Bush will cut funding to the arts. How many Iraqi civilians, murdered by Bush I, starved to death by Clinton, and then born brainless as a result of Bush II's DU shells were poets?

-- Jonathan Penton

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Bush is the Ike Turner; Poetry is the U2...

9 October 2004

He splices the month's two running analogies — Bush as Ike Turner, the magazine POETRY as U2 — into one, in the parlour-game spirit he credits to Ben Friedlander.

I thought I'd combine these (reminds me those parlor games ben friedlander used to play circa 1993 where he'd link poets with country musicians, etc...)

1. Ah Gwyn, "you're just a fool, you know you're in love"!
2. And Aaron T. well at least U2 didn't name itself "MUSIC" or "ROCK MUSIC" or even, perhaps, "THE BAND"---maybe the BARRY MANILOW of poetry would come closer, "I am music and I write the songs" (which of course BM didn't write....)

Chris

P.S. "WANNA BUY SOME WOOD"??????

P.P.S---Would your hero ENO then be Rumsfeld (oops, wrong analogy--- I mean that woman who gave the money to POETRY?)

I was approaching it on the level of "formerly innovative things which now suck." Though later, in the shower, I was thinking I should have said "the REM of poetry" as they were always much more interesting to me than U2 until they too began to suck.

I would also suggest, though tentatively, that many - including the band itself - may consider U2 an institution of sorts.

Aaron

"Make a sudden, destructive unpredictable action; incorporate." (Brian Eno)

for all his faults, ike turner is a brilliant musician. please don't compare bush to him.>>

Fair enough.

If I were the devil I might counter that 'for all his faults,' Bush has been a fine 'family man,' husband, and father.

While not exactly pro-spousal abuse myself, I might counter that Ike confined himself to slapping the shit out of Tina, not an entire country and over 1,000 troops from the US alone. Granted, the excuses were probably just as lame in both cases.

Also, Ike's music presumably did nothing to erode civil liberties in the US, but then we never know.

Gwyn McVay

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Is there an audience for Audio Poetry?

12 October 2004

A small-press recordist asks why studio poetry CDs find no buyers; the question lands on a man with a band album of his own to move.

In the thread, furniture_press had written · 12 October 2004 —

| What is he doing wrong? Is he doing something wrong? Is there an audience

Hi---

I've been trying to figure this out for years. Part of it is I think a distrust of "performance" among the "sophisticated" set these days (to which I can attest; often I am called a good performer of my work, and that is quite often a "left-handed" compliment, as if you're not being "serious" enough). But that can't be the only reason--- for as you say there was a "massive turnout" at the event but no one bought the CD. This also rings true in my experience, both as a poet and musician. Perhaps it's economic; people spend the money to see the show and just don't have much left to listen to a CD in the privacy of their room (does it lose something in the 'translation'?). I guess I thought when I put the CD of my band playing rock songs together, it would do better than tapes of my poetry readings. But so far it hasn't. So, here, I think the issue is distribution, etc. I mean, we gotta reach out to a different (non-poetry) audience, but that probably takes more money for publicity than your friend, or I, or whoever, had.... I keep thinking that the days in which a young Richard Hell, Patti Smith, Jim Carroll, Leonard Cohen, etc. etc., could find ways to do this are not just iced in history. I think Edwin Torres' album on KillRockStars did okay (but KillRockStars had the publicity and distribution) at least relatively speaking, but maybe you should ask him about that.

I'd definitely like to join forces with you to help change this state of affairs.... maybe we could brainstorm or something

Chris

This letter concerns audio poetry, i.e., aural, i.e...

My buddy Justin Sirois of Narrow House Recordings has put out a great deal of work on CD:

studio quality readings by:

Anselm Berrigan, Laura Elrick, Heather Fuller, Rodrigo Toscano, Rod Smith, Deborah Richards, Carol Mirakove, Kristen Prevallet etc. etc. but he's not getting any feedback

from his audience. The one year anniversary of Narrow House took place at the Bowery Poetry club with a massive turnout; but no one bought recordings! He's not even, after one year, getting any reception from anybody.

What is he doing wrong? Is he doing something wrong? Is there an audience for this media?

Please, write me.

check out <http://www.angelfire.com/poetry/thepixelplus/nhindex.html>

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poetry as precognition

21 October 2004

Mary Jo Malo invokes Graves's White Goddess; he answers, as he will all autumn, by pressing Laura (Riding) Jackson's prior claim on the ideas Graves took from her.

In the thread, Mary Jo Malo had written · 20 October 2004 —

Poetry was originally both prophetic and eerie and has been elucidated as such by Robert Graves

Mary---

thanks for this. Do you know Laura (Riding) Jackson's (no less controversial tome) THE WORD "WOMAN"---whose insights Graves largely based (although somewhat "watered down") his book on. If you don't know it, you might like it.

Chris

Poetry was originally both prophetic and eerie and has been elucidated as such by Robert Graves in his controversial tome, The White Goddess. The

ancient

Hebrew prophets and psalmists were poets in this tradition, and even Thomas Paine tried to explain this to a fledgling but Puritan America. Epic warrior

and

religious poetry in many cultures was often prophetic, and later converted to the romance cycle or perverted into secular law. I'm particularly prejudiced to Grave's work regarding the ancient oracle traditions, but I'm completely sympathetic with his recognition of the poet's (druid or whatever)

indebtedness

to a woman's dreams and intuition in their unconscious environment. In the finest Celtic tradition of the 'hywl', poetry is often a trance, a spontaneous pouring forth, an

automatic writing if you will. Poets teach themselves and by extension anyone else who wants to know. Yes, we can craft and perfect, but

the

content is 'inspired' and most often reflects the poetic theme: life, death and what remains of the beloved. Poets make connections, and that they can transcend time shouldn't surprise us.

Mary Jo Malo

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Mary...

23 October 2004

The Riding thread continues; he sets her early scepticism against Pound's faith in modernising language, and eyes a Graves partisan's account with suspicion.

Thanks for writing about Riding.... I lost your post, but a couple of things I wanted to respond too

One of the things that distinguishes Riding from Pound is that although she might have seemed to briefly "toy" with the idea of the necessity to "modernize language," she got (gets) through that pretty quick-- even in the 20s, her 20s....

Also, that book written by the graves' relative is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of writing. Doesn't it seem like a bit of a "slam job" (written in part to defend graves against her) to you?

C

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time for a new start (inchoate, but a start)

3 November 2004

Written the day after the 2004 election, out of a Day of the Dead procession his mending leg could just manage. Thomas Frank's Kansas is on his mind, and behind it a larger reckoning.

I took time off from election work to go to the day of the dead parade last night.

If you don't know about the day of the dead parade, it's a slow parade that begins at 24th and Bryant and winds its way up 25th to officially end around 24th and Mission. It's short in terms of distance, but it stops a lot, which made it do-able for the current state of my leg. I prefer it to Halloween, because it alternates between a somber and a festive tone. Both moods, in fact, may be felt at the same time. Sure, there is a kind of ³party atmosphere² with loud drums, costumes, incenses, and people walking around on stilts, but the candles that people hold tends to make more room for the darkness and the silence than many of the holidays in the ³dark half² of the year (such as the Christmas blitz), and, yes,

There is a haunting feeling, a purge, and if I had both my legs, there may have even been a physical catharsis. In any event, not the silly commercial Halloween goblin ³boo² but the tables set for the dead in the park. Even the most ³secular² or least ³superstitious² may come to feel in a slow dreamlike walk that the line between the living and the dead is more permeable than the everyday hustle and bustle of western civilized society.

Now the fact that it was election day may have just added to that feeling, and soon I found myself over at The Dark Room for the Pirate Cat Radio Election Coverage, which brought one back to a ³reality² that must be contended with, a reality I think many of us have got to make sense of, and try to figure out how to do something about.

For the last few months, I've been thinking more than usual about the kind of questions raised in ³What's The Matter With Kansas? HOW CONSERVATIVES WON THE HEART OF AMERICA² by Thomas Frank, and with the election results in, there's a feeling of helplessness, coupled with an anger, but also an attempt at humility.

For instance, a side to me wants to scream, ³THE DEMOCRATS ARE REALLY ³SCREWED¹² So Much For Checks And Balances. No President, No House, No Senate, and No Supreme Court Majority. But to even say the word ³SCREWED² would probably be taken as a flippant side of some literally MARGINALIZED BORDER (if not exactly COASTAL) ³ELITE² that is out of touch with the large majority of the geographical middle of the United States (as all the blue states, I'm pretty sure, are either on the margins of America, or contiguous with states that are).

If you don't want to be the flippant, cultural elite snob, it's time to really try to figure out what's going on with people in the middle of the country who think Bush is a good president, and not just see them as either deluded or deluding.

So I watch Peter Jennings interviewing the head of the Republican National Committee After if had become pretty obvious that Bush had won, and I try to imagine how most people in the ³red states² might see Jennings as part of that ³liberal media² of the ³cultural elite,² and sure enough, with those eyes and ears, he can be seen as disrespectfully grilling the Republican. ³Well, in the exit polls in the blue states, most people claim the war in Iraq was their main consideration in voting for the President, while in the red states, most people claimed ^{FLU}moral issues¹ were more important.²

Jennings¹ snide attitude towards these ^{FLU}moral issues¹ was no more ^{FLU}fair and balanced¹ than Fox's attitudes toward Kerry. Of course, I'm sympathetic with Jennings. For surely, The war in Iraq IS a moral issue at least as much as others.

But if this exit poll does hold any salt, it is interesting that neither side considered economic issues to be of as much importance as the moral issues involved, and there¹s at least a strong POSSIBILITY that many in the ³red states² actually voted for Bush in part because they¹re sick of these right and left coast city slickers they see on TV telling them (in varying degrees of directness) they¹re stupid and/or evil for voting for Bush.

So, is this the same kind of culture wars going on that went on in ³Inherit The Wind² (the Scopes Monkey Trial)? Does anybody else who lives on the coast have this horrible dream in which the man has jumped out of that old painting, ³American Gothic,² and is chasing people around with his pitchfork? Has any chance of an alliance between ³city² and ³country² become impossible in the current divisiveness?

If one is not a Bush supporter, this election result is even more depressing than the 2000 one for many reasons. To take the first three that come off the top of my head: 1) The electoral college can't be blamed as much. 2) Election fraud can't be blamed as much. 3) Nader can't be blamed as much. We¹re almost forced to take the medicine that the will of the people went with George Bush, a Republican majority in both houses of congress, etc.

Sure, there are ways to spin it otherwise. In the first place, the ELECTORAL MAP with its red states and blue states does create the false illusion that most of America's heartland was SOLIDLY FOR BUSH; that a 4000 mile drive from Virginia, south to Florida, West to Texas, North to North Dakota, West to Idaho, for instance, would be a drive through BUSH COUNTRY. That's just the semiotics of it. In many of those states, at least 40% of the votes went for Kerry, so obviously it's not a clear cut division, and obviously many in those states are upset by the outcome too (some even argue that if many people who are natives of those states wouldn't have up and left to move to the coastal states, the electoral picture would've been quite different). But what solace can be taken in that? It would be even more hopeless a gesture of ³sour grapes² to argue now that WE NEED TO DO AWAY WITH THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM for instance--- And thoughts of CIVIL WAR, or SUCCEEDING FROM THE UNION, are even less likely to become a reality, in part because the geography breakup of America would be even more striking than what would have happened in Canada a few years back had the Quebecois gotten 1% more of the vote. Sure, we could also continue to talk about election fraud, not just about people not being allowed to vote, but more structurally about how only the very rich can run for president or even congress in most cases.

But can the anti-Bush coalition truly take any positives from this election? Isn't it part of a larger trend in which the mainstream of America is moving further and

further away from the great populist spirit of say FDR? Hell, even after WATERGATE, a conservative democrat, could barely squeak his way into the white house (8, 000 votes in Ohio would've decided it), and Clinton probably wouldn't have won without Ross Perot. At least the Democrats had at least one of the houses of congress back in those days. I think many took solace in 2000 that Gore really had won (and he certainly won the popular vote), even with all his mistakes, and given the fact that Kerry did better in the debates in 2004 than Gore did in 2000, many may have felt this election would be at least as close (of course the media also may have made it seem closer---in this I actually AGREE WITH RUSH LIMBAUGH^{FLD} in order to get more people to watch a long drawn out ELECTION COVERAGE NIGHT: THE SEQUEL. In fact, their slowness in calling states last night seemed a crass move to sell more advertising!)

It was ³Close² enough that many now say they are ABSOLUTELY DISENFRANCHISED, but what to do about it? Riot in the streets? Hope for an apocalypse of some sort, another Al Qaeda attack, or wait for the Iraqi casualties to roll in? Wait for the economy to get worse and worse in the red states, like another ³Dust bowl² that will suddenly make people realize that economic issues matter as much, and maybe more, than legislating morality? (Why DO people in Kansas care if people are gay, or pro-choice, etc., on the coasts, or in the bigger cities?) NONE OF THESE OPTIONS SEEMS TO BE THE RIGHT WAY TO DEAL WITH THIS DEFEAT

Can we be gracious in defeat? And how to do that without ³rolling over?² Maybe just maybe it's really time for a general stock taking of traditional Democratic values, on a large scale. Some could say it's just about the candidate^{FLD} let's find someone better next time--- Maybe it's time the Democrats look for a woman presidential candidate. It would HAVE TO BE another southerner, someone popular in the south, west, or Midwest swing state. I don't want to just get into the ³I TOLD YOU SO² to all those democrats who voted for Kerry in the primaries because he was more ³electable.² A Mass. Senator! A little more charisma, etc^{MTS}.

But maybe the question of values needs to be addressed more thoroughly on a larger scale. One ³RED HERRING² for the democrats has generally been the support of gun-control, and the way that seems inconsistent with their pro-choice stance on other issues.

But how to deal with the social conservatives in the heartland? Maybe the condescending attitude towards them from many ³in the blue² IS a problem. Maybe there should be more sit-coms, or reality TV shows, based in ³UNGLAMOUROUS² places like NEBRASKA. Maybe this election indeed was A kind of revenge by these people for having to watch and listen to so much programming that is biased towards a city life, city values, etc--- I.E.---³THEY² (of

the red) know more about ³US² (of the BLUE) than we know of them! And seriously I do believe there can be a common ground between the ³red² and the ³blue,² but it's not going to be found through electoral politics, and it's currently not found very much in the national entertainment/infotainment industry either (not even for the most part in the poetry world; though maybe in FOOTBALL, with its salary cap that gives the people in many red states a fighting chance against the money powers),

More later ..

Chris

The Republicans of course would rather stop the contest now before all the votes are even counted.

What they want to do now is start the manipulation machine rolling-- so Republicans simply declare victory and throw money at the problem.

This is not over. How about you finish counting the votes Ohio?!

If Kerry concedes all is lost. e-mail friends and family in Ohio if need be and declare Kerry the winner of this election!

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passive moralists

5 November 2004

Post-election strategy talk; Pamela Lu had mapped the two-party trap and wondered whether the Right might fracture. He takes up her thread on the coalition's seam.

In the thread, Pamela Lu had written · 4 November 2004 —

| for fear of fragmenting the Left, I wish some of the Repub party base would split off

Pamela---

Thank you for this in general--especially your thoughts on the possibility of the republicans fragmenting at the seam between economic and moral. Also, thanks for your Hollywood scenario about the rewrite of Will & Grace. I wish I had thought of that, and it definitely begins to fit the bill of the kind of thing I was gesturing towards.

Chris

Aaron, et al,

I agree. Of course politics cannot be reduced down to linguistic/philosophical analyses. We're dealing with real, i.e. material, issues here, real lives, real jobs, real freedoms are at stake here. That's why the outlook of another 4 years, what with the possibility of up to 4 Supreme Court appointments coming up for grabs, makes me very very afraid.

I too feel bitter about this entrenched corporatized two-party system, where only millionaires can afford to run for office, where third-party candidates are barred from

the nationally televised debates. That needs to change. I feel some rancor too about Nadar not sticking with the Green party this time around, I mean, if we want to promote a multi-party system we at least need to start developing loyalty to our third parties, don't we? In 2000 the Greens looked like they were going to be a really viable organized party beyond the Dems and the Repubs, especially on the national scale with Nadar's high profile. Now it looks like a lot of people were just attracted to Nadar as an individual candidate, and not so much to the Green party platform.

I still have high hopes that the Greens will continue to gain political power, starting from the grassroots level on up. We need more Green (and other minority party) members on school boards, city councils, boards of supervisors, as mayors, state legislators, governors, and then...?

At the same time, for fear of fragmenting the Left, I wish some of the Repub party base would split off and form a conservative third party that fragments the Right. Besides the anti-govt. conservative libertarians, we could have the ultra-Christian theocrats jumping ship and draining the vote. Well, at least I can fantasize about this. That would only be a likely scenario if John McCain somehow started calling all the shots in the Repub party...

*Back to the language thing. If you read Lakoff carefully, his is *not* a facile ivory tower argument. He outlines how the neocon movement has poured millions of dollars during the 40 odd years since Goldwater into conservative think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, and into conservative network funds that seek to attract and retain bright young conservatives and help them into key positions of power in the academy and the media industry. Sound like a conspiracy? Well, it was just smart organizing. As a result, the conservatives managed to build a coalition out of what was once a splintered Repub party base.*

Lakoff's point is that the conservatives worded their platform points into a successful rhetoric that strongly won over the Christian evangelical base, which as group may not actually be wealthy and may in fact be voting against their own economic self-interest by supporting tax breaks for the rich. The logical argument here takes a back seat to the emotional appeal to "moral values" or whatever you want to call it, but this is not to say the people are just empty droids ready to absorb whatever their leaders tell them. They absorb these ideas, these rhetorical calls on behalf of "morality", because these ideas actually do resonate with some emotional core of familiarity and personal conviction. Lakoff's theory is that this conviction is not only a religious one, but a deep-seated values-based one, which speaks to fundamental differences between how conservatives and liberals view the world, view human nature, and the roles/responsibilities of humans in the world.

Lakoff's appeal to liberals is that they take this moral values issue, and the emotions it registers in voters, seriously, because it could be the key to what makes swing voters swing in the first place. In a lot of ways I subscribe to his argument because I subscribe to the idea that election campaigns are more and more about turning over this percentage of swing voters, because that's the pivotal factor. So campaigns have to be fought on several fronts at once: 1) Mobilize the loyal party base, get them interested in volunteering, spreading the word; 2) Win the national debate on issues, outlining the many reasons why the Dem platform is better for people, social justice, the environment, and the nation in general; AND 3) Turn over enough swing voters by

*appealing to their sense of deep-seated values, *not* their conservative-based values but their *liberal-based* values, because the idea is that the swing voter (what I guess I'm calling the "passive" voter) has *both* sets of values, liberal and conservative, in their personal makeup. This third front is where campaign language becomes very very important.*

Anyhow, this is a topic to think about for the long term, for the long-term future of the liberal coalition and the country in general. In a way I just want to put in plug in there for Lakoff because I feel he's really done his homework and is really on to something in my opinion.

A assorted handful of cents:

On the reds and the blues-- I just want to affirm Chris Stroffolino's post about the alienation between the red and blue states, and about how us blue types can't just take the I'm-above-it-all elite city slicker stance forever against the red yokels and expect things to change. We have to take the other side seriously, learn how the enemy thinks the way it does and why. In response to the 11 anti-gay initiatives that passed across the states, I predict that gay producer moguls in Hollywood will start coming out with sentimental Hallmark-style melodramas about the travails of mainstream gay couples and their children -- instead of Will & Grace bouncing around the gay ghetto, we'll have Willie and Mike on some couch somewhere in a midwestern suburb or even small town, shopping at the WalMart back-to-school sale for their adopted, possibly multiracial children, enduring slurs and attacks and nasty remarks from the conservative town baddies but also getting supportive hugs, kind words, and friendly go-get-'em punches on the shoulder from open-minded supermarket checkout clerks and Seventh-Heaven-style progressive social justice pastors. On the next election day, swing voters in red states, especially the female ones, will gaze at the anti-gay initiative set before them on the ballot, think back on cinematic memories of what poor sweet Willie had to endure just to have a family life like everyone else, and tearfully punch through the "No" square on the scorecard, leaving it chadless...

On passive morality and voting-- I guess when I use the term "passive" to describe a voter, this is what I mean: I have essentially been a passive voter myself in the past, when it comes to ballot initiatives and propositions. In California we literally have a dozen or more of these propositions to decide on each election. This time round, I was an "active" actually read my information pamphlet pretty thoroughly beforehand. My partner and I spent a good Saturday reading through all the summaries, the arguments pro and con, the rebuttals to the arguments pro and con, and we talked through the ones we felt iffy on. Where I felt iffy on a proposition, I categorize myself as essentially a "swing voter" on that proposition. So she and I debated over the iffy ones and sometimes I convinced her to my side, or she convinced me to her side. Sometimes we were left on opposite sides and our votes cancelled each other out. Sometimes we both convinced each other to our sides and wound up with diametrically switched positions from where we started. I actually agonized over a couple of them and spent election day morning rereading arguments and articles, and switched my position on two propositions minutes before entering the polling booth. And that was after an "active" approach!

Now what would I have done in a "passive" approach? In the past, I would have blown off the big thick voter info pamphlet with its one or more supplementary bulletins. I

would have clipped out a couple of endorsement pages that **felt socially and ideologically familiar** to me, which in this case would have been the Dem party grid and the endorsement page of my local left-leaning muckraking urban weekly. I would have gone down the column in about 5 minutes matching my votes, where the two endorsement tables differed I would have deferred to the weekly's. Presto. Done. I would have been a swing voter who had been captured by one or another camp **passively**.

On families and counterculture-- Seems to me that even in countercultural communities that are actively not centered around or even actively opposed to the conventional biological notion of "family", the relationship dynamics that get played out are still in fact modelled psychologically after the countercultural individuals' idea or memory of their biological families. And we have the contemporary urban notion of the "family" or community you choose versus the one you're afflicted with, as when gay people of my generation give each other high fives and exclaim "hey, you're family!" We need to expand the term "family" so that it's about emotional support and security and solidarity, not just biology.

On good and evil in the hearts of humanity-- I grew up in a highly intolerant part of California, so when I was younger I believed that many people around me had malevolence and hostility in their hearts and were out to get me. I was right. Some of these people were active in their malevolence, and some were more passive. It was a continuum of intolerance. As I get older I have less of this feeling in general. This isn't so much a function of age but of changing times. When I go back and visit my hometown I find it to be dramatically less intolerant (this is not to say that it's actually **tolerant**!). But things like social attitudes, especially among the young, have really shifted over the years, and the continuum of intolerance has basically lost a lot of its passive members. This is due in part to some large and widespread changes in social opinion nationwide. And I think that's why reactionary movements like the Christian Right have such a jarring impact and appearance -- they stand out, because they are moving against the social tide that's been progressing ever since the civil rights movement.

So I say, get 'em when they're young. Send coalitions of liberal Christians out to the moderate churches and college campuses to get the young Christians mobilized to the progressive side, before the Right tries to sweep them over with manipulative claims of a "populist conservative revolution". Mobilize the young.

Best, Pam

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poetry is futile - prove me wrong

9 November 2004

Mary Jo Malo sets down Pound's late, broken recantation; he presses the distinction between poetry's futility and one poet's.

In the thread, Mary Jo Malo had written · 9 November 2004 —

| That I lost my center fighting the world The dreams clash and are shattered

"That I lost my world fighting the center"

could equally be apt?

Mary--do you think Pound is saying poetry is futile in that or rather that his particular kind of poetry is?

*That I lost my center fighting the world The dreams clash and are shattered
and that I tried to make a paradiso terrestre*

http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/notes.htm

*i'll have none of your -ologies no advice show me what works what has been proven on
the side of the road on the office floor give me the dice i'm loading them my way*

mary jo

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NEA outrage

24 November 2004

The NEA list is out and the thread is aggrieved; Ron Silliman's win complicates the grievance about academic taste. Chris aims a needle at the winner.

In the thread, Austinwja@AOL.COM had written · 23 November 2004 —

I don't know whether or not to be happy for Ron.

I wonder if Ron would be interested in disclosing which particular poems of his won the NEA grants in 02 and 04. Would be interesting to see (and "probably for all the wrong reasons"....) C

In a message dated 11/23/04 8:14:12 PM, jamato2@ILSTU.EDU writes:

<< bill (ron?), ron silliman won an nea two years ago, yes?... i apply for the poetry nea every coupla years... just rec'd my reject this year in fact, and am looking forward [cough] to learning who ended up with the \$20K this time 'round...

very happy for ron, of course... but if you read this past sunday's nytbr---"the poetry issue"---you'll likely be at least as distressed, in general, at how poetry is made to play to said imagined readership... a most interesting exercise in fact is to make a list of the presses that publish the work reviewed therein...

best,

joe >>

I am an academic. Many of the innovative thinkers in most disciplines are academics. The entire poststructuralist movement is governed by academics. L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry is academic. Medical advances are usually instigated

by

academics. And on and on. But these panelists and winners! I don't know where these academics/poets are coming from. It's as if they all live and

work in

caves, unaware that digital television is now available.

Well, maybe I do know where they're coming from. The list of winners for 2003 evinces a very neat spread across the nation. Every area of the country

is

represented equally. How did that happen if submissions are blind? Something else is going on in addition to antique academic tastes gone nuts. Some shoo-be-do is at work here. There must be a few innovative artists among

middle

Americans? Do they all conform to the same worn out rubbish? Imagine a Renaissance with an NEA. Imagine the 19th century! Today's best anthologies, generally records of innovation, would contain the same poem repeated for 1000 pages. Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, who are they? Baudelaire, Rimbaud,

Lautremont

-- forget them. Stein, Cummings -- no way.

I don't know whether or not to be happy for Ron. He's probably the only one on the list of winners who actually deserves the award. But in this crowd of winners, he seems like the mistake, the one that got away, dare I say it -- the token. I'd bet money that if some unknown had submitted Ron's manuscript, word for word, he wouldn't have gotten anywhere near the winners circle, not with this group of panelists. Someone on the panel was able to match work and author, and I suspect that happened with many of the other winners.

Whew! I'd rather have my tax dollar pork barreled to wine tasters, rather than have it swiped for this nonsense.

Best, Bill

WilliamJamesAustin.com kojapress.com amazon.com b&n.com

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The year opens mid-game. The list is trading "oatmeal" poems — Mairead had started it, and the pun on Joyce Carol Oates was irresistible — and Stroffolino throws in a John Prine line and Gil Scott-Heron's nickname for Gerald Ford before forwarding an Oates horse-racing poem. Froth, but the good kind: the sound of a room enjoying itself, which by this year it did less often.

2005

The year the poet becomes, more insistently, a bandleader: Continuous Peasant tours both coasts, an album ships, and Stroffolino succumbs to the blogosphere even as he distrusts the machines that run it. It is also a year thick with mourning — Lamantia, Creeley, Lorenzo Thomas — and, after Katrina, a year in which the list turns into a switchboard of worry and he into one of its more anxious operators.

as suggested by Pam*25 February 2005*

Pam had offered an anatomy of how the list relaxed over the years; here he takes up the invitation and dates the cooling himself, to the theory-fevered seasons of 94-96. One of his rare backward glances at the room he grew up in.

Hi Pam--- Thank you for your analysis. It's very much appreciated. I think the history of the list and the history of the various rapproachments you mention definitely have some parallels, or overlaps, but there's also some other other factors that might be involved in which these two histories may somewhat differ. For, yes, I remember witnessing and participating in very distinct, and, yes, comparatively "unrelaxed" (more theoretically based and sustained) discussions on this list circa 94-96, and have seen a gradual relaxation since that time (with some occasional bursts, but, as you argue, more often than not occasioned by socio-political issues, 9/11, the recent presidential election, etc, than by issues of "poetics" as such). While part of this can be attributed to the gradual dropping out from active participation of many with already articulated positions, many of the lang. poets either setting the terms of the discussion or at least using the forum to continue certain debates with others of their generation or older (when Creeley, Don Byrd, and Perloff were more active). The list was certainly more "closed" then, even if this was just because of the mere fact that word of it hadn't gotten around (rather than a blatant attempt to have a more closed discussion), for it was certainly open to others who certainly did not share many of the core assumptions of the Lang. Po. polemicists. In fact, one of the exciting things about this list in those early years was that it created a forum for myself and some other young writers to begin to articulate, in a somewhat informal way, our poetics and polemics in ways that other more formal forums didn't allow. After awhile many of the "established names" and many of the younger polemicists (say Steve Evans, Mark Wallace, Louis Cabri) interested in a specific debate which either extended, challenged, or reacted to a Lang Po. poetics took their debates elsewhere (the blogosphere, for instance; their dissertations; various "sub-lists"). In addition, certain "flame wars" drove some people away, and the list opened up to many for whom the issue of "poetics" as understood by this list's "founding fathers" (yes, mostly male---more on gender in a second) was often a more marginal concern. In my off-on involvement during these last 7 or 8 years (I've dropped out on a few occasions for a year at a time or so), I'm definitely aware that I became less interested in articulating my poetics on this forum (since, like many others, I discovered that when I attempted to work out a more subtle response to someone's post, it would more likely be ignored than if I just wrote a short, relatively unreflective quip), and would tend to seek out other forums for a more serious discussion, or start backchannel conversations, etc., or "lurk." I'm not

necessarily lamenting this change; obviously I'm still here (while many of my old friends and colleagues are not, except to advertise their new book or workshop)--but I do think this history cannot be exactly explained by the other history (of RAPPROACHMENT) you mention.

The history of that rapprochement also fascinates me, probably more than the specific history of this list--for, to me at least, it seems to have more consequence. My particular take on it differs from both those who still claim the "utopian" vision of Lang Po as somehow separate from "official verse culture" (and yes some still make that argument) on one hand, and those who consider the collapsing of those boundaries (from the 80s "poetry wars"), to be a positive thing (the influence over MFA programs, the championing of the "fragment" by many at IOWA, etc.). Since I've been articulating that elsewhere (in an interview with Bengali writer Aryanil Mukherjee and in Fulcrum Magazine, for instance), I won't get into the intricacies of my particular polemical stance here, but I will say, briefly, that there is a valid perspective from which this "rapprochement" (or even "merger") of some aspects of the lang. po aesthetics with some aspects of what used to be called "mainstream" aesthetics has helped reinstate a "HIGH" VS "LOW" dichotomy (which to some extent was implicit in some of the lang. po polemics, though framed as "LEFT" VS "RIGHT") which has in effect created a new "official verse culture" which in some ways is very closed (not at all that different from that passage by PAUL CARROLL which PERLOFF quotes in the beginning of her book on FRANK O'HARA, and, one could hope, very ripe for something to happen like the opening that happened with that coalition of poets Donald Allen was able to assemble in his anthology emerged). Of course, for something like that to happen, there may need to be other factors, outside of the realm of "poetry" and "poetics...." (and some of these factors may involve the issue, Pam, from which you began this discussion, like the social move toward integration that was happening in the 1950s, which, to many of course, doesn't seem as BAD now---like the PRIVITIZATION OF SCHOOLS issue isn't as BLATANTLY a Segregation issue as BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION, but it really is if you think about it....

Anyway, so that's one theory why there seem to be less POLEMICS in the field of POETICS (beyond the list) these days than there were in the 80s and early 90s. But there are others too, and perhaps GENDER comes into play here. One conversation I've been involved in REPEATEDLY since say 1996 with many well known poets goes something like this: "OKAY, Duncan WAS Pretentious in his Polemics, and Watten, for instance, is to be applauded, for challenging those polemics. But in a way, even if he helped challenge the mystical magical poet ON HIGH notion, he too replicated what's so abhorrent about those polemics, and

WE, by contrast, can now take a middle ground, or avoid the excesses of polemics altogether." Now the fact that many of the people who've said things like this to me happen to be female may be entirely accidental (I certainly don't want to make a gendered essentialist argument here), but if you couple this with the fact that many of the most celebrated writers of "my generation" so far are women, one may come to understand why many of the males have come to think that engaging in polemics is a form of "male chest beating" rather than a useful tool for organizing one's thoughts, etc. It will be interesting to see how this plays out. I myself am rather torn about it--on one level I celebrate the changes that have happened in terms of a more gendered discussion in recent years, and I certainly don't mean to say that you, Pam, share these thoughts about the gendering of polemics I characterized above, but I also wonder if that position I characterized above (whether spoken by a female or a male) has, instead of creating a new openness to various poetic modes has rather merely replaced the role of polemics and criticism with a backroom dealing in which people lack the courage to articulate a poetics of resistance that doesn't simply rehash the old language line (or an old duncan line for that matter) on the grounds that it might be considered a kind of "chest beating" that in the current climate is considered anti-social.

Okay, I left a lot of loose ends here, but I thought I'd throw some of this out, because when I read your post Pam I am reminded why I got on this list in the first place, and thought I'd at least try to raise some of my concerns here, in hopes of furthering discussion, either on this list, backchannel, or by any means necessary....

Chris

13. To get back to poetics, it has felt to me that the polemicized nature of this List (like the polemicized nature of PC discourse) has gotten considerably relaxed as of late. I mean the polemics about poetics and poetry itself (see 5 and 6). Well we all know about this. The battlelines have been drawn and redrawn and redrawn again, and the fight is no longer fresh. Rather, now seems to be a time of rapprochement in various forms-- more poets from the experimental tradition landing academic posts, their subsequent influence & power upon MFA programs, Fence Magazine, the January almanac on the Academy of American Poets website, Lyn Hejinian editing the Best American series. For better or for worse, there is more crossover between the two "camps," more proliferation of "experimental" writings (how many bloggers have bemoaned the surplus of young poets coming out of experimental-minded MFA programs and reentering the institutional bloodstream as instructors?), less and less of a clear line between the establishment and the previous anti-establishmentarians. Ron Silliman explores this in his February 22 "prophecy": <http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>

14. So in a way I think we are living in a time of release, a time of aftermath. Even as we are living in a time of intense battle, violent conflicts abroad, major and too-significant domestic policy battles at home in the U.S. And if there is not currently a

polemicized situation within the poetics community itself, which fires the passions and gets people posting to the list, then there are certainly plenty such situations in the world to get us going, in the polemical spirit of Poetics.

-Pam

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[polemics] Dear Poet Son

4 March 2005

Dan Waber had posted a sonnet assembled from his mother's emails, tagged [poem]; Stroffolino answers under a [polemics] banner and signs himself Apu.

& If she talks your head off about how she's a failure while she's slaving away as a night geriatric nurse to try, in some small way, to help you have an opportunity she didn't have, don't try to convince her that Christmas is a bourgeois holiday or feel ridiculously self-consciously ashamed to call her on mother's day to tell her you love her (for it may be the last time you talk to her).

(just speaking from personal experience) Polemically yours, Apu

4/61

Echo = Dear Poet Son, two good words recently come to mind: sough, verdigris. Love, Mom

Source = The complete text of an actual email from my mother, Marlea J. Waber

Dear Poet Son

Letters from my mother sometimes start, "Dear Long Lost Son," or "Dear Too Busy Poet," or "Dear Stranger Rumored To Be My Son."

It's her way of applying guilt in two coats, but it makes a grown-man son feel good to know he's missed. Sometimes there are more words in the Dear-line than the note. Recently she wrote: "Dear Number One Son Who Can't Come To Visit His Only Mother, Come to see me before I die. Love, Mom." Zen mind or artist mind, I only know the sough that patinates my lines, turns verdigris

my copper coinages, and thrums my love of word play is the non-stop song of Mom.

Dan Waber

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Ashbery in the NYTBR

6 March 2005

Kozaitis had forwarded the Times' new Ashbery review, with its aside that the Language poets had out-difficulted him. His reply opens a week's volley on the point, most of it traded with the street-poet Steve Dalachinsky.

In the thread, Anastasios Kozaitis had written · 6 March 2005 —

| *John Ashbery is our great poet of the interior landscape*

Are the language poets really more "difficult" than Ashbery? This is a different question, I think, than are they more "incomprehensible?" Regardless of to whom these categories are applied, and the value we place on those terms (I'll beg those questions for the time being), isn't it possible that an "incomprehensible" poem can be less "difficult" than a comprehensible one?

C

Meanwhile, he has been outflanked on the difficulty scale by the Language Poets, for example (many of whom truly are incomprehensible), and even by Jorie Graham, next to whom he is a piece of cake.

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Walter Benn Michaels on Susan Howe??

8 March 2005

Lori Emerson, stuck on a review she wanted to write, had asked the list how one might refute Walter Benn Michaels on Susan Howe. He obliges from an unexpected flank.

In the thread, Lori Emerson had written · 7 March 2005 —

| *I can't quite get at how to refute him!*

Dear Lori---

I'm not quite sure exactly what you want to refute in Benn's new book or in the interview excerpt, but one thing I've noted about many recent attempts (perhaps coming out of a reductive reading of Howe or of Sharon Cameron's "Choosing" book) to emphasize the handwriting is that in quite a few cases this becomes a substitute for reading the poems---i.e. the textual complexities that exist in her use of dashes, or even on the levels of words that can be both nouns and verse, the tension between the line and the sentence, the "experimental fragment" and the "conventional rhyme and rhythm," the multiple meaning possibilities that need to be emphasized more to contest certain dominant images of her (whether Vendler's often unilateral readings, or, worse, the Billy Collins' mass-distributed edition of her work which changes words, ostensible to make it easier to some notion of a "plain reader"). Sure, I believe attention to the handwriting could help aid in this, but for quite a few it has become the be all and end all, which almost misses the point as much as Collins, etc.

C

Dear all: I wonder if any of you have taken a look at Walter Benn Michaels new book The Shape of the Signifier that opens with an essay on Susan Howe-- I'm working on a book review of it and, although I want to, I can't quite get at how to refute him! I'm curious to know what you'd think of, say, this passage from an interview with Michaels where he explains his position in the book:

"WBM: I don't know if you know Howe's work, but Howe is completely committed to the idea that you haven't read Emily Dickinson unless you've read the manuscripts. The Johnson edition and every edition except facsimile editions distort what the text is. But she has a certain conception of the text such that it's impossible for it to continue to be a text. She begins to imagine the spaces between the words are fundamental to what the text is...

Interviewer: That would be considered part of the intention...

WBM: She gives two different accounts of that, but you're on the right track. One account I find theoretically defensible, and that is, hey, if it mattered to Emily Dickinson how far apart these words were and what they looked like, then you haven't got her text unless you've got the way she did her 'i's' and 't's'. But Howe, half the time, is saying something else which is more radical, at least in a de Manian sense: it doesn't even matter what mattered to Emily Dickinson, what matters is what this object is. Unless you're seeing that object, then you're not seeing the object Emily Dickinson produced. And she identifies that in a de Manian way, with what she calls 'gibberish': it's precisely the moment when the thing becomes meaningless that it becomes an object."

How does this strike you? Inaccurate? Dead-on but not problematic? or just dead-on? or just problematic?

best, Lori

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Philip Lamantia, 1927-2005

11 March 2005

Silliman had forwarded the Chronicle's obituary. Lamantia, the San Francisco surrealist, was one of the elders Stroffolino had actually known — a first death in a year that would bring several.

In the thread, Ron Silliman had written · 11 March 2005 —

| Philip Lamantia, the blazing San Francisco poet

I got to meet him a few times through Garrett Caples and Andrew Joron. He really wanted to know about my Italian name and such. I knew his health was bad, but he strangely didn't seem very old. I had just read Garrett's book "THE PHILISTINE'S GUIDE TO HIP_HOP" and it turns out Lamantia was also quite into obscure hip-hop in the last 15 years of his life. C

Philip Lamantia -- S.F. Surrealist poet Visionary verse of literary prodigy influenced Beats - Jesse Hamlin, Chronicle Staff Writer Friday, March 11, 2005

Click to View

Philip Lamantia, the blazing San Francisco poet whose embrace of Surrealism and the free flow of the imagination had a major influence on the Beats and many other American poets, died Monday of heart failure at his North Beach apartment. He was 77.

A San Francisco native born to Sicilian immigrants, Mr. Lamantia was a widely read, largely self-taught literary prodigy whose visionary poems -- ecstatic, terror-filled, erotic -- explored the subconscious world of dreams and linked it to the experience of daily life.

"Philip was a visionary like Blake, and he really saw the whole world in a grain of sand," said poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose City Lights Books published four of Mr. Lamantia's nine books from 1967 to 1997.

"He was the primary transmitter of French Surrealist poetry in this country," said Ferlinghetti, who first met Mr. Lamantia here in the early 1950s. "He was writing stream-of-consciousness Surrealist poetry, and he had a huge influence on Allen Ginsberg. Before that, Ginsberg was writing rather conventional poetry. It was Philip who turned him on to Surrealist writing. Then Ginsberg wrote 'Howl.' "

That epochal poem made Ginsberg's name and set off a revolution in American poetry and culture. Ginsberg first read it aloud at San Francisco's Six Gallery on Oct. 13, 1955. The other four poets on the bill that night were Gary Snyder, Michael McClure, Philip Whalen and Mr. Lamantia.

Rather than reading his own works -- his first book, "Erotic Poems," had been published in 1946 -- Mr. Lamantia read the prose poems of his friend John Hoffman, who had recently died in Mexico.

"Philip was one of the most beautiful poets I've ever known. He was a poet of the imagination," said McClure, who lives in Oakland. "He was highly original -- I'd call his poetry hyper-personal visionary Surrealism -- and he was thrilling to be around. Everybody would sit around and listen to him all night. The flow of his imagination was a beautiful thing. "

A man of ecstatic highs and deep, deep lows, Mr. Lamantia suffered from depression, friends said, and had become a recluse in recent years, rarely leaving home.

But in his younger days, he was a dashing figure who conversed brilliantly on a wide range of subjects. An omnivorous reader, he delved into astronomy, philosophy, history, jazz, painting, ornithology, Egyptology and many other subjects that informed his expansive vision.

"He was very handsome, like a real Adonis," Ferlinghetti said. "He was a brilliant talker, a nonstop associative talker like Robert Duncan (the late San Francisco poet with whom Mr. Lamantia was associated on the pre-Beat San Francisco poetry scene of the late 1940s and early '50s). "He would talk in a continuous stream. One word would set him off in one direction, and another word would get him on another trip. He was a real polymath. And he had an encyclopedic memory."

Born in San Francisco's Excelsior District, Mr. Lamantia worked as a boy in the old produce market on the Embarcadero, where his Sicilian-born father was a produce broker. He began writing poetry in elementary school and fell under the spell of

Surrealism after seeing the paintings of Miro and Dali at the old San Francisco Museum of Art on Van Ness Avenue.

He started reading the poetry of Andre Breton, the so-called pope of Surrealism, and other writers in the movement. In 1943, when he was 15, some of Mr. Lamantia's poems were published in View, a Surrealist-leaning New York magazine. Breton gave the young poet his blessings, describing him as "a voice that rises once in a hundred years."

Some months later, Mr. Lamantia dropped out of Balboa High School and moved to New York City, where he lived for several years. He associated with Breton and other exiled European artists such as Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy, and he worked as an assistant editor of View.

Returning to San Francisco after World War II, Mr. Lamantia took courses at UC Berkeley in medieval studies, English poetry and other subjects while continuing to write and publish poetry. In 1949, he began traveling the world, staying for extended periods in Mexico, Morocco and Europe.

Coming back to the United States every few years, Mr. Lamantia became part of the underground culture blossoming on the east and west coasts. Like other poets who felt estranged from mainstream culture in the atomic age, "he found in the narcotic night world a kind of modern counterpart to the gothic castle -- a zone of peril to be symbolically or existentially crossed," wrote Nancy Peters, who later married Mr. Lamantia in 1978 and edited some of his books for City Lights. "The apocalyptic voice of 'Destroyed Works' is witness to that experience."

Published in '62 by Auerhahn Press, "Destroyed Works" was Mr. Lamantia's fourth book. The San Francisco house had also published the poet's two previous collections, "Narcotica" and "Ekstasis," both in 1959.

Ever searching to expand his vision, Mr. Lamantia spent time with native peoples in the United States and Mexico in the '50s, participating in the peyote-eating rituals of the Washoe Indians of Nevada. The poet, who taught for a time at San Francisco State and the San Francisco Art Institute, also embraced Catholicism. In later years he attended the Shrine of St. Francis in North Beach.

"He had a vision of the world that was completely unique," said Peters, who later separated from Mr. Lamantia, but they remained good friends. She edited three of his books for City Lights, "Becoming Visible" (1981), "Meadowlark West" (1986) and "Bed of Sphinxes: New and Selected Poems, 1943- 1993."

Andrei Codrescu, a poet and NPR commentator who knew Mr. Lamantia well, called him "one of the great voices of our subconscious for the last 50 years.

"He was a very pure poet in the sense that he was one of the very few American poets who continued to pursue the Surrealist investigation of dreams and the unconscious -- and he connected those explorations to civic American life."

A memorial is pending.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/03/11/BAG4MBNRMF1.DTL>

[↑ Index](#)**Ashbery in the NYTBR**

11 March 2005

Dalachinsky — poet, jazz-scene fixture, sidewalk book-vendor — answers in his signature unpunctuated rush; Stroffolino, ever the etiquette-minder, snags on a single word.

In the thread, Steve Dalachinsky had written · 8 March 2005 —

incomprehensible poems should be less difficult just by the fact that they are meant to be incomprehensible

Steve---I 99% agree, and, er, comprehend, this post. The only question I have is your use of the word "aloof"-- You don't have to respond if you don't want.... But I'm trying to get better at my email etiquette!

C

incomprehensible poems should be less difficult just by the fact that they are meant to be incomprehensible or in some cases partially incomprehensible quasi-linear there fore not needed to be interpreted there fore less difficult because their very nature is to defy interpretation or to be uninterpretable whereas the other is meant to be but due to it's complex properties it's very aloof comprehensibility makes it very difficult to comprehend particularly because it's very nature prods us to uncover its meaning(s) and interpret it while the incomprehensible poem offers us no other challenge but to read it or ignore it however what makes the incomprehensible poem difficult is our need to interpret it and therefore we tend to read into it things that are not there rather than to just listen to it for its musical or other sometimes dull even monotonous qualities

like untitled abstract paintings doesn't that look like a donkey to you no a horse's ass no a nude centipede or tricycle

today was a beautiful spring like day i stood outside with my wares for 3 hrs made naught zero ziltch nada zip nothing.....

[↑ Index](#)**Ashbery in the NYTBR**

12 March 2005

In the thread, Steve Dalachinsky had written · 11 March 2005 —

aloof = at a distance but in view

Hey Steve, your party metaphor reminds me of the (apocryphal?) story David Lehman told while introducing Ashes at a KGB reading a few years back-- --- someone asked Ashbery if he read Foucault, and he said no... and then like half an hour later overheard Ashbery talking, seemingly with great authority and knowledge about Foucault, and when confronted with "I thought you said you didn't read Foucault," Ashbery replied "I don't, but I do go to a lot of parties."

ashberry has alot of oh i get that in his work but it's difficult many times to get that get it?

so we see it it's there but even tho it has meaning it's distant because even tho it may be meant to be gotten it causes some of us to work too much so we stop working and say who cares well some of us do because it's like a snob at a party full of limm(b)e(p)ricks

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rewater: rewetting

15 March 2005

A prose meander that keeps interrupting itself to deny it is a poem — a denial the list would not let stand. Behind it: the return from San Francisco to Oakland, and a leg still mending from the accident.

In the thread, Mary Jo Malo had written · 15 March 2005 —

| *you've rewhetted my appetite for at least reading poetry*

Thinking about why I moved back to Oakland from San Francisco (many "reasons" could be given

the lake (with its lure of meritocracy?) is probably one

So I'm thinking about my love for, or addiction to, cities even though I don't take advantage of many of their amenities (that wasn't an intentional rhyme; this is NOT a poem)

Has any body else ever felt that sadness about old largely empty downtowns, stately old abandoned buildings victim of zoning laws and tax-write offs (better to keep them empty until the yuppies allegedly move in) And wish or hope or even actively try to "MAKE THE DOWNTOWN MORE VITAL" with nightlife, for instance, like back in the days

I mean I love "I want to see the bright lights tonight" And "FUNKY FUNKY BROADWAY" (every town's got one the old song says)

So maybe you get glad when a CLOTHING STORE stays open past 5PM Like you're kind of PULLING for THE UNDERDOG in a football game between "downtown" and "suburb" (in this case Oakland versus heavily favored Emeryville)

And then it hits you, you don't even LIKE TO SHOP. You avoid it as much as possible

But you do like nightlife, dancing and bar-talk (let's assume you didn't recently break your leg) and it is perhaps a "law of capital" that you can't have that without the stores....

And even though the tall buildings from the 20s (and those newer more antiseptic ones) still cast their shadow with the illusion that something besides BUSINESS might be happening in that center

you, without even really thinking about it, are drawn more to the LAKE, whether to sit, run, or bike.... and it's not glamorous (hell, people don't care how they look as much when they're jogging sweaty, preparing for the night perhaps) and it's not even really cheaper (the rents in this town are really high) and there's even a law about playing live music there

but it's still pretty cool And, even with the "dead downtowns" in the post suburban white flight VCR internet era, a lot of towns do have a street called FUNKY FUNKY LAKESIDE so, uh, don't let the green grass fool ya)

(with apologies to Wilson Pickett...)

C

Thanks, Steve

I've had a bit of a dry spell lately, and you've rewhetted my appetite for at least reading poetry. I might even write something later today or tomorrow or in the near future. I'm only speculating, but it's a distinct possibility. Your lake sounds like my pond.

Mary

there is this lake it spits images up at the spectator it is anonymous tho known placid when un touched viewed it is always un touched it spits images into the faces of its spectators it remains untouched it is there even when the spectators are not spits placid images even when they are far away splits spilt calpids spits placid images twisted & yawning up onto the river bank empties itself of spectators spits images at those viewing its neverchanging surface placid lake aloof is breathtaking is spectator & spectacular spits itself onto the shore becomes spectator watching itself from the shore watching itself from the lake becomes spectator / & / spectacle becomes motion/less ripple less shore less lake-less root.....less outlet / for / spectator

not seeing the isn't is inevitable not being the isn't is unthinkable.

steve dalachinsky nyc @ roulette oliver lake trio 5/12/05

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rewater: rewetting: o poem for chris s

15 March 2005

furniture_press had returned his disclaimer to him as lineated verse, with mock condolences. He plays along.

In the thread, furniture_press had written · 15 March 2005 —

| Sorry, but this is not A poem.

Thanks, I appreciate the sentiment. I didn't see it as selling myself short (at 5'6" a steal) just a note to myself to not let the "art-urge" overtake the idea/insight i was trying or wanting to get to

Sorry, but this is not A poem. Just because The line happens to break Here doesn't mean there's Any intention. And just Because there happens To be capital letters Beginning each line-

Well, frankly, don't Sell yourself short.

----- Original Message -----

Thinking about why I moved back to Oakland from San Francisco (many "reasons" could be given

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steve dalachinsky nyc @ roulette oliver lake trio 5/12/05

www.towson.edu/~cacasama/furniture/poae baltimorereads.blogspot.com zil-lionpoems.blogspot.com

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studying the anger for Oprah Winfrey's love of Anna Karenina

28 March 2005

CAConrad, the Philadelphia bookseller, had filed a class-watcher's report on customers who demand the Oprah banner torn from their Tolstoy. The one-line reply drafts Jonathan Franzen, who had memorably flinched at her embrace of his own novel.

In the thread, Craig Allen Conrad had written · 28 March 2005 —

| I'm always feeling like an anthropologist studying the rich.

Thanks Oprah,

signed Jonathan Franzen!

I work at a large bookstore in an affluent neighborhood in Philadelphia, and I'm always feeling like an anthropologist studying the rich. One of my favorite customs of this culture is when one of them brings a copy of the latest translation of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina to the cash register and insists I tear off, and throw away the Oprah Winfrey Book Club paper banner which folds around the outside of the book.

They always have an eye roll or look of disgust when asking for this to be done. And in my studies I always like to ask why, of course, for a good start at these short bursts of study (they're always in a hurry after all).

The answers are always given in angry tones, almost shocked that I don't already realize how disgusting it is that Oprah Winfrey should have anything to do with Tolstoy's writings. When I point out that SHE put the book on the bestseller list for many months, I mean, let me repeat that, SHE put Leo Tolstoy (who has been dead for quite a long time) on the bestseller list---there's often another burst of anger, "I WOULD HAVE READ IT ANYWAY!"

Would they have? This translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky isn't exactly brand new, so it's not as if they JUST read a review in the Times, or something. In fact, I know they're liars because I see them picking them off the giant displays of the book and reading the back of the cover. These displays are what's selling the book at this point, and it REALLY IS Oprah Winfrey who made these displays possible, like it or not.

The truth is, when you put this latest translation next to another of the older, popular translations, like the Constance Garnett, you see the difference almost right away. Garnett is wooden, and frankly ugly when compared with the Pevear/Volokhonsky translation which Oprah likes. In fact, the feedback from this newest translation is that the book brings Tolstoy to life.

But anyway, the class issues surrounding the book's having something to do with Oprah is fascinating to watch play out in front of you.

Hey, everyone's reading Tolstoy again, and Oprah deserves thanks for it, don't you think?
CAConrad <http://PhillySound.blogspot.com>
(<http://phillysound.blogspot.com/>) "Art, instead of being an object made by one person, is a process set into motion by a group of people. Art's socialized." --John Cage, 1967

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On Creeley

30 March 2005

Creeley had died that morning; Brian Stefans forwarded Ashbery's 1995 introduction of him. The grief here is complicated by having assumed, as one does, that there would be another reading.

In the thread, Brian Stefans [arras.net] had written · 30 March 2005 —

| Almost fifty years ago Robert Creeley and I sat almost side by side

Thanks for forwarding this Brian--- It was great because I didn't know it was Ashbery at first-- but this excerpt especially gets to the heart of many of my feelings/thoughts about RC. I think the full extent of Creeley's achievement has yet to be really appreciated (well, something like that), including the novels/short stories, the letters, the digressions at readings, the essay-like prose, the collaborations with painters and filmmakers, as well as his openness and availability to many younger writers....

I didn't know his health was particularly bad, and this hurts especially because I hadn't seen him a few years, and just thought I would again-- But I think he knew what he meant to me, and at least I'm told he died peacefully, and lived a full life (oh, that seems silly----can any immediate response to death not sound terribly trite? sorry.....)

C

If cramming as many possible things into the smallest space with no sign of strain or congestion is minimal, then maybe he is a minimalist. But what strikes me most about his poetry is a sense of richness and ripeness, beautifully contained in a vessel which was made to order by the circumstance of writing the poem. As he writes in "Some Place":

I resolved it, I found in my life a center and secured it.

And lest we misinterpret his accuracy for pride, he adds farther on:

There is nothing I am nothing not. A place between, I am. I am more than thought, less than thought.

No one, I think, has ever stated what it is to be a poet more cogently and, yes, more succinctly than Robert Creeley. But his succinctness is like the unfettered flashing of a diamond.

-- John Ashbery, introducing Creeley at a reading at the New School in 1995.

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say what, ma?*4 April 2005*

The moderators had just re-posted the ban on unsolicited poems; Vernon Frazer objected. Stroffolino reads the fine print like a tenant lawyer.

In the thread, Vernon Frazer had written · 4 April 2005 —

| I think the policy should be reconsidered.

"...the exchange of unsolicited poems"

may not mean what it seems to mean

What's the difference between exchange and solicitation

If I solicit from you and you solicit from me

Which isn't so different from what many 'proper' forums do

An exchange of solicited poems does not seem (legally) precluded

discussion of poetry or for the exchange of unsolicited poems."

This is truly a sad

day. My poems are posted

here without a break! --

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How Some Stand on ALLEN GINSBERG Today*24 April 2005*

Part of Craig Conrad's running Ginsberg symposium. Beckett had floated a "Stein problem" — the personality getting in the way of the poems — with Anselm Berrigan and Tony Trigilio weighing figure against work.

In the thread, Tom Beckett had written · 24 April 2005 —

| The personalities are so large that they get in the way of the work.

Tony---I liked Anselm's comments too, but taking just that one by itself, I feel it tends to ignore that, for Ginsberg, the figure was actually part of the work. "GENERALLY speaking" it may require little effort of mind to talk about Ginsberg as a figure than a poet primarily on the page, but to reduce G to poet on the page also may flatter many poet peoples' mind habits as well. Allen's importance may be as much as "figure" as the "works themselves" but that you can't have one without the other is just something people either can't or won't or are afraid to do, because it challenges their little boxes. It may require much "effort of mind" to ignore or downplay the "figure"--but what KIND of "mind"? you know, like the classical Cartesian mind separated from the body... But, don't worry Tony, I'm

sure academic dissertations (if that's what you really want) on Ginsberg will again become as fashionable as ones on Spicer might be now--

Sorry, too, if I sound a little "pissy" here--I'm not ultimately trying to be divisive. Both of us obviously value Ginsberg highly, if for (seemingly) different reasons and, as such, he'd appreciate both of our interests.

I think both you and I are speaking from different perspectives about things we see not being paid enough attention to-- and at best there's a symbiosis between the work and the figure that is obviously IN "the poems themselves" (to paraphrase a famous dictum of The New Criticism and maybe you're right, there's too much emphasis, even if it's positive, on judging the writing by the man, but to me part of what allowed Ginsberg to help shatter what was so deadening about The New Criticism was precisely his willingness to push the limits of that well-worn distinction between "thought" and "action," or "work" and "figure" and I personally feel it requires much EFFORT OF MIND (and more!) to not only consider its implications for those of us of not yet "disembodied poetics"

C

Hi Craig--

Thanks for this project -- fun to read in general, and necessary, I think, to raise the level of discussion on Ginsberg. Anselm B.'s remarks especially were great: "The problem is the lack of depthful conversation, writing and thinking about Ginsberg's work. It's much easier to talk about him as a figure because that, generally speaking, requires very little effort of mind at all." As he wrote, we'd have "no Allen Ginsberg-as-social-phenomenon without his poems," and the poems themselves (beyond "Howl" and "Kaddish") don't get talked about enough. We already have too much biographical work on the Beats in the guise of critical response, and not enough on the works themselves.

Best, Tony

**Date:* Sat, 23 Apr 2005 22:38:03 EDT *From:* Craig Allen Conrad
<CAConrad9@AOL.COM>*

62214>

**Subject:* How Some Stand on ALLEN GINSBERG Today *Content-Type:* text/plain;
charset="US-ASCII"*

How Some Stand on ALLEN GINSBERG Today

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Hey Gloria---*8 May 2005*

Frym had written wishing they might read together sometime. What comes back is nearer a private letter than a list post, and was left in public anyway.

Hi Gloria---

Thanks for writing. I'm glad you had a good time with Andrei....I was hoping to make it to that too, but knew with my own reading that evening that I wouldn't have the stamina to pull it off. I still can't tell if it's just aging that's making me have less energy or still the trauma and rrecovery process. Or maybe it's that BUBBLE of which you speak....enveloping. I'm hoping go back to playing on the streets again in the summer, try to break the personal prison which is of course also a cultural prison. Not just academic, either right. But all kinds of social segregation (and denial about it at that!); gotta be a way....somehow... Yeah, would be cool to read together at some point, maybe we could get more than 12 people to show up....Glad you and Jane are still in touch. Funny, I consider her one of my best friends, but we talk about once every 3 months. When was last time WE spoke? Ah, adulthood! let's do phone again soon? I hope your health and domestic issues are a little better.... Do you know that I got Marina's band to play a show at an art gallery with us awhile ago. It was okay, though the PA broke during our first song-- so that was weird....Do you know Greil Marcus? I just found out recently he lives near here....I'm soo out of it. Ah the Hershey plant, near the orphanage where my dad grew "up"---

Talk soon? Chris

Hey Chris,

Am dreadfully sorry to have missed your reading last Sat. with Albert . It was a full day--Andrei Codrescu flew in to do a special talk at SPD, he's a dear friend, and we wound up at someone's house drinking and talking for too long until I put him on BART. I would like to just once hear you read. Why don't we read together? That way we'd be sure to hear one another. I just now wrote to Jane Ransom, whose last email from October has sat festering in my IN my box. During the school year, the bubble envelopes. Plus, I've had some health and domestic issues that I'd like to throw into a big Mix-O-Matic and see how they turned out together. Feel like we haven't connected in ages. What are you doing now? Next year? I'm no good at reviewing R & R, only jazz, Latin, and opera. I leave you and Greil to Dylan. Shuffle Boil is a place to look, though--write David Meltzer or Steve Dickison. They are always open and might know of a good reviewer for your band. You know, you also could ask Marina Lazzara. She's one great one. Why don't you marry her? You're both Italian and she's is as intense as you, working class, grew up near the Hershey's plant in Pennsylvania. She has oriented her poetic life to r & r. Lovely voice. Way gorgeous woman--she's just turning 40 real soon. Go after her.

xxxG

----- Original Message -----

My record label just sent me some advance PROMO CDs of my band CONTINUOUS PEASANT's second album, INTENTIONAL GROUNDING for me to send to people and try to get some reviews.

Steve Carll wrote a great review of the first album and other poets, like Jim Berhle and Stephanie Young did well by us

So I thought I'd just place an open call here, like first ten people who might be interested in some primitive melodic "indie-rock" sounding thing

and might be interested in trying the genre of "rock criticism", I might be able to hook you up with some presses to publish them in...

Anyway, let me know backchannel in the next few days, and I'll try to get a copy off as soon as possible.

Thanks!

Chris www.continuouspeasant.com

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The Apt Word

18 May 2005

Nick Piombino had posted a poem called "The Apt Word." This is the answering poem, and the pun it turns on is one he cannot leave alone.

The Word Apt

I once knew a woman who hated the song, "Come On Eileen"
because she read it "the wrong way" (like jazzm)
and Samuel Johnson called the pun Shakespeare's "fatal cleopatra"
(which may not be so bad if your only other option
is the Roman "honor" of cut throat "Caesar), but still
When I think of the apt word, I think of the word "apt"
And all of us who live in them, and don't even "have"
A complex. How apt. the voiceless voice. The asp word?
The baby at my breast, sucking me to death? Apt apt.
Mot Juste. Just moat, can you draw a bridge? Tis Paltry
To be Caesar, dear landlord. The various properties.
Do you fit in your apt? Can you afford a storage space?
Here I am writing, piling boxes and boxes of papers
I can't afford to keep. Once, while moving from apt to apt,
I threw a whole box of them (1986) away. I kind of regret
it now. Another time, I threw many boxes of books away.
How apt, this economy, of words. Of course, one will say,
you could save it all, today, to disk. But how much time
does that take? And time is money? And money grows

on cut-down trees I will never a poem as lovely as.
How apt. Looking good on paper, while voices grow
voiceless, and throats scarred by beautiful abstraction.
What doth your body say about the apt? In my apt
there are many mansions. Maybe even Charles Mansion,
ever cell he saw. Bernadette Mayer lamented the lack
of farm, but at least her apt had rent control.
The word is ours to rent, but that doesn't mean we'll
even get our security deposit back, especially because
they're very good at blaming you for a scratch
the previous tenant caused. This to, a world, to rent
a tent, is apt.

>> The Apt Word

>>

>>

>> To write modernism is to write in voiceless voice.

>> To write in voiceless voice is an enunciation.

>> The enunciated is always pronounced.

>> This is based on the apt word.

>> Whatever I write, there is the apt word.

>> In terms of cleverness, the reader desires this, the apt word.

>> The apt word makes one famous, i.e. on the road to fame.

>> Apt may be an apt word.

>> Writing this style is always a well-honed craft.

>> I try to procure your agreement or perhaps disagreement.

>> My taste is apparent on the page.

>> I am an expert in the use of words and their exactitude.

>> More specifically, the apt words.

>> Every phrase, every poem, is a composition.

>> The poet works hard at the composition, every word must fit.

>> The fit word is the apt word, both harmonious and perfect.

>> A poet claws its way to the apt word and beyond.

>> There is light on the other side of the apt word.

>> The apt word must not appear contrived.

>> Or it must appear contrived as a collusion between reader and writer.

>> The apt word must be secretly clever.

>> Or it must appear clever as such a collusion.

>> It's nature, the apt word, unnoticed but graces a reputation.

>> The audience knows the poet by the apt word.

>> Every poet has a different approach to the apt word.

>> And every poet has a different approach to the rest of it.

>> But it is all carefully crafted and that is why we care about poets.
 >> And it is beautifully written and full of surprises.
 >> And that is why we care about poetry.
 >> I am serious about this, this apt word.
 >> It is a well-turned phrase that contributes to the whole.
 >> In a sense it is the whole.
 >> Love language, love the apt, advertising and poetry pick and choose.
 >> Here I am writing, searching for the perfect form.
 >> Oh there must be more to this than that, there is not.
 >> My words are perhaps not apt enough.
 >> My turns of phrase...
 >>
 >>
 >> =

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Reminder: Text/Styles 5/22

18 May 2005

Nada Gordon's poetry-and-fashion benefit for garment workers; his request for a runway report would, days later, be answered by Gary Sullivan turning up as "fashion photographer."

In the thread, Nada Gordon had written · 18 May 2005 —

| *A poetry/fashion event to benefit international garment workers*

nada---I would love it if you would do a fashion report of what everybody wears (and how that most certainly relates to their writing--and performance--style) C

Text/Styles A poetry/fashion event to benefit international garment workers Sunday May 22 Bowery Poetry Club (308 Bowery) 8-10 pm

Featuring:

Kim Rosenfield Rob Fitterman Adeena Karasick Shanna Compton Katie Degentesh Virginie Poitrasson Tim Peterson Christina Strong Marianne Shaneen Douglas Rothschild Brenda Iijima Tonya Foster Jordan Davis Meghan Cleary Kim Lyons & (organizer/MC) Nada Gordon

Wear your favorite or most outstanding clothing. Bring clothes to sell for the benefit of garment workers worldwide. All proceeds will be donated to Cleanclothes.org,

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Creeley/Poe/Riding/Lawrence/Williams/Dickinson/bells bells bells bells!

13 June 2005

Gloria Frym had read Poe through Williams; Stroffolino swerves to Laura Riding, whose 1920s demolition of the "Monsieur Poe" cult was one of his recurring enthusiasms.

Is anybody here familiar with Laura Riding's wickedly brilliant (and witty) taking to task of the cult of "MONSIEUR POE" as she saw it being formulated in the 1920s?

Just curious what Poe fans and/or Poe skeptics might think of that....

C

bells bells bells!

I'd like to add that Williams' essay on Poe seems to me one of the most important. He reads Poe through Modernist psychological and political eyes--posits that Poe both records and anticipates American alienation from self and body, both physical and spiritual, the emotional terror of a vast unknown continent on its way to Westward Ho (including shopping malls!) and empire. Whatever his intention, some of Poe's greatest stories now morph back into physical parallels of 20th century horrors ("The Masque of the Red Death," easily reads as AIDS), and 21st century government sanctioned physical torture. "Ligeia," too, is a ghostly character, whose embodiment only becomes real and beloved in death. As American Fascism promotes the culture of war, Poe's "darkness" feels all too realistic these days. Also, Poe was America's first real literary critic. His standards, as revealed in his numerous reviews of his contemporaries, were demanding and orthodox, akin to Clement Greenberg's in visual art. And his short stories seem to me a poet's prose. There are no real characters in Poe's so-called tales of ratiocination. Characters are used in the service of the text, and dimensions of a unnamed single speaker, fairly incapable of conventional fictional strategies. Lastly, that Whitman was one of the few who attended Poe's funeral has some significance. The American Optimist pays homage to the American Pessimist, who is Noir as America. Poe dies long before the 1855 first edition of Leaves of Grass. Both poets are groping for physical, intellectual and aesthetic "American" morals and aesthetics that might counter the puritanical (now morphed into fundamentalist) normative standards. As for Dickinson, I don't agree that her work is hermetic. The work is often elliptical and dense, but not without entry, providing the reader who can accept multiplicity of "meaning", indeterminacy, sound, pun, and other now familiar literary devices, with pleasure. The work both doubts and confirms. She thought, as she said, "New Englandly." And rebelled grandly. As did Creeley. And were Called Back, as it were, differently. Not wanting to create a reductive argument about either, I suggest that each are various and accessible and difficult and yet, more interrogating, philosophical, domestic, and finally local rather than hermetic in their poetics.

Gloria Frym

----- Original Message ----- bells bells!

Yes, it was wonderful that Charles B. told us of the story behind Creeley's Ligeia libretto. If Creeley was willing to work on this text without knowing the composer very well, and wasn't so upset when the composing of the music didn't happen, it sounds like he was very pleased to be collaborating with POE.

*I think as many of us as possible should make Poe's works part of our summer reading, and report back in say, September. The different visions people have of this elusive literary figure are quite intriguing. On the surface, D.H. Lawrence's conception of Poe (in *Studies in Classic American Literature*) as a sufferer/diagnostician writing from within a realm of decadence seems pleasingly consonant with one's naive reactions to EAP's works, though we know, of course that Poe was not the forever zonked-out sadsack seer that folklore pictures, but was very much a busy, critically-acute professional, as emphasized by W.C. Williams in the Poe chapter of *In The American Grain*.*

I was surprised to see Charles B., in the recent Creeley piece, place Poe amongst his list of people whose writings are in the middle between Whitman's "expansive, sexually explicit, and exuberant" works and Dickinson's "philosophical, hermetic, introspective" poems. Poe is expansive and exuberant, I wondered? And what is the sexuality in his writing except incest, and men's love of very young women, and the morbid desire to completely know the other that Lawrence notes?

But as far as exuberance goes, maybe one reason I've never thought of this quality in relation to Poe is that I haven't taken "The Bells" seriously (as part of not taking the poems in general very seriously). But "Bells" is not so bad at all. I sign off with the beginning:

Hear the sledges with the bells - Silver bells! What a world of merriment their melody foretells! How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, In the icy air of night! While the stars that oversprinkle All the heavens, seem to twinkle With a crystalline delight; Keeping time, time, time, In a sort of Runic rhyme, To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells From the bells, bells, bells, bells, Bells, bells, bells - From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

--- Ruth Lepson <ruthlepson@RCN.COM> wrote:

Hi Charles B,

Thank you so much for taking the time to tell all this. I will dip into Poe & dear Bob's libretto & the Granary Books book.

All best,

Ruth Lepson

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Close Listening / WPS1

29 June 2005

Dalachinsky, sore at never making the interview series, finds a ready commiserator. A rare glimpse of where Stroffolino placed himself in the room's pecking order.

In the thread, Steve Dalachinsky had written · 29 June 2005 —

| *hey how bout interviewing some of us lost n.y. second stringers*

hey steve---

don't sell yourself short. i get the same "second stringer" blues too--- charles being so good at getting the means of production and us not making his "a" list (or even "zed") for whatever reasons can be very depressing....

but there's gotta be somebody else, somewhere, maybe with a good business promo sense who will dig us???

okay, back to don quixote...

C

| *hey how bout interviewing some of us lost n.y. second stringers*

| *we're just as good as the rest*

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Was Robert Creeley "stupid about gender" and love?

3 July 2005

The argument he had started on his new blog — a defense of Creeley against the charge of being "stupid about gender" — comes onto the list. Ruth Lepson, who studied with Creeley in early-'70s Cambridge, had written in.

In the thread, Ruth Lepson had written · 3 July 2005 —

| *we loved the man more than the poems but the man was the poems, too.*

Hi Ruth---

hey, thanks for writing. i like what you say---especially about the "dostoyevsky character" in the poems--the whole question of the often solitary dark character in so many of the poems and how that might seem "at odds" with how so many of us knew him socially....

Once I saw him at a panel discussion in Albany in 1995 and he kept on making fun of the phrase (and stance), "wandered lonely as a cloud" and I always thought that he, more than many poets, really HAD TO remind himself to do that in order to be able to let go and be so PRESENT with people. Also, in my copy of LIFE AND DEATH he simply wrote the phrase "IN THE CITY!" and at first I thought he was quoting something from one of his poems in that book, as many poets do when they sign their books, but it turns out he was just GIDDY to be in NYC.

What do I make of all this? Maybe he was able to wrestle so much of the solitary alienated demon out in the act of writing and that allowed him or helped him really appreciate people when he was actually WITH them, and that back-and-forth is surely not unique to Creeley, but I love the particular ways he went about navigating or "negotiating" that--(okay, not very profound this.....Sorry...)

the Dostoyevsky reference also brings up a more general point about poetry---especially poetry that can be both, as you say, "lyric and innovative"---Why is it that people are more inclined to be JUDGEMENTAL when a lyric poet/persona explores some "unsavory" aspects of the "self" than when a novelist or playwright creates "characters"?

I have my own theories about that, but I'll save it for later--- For now, I just want to say I appreciate the fact that you (and Mary Jo and others) are less interested in engaging in the kind of (spurious) moral JUDGEMENT I was taking issue with--- I mean, of course, we "SHOULD" be a lot of things we're not, but thankfully that didn't stop Creeley from giving voice to a lot of other things....

C

Dear Chris S.,

Read yr creeley thoughts w/ great interest as I am trying to (un)formulate thoughts abt dear Bob myself. Some friends, knowing he was the central contemporary poet for me, have asked abt his life with women. I can say that his generosity was unlimited, and to me as a young poet in Cambridge in the early '70s, when I asked if I cd talk to him abt poetry once that summer, he sd, "Come every week." So I did. He let Celia Gilbert and me interview him. He wrote a blurb for my first book. He came to Boston to read for Oxfam America readings I was organizing. In recent years he came to my classes at the NEng Conservatory of Music, even Xeroxing handouts himself. Sure, he loved to talk and be with people, but that's part of the point. One felt his kindness and kindness.

At the same time, he was a kind of Dostoyevsky character in his poetry. There was a guy, Robert Creeley, who appeared in his poems. This guy was the existential person of our time. I read Creeley always thinking of his poems as current and newly meaningful, because he was asking about and tentatively coming to statements, filled with feeling, about what it means to be alive, in our time & in any time. What we all have in common was his subject, I feel. Denise Levertov and Adrienne Rich were the other essential poets for me, and I never felt conflict going from Rich to Creeley. Each was vast and sincere while questioning the notion of sincerity.

Three times I've gone to visit Bob at Tulip Lane in Mt. Auburn Cemetery and each time what comes to mind, after the existential shock that he doesn't exist now, is what he said, "If it isn't fun, don't do it." Is that gender-laden? I dunno, but it reminds me as well as any guy, once I can get past what I mist do, to choose.

I wrote some poems for Bob in the weeks after he died. One of them is a realization that came for the first time in my life about the importance of art, which had often

seemed flimsy in the face of humanity's suffering. I was standing outside thinking nothing means anything bec Bob died, people die, and I thought, Why did people love Bob so much? Because he was a great poet! He was able to say what most people cannot, and what we long to hear other people say. One of the few times on this earth when a human being, lovely to see and hear as he was, went beyond sex.

Bob was called a lyric poet and an innovative poet. Impossibly, he managed both.

On 7/2/05 6:00 PM, "Chris Stroffolino" <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> wrote:

OKAY, I did it---finally testing the waters and succumbing to the BLOGOSPHERE

Just up---first two posts.

1. Oakland "My" Oakland---some loose tentative thoughts about the WAYANS BROTHERS hope to build a movie studio in Oakland, the local RAGazine THE BOOTY CRACK, the CULTURAL SEGREGATION of blacks and whites in Oaktown against a backdrop of gentrification, etc.

2. (of potentially more interest here) Was Robert Creeley "stupid about gender"? Some thoughts, and a defense, not just of Creeley's love poetry and prose, but of the kind of thinking he did, and a plea that such thinking/feeling may still be relevant today....(warning: a little "over the top" this may be, written very shortly after his death, while very shaken up)....

Oh yeah, here's the link---

<http://blog.myspace.com/continuouspeasant>

comments always appreciated

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Lorenzo Thomas (1944-2005)

4 July 2005

Lorenzo Thomas died on the Fourth of July; Charles Bernstein posted the notice, tyrone williams the second. The third death of the season, and the one whose work was hardest to find.

In the thread, tyrone williams had written · 4 July 2005 —

readers unfamiliar with Lorenzo's impact on the development of contemporary poetry

Oh, this is sad! He was only 60, and such a wide range of work, much of it still very hard to find. I hope someone puts out a big collected/ or at least a more comprehensive selected soon. Maybe the poetics list policy of not posting poems to this list could be WAIVED since many people don't know his work that well?

C

Thanks for the note, Charles. Although not as well known as Creeley, I hope readers unfamiliar with Lorenzo's impact on the development of contemporary poetry, as opposed to "simply" a founder of the Black Arts Movement, will begin to (re) read him.

-----Original Message-----

Lorenzo Thomas, a radiant voice of, and for, the poetry of the Americas, died this morning, on the Fourth of July. His life and work is something to celebrate today.

August 31, 1944 (Republic of Panama) -- July 4, 2005 (Houston)

..... It was in those days musicians started dancing Didn't have to touch their instruments. In fact, they couldn't even stop the music playing It was so much sadness in the world --- from "Back Ordered Tears" from _Dancing on Main Street_ (2004)

More on Lorenzo Thomas at his new EPC author page -- <http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/authors/thomas/>

Charles Bernstein

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Three obituaries in four months — Lamantia in March, Creeley at its end, Lorenzo Thomas on Independence Day — had turned the list into a house of mourning, and not everyone could bear it. When mIEKAL aND finally begged the room to say something about someone who hadn't recently died, Stroffolino's whole reply was: "Plato was a dickhead?" It is left out here, along with a one-word "yes" to a query about whether anyone ever saw Creeley read standing up — small change, but the sound of a man keeping vigil by wisecrack.



Somewhere in this year the centre of gravity shifts. In July he succumbs to the blogosphere, and a run of postings — "New on PeasantBlog," again and again through the autumn — turns the list into a marquee for the other Stroffolino: the bandleader, the rock critic, the MySpace essayist holding forth on Greil Marcus and the death of the single. The link-lists are dropped here; what they announce — that the poet was increasingly to be found elsewhere — is the part worth keeping.

New Orleans poets and friends.

30 August 2005

The last days of August; Skip Fox begins the roll-call of New Orleans poets unaccounted for, and Stroffolino adds a name. For the next fortnight the list would work as a switchboard, and he as one of its more anxious operators.

*In the thread, Skip Fox had written · 30 August 2005 —
| Anyone know? I'll post as I might hear.*

How about Brett Evans and his wife Janine?

Chris

Camille Martin is staying with her parents in Lafayette, LA, but is worried about losing her "library" in her 3rd floor attic apartment.

Bill Lavender and his companion Nancy Dixon were going to "ride it out," but I've been unable to contact him since right before the storm got really bad. He thought he was safe, up off the ground on what south Louisianans call a ridge.

I hear Alex Rawls was out of town with companion.

I got a hold of David Brinks' mother, who was going to ride it out on her arc (she has a zoo), but she's on the north side of the lake. David and girl friend had already left (Sun. evening).

I don't know about many.

John Gery?

Joel Dailey?

Roger Kamenetz and wife?

Andrei Codrescu?

Anyone know? I'll post as I might hear.

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some news of Bill Lavender

31 August 2005

I wonder if this "converted warehouse" is the same as the "can factory" I hear Brett Evans is staying in (from a 5th party). I know Brett and Bill are friends....

You know, if they are alright, they're going to think this is hilarious that we're doing this.

Chris

We've just heard from NOLA poet Alex Rawls. ...

Alex & Kat are near Pensacola with her parents. He has some news of Bill Lavender and Nancy Dixon. As of Monday morning Bill was fine. Monday evening Bill's son Will spoke to him and he was still doing good (Alex is in touch with Bill's son and a sibling of Nancy's & will relay any information as soon as he hears more). Bill has a boat and the keys to a friend's condo which is on the 3rd floor of a converted warehouse not far away from his house. Alex would like to have some confirmation that Bill is alright but isn't that concerned.

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New Orleans poets and friends.

2 September 2005

The Brett Evans thread he opened a week earlier pays off: forwarded word that his friend is alive, if not yet taken off the roof.

In the thread, Skip Fox had written · 1 September 2005 —

| we left the 2 cats behind---they're probably goners

Dear Skip---

From Frank Sherlock on Brett and Janine.... I'm keeping my fingers crossed (or praying; whatever you want to call it...)

Chris-

I talked to Janine's mother today. Brett stayed in a cannery on the fourth floor with his dogs & neighbor's pets. He called Monday after the storm, but she lost contact. He called J's mother last night. He's still waiting to be rescued, but the rescuers know he's there. They delivered some military rations (food, water, etc.) but it may be a few more days until he's rescued.

Peace,

Frank

What Joel Daily wrote Camille last night or this morning:

glad to hear yr same & sound.....tell the Skipper hello.....I hope Bill & N had the brains to leave.....my poor berrigan collection is probably in utter ruination.....we left the 2 cats behind---they're probably goners.....anxiety ridden, stressed out but alive I guess....the future is very uncertain

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or "embrace your narcissism"?

10 September 2005

Gabriel Gudding had posted a taxonomy of "literary narcissism," with Ginsberg as exhibit A and the Naropa wars as evidence; Maria Damon disputed the diagnosis.

One could even make the argument that Ginsberg's "narcissism" (which could conceivably be a fitting characterization, if the word is understood as not-necessarily pejorative) actually saved him from some of his other addictions....

and not just true of Ginsberg; to me "narcissism" is such a vague bogey-man and rather than judge it, to me, the question is, well, what good can come from it? And sometimes a lot of good can....

Chris

this is a fascinating portrait of "literary narcissism," gabe, but i'm not sure ginsberg qualifies as an alcoholic just because he has a few narcissistic tendencies (not many, actually; he was not a clinical narcissist). trungpa, his guru, was an acknowledged alcoholic; that's no secret, and i think you're right to discern a heavy dose of alcoholic acting-out in the famous incidents that led to the so-called Naropa Poetry Wars. ginsberg himself has always struck me as fitting the profile of the co-dependent, following his relationship with his mother Naomi. His partner Peter has had -and i think continues to have -many struggles with addictions, including alcoholism, and many of Ginsberg's dearest friends (kerouac, burroughs, corso) likewise. ginsberg went through codependency treatment at Hazelden around his relationship w/ Peter, i believe in the 1980s. Ginsberg has never struck me as an addict, except perhaps in his

sexual loneliness and manic attempts to appeal to young men. it is easy -for me at least -to have a lot of compassion for him, but then again i am fairly codependent myself.

*At 2:07 PM -0500 9/10/05, Gabriel Gudding wrote: Ever since reading THE GREAT NAROPA POETRY WARS this summer, I have been thinking about Allen Ginsberg's alcoholism -- and how that book clearly shows that, though he would never fess up to it, Ginsberg was interested in the purposeful manufacture of Outrage, the politics of scandal and what might be called an Economy of Attention. Does any of this seem familiar? * A Literary Narcissist's behavior will not only tolerate but encourage attacks on himself so long as it can translate his own self-fascination into more news of himself. * Just as the Narcissist will use argument, catastrophe, disputation to attract attention, certain people will be willing to dispute the Narcissist in order to participate in the economy of attention. Others will dispute the Narcissist because they are so profoundly appalled by his/her behavior. Either way, the economy of attention is fueled. * The Narcissist needs Catastrophe. The more internal crises of shame the Narcissist endures and fails to heed, the more s/he will need to create external Catastrophes. A chief and signal way a Narcissist might attract attention is to start fights: Narcissists will gravitate toward satire and caricature as a means of creating argument. The Narcissist will attempt to construe strife with health: "These arguments need to happen," etc. * The Narcissist IS fascinating -- but not for the reasons the Narcissist thinks. S/he is fascinating because the energy s/he will expend in micromanaging the self image is so profoundly exceptional. People just sort of stand there slack-jawed wondering if this person has a life. The Narcissist however will mistranslate the fascination of others as admiration. * Poetry communities will tolerate narcissism so long as it is translated into a Social Energy which others can use to strengthen and promote their projects. * Narcissism and alcoholism. Alcoholism is a systematic way to push down socially regulating emotions like shame, guilt, and embarrassment at one's own self-aggrandizing behavior. The suppression of these emotions is never successful, even in the most energetic of self-aggrandizers, and they will periodically burst upward into brief displays of remorse and convictions to change. These brief spouts of regulatory behavior are sometimes shared publicly and sometimes privately among confidants. These displays however can often easily be "re-used" by the Narcissist as a way of showing his/her authenticity and emotional fealty to the community. * The Narcissist is aware of the economy of disgust surrounding his/her behavior. S/he becomes more and more sensitive to this and consequently begins to demand private declarations of loyalty from those people whom s/he knows consider themselves friends -- even if they have said nothing publicly against the Narcissist. * The Narcissist, aware of this disgust, will create a personal mythos in which s/he will be justified and exonerated by the rewards of literary "history." The stronger the disgust of others, the greater the energy used to maintain the mythos of exoneration by history. * Narcissists are only interested in community so long as it pays dividends to their energy: they will support it if it feeds them. * The narcissist may outright demand in private that you "pay" him publicly with praise. Then he or she will publicly "repay" you with a communal mention. * In their attempt to cause others to adopt their self-fascination, Narcissists will become increasingly paranoid, constantly searching the environment and community for news of themselves, for fealty or disloyalty. * The Literary Narcissist begins purposefully to conflate criticism of his social behavior into an indication of his/her literary worth. That is to say, the Narcissist will try to show that the reason others*

*despise or are disgusted by him is in fact because he or she is a "Rebel," a true Literary Revolutionist -- and that the statements of disgust others publicly make at his behavior is merely an indication of (a) their necessary denial of the work because they are threatened by it, or (b) their jealousy of the work. * There comes a point -- and the point may come early -- where the community thinks to itself "teapot" and the Narcissist still hears "tempest." The truly insular narcissist (aka "the boor") will be met more and more with shunning, ignoring and silence. This will wrest the narcissist from his insularity -- such that he will begin another project designed to create Genuine Interest instead of mere scandalous attention. This project, like a new comet's head, will be followed by a long tail of manufactured scandal so as to call attention to its presence in the literary sky.*

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or "embrace your narcissism"?

13 September 2005

In the thread, Jonathan Penton had written · 11 September 2005 —

| How do you define narcissism, and what are its benefits?

Jonathan thanks for your thoughts about narcissism. I don't mean to sound flip-pant, but my approach is to let others try to "define" it rather than doing so myself. Gudding certainly did a lot of soul-searching to come up with that characterization, and it was an important thing for him to get that down in some systematic way. Yet, I tend to find the term, coming into such wide circulation in the 20th century as part of a general therapeutic model (Freud, etc.) that promises a way to solve the "disease" it diagnoses (in ways that for many "replaced" but largely echo some Christian notions of "sin" and "salvation"), tends to imply some ever elusive "non-narcissistic" norm of "health" that generally is only defined negatively, or defined in terms of conformity. At least that's how it's often used. So I often question people who negatively judge others as "narcissists"--because it seems they got "4 fingers pointing back at themselves" in most cases.

Then, of course, there's the whole way the term distorts and reduces the Narcissus story, which is way more suggestive and provocative than the "clinical situation" or even than the grad-school Lacanian mirror stage conundrum entanglement situation. I think it's way too easy to say there's an "either/or" between "self-love" and love for another, or others, and too often the clinical 20th century definitions play into that. Sure, there's a kind of "you can't love others until you love yourself" saying in circulation to---but then the way "self" is defined in those terms can be somewhat dubious (like a more sophisticated version of a parent yelling at a kid who is banging on drums, "Johnny that's not YOU"--)

Okay, just some loose (but hopefully suggestive) thoughts here; don't know if it's of any help. No time to get too deep now. Chris

But I'm too influenced by the psyche world, and the term has become fuzzy for me. How do you define narcissism, and what are its benefits?

Yours, -- Jonathan Penton

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[Fwd: SAVE OUR POETS FROM STAGNATION?]

14 September 2005

Catherine Daly forwarded Terry Quinn's complaint against the journals' "previously unpublished only" rule. The grievance was one Stroffolino had been nursing for years.

In the thread, Catherine Daly had written · 14 September 2005 —

| you're only allowed one shot at getting some form of success.

Catherine--- Only browsed the piece, but I've been arguing that main beginning point--about "PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED POEMS---for years. I agree with their diagnosis of the problem--- would even go further and say it may even lead a poet, who wants to get "his/her name out there," to emphasize quality over quantity, or at least encourage it. Their particular proposed solution I'm more skeptical about, but I'm glad others are thinking about this too...

C

Terry Quinn (4/1/05): The Publishing of Poetry

What other branch of the Arts is as self defeating as Poetry? I can't think of a method of publishing that is so guaranteed to bury good poems and poets than that which exists in this country at present. Can you imagine any other enterprise, never mind just in the Arts, where you're only allowed one shot at getting some form of success. And yet there it is, usually in heavy black type at the front of the publication 'Previously Unpublished Poems only'. Let's take painting. I'm not altogether sure how it works in the Art world but I've an artist friend who has exhibited his paintings all over London. He'd be completely baffled (he was, because I asked him) if he'd been told that no other Gallery would hang his work as he'd already shown it somewhere else. Or a photograph published in one magazine and never accepted elsewhere. How about music? Would a composer accept the fact that because the CBSO has played his work then no other orchestra would play it? Or a pop tune - played once on Radio Cumbria never to be played on Radio One. I know the group would sign for a label but that's like signing with an agent. The playwright who has had his or her work performed at the Birmingham Rep so the Royal Court won't look at it. Publishing novels at the same time is on a different scale and economically wouldn't make sense usually. Anyway, the point I'm trying to make is that restricting the method of publishing in the poetry magazines to previously unpublished works has two consequences. The first and minor one is that a lot of available space is filled by not very good poems. But the second consequence is crucial and it is that a really good, maybe great, poem might be published in a small magazine with a circulation in the dozens and that's it. Virtually certain to be lost forever unless spotted for an anthology and how likely is that? This is crazy. So what's the alternative? Obviously there still has to be a policy of printing new poems else it all stagnates but there must be the freedom to publish poems already published. This would emulate the pop charts at a

crude level. So in my best of all possible worlds a good poem would start to be published in lots of magazines all over the country and would be spotted by all sorts of readers. From there it would not be long before it would appear in anthologies which seem to be the stock in trade of Waterstones or Ottakars or whatever and then both readers of poetry and general readers would start to see the best of current poetry rather than stuff that's good but highly restrictive in origin. And it might well then encourage the general reader to hunt out where these poems originated from i.e. the poetry magazines. As a sort of experiment I tried to see how this would work in practice with a friend who loves reading novels but not usually poetry. I gave her a couple of poetry magazines to read through. After a time her eyes seemed to glaze over. She reckoned they were mostly a bit dull, a bit samey or she didn't understand them. I then gave her a copy of 'The Firebox' and the reaction was different. She liked a fair few of them and got pleasure from them. She liked the poems. The lesson is that good poetry works. This isn't about what is 'good'. That will take care of itself. The way it's published now is stifling it at birth.

<http://www.iotapoetry.co.uk/forum.htm>

*

Within its 130 pages ENVOI hosts 48 poets with over 150 poems between them, as well as reviewers Eddie Wainwright and Will Daunt. And there is a cutting crie-de-coeur article by Terry Quinn, THE PUBLISHING OF POETRY that should be printed, nay, blazoned on the forehead of every poetry editor in the land. It is about the nonsensical notion that lies behind the ridiculousness of the dreaded phrase, PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED POEMS ONLY. A practice that doesn't exist in other branches of the creative arts. This practice leads to the facts that

a lot of available space is filled by not very good poems, and a really good, maybe great, poem might be published in a small magazine with a circulation in the dozens and that's it. Virtually certain to be lost forever unless spotted for an anthology and how likely is that? This is crazy.

Perhaps Roger Elkin could spearhead Quinn's idea. Reprint and send this article to every poetry editor on the planet under the banner of SAVE OUR POETS FROM STAGNATION.

<http://www.geraldengland.org.uk/revs/mg005.htm>

*

Moira Richards mr@intekom.co.za

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Good News from THE KATRINA PAPERS

9 October 2005

Hank Lazer forwarded Jerry Ward's account of returning to the flooded city; Stroffolino answers with the HUD secretary's forecast that New Orleans would come back whiter. Katrina had joined his standing subject, the gentrifying of Black neighbourhoods.

In the thread, Henry A. Lazer had written · 9 October 2005 —

| *One of the more personal, specific accounts of the ongoing post-Katrina process.*

Jerry's point below needs to be echoed! Here's something from THE BAY VIEW

HUD Chief: "New Orleans is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again," Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson told the Houston Chronicle editorial board....

"I wish the so called Black leadership would stop running around this country, like Jesse and the rest of them, making this a racial issue," the HUD chief complained.....

Whereas New orleans' population before Katrina was 67 percent Black, Alphonso Jackson predicted that only 35 to 40 percent of the post-Katrina population would be black. "I'm telling you, as Hud secretary and having been a developer and a planner, that's how it's going to be," he said.

The article, "Gentrification through Genocide," is in 10/5 edition of Bayview www.sfbayview.com

And feel free to check out the Continuous Peasant New Orleans benefit song--it's called "where were you yesterday?" at www.myspace.com/continuouspeasant or at www.musicforamerica.org

It's free to listen to, but if you want to download it all monies will go to the Vanguard People's Hurricane Relief Fund (significantly, NOT the Red Cross)

The natural disasters that are now elements of a national tragedy persuade me to fight a repetition of the Reconstruction era and the nadir of African American experiences, to speak loudly against a replay of the Great Migration. Commitments must gradually erase the depression and periods of near-insanity that have afflicted me since August 29 2005. I must devote myself to the practice of civic virtue in New Orleans.

Jerry W. Ward, Jr.

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Call for Participation: 2 Factory School Textbooks

5 December 2005

Factory School's call for textbook help contained a word he had never met — "wiki" — and he fastens on it with un-embarrassed delight, launching a fortnight's thread that is half comedy of technophobia, half serious worry about what the machines are doing to culture.

In the thread, kuszai@FACTORYSCHOOL.ORG had written · 5 December 2005 —

assembling a wiki to coordinate the communal writing, editing and critique of the assembled materials.

Hey, WOW----seriously! I'm actually LEARNING something on the poetics thing, because in this case I think it can be SOLVED....

I never heard the word WIKI before----please illuminate! Thanks in advance, and more later

I haven't even read beyond that word yet---I can kind of get it from context I think---but am still really curious of that etymology-- (please forgive me for asking you rather than googling-- google the new dictionary/encyclopedia....etc etc...)

I think I could see myself in a WIKI

Chris

Call for Participation: 2 Factory School Textbooks

Please Forward Where Appropriate

Factory School is currently editing 2 textbooks for immediate production and use by students. We are also looking for other textbook ideas, are searching for potential editors and curators, and as part of that are assembling a wiki to coordinate the communal writing, editing and critique of the assembled materials. We have enough people to do this, but are hoping for others to come on board to accomplish the following:

1. expedited editing of materials for instructional purposes 2. textbooks must be sold at cost or nearly so to counter-act the corporate textbook scam 3. organizational modeling for future project work

Here are the two textbooks currently in process:

1. "Introduction to Literature"--assembled from the public domain, orphan texts, and more contemporary writers who've donated their works to the project. The goal is to write assemble a 10,000 page "open-source" textbook to be modified for local use. We need editors, contributors, as well as more and more advisors to allow us to muscle-past textbook committees who might see our project as threatening if not bizarre. "Is that a real textbook or did you make it yourself?"

2. "Pirates of the University: Campus Psychogeography and Free Culture Reader"--this book is what it sounds like, and is hopefully the project that folks on this list will be most prepared to help with developing. Since most of the writings involved are scattered, we're looking for suggestions on both of these topics, psychogeography and free culture, though it's not like we're ignorant of these topics. We're just looking for good examples of psychogeographical writings that we might not know of, as well

as good theoretical writings on them. Again, please forward any suggestions you may have. If we get duplicates, even better. This project is open should anyone like to get involved, and we're looking for referrals, especially to the writers involved, with whom we'd like to establish contact as soon as possible.

There are other projects on the horizon, and we are currently seeking proposals, and more information can be given: please write to me at kuszai at factoryschool.org or ossuary at factoryschool.org

Thanks for your time--

Joel Kuszai Pennsylvania, USA

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Wiki

6 December 2005

His plain question had drawn nothing back but links, and it stung; here he says so.

In the thread, K Welch had written · 6 December 2005 —

anyone interested in Wikis could benefit from spending an hour or two at Ward's Wiki.

I don't know---maybe it's just me, but it bums me out that I just ask a simple question and all I get in response are LINKS.

When people come up with their revisionist history of what went wrong with this list, that should probably one of the factors.

Sorry if I sound cranky--

Chris

In response to the chit-chat on Wikis on this list; the original Wiki is at c2.com <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WelcomeVisitors>>. Founded in 1995 by Ward Cunningham, it is mostly devoted to a certain style of software development. However, I found that "Ward's Wiki" also has a lot of good material on Wiki theory and practice, including a "one minute Wiki" <<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?OneMinuteWiki>> page. You can also find a list of available Wiki "engines" or programs. There are dozens and it turns out that its ridiculously easy to set one up, if you have access to a Unix server.

The site is dense and a little technical but I think that anyone interested in Wikis could benefit from spending an hour or two at Ward's Wiki.

-- K Welch scholarist@gmail.com

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Wiki

7 December 2005

*In the thread, Jonathan Penton had written · 6 December 2005 —**when giving factual answers to questions, let us not refer to experts, but use poetic license.*

Jonathan---

You may be right, but my point was not to single out your email nor to come out against "accuracy" and "factual answers"

It was seeing the offhanded easy way Joel had with that word WIKI (in this sentence)--

as part of that are

assembling a wiki to coordinate the communal writing, editing and critique of the assembled materials.

And---not even knowing it was a computer-related term. But even if I did know that it was a computer-related term, I still wouldn't know how specifically this particular Wiki would coordinate communal writing, etc.

So I guess I was conflating two of my ignorances, like if someone didn't know the term "JAZZ COMBO" and read the sentence, "we are assembling a JAZZ COMBO to coordinate the communal composing, playing and recording of the assembled materials" one might still be rather confused even if one looked up the word JAZZ COMBO or listened to all the Bix or Louis or Bird or Pres, etc.

The question still remains for me---how can a wiki assemble the communal writing, and more specifically how would Joel's or anybody else who might want to do something involving a wiki. Sure, to use my analogy, the "Jazz combo" is a template (or platonic essence?) that would be worth talking about and I suppose our link does a good job of that--- but would it really have been so hard for people to apply their own ideas of this concept to be put into practice in the here and now

Like there might be a significant difference between 1) "What does a JAZZ COMBO (or WIKI) do? and 2) "What does YOUR Jazz combo (or wiki) do?"

In answering the second, someone might then say---"well, it's not really a JAZZ combo because there's a harpsichord rather than a saxophone" or "because the music you play sounds more like what I call country&western than jazz"

And this could be an interesting conversation, and not mere "poetic license" but actually rather informative and even factual.

Thank you for your time....

Chris

Accuracy. It's a Satanic plot. From now on, when giving factual answers to questions, let us not refer to experts, but use poetic license.

Lesson learned,

-- Jonathan Penton <http://www.unlikelystories.org>

Murat Nemet-Nejat wrote:

This must be the internet version of form letters; form answers.

Ciao,

Murat

In a message dated 12/06/05 8:15:15 PM, cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET writes:

I don't know---maybe it's just me, but it bums me out that I just ask a simple question and all I get in response are LINKS.

When people come up with their revisionist history of what went wrong with this list, that should probably one of the factors.

Sorry if I sound cranky--

Chris

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drummer seeks musicians to play wiki

7 December 2005

kuszai gently ribs his refusal to click the links; the subject line — "drummer seeks musicians to play wiki" — is kuszai's, and better than most poems on the list that week.

In the thread, j. kuszai had written · 7 December 2005 —

| you "prefer not" to fill in some basics yourself by clicking on some links

Thanks Joel (and Jerrold and Catherine and others) for explaining this--

It's still confusing to me, but it just takes a while for these things to sink in (learn by doing, etc). So, thank you for your continued patience with me on this--

In other news, I can't even make mix-tapes for friends anymore coz everybody does the CD-burn thing. I know I shouldn't waste energy complaining about all this stuff, but sometimes I wonder if it's not accidental that 1) the rise of "attention deficit syndrome" parallels the rise of various new technologies in the 90s and 00s 2) a kind of cultural malaise in terms of creativity that many people feel in many of the arts (and entertainment 'fields') doesn't somehow relate to the acceleration of having to learn new tricks technologically just to not "fall behind" and be "invited to the table"

the computer people take more than just money off of us...?

Just wonderin'

Chris

Chris-- thanks, I appreciate what you are saying, even if I find that you "prefer not" to fill in some basics yourself by clicking on some links is a little odd, no eccentric. Goodness! You could make this a lot easier, my friend! I'm new to these things too, am not an advocate nor a futurist... I see it as a very simple and practical tool for doing something that might be done. My comment about wiki building was offhanded, and I'm sorry if it was too opaque, etc.--

It would be interesting to read a history of the desire for communal writing machines. I think of some of the performative ones that were in use in Albany, and places like UT Austin, with people like John Slatin, others, but of course I know it predates that to be sure... and being scared about provoking another attack of the auto-renga, I'll just line up behind the auto-thieves, who may see value in a particular model car, but are not necessarily interested in "promoting" it...

That said, here is an example, about what is so great about the wiki:

When you add a double bracket around something, it automatically becomes a link. There is nothing at that link (no page) until someone visits it and starts typing. When saved, it becomes a page. So, if I type, [[Chris Stroffolino]] in a wiki page, then save it, then click on it, then type your bio, etc., then save it, suddenly there is a page saved called "Chris_Stroffolino" and so forth. There are other ways to link, etc., especially to pages outside a wiki (note that that Chris_Stroffolino page would be "inside" the wiki, that is, saved in the database files on the server). Or something like that. I'm not really all that interested in that part, but just trying to make use of it, understand enough to do what I want to do...

Other features: each page has a "discussion" or "talk" page, which allows commentary about a page to live with, or behind, or next to, a "visible" page-- If you would visit Wikipedia and check out the "talk" -- you'll find the enormously significant ways in which discussion accompanies editing and writing of pages. Look at a controversial topic (Scooter Libby-related debates about balance and objectivity, for example, were fascinating, though I've not looked since for some time now) and you'll see what I mean...

Compare the way that "Wikipedia" organizes content and the way that the "Urban Dictionary" does, especially for words with multiple-user entries (while nephz has one jaun has many and many spellings) -- the difference between these two -- with Wikipedia working with disambiguation, the U.D. organizes them, by compiling the differences, not rectifying their meanings. While both have value, the structural possibilities offered by wiki are preferable for me in what I'm trying to do, what I want to use it for...

What else? It's easy to keep track and see what changes have been made; you can have a page contact you by email when it's updated (tracking), etc. and of course it's easy to lock-down pages as they're now doing at Wikipedia; a disappointing result. (They're also now talking about printing books, so I wonder how they plan to do that in terms of the community of labor that went into developing those pages)

And there is more, but this is starting to sound like an infomercial for wiki culture. Dan Weinstein, Ken Sherwood and I will be presenting a panel at Louisville XX Century Lit Conference, and this is going to come up as Dan is the person who introduced me to wikis. Ken will be talking about audio and podcasting, and I'll be

presenting my work on this kind of thing, though refracted through subcultural theory and council communism and a proposal for the systematic hausmanization of the poetics list...

Frankly, I'm shocked that given our ability to communicate, we aren't more "organized" than we might be. Our channels are fragmented, our interests atomized. I'm publishing my books but for WHAT? Perhaps I'm just swooning having seen Julie Herrada's awesome exhibit at UofM on the 100th anniversary of the IWW and thinking now about all the stuff we need to do to think through what the '56 Hungarian uprising might mean for us 50 years later. I'm embarrassed to have gotten less done, to have been more involved in what other people are doing, looking around and seeing all the rhetorical flourish but very little of substance in the way of material something. Look around, what institutions have we built? And not to be "pro-institution" But... And if we were going to build an institution, one that might threaten the viability of at least one wasteful, bullshit-producing corporation, why wouldn't we?

Sorry to go on so long-- I now have to run to a day of student conferencing, but I'm happy to continue this somewhere, so keep in touch--

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drummer seeks musicians to play wiki

8 December 2005

Bill Marsh had called the bluff: where, exactly, is this cultural malaise? The answer is the year's longest post, and its most sustained piece of thinking.

In the thread, Bill Marsh had written · 7 December 2005 —

| i'm wondering where you see or experience this "cultural malaise"

Hi Bill---

Thanks for writing--I think the crisis with underfunded schools and artist and entertainment types are very intertwined. Obviously, I'm somewhat ambivalent about the "new technology"---

(for instance, there was that satire in The Onion a few months back about the guy who finally broke down after 10 years and got a cell phone which he used to call up NPR from his car to decry the "loss of public spaces"---they got it down kinda brilliantly)

So yes sure I have to avoid the temptation to champion "primitive" luddite, or whatever else I may invoke as theories of "cultural decay" and be, uh, "nostalgic for a time before i was even born"

For looking at larger issues like the way the car and TV (more so than radio, I'd say--though to some extent TV was an "extension" of the radio) changed cultural life in America---and how the changes, after a brief, and exciting transitional period, have now become normalized, and now seeing the web similarly

normalized for many teens, it tends to render obsolete many identity-forming "standards" a previous generation may still appeal to.

For instance, in the mass-media of recorded music, there has been, along with the rise of the CD, the "death of the single," and the marginalization of the more autonomous (relatively speaking) "personality DJ" on the radio. The implications of this are too broad to go into here (and probably of not the most interest to a poetics list)---but people who grew up accepting these primary modes of cultural reproduction in that sphere find themselves groping to try to understand what exactly has replaced them (and many are fumbling around the web, etc).

Now, if one thinks (however "subjectively") that these older modes enabled a more vital cultural dialogue---as the baby boomer generation cultural critics are often fond of doing---that the art that was "allowed" to be more popular "once upon a time" was actually "better"---and that the mode of production enabled that. Not just because one could have a hit single with raw (CHEAPLY PRODUCED!) garage rock in 1966, but also because the single was less bulky than an album, or, later, people "UPGRADING THEIR ALBUM COLLECTIONS to CDS"---to, in effect, reify and rigidify a certain CANON you might say. Consumers in the 80s/90s became way more encouraged to "upgrade" their old album collections (bonus tracks were thrown in for the skeptics) than check out newer things. And there was more of a PROFIT margin for the record companies in doing this. The switch from singles to albums that took place in "pop music" in the 60s also became progressively more normalized, even as the "art rock" thing went back to the older mode of an album largely being a few "hits" with a good deal of "filler" (as in early motown albums), but in 1965, you didn't HAVE to get the album. By 1995, you did---and so "consumers" tried to subvert this with napster and such.

Anyway, similarly with schools---basically ever since brown v. board of education allegedly desegregated public schools, there have been attempts to de-fund public schools, although it took awhile for this movement to gain steam---the "reagan revolution" "school vouchers" etc. The analogy with the "music biz" (above) is only partially explained by racism--Privitization ends up becoming the bastard child of the Great Society when it comes to "higher education." The FLOWERING of "higher education" in the late 60s through the 80s, in which colleges were largely opened up to lower class whites, women, and "minorities" more than ever before at first, like the so-called DEMOCRATIZATION that pop-top 40 radio allowed around that same time, at first had great liberating potential. But soon, after the late 70s "student-loan" act (which allowed or maybe even "forced" the prices of colleges to go up), and people with BAs and MAs and even Ph.Ds now flooded the "marketplace" and the degrees became devalued (for many, an MA in

1990 was somewhat analogous to a highschool degree in 1960)---meaning access to the means of cultural production for both became equally limited.

When I say "cultural malaise" then, I don't mean that there isn't as much GREAT STUFF being produced today, whether intellectually, artistically or in the entertainment industry, but that it does seem, empirically, much more difficult for people to find it or to be heard as the mass media has a much smaller tolerance for eclecticism and difference than it once did. Conspiracy theories can come in handy here, but of course it's probably better to not let the question rest with "what went wrong" but rather try to figure out how this can be "subverted" or at least "changed". So, I keep coming up with quotes like "if a fool persists in his folly" or "I will never cease from mental fight"---but it can't be purely MENTAL, can it? At least not for me. Like what does the desire, and frankly, NEED, to shake things up---without losing a sense a fun--mean today? What can it mean today? Working one-on-one, seeking out individuals on, say, MYSPACE may not be the most efficient way of trying to build a network or coalition in the absence of vital local culture, or the absence of a "national promotional campaign" that allegedly understands the proper rules and is too often (whether in the field of books, music, teaching, etc) a form of censorship based on credentials and a fear of risk-taking. But it's definitely better than just sitting at home, or with a few friends at a bar, resigning ourselves to not being heard, which, for me, is ultimately a kind of selfish fear of GIVING--not that I want to go too far into the "death or glory" thing. I mean I like to QUIP and make fun of (almost to the point of discrediting) say Ezra Pound for saying he lose his center trying to fight the world, but the "cultural malaise" of which I speak is ONE with the idea of living in one of the RICHEST countries in the world and in which people whose city was destroyed by a hurricane are offered little to no help whatsoever. A Basic helplessness in part because the MEDIATORS have once again become more like WALLS than BRIDGES---despite some hopes after the slaves were "freed" that there could be "social progress."

It's precisely the myth of "social progress" that has engendered the reversion! Unfortunately, the web, like "upward mobility" promised by "white collar" jobs (and the myth of college), as well as the "revolutions" in the mode of productions in the entertainment industry, has based so much of its "aura" on such a myth of social progress, and even if it's ULTIMATELY not any worse than previous modes, it certainly isn't SOCIAL progress, at least not in and of itself. A tool perhaps, yes---but at what cost?

Okay, blah blah, Chris

chris,

i think boring school curricula is a better explanation for attention deficit

but seriously, i'm wondering where you see or experience this "cultural malaise" -- the bad thing about 'new technology' i think is definitely "having to learn" it but i see this as more of a problem for underfunded schools having to meet NCLB standards than for artist and entertainment types looking for new stimuli.

but in writing, publishing, for example, the museum is filled with bundles of high-tech tricks (techniques and practices and such) that writers, editors, publishers have had to learn in order to make it work the way we see it regularly w/o benefit of anything new to the 90s and 00s. a lot of that work has gone backstage to be sure, but it takes time/money/ resources all the same. what did it take, for example, to get invited to this poetics table and pick up a fork?

i'd love to have some of those mix-tapes, by the way. i'm giving my kids my old 4-track recorder so they can see what it looks like for sound to go somewhere.

cheers, bill

On Dec 7, 2005, at 2:52 PM, Chris Stroffolino wrote:

Thanks Joel (and Jerrold and Catherine and others) for explaining this--

It's still confusing to me, but it just takes a while for these things to sink in (learn by doing, etc). So, thank you for your continued patience with me on this---

In other news, I can't even make mix-tapes for friends anymore coz everybody does the CD-burn thing. I know I shouldn't waste energy complaining about all this stuff, but sometimes I wonder if it's not accidental that 1) the rise of "attention deficit syndrome" parallels the rise of various new technologies in the 90s and 00s 2) a kind of cultural malaise in terms of creativity that many people feel in many of the arts (and entertainment 'fields') doesn't somehow relate to the acceleration of having to learn new tricks technologically just to not "fall behind" and be "invited to the table"

the computer people take more than just money off of us...?

Just wonderin'

Chris

Chris-- thanks, I appreciate what you are saying, even if I find that you "prefer not" to fill in some basics yourself by clicking on some links is a little odd, no eccentric. Goodness! You could make this a lot easier, my friend! I'm new to these things too, am not an advocate nor a futurist... I see it as a very simple and practical tool for doing something that might be done. My comment about wiki building was offhanded, and I'm sorry if it was too opaque, etc.--

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Compare the way that "Wikipedia" organizes content and the way that the "Urban Dictionary" does, especially for words with multiple-user entries (while nephz has one jaun has many and many spellings) -- the difference between these two -- with Wikipedia working with disambiguation, the U.D. organizes them, by compiling the differences, not rectifying their meanings. While both have value, the structural possibilities offered by wiki are preferable for me in what I'm trying to do, what I want to use it for...

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drummer seeks musicians to play wiki

22 December 2005

Robert Corbett had floated a link between gender and the suspicion of new technology; Stroffolino recasts his own unease as generational, and bound up with class.

In the thread, mIEKAL aND had written · 22 December 2005 —

| Unless I'm mistaken, I believe people download music to listen to it.

Robert---

thanks for writing. I probably have at one time or another also thrown out the possible linkage between gender and technology suspicion---

it's definitely an idea worth exploring, and would, I think, relate to a LOT of other developments in the last 15-25 years

At present, I tend to feel it's more of generational (but not in the sense that one 55 year old, or even 100 55 year olds, who love the new technologies, could prove me wrong)---and also relating to class.

On a basic level, when you're 10 and it's clear IPODS, etc, are the rules, the ticket, what have you, and you never learned the older technologies, well, it doesn't come off as much of a time-wasting, money-wasting hassle....

Funny, how it used to be, "oh the young kids, they make too much noise or are too wild" ---whether it was the Bing Crosby parents reacting to their kids on Sinatra, or the Sinatra parents with their British Invasion kids or the hippie parents with their punk kids...."

Now, it's more about modes of technology

As typewriters and turntables and toaster ovens whine on the isle of misfit toys....

awaiting the foggy xmas eve or "second coming" blah-di-blah....

basically, i can't criticize ANYBODY for doing it---

and may HAVE to do it myself someday real soon...

but I should've responded to ZERVOS' email a while back about the IPOD heralding the return of the single....

I mean, I can see that point in a way but it still falls short of the sense of public space if taken by itself

Of course, it does seem it might be helping marginalize the impact of MTV as one form of large scale corporate arbitration,

but the point is the INDIE labels, the musician with little or no money to spend on promotion, has been at a huge disadvantage under both the regime of MTV and the regime of the IPOD

and this wasn't as true in the golden era of the 45RPM single (not that there was ever a level playing field, but it was closer....)

C

Chris,

I want to second you in your discomfort with all the new technologies (not all of them all that new--the computer industry's most recent innovations have mostly been in pr). As someone who is trying to convert vinyl into .mp3s--because, dears, there is music not in that most holy of formats--I get irritated by how much technology gets in the way of doing things. I could start a rant about a certain software company, but I won't. And I really like wiki. It just seems really cool, though it really is for consensus based documents (i.e. like a Constitution) and not creative and/or polemic ones (i.e. a Manifesto).

But I do find myself, contrarily, behind the curve on some of these changes. I do not have a .mp3 player. I don't really see the sense in downloading music, except for the purposes of archiving. And it goes further. I am wondering whether others on the list think that suspicion of technology in this sense is gendered male, in some sense. I am not sure, but I don't believe I have ever met a woman who took offense at changes in technology. And by this I don't mean, didn't change their ways. I mean was snarky about it. Perhaps I am wrong, but it's my sense that certain curmudgeonly attitudes about technology--which I have by the way--are male attitudes, by and large.

Agree? Disagree?

Chris Stroffolino <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> wrote: Thanks Joel (and Jerrold and Catherine and others) for explaining this--

It's still confusing to me, but it just takes a while for these things to sink in (learn by doing, etc). So, thank you for your continued patience with me on this---

In other news, I can't even make mix-tapes for friends anymore coz everybody does the CD-burn thing. I know I shouldn't waste energy complaining about all this stuff, but sometimes I wonder if it's not accidental that 1) the rise of "attention deficit syndrome" parallels the rise of various new technologies in the 90s and 00s 2) a kind of cultural malaise in terms of creativity that many people feel in many of the arts (and entertainment 'fields') doesn't somehow relate to the acceleration of having to learn new tricks technologically just to not "fall behind" and be "invited to the table"

the computer people take more than just money off of us...?

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Chris

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drummer seeks musicians to play wiki*23 December 2005*

The thread closes where his two vocations meet — the broke bandleader's case for web distribution set beside the poet's gift-economy. A fitting last word for the year he became, more than ever, a musician.

*In the thread, Jonathan Penton had written · 23 December 2005 —
 | the difference between tools and toys*

Hey Jonathan and Robert

Well, what I say isn't necessarily going to clarify anything but rather my own ambivalence about the new technology--- my "guilty until proven, well, if not innocent, at least useful" and, yes, for me, right now, the jury is still out.

But, even though I agree with a lot of Robert's criticisms, I also see Jonathan's points as a consumer as well, and since my perspective right now is more as a producer than a consumer, I'll supplement some of J's defenses of ipod, etc with a possible defense from the "production" side.

For a band with limited economic resources, who is more interested in having the recordings of their songs heard than doing live shows-- i.e. who maybe is appealing to the "closet" listener, the suburban teen who is too young to go be able to go to many of the bars where "unestablished" acts tend to play (failing the "all ages" show, which is usually associated with a narrower range of music), and who, because of living with a parent or maybe two, may have more expendable cash--- well, for these people the internet downloading may be a very useful tool---

For as Jonathon says, for many Radio is not as vital of an option as it once was. Even college radio tends to get a lot of its taste dictated to it by magazines like Pitchfork---and there's a lot of places in the USA where you can't even get college radio. And many of the bigger so-called "indie" labels still larely operate on a kind of payola system. Sure, there's the "local scenes" and one can definitely still reach people that way-- but again not so much the teens--and if one is interested in getting recordings of one songs circulating, perhaps the web can be useful. It's a slow process, and involves rethinking one's way of getting songs out there, but to make some songs available for free downloads may still have longterm benefits. Some indie labels are really against this because immediate profit matters more than longterm grassroots fan-base building, but that could be "penny wise, pound foolish" perhaps--- Well, compared to the economy of being a poet, in which one gives away one's work for free and then is guilt-tripped into "donating" on top of that, because "the bestest poetry doesn't have market value" (but if you write enough of it, YOU as person will have market value)--

Anyway, compared to the "poet" economy, the getting the songs out there through the web (and just signing up for IODA or other digital downloading

services---but actively seeking individuals through the web), may---perhaps--be a way for a somewhat independent artist to subvert the taste making mediators. I know I've been able to turn at least some people in places it would be EXTREMELY expensive for me to try to TOUR on to some of my music---places like Nebraska, Glasgow, Brazil, etc--- and even sometimes down the block. And that gives me a little hope-- if not even "beer money" as of yet--but it's still early, the jury's still out, and I'm still searching for any means possible.

Chris

Hi Robert,

I was going to respond to your analysis of iPods with a very foolish comment about "the difference between tools and toys," but I was saved by visiting a filmmakers' board today, where a student was talking about his new way of learning films: since he has given up on finding useful data from Hollywood, he instead goes to school, plugs in his iPod, downloads hundreds of megs in independent free film, and watches and studies them at home, on that tiny screen, at his convenience. I do something similar at cafes with wireless, as a fan, but I'm not trying to run Premiere. He needs a desktop.

Myself, I need a CD writer and PC; I use them as tools. Free with these tools comes the ability to record, for myself, an unlimited amount of music. In many places, the ability to learn about new music from the radio or clubs is negligible, and I simply can't afford to pay industry prices for music on a regular basis. (And, yes, if Bob Dylan ever falls into abject poverty as a result of my actions, rest assured I'll try to help.)

That's not in argument with your points, of course. Neither the CD writer's value to me nor the iPod's value to that film student constitute a revolution. (The only statement you made that I would object to is your dissatisfaction with CD-Rs, as I am not aware of any sound recording technology, available to the public, that was particularly resilient to wear.) Of course technology is a mess. Technology will always be a mess, and there are always those who, as a result of fetishizing technology, will enjoy that mess; namely, they will enjoy their ability to acquire useless items that no one else yet has. And, because of this very large and strong market, we put up with many substandard products; it's likely the film student I mentioned would vastly prefer an iPod that would last as long as your speaker system (and I'm betting your speaker system is far more physically attractive). And yes, that is infuriating. On the other hand, a few decades ago, these fetishistic personalities were buying bigger and less efficient internal combustion engines as a manner of competing with one another. I would prefer they screw up our .mp3 technology than our everything.

I think we might be using different meanings of the word "culture." To me, a culture and its technology is inextricable, and to refer to the "wisdom" of a culture is almost tautological: could we generate wisdom from /outside/ of our culture? And if not, are not our wisdom and our technology rooted together?

Yours, -- Jonathan Penton <http://www.unlikelystories.org>

Robert Corbett wrote:

I am simply commenting that downloading music is not the most intuitive way to listen to it, to me, particularly new music. Better the radio, the club, and the music store. Downloading music, even when I did do it, was about searching for tracks that I knew of but couldn't find or didn't want the whole album. And that was primarily to make mix CDs.

I have found that, like a lot of computer applications to culture, what first seems like an interesting and perhaps more instant-gratification-y delivery system turns into a way of getting work at less than the best quality, in usually fairly fragile formats--CD-Rs like minidisks have a disturbing habit of breaking down quite quickly. To avoid all these problems, then, requires an investment in capital, which doesn't guarantee that you can preserve the music, as you can with a vinyl record (and so far, CDs), since the recording formats tend to change--the better for fidelity, of course, but also requiring more capital for playback--or be proprietorial. It's a mess in other words.

Let's look at the IPOD. Since it is made by Apple, I think we can have some faith that it will last and that the formats won't exclude old players, but the machines are small and easily lost and easily smashed. And they have not as yet eclipsed traditional component systems in reproductive fidelity, even less in their ability to play different formats of recorded music. Yet they cost as much as a decent receiver that will last (mine has) 15 or 20 years or more. What is the revolution here? To me it is one in marketing and consumer electronics, not in fidelity or even portability.

The main thing (and the best thing) about digital applications to music and culture more broadly is their ability to archive and extend the reach of the library. That is a good thing, but to herald it as some sort of break or disruption is to ignore the fact that technology does not and has never driven culture, except in allowing cultural applications of new technologies. Culture, older, based on experience and tradition--dare I say, wisdom--handed down, always trumps technology. This is no different for the e-mailing list, which to me is a virtual salon; blogs, in which everybody becomes their editorial columnist; and wiki, which allows collective, consensus driven documents (i.e. encyclopedias and other reference tools) to be created without a publisher. None of these is a new form, just old wine in newer, shinier, cheaper bottles. It is mistake often made since the rise of personal computers to parrot what the marketers and engineers would like to believe, that somehow a "change" has occurred, but to me that is simply part of the usual wankery that happens in late capitalism about new gadgets, mostly in the service of getting "bank." The old rules, mostly, still apply.

Jonathan Penton <unlikely@NATISP.COM> wrote: Most commonly. Sometimes people download music to remix it, but they've usually listened to it first.

-- Jonathan Penton <http://www.unlikelystories.org>

mIEKAL and wrote:

Unless I'm mistaken, I believe people download music to listen to it.

On Dec 22, 2005, at 6:04 PM, Robert Corbett wrote:

I don't really see the sense in downloading music, except for the purposes of archiving.

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2006

The year the list becomes his study of Laura (Riding) Jackson and his seminar on class: 2006 opens with him defending Riding's late bitterness to Charles Bernstein and closes, on Christmas Day, with James Brown. In between—two years after the accident—he answers thread upon thread from a wheelchair and a rented Bay Area room, brokering quarrels between the street and the academy he always claimed to fall between, and folding pop songs into everything.

Recommended Riding

4 January 2006

Charles Bernstein's roundup of new Laura (Riding) Jackson titles gives him his opening; he reviewed the Friedmann biography himself, and Riding will be the year's presiding spirit.

Yeah, I second the Friedmann bio (I wrote a review of it in a Poetry project newsletter last year)

The Riding reader is probably not a bad place to start for those who can't find the many out of print texts....

And thanks for letting me know about the "Mind's Watch"---didn't realize it was out.

though when I read the phrase, 'the most substantial collection from this period apart from Rational meaning," I still feel The Telling gets slighted

Chris

The Poems of Charles Reznikoff: 1918-1975, ed. Seamus Cooney (Boston: Black Sparrow/David Godine), 2005. Reprints the 2-vol 1989 Black Sparrow edition, but the text is reset and repaginated, there are a few corrections, the notes have been revised, there is a new biographical chronology, and Reznikoff's short and key essay, "First, there is the need" has been appended. Full review of this book at: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

* There are several new books of interest by and about Laura Riding:

Elizabeth Friedmann, A Mannered Grace: The Life of Laura (Riding) Jackson (New York: Persea, 2005)

The Laura (Riding) Jackson Reader, ed. Elizabeth Friedmann, (New York: Persea, 2005): a thoughtfully selected and substantial sampler of the full range of the work, including the full text of The Telling, & about 40 pages of the poems (I would have preferred to see more).

Laura (Riding) Jackson, Under the Mind's Watch: Concerning Issue / Of Language, Literature, Life / Of Contemporary Bearing, ed. John Nolan and Alan J. Clarke (Oxford & Bern: Peter Lang, 2005). A collection of unpublished essays from the 60s and 70s, assembled by (Riding) Jackson, the most substantial collection from this period apart from Rational Meaning.

Laura Riding, Mindscapes: Poemas, Selected, translated into Portuguese, and introduced by Rodrigo Garicia Lopes (Sao Paulo: Editora Iluminuras, 2004). 150 pages of the poems in bilingual facing pages, followed by a short section of commentary by Samuels, Friedmann, Jacobs, Nolan, Rothenberg/Joris, Clark, Bernstein, Billitteri/Friedlander.

Charles Bernstein

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Riding (Jackson) & Stein

5 January 2006

Bernstein has drawn a line from the young Riding's admiration of Stein to the sourness of her later verdicts; Chris rises to defend the sourness as principle rather than spite.

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 5 January 2006 —

| Later in her life her comments become more reductive and bitter.

There's an interesting account of the break between these two writers in *A MANNERED GRACE*, a break in the friendship (over a misunderstanding and implicit charges of anti-semitism) as well as over different approaches to language and writing.

That Riding was drawn in the mid-twenties (and in her mid twenties) to Stein, 26 years older than her, especially the Stein of "C as E", is probably no more relevant to Riding, and (Riding) Jackson's own writing, than her strategic employment of e.e.cummings against such snob modernists as Eliot, Pound, etc. around that time. At best they could provide points of entry for a reader---since Stein, nowadays at least is far more accepted than Riding and (Riding) Jackson. But, in defense of the "reductive and bitter" later comments on Stein, for me part of the point is to challenge a mode of talking about literature that OVERPLAYS that relationship, and literary "affiliations"---like people saying "oh Stein rescued Riding from the stuffy Fugitives" (or anthologists "representing" Riding by "Elegy in a Spider's Web," because it seems most "Stein-like"). From the 1920s up until her death in 1991, (Riding) Jackson took on various sacred cows of various and/or successive literary (among other) establishments, not simply the names or "figures" but also of modes of reading them that have become entrenched. One of these is to stress superficial, or seeming similarities, stylistically. Since both detractors and supporters of Stein had come to stress such similarities with Riding, it became important for (Riding) Jackson, in the service of clarity, and of dialogue (how many "literary" writers have taken the care to respond so in depth and intimately to her detractors as she?-- and then be called a "bitch" for it to boot?), to stress the differences. I think many such comments have to be read in light of (Riding) Jackson's larger challenge to literature, rather than in terms of equally reductive side-takings in a courtroom drama.

One doesn't necessarily have to agree that Stein's writings are being SINGLED OUT as especially "products of a pathological condition," to consider from what perspective that would be true, and what, if any, could be an alternative....

What is meant by "witness for the prosecution" in Charles' paragraph? Who is prosecuting whom? What is prosecuting what? And as a courtroom materializes, one could wonder about defendants, juries and judges, and the role playing involved...

Chris Stroffolino
www.continuouspeasant.com

www.myspace.com/continuouspeasant

**The Telling* (30pp.) is included in the *The Laura (Riding) Jackson Reader*. That work remains of great importance to me too. I don't know about any other plans for other (Riding) Jackson publications. Despite her early connection to (and friendship with) Stein, Riding rightly viewed her work in sharp contrast to Stein's. In some ways it is one of the clearly demarcation of the difference of what I call first- and second-wave modernism; Riding is certainly one of the most striking poets of the second-wave (as indeed are Reznikoff, Zukofsky, and Riding's friend Hart Crane, etc.). Riding (Jackson) first discusses Stein, quite brilliantly, in *Contemporaries and Other Snobs* (1928). Later in her life her comments become more reductive and bitter. One particularly unpleasant example, "The Word Play of Gertrude Stein," is in the new collection of later writings, *Under the Mind's Watch,* where (Riding) Jackson says that Stein's writings "were early products of a pathological condition." Nonetheless, as with all of (Riding) Jackson's work, her "witness for the prosecution" approach is incisive in its delineation of certain philosophical and aesthetic (you might even say theological) fault lines for modernist (and contemporary) poetry.*

Charles Bernstein <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein>

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Riding (Jackson) & Stein

6 January 2006

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 5 January 2006 —

For (Riding) Jackson, after 1938, the "crime" would be poetry, or poetic artifice, including her own.

Thanks Charles for writing back

After 1938, the "crime," however, would not be that she devoted much of say 1922-1938 to the writing of poetry, including her own-- (and in my opinion, there's more there than in many who devote their entire writing life almost exclusively to poetry or verse; it's not like the "renunciation" truly invalidated those accomplishments in an absolute way for her, yet quite a few take the fact of that as an excuse to limit and devalue a "body of work" (in what could be recognized as

"poetry" even)---sorry for that awkward term--at least as significant as any in the 20th century (for instance).

The "crime" (on perhaps a broader level) could also be ELECTRICITY which she, in a sense, renounced around the same time as she stopped writing "poetry" (the two actions are very related, but the electricity is not talked about so much, at least in "poetry circles")

For me at least, despite the so called "official" versions, much of the writing that (Riding) Jackson did since 1938 I turn to for many of the same reasons I turn(ed) to what's called poetry---the feeling and thinking, and it doesn't lack "artifice" though there's a sense of liberation along with rigor. And before 1938, the generic status of "poetry" or what is, and/or should be, called that--is written about variously

For those who are not willing to let go of the term poetry as the ultimate writerly good, (Riding) Jackson offers ways to redefine it throughout---to in a sense save it from what it has, institutionally, become. And this is as evident in the writing she, and others, call poetry as much as it is in her writing (both before and after 1938) that is NOT called that...

(much more to say, to write...)

Chris

What is meant by "witness for the prosecution" in Charles' paragraph? Who is prosecuting whom? What is prosecuting what?

For (Riding) Jackson, after 1938, the "crime" would be poetry, or poetic artifice, including her own. There is not greater Prosecutor.

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Between his replies to Bernstein he spends the second of his two allotted posts of the day correcting a single word in the first, then apologising for the correction. It is a small habit but a telling one; all year he keeps sheepish watch over his own typos on a list that rationed everyone to two posts a day.

Recommneded Riding (1/16)

16 January 2006

Days after the exchange with Bernstein and Dave Baratier petered out, on what would have been Riding's 105th birthday, he posts the private journal questions it left him with.

Today would have been Laura (Riding) Jackson's 105th birthday, so I just thought I'd share some of these journal thought/questions I wrote after my little truncated

dialogue with Dave Baratier and Charles Bernstein on this list last week (the first paragraph refers, briefly, to two other threads from this list a few weeks back....)

Chris

Do you want to wage war over the meaning of the word ³poetry² with the editors of the Chicago magazine ³Poetry: A Magazine of Verse²? Or the curators of the Chicago alternative shindig, from poetry to verse? Or with Charles Bernstein for that matter who considers ³poetry² as a defendant and a writer like Laura (Riding) Jackson a ³witness for the prosecution?²

Does it seem that Bernstein, in claiming to side with ³poetry,² characterized as the defendant, is a witness for those who are prosecuting a case against Laura (Riding) Jackson in the name of ³poetry²? And what is this ³poetry² for which he speaks? Is it YOUR poetry? (and if it's not, is he, along with the Chicago poetry/verse folks, prosecuting a case against YOU?)

And if it is, does it need to be so spoken for, defended? Can it be DEFINED? (and what is the relationship between defining and defending?)

Does Shelley's or Sidney's famous defenses defend it? Does Whitman's anonymously printed self-reviews defend it? Does Baraka's ³Hunting Is Not Those Heads On The Wall²? Do Riding's statements that criticize the limits imposed on what was called poetry by many in her day (from the 1920s up until her death in 1991), whether ³modernist² or not, define it? Is there a wall separating freedom from poetry?

Do you think verse is much easier to define (if not necessarily to defend) than poetry? And, if so, is poetry only valuable as verse?

To what extent is freedom disparaged by what's called poetry? It's clearer for the formalists, but for those who claim NOT to be formalists, or who engage in a more moderate formalism (allowing a modicum of freedom in the form of ³hybrid texts² etc), to what extent is ³ask not what poetry can do for ^{FLG}or as ^{FLG}you, but ask what you can do for poetry² a statement you agree with?

Then there's quotes like these ³but if you're gonna call people like Robert Frost a poet, then I got to say this gas station boy was too² (taken out of context from a 1965 Bob Dylan press-conference interview) around which a really interesting essay could be written.

NOW, HOLD IT, Here I am imagining like I got some kind of public forum---this Buffpo list! I don't. Bernstein briefly came down here to debate a little, then quietly left me with the last word, and a (temporary) feeling of inconsequence, of ³squandered energy² insofar as poetry is a social medium. But I guess that's okay if I have no reputation to defend. And even if I did, any defense would have no

meaning unless it was also a creating in its own right, whether or not such creation is called poetry, or ³glorified² with the fetishised term poetry.

To ³break the spell of poetry² is to de-fetishize the term whose shackles may be aesthetically shiny, or even gloriously grimy, but insofar as poetry is a non-pejorative term employed or deployed to designate a writing activity, to what extent is a defense of it necessary?

If it can't be defined (even as ³that which can't be defined²), at least in any absolute way, that doesn't mean it can't be defended. But if you choose to defend poetry, especially if you're defending it as ³that which can't be defined,² what are you defending it against? And can whatever you're defending really be called poetry? Or, you're going to claim ³REVOLUTION² and offer more of the same dressed in shiny new snake oil vocabulary or syntax, are you any better or worse than those who don't claim to be revolutionary?

Chris

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Favorite Poetry Readings: RSVP

16 January 2006

Alex Saliby had pronounced most readings a bore and poetry no performance art; K Zervos counters with Australian sound-poetry that won over a rock festival. Chris, a habitual improviser at the microphone, takes the whole quarrel as a dare.

*In the thread, K Zervos had written · 16 January 2006 —
| The poetry dedicated crowd at La Mama loved it.*

Okay, I'll jump into this one a little.... (though I have way too many thoughts to adequately represent here)

While I don't entirely agree with Alex Saliby (for instance, I've always found Creeley to be an excellent performer if not exactly "reader"), like Alex (and many others I've talked to), I do generally tend to find about 90% of poetry readings I've attended to be pretty boring.

(however since I go to less now than I used to--- which of course means I don't get asked to read as much as I used to-- that percentage has decreased---maybe only about 60% I now find boring)

Yet, the conclusion that I draw from this, for me, existential fact, is not that poetry IS NOT a performance art.

Rather, I take it as a challenge--

If, for instance, one likes, loves, even NEEDS, poetry on the page, the intensities that occur in reading and writing in "a room of one's own" (or at least a cafe),

what is the purpose of a poetry reading of this kind of work that, on paper and in solitude, can seem very liberating or vivifying?

I think it is, for the most part, an under-explored question. Or that there's an etiquette/protocol based on the assumption that somehow reading from what essentially amounts to a "PREPARED SPEECH" in a gallery, bar, etc., whether seated at a desk or standing, in a church-like quiet, with the occasional chuckle perhaps, is going to somehow come close to evoking what the book does.

Or that anybody who would even hope or expect that the performance would do anything like this is, frankly, unrealistic. The assumptions that the "reading" is somehow secondary to 1) the after reading party and 2) the book you're then supposed to take home color most readings with a "life is elsewhere" feeling.

It's one of the reasons that in my own readings (starting from around 1998) I began to READ less and less of my poetry, and IMPROVISE far more-- going around the room, asking questions, inviting heckling, needling the audience, changing tones, using stand-up comedy, dialogue pieces, perhaps even playing a song (if there's a piano) and THEN after clearing away a lot of the GUCK, that detritus, "breaking down the fourth wall," reading a SERIOUS poem VERY VERY slowly---just one or two perhaps-- but in general I've found I've REACHED more people and more profoundly this way--- Sure, some of these experiments have been more successful than others. That's the risk of such performances, but even though I've had some "purists" object to what I'm doing, or who say "I'm selling my self short" perhaps (on the ground that they think it's making a mockery of my work or something), I still feel it's worth it, and comes closer to the sense of intimate confrontation I find in my favorite writing on the page.

For if people want to READ THE POETRY ON THE PAGE, which, yes, sure, I'd like them to do, well, they can always see the linguistic subtleties THERE-- I don't ALWAYS need to try to replicate that in performance. Sometimes I'll still do the "Straight" reading (or at least my version of the straight reading) but even in the best of those I've attended as an audience there's this sense of A WASH OF WORDS that can drown or floor--- (and the linguistic subtleties don't come through no matter how drab a monotone one reads in---therefore why not have some fun with it?)

One way to cope with this (as audience member) is to take notes, or to stand near the back of the room and allow oneself to sway--

Yet if, say, three people are reading, and there was a GREAT LINE by poet # one that really blew you away, by the time the event is over it's sometimes very hard to remember just what that was---

I'd really love it if more poets and venue-curators considered re-evaluating the standard poetry reading format.

I've curated some readings where I only let a poet read for like 5 minutes and then let people in the audience interact with that poet, and then move on. That's one possible way. Many others....

Then of course there's the big problem that for the most part only poets go to alot of these readings, and the way this changes the performance itself.

Luckily, there's some exceptions---

Last night, I happened to go to a performance hosted by East Bay writer Kaya Oakes, who wrote an essay a few years ago called "Why Poetry Readings Suck," and who I'm told will shortly be publishing her first book of poetry on Dave Baratier's PAVEMENT SAW Press (which, for the sake of full disclosure, published my first book, 11 years ago). It was a lot of "personal essays," "cultural criticism" kind of stuff combined with poetry---and it worked very well as a combination of informal and formal. Particularly the reading by Stefanie Kalem and poet Jeff Johnson---both spoke directly to an audience, in a non-specialized way, and when Jeff read two linguistically sophisticated poems in between his two informal stories, even if they might have "gone over the head" of some of the audience, they had an emotional impact that the framing devices helped bring forth, and showed that, yes, there can be a place for what might be called poetry, outside the "self-satisfied" (but secretly frustrated) inwardly oriented pseudo-consensus of the sub-sub-coteries.

Chris

One closing point, I confess, I never think of poetry as "performance" art. More to the point, I don't view reading as a performance skill...just a short-coming in my upbringing I imagine. Alex

----- Original Message -----

*Thinking of poetry as performance, but not necessarily separating the poem from its performance, I would appreciate it if Poetics subscribers (*lurkers alert!*) would provide a list of the poetry readings that you most valued over the past few years. If possible (though hardly necessary!), please provide a description of the style of performance or performances and also discuss what you particularly valued about the reading or readings.*

Charles Bernstein

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Poetry Foundation Article

30 January 2006

The list is up in arms over the Ruth Lilly bequest to Poetry and the new Poetry Foundation; amid calls for petitions and cries of a 'sea of mediocrities,' Chris worries less about the enemy than about how the enemy might contrive to paint them as the cops.

In the thread, furniture_press had written · 30 January 2006 —

| Can there be a call to petition this outrage?

Yeah, and we gotta do it smart, and with a sense of fun.

When the Beats helped "open up" poetry in the 50s and turned new people onto it, the stuffy snobs of the day (somewhat analogous to the Lilly/Poetry folks of today) showed their true colors in reaction. Today, the dynamics might be a little different. So the cautionary tale I get from this for today, assuming we could get some major media attention, would be to try to be aware of how they might be able to present US rather than THEM as the Poetry Cops, and paint us into a corner, or have us paint ourselves into a corner. I think brainstorming on some ways to avoid this risk would be important. The story about how the LILLY people approached THE POETRY PROJECT to try to get some of THEIR money, I think, is very telling, and could be strategically used to show what they are on about.....

More later---I gotta run...

Solidarnos, Chris

Kudos to Ray. I'm also very pleased to see that Steve Evans is taking on this subject in The Baffler. What we need, however, is a major major venue. Maxine Chernoff

Quoting Haas Bianchi <saudade@COMCAST.NET>:

What I find interesting is that no one is challenging the "poetry" Foundation to justify the cash they waste and why the poetry community does not organize to challenge what they are doing?

Just think about this statistic for the same amount that they just spent to research why Americans do not read poetry they could have endowed 10 small presses for five years.

With all the money they have they could have supported reading series in rural and suburban America where poetry does not exist.

They could have provided hundreds of scholarships for the education of poets.

They could have created a place where poetry could have its own institution like the National Science Foundation Giving out grants to poets to do important work.

The problem is that the PF is a sea of mediocrities, Billy Collins lovers-- give me a break Kay Ryan is a great poet? What a crock

Ray

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NEGLECTORINSKI (Nilesen/Vincent)*5 February 2006*

The 'Neglectorino' game of naming overlooked poets has mutated into a real argument between Aldon Nielsen and Stephen Vincent over 'theory,' 'translation' and cultural insularity; Chris steps in to keep the left from dividing against itself.

Hey, thanks for the Italian-American props everybody, but i thought I'd change up the suffix of this ever expanding thread's subject heading...

Anyway, more importantly, I wanted to at least make a nod to this very interesting debate that is developing between Aldon and Stephen.

I don't have time right now to get too deep into this, but I wanted to say that I think that these two positions need not be opposed---. I personally found myself agreeing with much of what Stephen said, and feel that potential strategies for what can be done today in the face of the "legacy of cultural insularity" and the Reagan reaction to much of the cultural opening of which Stephen speaks is something that needs to be confronted more than believe it currently is on the "left" etc...

At the same time, I agree with Aldon that positing the issue as "translation" vs. "theory" (one being good, one being not so good) itself could be as much a manifestation of this "insularity" as Stephen claims the move toward "theory" itself is. There's the danger of once again, the "divided left" syndrome, which is itself a legacy of the "counter culture" vs. "labor" divisions that were manifested (and exploited by Reagan, or before him Nixon, etc) in the 1960s.

What would be needed would be at least a coalition (respectfully aware of the differences of course) of "translation" and "theory" as the terms are operating in this Nielsen/Vincent debate---but I think Stephen raises some bigger existential questions that go beyond this particular debate. Especially worth singling out in Stephen's quotes is the legacy of DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS (or as Jello Biafra put it in the late 1980s--- STAY IN YOUR HOMES!) and this ending, which I'll quote again

instead of an openness to "otherness" - and all the

adventure, risk, and, occasionally, the wonderful embarrassing stupidities that may occur within this realm - we are back to an age, it appears, of paranoia and surveillance - one in which 'we' may live in fear (for politics and/personal association) of being perceived by those in authority as being a dangerous "other."

I think I can quote this favorably, without necessarily siding against Aldon and his position---I.e. "theory" (as Aldon figures it) does not have to be opposed to what Steven is saying. It CAN be, and sometimes (maybe OFTEN) is used as a form of self-policing, but it NEED not be. Conversely, one NEED not "take it to streets"

like, say, the young Abbie HOFFMAN in order to be open to such "embarrassing stupidities" of which Vincent speaks....

Sometimes I feel when I go on like this I'm being 1) TOO obvious 2) too "utopian" (it's "easier said than done")

but unless this stuff is talked about, and a better understanding is arrived, so many of the "best minds of my generation" will not be allowed to contribute to the betterment of cultural life, and instead will continue to fall through the crack of the various "open minded" authorities as, for instance, "too much of a 'street poet' for the LANGUAGE POETS and too much of a 'LANGUAGE POET' for the 'street poets'"---to give but one example of this insular legacy caused by a large number of cultural practices ostensibly beyond our control....

"beyond our control" in the sense of "in SOMEONE ELSE's control" not that we could "take control" per se, but at least to debunk theirs---

Chris

Stephen --

I have to say I'm one of those who would have a lot of questions about how "theory" is working in your hypothesis -- as I've been mentioning in recent writings, I'm hardly alone in having to come to issues in theory such as questioning of the Cartesian subject and rebellion against the insularity of the New Criticism via readings of Fanon, Baraka, C.L.R. James etc. -- In the current "culture wars," the right has taken pretty much the opposite tack from what you conjecture, arguing that "theory" and an interest in "suspect" cultural diversity went hand in hand--

On Sun, 05 Feb 2006 10:21:07 +0000, Stephen Vincent wrote:

....So we all know Neruda, but few are aware of Zurita, an astonishing Chilean poet, for instance.

A neglected US poet in my own estimation, I nonetheless think that this parochialism is a bigger issue--there's more to learn, and not just about poetry, by diving into these cultures.

I suspect part of this 'parochialism' is a Regan through the current Bush legacy of cultural insularity. Imagine, beginning with Regan, a the chorus for children was "Don't talk to strangers." Tho aimed at potential kidnappers, it was metaphoric of the time (concurrent, for example, with anti-immigrant initiatives - i.e., "don't speak Spanish"), a way of demonizing "the other" - now carried over to Muslims, etc.

This contrasts with the Sixties where the momentum was the opposite - "we" left home as quickly as possible. To know, be among, join with "the other" was the challenge, excitement, etc. It was, parenthetically, a time in which many poets took up the challenge of translation, Latin American poets much among the translated.

By the 80's - and I am probably going out on a limb here - the interest went to "theory" as the new "other." Interest and reciprocation, domestically, for example, in and with

"linguistic empty" if it were not for the theoretical power of the writings of Franz Fanon among others. I am totally with Aldon there.

My appeal, I believe, is more to the pragmatics - what to do - in the dialog with the 'other' - particularly now in the face of an Administration intent on defining and eliminating 'the other' as 'evil', etc. "I mean, boys, do we really need the old New Orleans? Katrina wasn't all that bad," etc.

Mud in your (our) eye.

Stephen V

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and/personal association) of being perceived by those in authority as being a dangerous "other."

I think I can quote this favorably, without necessarily siding against Aldon and his position---I.e. "theory" (as Aldon figures it) does not have to opposed to what Steven is saying. It CAN be, and sometimes (maybe OFTEN) is used as a form of self-policing, but it NEED not be. Conversely, one NEED not "take it to streets" like, say, the young Abbie HOFFMAN in order to be open to such "embarrassing stupidities" of which Vincent speaks....

Sometimes I feel when I go on like this I'm being 1) TOO obvious 2) too "utopian" (it's "easier said than done")

but unless this stuff is talked about, and a better understanding is arrived, so many of the "best minds of my generation" will not be allowed to contribute to the betterment of cultural life, and instead will continue to fall through the crack of the various "open minded" authorities as, for instance, "too much of a 'street poet' for the LANGUAGE POETS and too much of a 'LANGUAGE POET' for the 'street poets'"---to give but one example of this insular legacy caused by a large number of cultural practices ostensibly beyond our control....

"beyond our control" in the sense of "in SOMEONE ELSE's control" not that we could "take control" per se, but at least to debunk theirs---

Chris

Stephen --

I have to say I'm one of those who would have a lot of questions about how "theory" is working in your hypothesis -- as I've been mentioning in recent writings, I'm hardly alone in having to come to issues in theory such as questioning of the Cartesian subject and rebellion against the insularity of the New Criticism via readings of Fanon, Baraka, C.L.R. James etc. -- In the current "culture wars," the right has taken pretty much the opposite tack from what you conjecture, arguing that "theory" and an interest in "suspect" cultural diversity went hand in hand--

On Sun, 05 Feb 2006 10:21:07 +0000, Stephen Vincent wrote:

....So we all know Neruda, but few are aware of Zurita, an astonishing Chilean poet, for instance.

A neglected US poet in my own estimation, I nonetheless think that this parochialism is a bigger issue--there's more to learn, and not just about poetry, by diving into these cultures.

I suspect part of this 'parochialism' is a Regan through the current Bush legacy of cultural insularity. Imagine, beginning with Regan, a the chorus for children was "Don't talk to strangers." Tho aimed at potential kidnappers, it was metaphoric of the time (concurrent, for example, with anti-immigrant initiatives - i.e., "don't speak Spanish"), a way of demonizing "the other" - now carried over to Muslims, etc.

This contrasts with the Sixties where the momentum was the opposite - "we" left home a quickly as possible. To know, be among, join with "the other" was the challenge, excitement, etc. It was, parenthetically, a time in

which

many poets took up the challenge of translation, Latin American poets much among the translated.

By the 80's - and I am probably going out on a limb here - the interest

went

to "theory" as the new "other." Interest and reciprocation, domestically, for example, in and with "Third World" poets and poetries, became much dissipated. How much an

obsession with "theory" may be equated with a fear of "person(s)" is, I suspect, open to question.

Finally, it appears, instead of an openness to "otherness" - and all the adventure, risk, and, occasionally, the wonderful embarrassing stupidities that may occur within this realm - we are back to an age, it appears, of paranoia and surveillance - one in which 'we' may live in fear (for

politics

and/personal association) of being perceived by those in authority as being a dangerous "other."

Oh, well, the wheel does turn. Translators are the mediating heroes des temps.

Stephen V Blog: <http://stephenvincent.net/blog/>

[illegible]

"Breaking in bright Orthography . . ." --Emily Dickinson

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Seque at SeattleHow Much Time Are Readers Given to Read?

26 February 2006

Six weeks on, the readings thread still runs; Maria Damon has asked for a little February tenderness toward poets who go on too long, and Chris answers in that key.

Mairead--you raise some great points taking this thread to another level

And Maria Damon's call for february compassion and kindness-- "try a little tenderness" etc-- yeah, too---

What I think would be helpful in this discussion would be for people to think about their own readings in light of this (though maybe I'm only talking about myself, still I do believe in a kind of UNIVERSALIZING MY MAXIM in this instance....)

For instance, I think it would be really cool if others gave an example/account of a reading they themselves gave that they FELT (it's going to be subjective of course, even if your audience gave you some verbal or non-verbal feedback that confirms your feeling) was THE BEST or ONE OF THE BEST...

And then, with equal candor, gave an example/account of a reading that they felt to be THE WORST or ONE OF THE WORST you gave, a reading where you feel, for whatever reasons, you fucked up, you didn't get over, whatever, and in this account as much as possible do it without blaming the audience (or lack thereof).

In fact, if I get MONEY someday (since Mairead talks of MONEY), I think it'd be great to publish a book, or a CD in which people---okay, I'll say POETS-- talk about this stuff.

I think it's great that there's been a little more interest in things like READING REPORTS in recent years, but the SELF-READING REPORT might help supplement that stuff, and help ground the discussion of "poets going too long" in that compassionate way of which Maria writes....

While some say "JUDGE NOT LEST YE BE JUDGED--- Poets will judge (no matter how much they often say they don't--) but *I* say If you gotta judge, judge yourself too and it very well may take the sting off the way you judge (whether explicitly or implicitly) others.... (and, don't worry, it won't "blow your credibility," at least not for me-- quite the opposite, actually....!

Anyway, I was going to give an example of what I consider to be one of the WORST readings I think I gave (which may not be the worst reading YOU think I gave), but I've gone on too long, so I'll try to make it really short--- It was in SEATTLE in JUNE 2002, on a little west coast reading tour with a great friend and poet (and musician, it turns out, though we didn't do any music this time) with Brett Eugene Ralph. And this was in part because I went "too short", but there were other factors involved.

I'll say more about this later perhaps, depending on which way this conversation turns.

Chris

This is an interesting thread. I was of the opinion that poetry readings could not be too short. I trimmed back & trimmed back. I got to the point where I felt: Actually, it's too short. But I think that's as much to do with economics as anything else. Like if someone flies you 800 miles, collects you at the airport, brings you to dinner, drums up an audience, and then you look up from the lectern, smile, and say "Ah." "Thank you very much." Well, not quite, but distance traveled to the reading, by poet & audience, may enter into the equation. Not in the BPC where everyone is assumed to be a New Yorker, or at least tolerated at such, or clothed in that delicate fiction for the duration of the reading. A one-word reading might be just the thing for someone you are already in close-proximity to. I know I shouldn't end on a preposition. So I will say that it's always worth considering money; poetry readings are strange in that respect. The audience generally doesn't pay and whether the poet gets paid or not, or how much, doesn't seem to materially affect the performance or the willingness to read. However, where money is involved, its relationship to the reading may weigh on the person who raised it, or who hands over the check. Mairead

cadaly@COMCAST.NET 02/26/06 12:43 AM >>> Dear David:

Thank you for your post and I hope more of us pick up on this thread.

I usually get nervous and read short. Oftentimes, too short, but, I also suffer through readings where the reader says "oh, I've got some more and then some new stuff" -- i.e., 10-15 minutes more -- at the time I'm ready to cry "uncle"

which -- what is that idiom? the man from u.n.c.....

anyways, 40 minutes is "upper limit" of my attention span for someone who isn't a brilliant performer, or who is deliberately reading in a quiet / lack of affect way, and I don't care if you're a "famous" poet, but -- you know who you are -- reading with lack of affect or in a dull manner -- I'd rather have dinner with you, buy you drinks, chat or walk your dog or whatever... than listen to you drone your gorgeous poems rather than represent them responsibly

and who wants to be listening excitedly, carefully, to a reading, wants to sponsor a reading series, and find that snacks are 2 hours distant?

all best...

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aging BABY BOOMERS can make aging SEXY, Notley, Hejinian, Silliman, AN APPEA

28 February 2006

CA Conrad's thread wants to make aging sexy in spite of the cosmetics industry, and imagines a future sit-in; Chris enters it from an angle no one expected.

In the thread, Craig Allen Conrad had written · 28 February 2006 —

| we'll be the only authentic oldies around.

CA---

thanks for bringing up all these things....

One thing that hasn't been mentioned in this discussion is the question of what is often called FAILING EYESIGHT--

Ya know, while some say 'rage rage against the dying of the light," maybe part of the issue isn't just the cosmetic industry but the equally UNNATURAL insistence on 20/20 vision as a standard with age, maybe there's a quite natural "logic" to "failing eyesight" and that, if embraced, cosmetics would also become more superfluous.... (hope this doesn't sound like blaming dada for hitler....)

C

Silliman, AN APPEA

The most back-channeled response I've ever gotten from a post on Buffalo List. Yeah well, hmm, if I'm still alive in another 20 years I'll do a sit-in.

I'm sure by then the cosmetic industry will be much MUCH freakier than it is today. To the point that I'm sure those of us doing the sit-in LOVE-IN smooching by the zapping of whatever it is that's zapping the wrinkles out of them we'll be the only authentic oldies around.

Maybe by then age will be so hidden there will be a new campaign to Out the old folks. I'll maintain the website for the group, and of course the website will take existing photos and age them so we can see what folks would look like if they were natural.

Conrad CA Conrad IS A POET-AGENT IN SEARCH OF A TRANSVESTITE BOXER FOR MORE INFO GO TO: <http://TRANSBOXER.blogspot.com> (<http://transboxer.blogspot.com/>) "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained...." --William Blake for PhillySound: NEW POETRY: <http://PhillySound.blogspot.com> (<http://phillysound.blogspot.com/>) for CA Conrad's tarot services: <http://LightOfLakshmi.blogspot.com> (<http://lightoflakshmi.blogspot.com/>)

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Freedom of speech in the classroom

5 March 2006

Bill Marsh has just recast the academic-freedom panic as really a labour question—most teaching now done by contingent, part-time faculty; Chris, who lived that precarity, agrees the two are one issue.

In the thread, Bill Marsh had written · 5 March 2006 —

| The squeeze is definitely on, but it's also true

Thanks Bill and Kerri for bringing this stuff up.

I know what you mean Bill, but I personally wouldn't phrase academic freedom as a "non-issue" because of these other issues. Instead, I see the temp, contingency, issue as the same as the academic freedom one. The "accountability" buzzword, especially when it comes to the less quantifiable knowledges, disciplines, what-have-you, in a cultural climate in which "efficiency" is valued to the extent that what was once called "imagination" is now often seen as a symptom of Attention Deficit Disorder (okay, not in every case), is reflected in an increased policing on a departmental level---and a sometimes rather twisted use of "doublespeak" as issues of "freedom" often get couched in terms of "professionalism" and "standards" defined in increasingly monolithic ways, despite some decorative nomenclature differences.

Perhaps the burgeoning labor movement can be persuaded to address some of these less "obvious" aspects of the situation.

Chris

Kerri,

Multiple ways it can be felt, too. Academic freedom is a non-issue when 50-80% of the academic workforce is part-time, contingent, temp, flexible, etc., as it is for most colleges and universities these days. The new buzzword coming out of increasingly corporatized institutions is "accountability" which translates to the right's project of containing sixties movements and capital's project of recomposing itself internationally via the takeover of "knowledge industries" (this last plagiarized from a

Richard Ohmann article that lays out the project pretty well). The squeeze is definitely on, but it's also true that higher ed is now home to a pretty active labor movement, which may bode well for some...

bill

On Mar 5, 2006, at 10:29 AM, Kerri Sonnenberg wrote:

A few things have been forwarded to me in the last day/two that give me a great sense of alarm about the future of academic freedom. I have heard some conservative politicians say that the next attack on the left will occur in institutions of higher learning, so I'm wondering, since I haven't been in a classroom in a few years, if anyone on the list feels affected by this.

I'm also wondering- how expansive are teachers/professors' first amendment rights?

First, a high school teacher criticizing US foreign policy is recorded by one of his students and subsequently suspended.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0603050383mar05,1,5001379.story?coll=chi-news-hed>

And the following response to the recently released book "The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America." (The full "hit list" follows the article.)

Robert W. McChesney: 'David Horowitz and the attack on independent thought' Wednesday, March 01 @ 10:00:58 EST Robert W. McChesney, Common Dreams

David Horowitz's new book, "The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America," was published in early February to considerable fanfare encouraged by a tidal wave of promotion from the right-wing echo chamber. This is the same echo chamber that made "swift boat" a household word in September 2004. The book itself is sloppy and unimpressive, an apparent rush job.

The criticism of me, for example, consisted of two out-of-context quotes from articles where I criticize the news media and the Bush Administration. This is presented as prima facie evidence that I am a dreadful teacher who uses the classroom to harass students to adopt my political views, my campus-wide, student-elected teaching award notwithstanding. By the same "logic," quotations could be taken from many professors in America, and nearly all conservatives, to establish that they propagandize in the classroom. By Horowitz's evidentiary standards, Harvard's Stephan Thernstrom, who endorses The Professors on its cover, should be ridden out of academia as a narrow-minded bigot who abuses students who disagree with his pointed views.

In short, the book is clueless about how classroom teaching actually works; it would astound him to learn that many professors with strong political views - of whatever stripe - go to great lengths to provide an open classroom.

The people Horowitz vilifies in his book know exactly what it is like to hold unpopular positions - to be attacked as "dangerous" for going against the dominant interests of society -- and we tend to have considerable empathy for those who disagree with our political views in our own classrooms. In fact, that explains why Horowitz's lengthy and much-publicized campaign to locate conservative students who have been harassed in the classroom by left-wing professors has produced few, if any, credible

witnesses. But, as I will argue, this is a ruse, so that lack of evidence means no more to Horowitz than the lack of WMD did to Bush and Cheney as they planned the invasion of Iraq.

The entire premise of the book is flawed. If Horowitz believes, for example, that publicly supported universities have an obligation to have faculties that represent the range of U.S. political opinion, and that it currently tilts too far to the left, he should follow the logic to its obvious resting place. Generals and military officers are far more important to the functioning of a government - and, as history shows in depressingly frequent detail, a much greater threat to democratic governance -- than anthropology professors. In the United States the military is enormous, it is entirely funded by taxpayers, and the officer corps is significantly right-wing Republican. There is hardly a liberal Democrat in the bunch, and I dare say probably not a single soul to the left of the Clinton-Kerry center of the Democracy party. That means tens of millions of Americans have no political allies directing the most powerful military in human history, while the hard right feels like it has died and gone to heaven when it visits the officers' quarters on Election Day. If Horowitz is going on some sort of rampage about getting political balance in important publicly funded professions, he can only be taken seriously if he starts at the Pentagon. When he has established how to do it there we can proceed to the campuses.

But the point of Horowitz's book is not to make a coherent principled critique of academia and suggest reforms to solve the problem. Were that the case, Horowitz would be obsessed with the rabidly pro-market bias in most economics and business schools - and more than a few political science departments. In these classes and departments, students who are pro-labor union, critical of so-called "free trade" deals like NAFTA, and in favor of progressive taxation, living wage ordinances, strict environmental regulations and aggressive social spending are made to feel like their positions have little intellectual merit. They are ostracized. Yet Horowitz has no concern for these students, or for their rights. Screw them.

Horowitz's mission is clear: to attack critical work in the academy, especially critical work that does not restrict itself to the classroom, but sees intellectuals as having a necessary public role. Visible public outreach is A-OK for Milton Friedman, Stephan Thernstrom, the neo-conservative crowd, and denizens of the right, but strictly off-limits for liberals and the left.

For these reasons I would imagine that principled conservatives will run from this book faster than they would run away from a line-up for a voluntary IRS audit. But the book is important and requires a response that goes beyond pointing out its sloppiness and incoherence; we need to put what Horowitz is doing in a broader context. In my view, the best way to make sense of the book and what it represents is to see it as part of the broad attack on the autonomy and integrity of institutions and individuals who conduct independent and critical thought. It is this type of independent and uncorrupted inquiry - work that is not under the thumb of powerful political or commercial interests -- that is mandatory if viable self-government is to succeed. The space for this type of inquiry has to be fought for and preserved, and it is always considered with a certain amount of suspicion by those in power, who prefer minimal public interference with their exercise of power.

Indeed, it is revealing that Horowitz uses the term "dangerous" as a pejorative in his book's subtitle. Dangerous professors are those with ideas with which Horowitz disagrees. This is a ludicrously opportunistic and undemocratic framing. The entire premise of a viable democratic public sphere is that what some perceive as "dangerous" ideas be protected, even encouraged, and permitted to be thrown into debate. Especially, above all else, in universities.

In our society the two institutions commissioned to provide the substance of a democratic public sphere, as a place for critical inquiry, are the news media and academia.

Hence, to get a better sense of what is happening today with the attack on universities, consider what has happened with U.S. journalism. Back in the early 1970s professional journalism was at its peak. Journalists had relative autonomy from the demands of owners and advertisers and relatively lavish budgets. I do not wish to exaggerate the quality of professional journalism even at its peak; local news media tended to ignore the foibles of powerful local bigshots and all news media relied far too much on official sources, especially in coverage of foreign policy. Indeed much of my career has been spent documenting the limitations of professional journalism, even at its best. But on balance what it provided in the 1960s and 1970s looks awfully good through 2006 eyes.

Since the 1970s the autonomy, resources and critical wiggle room of professional journalism has come under attack on two fronts. First, as media ownership consolidated corporate owners began to think the idea of professional journalism made a lot less sense. After all, corporations aren't charities, and why should their shareholders bankroll a public service? So newsrooms have faced serious cutbacks in resources for investigative, political and international coverage. In its stead far less expensive and politically trivial celebrity coverage has risen in prominence. Commercial values play an increasingly visible role in what passes for journalism today.

The second front in the war on journalism came from the political right. To the political right, it was mandatory to make journalism more sympathetic to right-wing politics if the right was going to win political power. A very high percentage of right-wing funding went to various means of pushing the news media to the right. The overarching theme was that the media had a strident liberal bias that required journalist to be softer on Republicans and tougher on Democrats if they wished to be fair. The campaign has been a rousing success. One need only look at the weak-kneed press coverage of Bush's scandals and foibles, and imagine how a President Clinton or Gore or Kerry would have fared if he had done similar deeds, to see the effect. While these two attacks on journalism were independent of each other for the most part, they had the same effect: reduce the power and autonomy of journalists and make journalism more fearful of antagonizing the political right.

Universities and news media share a certain ideological importance as I have already noted. But as institutions they have quite different traditions. News media have been the province of profit-driven firms for the most part, whereas universities are non-profit, often public, institutions. Yet the attack on universities has followed the same pattern as the attack on journalism. The dominant issue on campuses for the past two decades has been the incessant commercialization of universities, from marketing of classes to corporate funding for research and activities. Increasingly our major

universities are linked to commercial institutions and commercial values, which work to undermine, even eliminate, much of the public service ethos of these institutions. Now the distance is further to travel with universities than with media, because they begin as non-profit institutions, but the direction is unmistakable. And the destination is nowhere anyone should want universities to be. It is the great crisis facing universities today, and about this crisis people like David Horowitz have nothing to say.

This brings us to Horowitz's attack on "dangerous" professors, those faculty like myself who dare to hold political opinions Horowitz disagrees with and which he would like to see banished. This is taken directly from the playbook for the right-wing attack on "liberal" journalists. The point is to intimidate dissident voices, to make them temper their words in their classrooms, and be very careful about what they do when they venture off-campus. Right-wing faculty are free to shout their views from the mountaintop - after all, they are the oppressed minority merely trying to balance the dominant left, much like the blowhards at Fox News - while left-wing faculty are supposed to shut up and go with the flow if they wish to be regarded as legitimate professionals and keep their jobs. As I discussed at the outset, it is a thoroughly unprincipled exercise with a crude political agenda. Combined with the commercial restructuring of universities the goal is to make intellectual life as ineffectual as our journalism has become.

It is a prospect that is unacceptable and must be opposed, in both media and higher education. It is a battle for the soul of our nation, and the future of our polity.

FYI (Not Part of the McChesney Essay)

DAVID HOROWITS'S LIST OF THE 101 MOST DANGEROUS PROFESSORS IN THE U.S.A.

The Professors' Colleges and Universities:

Arcadia University: Warren Haffar Ball State University: George Wolfe Baylor University: Marc Ellis Boston University: Howard Zinn Brandeis University: Gordon Fellman, Dessima Williams Brooklyn College: Priya Parmar, Timothy Shortell Cal State University, Fresno: Sasan Fayazmanesh California State University, Long Beach: Ron (Maulana) Karenga City University of New York: Stanley Aronowitz, Bell Hooks, Leonard Jeffries, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick Columbia University: Lisa Anderson, Gil Anidjar, Hamid Dabashi, Nicholas De Genova, Eric Foner, Todd Gitlin, Manning Marable, Joseph Massad, Victor Navasky Cornell University: Matthew Evangelista De Paul University: Norman Finkelstein, Aminah Beverly McCloud Duke University: Miriam Cooke, Frederic Jameson Earlham College: Caroline Higgins Emory University: Kathleen Cleaver Foothill College: Leighton Armitage Georgetown University: David Cole, John Esposito, Yvonne Haddad, Mari Matsuda Holy Cross College: Jerry Lembcke Kent State University: Patrick Coy Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Noam Chomsky Metropolitan State College, Denver: Oneida Meranto Montclair State University: Grover Furr New York University: Derrick Bell North Carolina State University: Gregory Dawes Northeastern University: M. Shahid Alam, Northwestern University: Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, Bernardine Dohrn Occidental College: Tom Hayden Penn State University: Michael Berube, Sam Richards Princeton University: Richard Falk Purdue University: Harry Targ Rochester Institute of

Technology: Thomas Castellano Rutgers University: H. Bruce Franklin, Michael Warner Rutgers University, Stony Brook: Amiri Baraka San Francisco State University: Anatole Anton Saint Xavier University: Peter Kirstein Stanford University: Joel Beinin, Paul Ehrlich State University of New York, Binghamton: Ali al-Mazrui State University of New York, Buffalo: James Holstun State University of New York, Stony Brook: Michael Schwartz Syracuse University: Greg Thomas Temple University: Melissa Gilbert, Lewis Gordon Texas A&M University: Joe Feagin Truman State University: Marc Becker University of California, Berkely: Hamid Algar, Hatem Bazian, Orville Schell University of California, Irvine: Mark Le Vine University of California, Los Angeles: Vinay Lal University of California, Riverside: Armando Navarro University of California, Santa Cruz: Bettina Aptheker, Angela Davis University of Cincinnati: Marvin Berlowitz University of Colorado, Boulder: Alison Jaggar, Emma Perez University of Dayton: Mark Ensalaco University of Denver: Dean Saitta University of Hawaii, Manoa: Haunani-Kay Trask University of Illinois, Chicago: Bill Ayers University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign: Robert McChesney University of Kentucky: Ihsan Bagby University of Michigan: Juan Cole University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: Gayle Rubin University of Northern Colorado: Robert Dunkley University of Oregon, Eugene: John Bellamy Foster University of Pennsylvania: Regina Austin, Mary Frances Berry, Michael Eric Dyson University of Rhode Island: Michael Vocino University of South Florida: Sami al-Arian University of Southern California: Laurie Brand University of Texas, Arlington: Jose Angel Gutierrez University of Texas, Austin: Dana Cloud, Robert Jensen University of Washington: David Barash Villanova University: Rick Eckstein, Suzanne Toton Western Washington University: Larry Estrada

----- Robert W. McChesney is the co-author, with John Nichols, of *Tragedy & Farce: How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections, and Destroy Democracy* (New Press). He is the founder of Free Press, www.freepress.net.

Source: Common Dreams <http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0228-21.htm>

Bill Morrow - hawkeye@fastmail.fm

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current long poems in progress

29 March 2006

Stephen Vincent's account of Beverly Dahlen's thirty-year *A Reading* draws out one of his own unfinished projects: a long poem written off the grain of Whitman's *Song of Myself*.

In the thread, Stephen Vincent had written · 29 March 2006 —

| The reader can wade in anywhere, I suspect, and come back with something

A while back I got the idea that I'd write a "long poem" that basically shadows Whitman's *SONG OF MSELF* (or the untitled poem that he later called *song of myself*).

"Shadowed it," was "written off of it." A kind of formal device that many won't necessarily call a formal device, yet even though Whitman has never really been one of my all-time favorite poets or anything, I feel this piece can still really

challenge or threaten many poet's notion of form (basically the best thing about his form is the DON'T WORRY ABOUT FORM sensibility that informs it)

And even thought Whitman is so intensely invoked by enough people across the spectrum of most "legitimate" contemporary poetry, as well as by many outside the poet corners (now forever linked with images of Monica's semen-stained dress?), it's almost like one of those "Jesus" things--- how the world Jesus fought loves to shout out his name, etc---

So, I got really excited and passionate about this project. Sometimes it falls into the "talking back to Walt" mode, and yes at times it explores the weird self-referential conundrum of making someone else's organic form into your (forced?) structure, an issue which may only be of relevance in "poetry circles" (like for those who take, say, CHARLES OLSON'S BREATH to be THEIRS, thus "following" him, etc....), but it was also cool, to play with what the so-called "visionary" mode is, or can or can not be, to me, or "nowadays." There's a few sections I just don't even want to write off of--- when he gets into the Texas war, etc...the AENEID part of Song of Myself, but I'll play with it.

Anyway, I've left it sit. I'm planning to reopen it this spring/summer. If it bombs, it "bombs." But I'm pretty excited about it coz yeah some restraints need to be loosed these days....

Chris

I am wondering if the same (no end or beginning) can be said of Beverly Dahlen's A Reading - a work that now extends over almost 30 years and 20 or so parts. (Instance Press will publish books 18 - 20) later this year, I believe. (Good news after long silence.) The language of the work kicks out against any notion of narrative continuity - as if to say implicitly narration is someone else's business, not mine. The reader can wade in anywhere, I suspect, and come back with something, but that something is not a story in any conventional sense. And you could probably return a week later at the same place have a quite different experience. The proverb about the river! And yet there is rarely any question that the books interface with historical moments/events -

In any case I can never read Beverly in the same sense that one reads Paul Metcalf's wonderful long prose poems (Genoa, for example) that still adhere to a narrative construct of beginnings and endings.

Beverly Dahlen and George Stanley (old & close friends) continue to redefine obscurity or 'invisible presence' as an important function in American letters. Ignore them at your own risk!

Yes, must - thank you, Peter Q - get to the Fisher Place

Stephen

Skip Fox asked Do many writers of contemporary long works assume a linear reading of their works in the same way earlier writers of long poems did?

I don't know about the many, but Allen Fisher's PLACE, recently published in its (more-or-less) "complete" form by Reality Studios in England, instructs the reader to read in ANY order save the printed one -- i.e. if you start page 1 and go through systematically to the end, you've blown it.

The same is true of his current long project GRAVITY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF SHAPE.

Both are astonishing, indeed stunning, works. Strongly recommended.

P

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Mayday Mayday (& news)

17 April 2006

A small-world reply from Pam Grossman—she has written for the same rock magazine and been solicited then ghosted by a LIT editor—sends him off on the discourtesy of editors who ask for work and vanish.

In the thread, Pam Grossman had written · 17 April 2006 —

i submitted an essay to "lit"--at an editor's request--several years ago and then never heard back

Hi Pam---

Thanks for writing. I actually never met Jack in person but cool that you've written for him. Would love to see some of your music writing (I guess I could just google these days...but feel free to direct me to any particular pieces...)

Yeah it's weird that I sent word of the show to a non-localized list. Sorry about that. I get all kinds of invites from people, usually, in NYC, so I guess I'm not too sorry about that.

But definite bummer when people specifically solicit work and then don't even write back, or even if they do write back and don't use it. It's been happening to me alot lately. And then there's all these discussions about how WRITERS are unethical if they want to simultaneously submit---arggh! It's so strange, about "solicitations" though because alot of editors seem to solicit either because of 1) name recognition or 2) they have a sense of a "style," a "type of writing," yet, let's say, a writer (like me, or you) is writing (and is most passionate about) stuff now that is perhaps in a different style, one that may take different kinds of risks than the kind of writing that may have first gotten our name known or something, and the editor doesn't like, sorry, but I still feel that if the editor doesn't like the new work we send them, they should still publish it, or never solicit it in the first place! The risk is on them now. But hardly any one ever calls 'em on it, coz people are cowed by the authority or something (even though there's no money, etc...). it's

even less forgivable when it's a web magazine! Okay, enough little high horse spiel---

mazel tov on the agent though! that's something--- write back anytime...

Chris

tiny world! jack rabid has been a friend of mine for over a decade now. and i have written for "big takeover," though not for quite a while.... i keep meaning to set up an interview with the fiery furnaces but just haven't gotten around to it. mazel tov on the column, and i hope you enjoy it.

wish i could come to the c.p. gig. a trip to your city is not on my next-few-weeks agenda, but it might well be on the next-few-months itinerary.

hope you are very well! also, i submitted an essay to "lit"--at an editor's request--several years ago and then never heard back about it (no response meaning, no). bummer, since she'd asked me for it...but whattya gonna do. i know the editor i speak of is no longer there. presumably the newer editors know how to say, "no, thank you" (or "yes, please!"). i will read your essay. and i do, in fact, have an agent here. who knows what could happen?

best, pam g.

-----Original Message-----

Hello---It's coming up on what is my favorite time of year, doesn't get as much play as xmas and such, but Frank O'Hara got the gist of it when he wrote. "It's April. No, May. It's May" So before I cry MAYDAY (my band's playing a show that night---details below), let me first tell you about some writing of mine that has recently been published or is available on the web--

1--The first published EXCERPT from my memoir, RADIO ORPHAN (still in search of a publisher, or an agent if you know of any!), has just appeared in the NYC based literally magazine called LIT (more info at www.nsu.newschool.edu/writing/lit)

2. I am now writing weekly columns (on a pro-bono basis for the time being for the website of THE BIGTAKEOVER, a NYC-based rock magazine named after a Bad Brains song founded 25 years ago by Jack Rabid. (www.bigtakeover.com))

3. I just wrote a piece on THANK YOU FOR SMOKING (though it also touches on CITIZEN RUTH and THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA) on my backup blog--- blog.myspace.com/chris_stroffolino While I still babble away at <http://blog.myspace.com/continuouspeasant>

Do I really expect you to read all of this? NO!

So, Mayday mayday---What's the deal with Mayday? it used to be a pseudo phallic fertility ritual but is more known as a cry for help..... "So When You're Near Me Darling, Can't You Hear me S.O.S (maybe Neil Martinson will spin that tune by a band whose English wasn't quite as awkward as mi espanol)--- 4 days to Cynco De Mayo), or hear me yell STD! (but, no, it's not what you think; it's SAVE THE DATE!) Oh the captain may be sinking but the ship is rolling right along here in the city of Pirate Bands, Pirate Cat Radio (87.9), faux Pirate stores run my the mysterious David Eggers, the entire ABBA meets ARGGGGHHHH staggering genuis of this place--

"Be amazed at the world that others might have missed" So if you come to the KNOCKOUT (which used to be called the ODEON) (located where VALENCIA ST. rams into MISSION) and catch Continuous Peasant (with an altered one-time-only lineup-- we gotta do a quieter acoustic show, and also try to squeeze onto a small stage) play with a local band, whose name I'm still trying to figure out, 6 EYE COLUMBIA (and they're at least twice as good as third eye blind), WE will set some people in the audience up with free BRILLO PADS (and maybe just maybe a GAVIN NEWSOME PINATA SMASHING!)

Love from Continuous Peasant www.continuouspeasant.com

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Routed to the announcements at the back of this year are his own notices: Continuous Peasant gigs at the Knockout and the Revolution Café, a new monthly column for the rock magazine Big Takeover, the first published excerpt of a memoir, Radio Orphan, still hunting a publisher. Two years after the accident, the poet of the quotidian was improvising a livelihood out of the quotidian in real time.

CA Conrad on Bukowski

4 May 2006

CA Conrad has been defending Bukowski as the door working-class readers walk through into poetry; Chris seconds him, refrigerator magnet and all.

And even a not so very working class friend once sent me a refrigerator magnet, with Bukowski's picture on it, and a quote

"Some People Never Go Crazy. What truly horrible lives they must lead." Charles Bukowski

Don't think you're gonna get that from Billy Collins. or Sleepy Time Tea

+ -

Yes Kevin, I know people get sick of hearing about Bukowski, and they get sick of hearing about class.

But let me tell you that I've met a LOT of working class men (a couple of women, all of whom are working class lesbians I know) who came to poetry through Bukowski.

He's not someone I've read in years, but I remember how much his poems spoke to me, about my life, my family. No, not pleasant, but beautiful in the drive WITH it under the arm.

What I remember most are the people I have met who have come to poetry BECAUSE of Bukowski. There was this poet I knew in Pittsburgh back in the early 90s who worked in a factory, his father before him at the steel plant, and he would get up in front of his friends at this bar, read his poems, and cry. Or maybe he just cried that one time, when I was there? And he LOVED by the way, the poems of Mina Loy. He came to Mina Loy by way of Bukowski because of coming to poetry in the first place.

Bukowski is a door thrown open!

Poetry is for everyone, and Bukowski demands that to be true. Conrad CAConrad is the author of Deviant Propulsion (Soft Skull Press, 2006) for poem samples from the book go to: <http://CAConrad.blogspot.com> (<http://caconrad.blogspot.com/>) "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained..." --William Blake for PhillySound: NEW POETRY: <http://PhillySound.blogspot.com> (<http://phillysound.blogspot.com/>) for CAConrad's tarot services: <http://LightOfLakshmi.blogspot.com> (<http://lightoflakshmi.blogspot.com/>)

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CA Conrad on Bukowski

5 May 2006

Marcus Bales insists that bringing poor children to art means initiating them into an elite, and that pretending otherwise is dishonest; Chris begins separating the several things Bales has folded into that one word.

In the thread, Marcus Bales had written · 5 May 2006 —

| *But to deny that it IS an elite into which you're initiating them*

Marcus---

I can see your point here, but aren't you using the word "elite" in two different ways, and conflating them.

You talk about initiating the economic poor into the intellectual and artistic elite

But you don't talk about initiating the economic rich into the intellectual and artistic elite (and, from what I see, except in the most amazing cases of autodidacticism, being part of the economic elite doesn't necessarily make one part of an artistic or intellectual elite)

Nor initiating the economic poor into the economic elite (I bring this point up, because there's an implication in your argument that the poor are less likely to understand the elitism of art, where in my experience it's more often the case that poor people understand all too well the elitism of what they may call "bougie" (is that the spelling?) art, and the resistance to it has more to do with the usefulness of such art. It's not that they can't master the code, it's that they are more aware that it is often not an economically self-sustaining proposition.

Sorry if I find myself speaking in generalities here, but the acute discrepancy that is often felt in many poor people between being part of an artistic or intellectual elite and the economic realities need to be investigated further. There's often a price to be paid for being part of an economic or intellectual elite, as you seem to be defining it, and that price, in contemporary America at least, more often than not may lead to people becoming even more economically poverty-stricken than they were before, and it's understandable that one may not wish to continue to

create such an art (even if they have been 'initiated,' like, say, Caliban)--or consider ways of redefining art and intellectual activities in less elitist ways.

Chris

On 4 May 2006 at 14:55, David Harrison Horton wrote: Marcus, Do you mean to say that the poor & working class kids in my East Oakland neighborhood are incapable of sharing and anticipating in art because they haven't been taught to appreciate the elitist mystification process that John Berger tried to dispell 35 years ago?

Not in the least. I mean to say that they are capable of sharing and anticipating in art if someone shows them how to -- if someone initiates them into the elite. I'm glad to hear you're doing that. In the case where there is someone like you there to do it, your kids are not intellectually poverty-stricken -- but think of all the kids who ARE intellectually poverty-stricken because there is no one like you there to initiate them. THEY are incapable of sharing and anticipating art (except in the most amazing cases of auto-didacticism) not because they are dumb but because they are poor.

But to deny that it IS an elite into which you're initiating them is not

merely

counter-productive, it's intellectually dishonest. You're fooling yourself

into

thinking that poetry is a thing independent of its creation and appreciation by people. It's not. Poetry is an artefact of human invention, not a thing

that

would exist if there were no people, like gravity or rocks or Keith Richard.

The writing and appreciation of poetry is indeed an elite occupation. What makes it less likely that poor kids or blue-collar kids will write or

appreciate

it is a lack of people like you to initiate them. And you, I'm sure, have to admit that even out of the kids who take the class not all of them actually get it; and of those who get it not all of them become poets. It's an elitism

of

choice, and good on you for giving them one.

Marcus

David Harrison Horton

----Original Message Follows----

Wrong, wrong, wrong. Art is an elitist project of necessity. The very notion of presenting some words in context to mean more than they would ordinarily mean requires an audience that expects that context and a writer who seeks to create it -- all moving away from the ordinary, moving toward the elite. It cannot be otherwise. Anti-

elite is anti-art. You cannot have art without elitism. I can't say it plainer, or less artfully, than "Wrong, wrong, wrong!"

Marcus

On 4 May 2006 at 13:44, furniture_press wrote:

> Oh, Chris! Tell it like it is! > > But this begs the question: is there a "working class language? > poetry?" I think once we get down to the kernel of it - that is, > language - and it's place in the world (how it's spoken, what's > spoken) then only can we see literariness (ornament) as an elitist > prank on Literature. > > C'mon, folks, what are we hiding when we say "the summer rain > brought splinters of heat to my brow, and, like a robin at sunset, > sing to my stars for heaven's love" > > See? I made that shit up. fuck that. FUCK that. > > This thread gives me new hope in Bukowski. I always thought he was a > chauvanist pig but, hey, when it comes down to it, he just states > what we're all afraid to say. And I think the line is appropriate: > > "Some People Never Go Crazy. What truly horrible lives they must > lead." > > Some people never tell the truth. They rely on adjectives. > > Big words from a little fish, but I stand behind it. > > /Pastamassima/ > > > > > ----- Original Message ----- > > From: "Chris Stroffolino" <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> > > Subject: CA Conrad on Bukowski > > Date: Thu, 4 May 2006 11:44:37 -0700 > > > > > And even a not so very working class friend once sent me a > refrigerator > > magnet, with Bukowski's picture on it, and a quote > > > > "Some People Never Go Crazy. What truly horrible lives they must > lead." > > Charles Bukowski > > > > Don't think you're gonna get that from Billy Collins. or Sleepy > Time Tea > > > > > ----- > > > From: Craig Allen Conrad <CAConrad9@AOL.COM> > > > Subject: Re: on the OXFORD BOOK OF AMERICAN POETRY anthology > \\\\/\\\\\\ - > > + - > > > Date: Thu, May 4, 2006, 6:44 AM > > > > > > > Yes Kevin, I know people get sick of hearing about Bukowski, > > > and they get sick of hearing about class. > > > > > But let me tell you that I've met a LOT of working class men (a > couple > > > of women, all of whom are working class lesbians I know) who > came > > > to poetry through Bukowski. > > > > > He's not someone I've read in years, but I remember how much > his > > > poems spoke to me, about my life, my family. No, not > pleasant, > > > but beautiful in the drive WITH it under the arm. > > > > > What I remember most are the people I have met who have come > > > to poetry BECAUSE of Bukowski. There was this poet I knew > > > in Pittsburgh back in the early 90s who worked in a factory, > his > > > father before him at the steel plant, and he would get up in > front > > > of his friends at this bar, read his poems, and cry. Or maybe > he > > > just cried that one time, when I was there? And he LOVED by > > > the way, the poems of Mina Loy. He came to Mina Loy by way > > > of Bukowski because of coming to poetry in the first place. > > > > > Bukowski is a door thrown open! > > > > > Poetry is for everyone, and Bukowski demands that to be true. > > > Conrad > > > CAConrad is the author of Deviant Propulsion (Soft Skull Press, > 2006) > > > for poem samples from the book go to: > > <http://CAConrad.blogspot.com> > > > (<http://caconrad.blogspot.com/>) > > > "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough > to be > > > restrained...." > > > --William Blake > > > for PhillySound: NEW POETRY: <http://PhillySound.blogspot.com> > > > (<http://phillysound.blogspot.com/>) > > > for CAConrad's tarot services: > <http://LightOfLakshmi.blogspot.com> > > > (<http://lightoflakshmi.blogspot.com/>) > > > > > > Christophe Casamassima > Professor Emiritus, Modern Languages &

Philology > University of Jamaica Avenue, Queens, N.Y. > > > -- > Graffiti.net free e-mail @ www.graffiti.net > Play 100s of games for FREE! <http://games.graffiti.net/> > > > Powered By Outblaze

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Bales on "the life of the mind" (was Conrad on Buk)

7 May 2006

The longest thing he writes all year: the argument with Bales over class, poverty and 'the life of the mind' reaches its full stretch.

Marcus--- I'll just respond to one of your points that the others haven't emphasized as much, specifically your use of the phrase "life of the mind".

The phrase appears 4 times, and I'd like to investigate how you use this because I think we define it differently. It makes its first appearance in this quote of yours---

M: It's not that the poor understand "all too well" the elitism, it's that they are > not taught to value the "life of the mind" because they're so concerned with just getting from paycheck to paycheck that the life of the mind seems pretty silly and affected -- bougie.

C: I don't think it's such an either/or distinction; just because some poor people might consider certain forms of art or writing "silly and affected," doesn't mean that they consider the "life of the mind" silly and affected. In fact, many poor folks I know (and even some folks with more advantageous economic status), make it quite clear that it is specifically what they see as certain IDIOMS, certain STYLES that claim to be 'the life of the mind' they react against--like the fact that in certain circles any claims of native intelligence or wonder are despised unless of course one drops the 'proper' names or cultural references (what constitutes proper of course varies from scene to scene, but in this I think we agree--it does often involve an use of a specialized---or what you may call elite--language). I don't think this has all that much to do with the fact the poor are so concerned getting from paycheck to paycheck; I could just as easily counter that the "middle-class" or rich are often so concerned with investment schemes, retirement funds, or with a "he who dies with the most toys wins" philosophy that they have little time for the "life of the mind" or to "stop and smell the roses" for that matter (even if such 'roses' are strictly imaginary, artistic, like that Marianne Moore line---oh what was it, about imaginary gardens with real toads in it). I personally won't make that argument seriously---I'm just saying it's no less of a generalization than yours, and ultimately I guess we just define "mind" or at least "life of the mind" differently, insofar as I have found many people in my life who don't have to be so addicted to books as others to be as intellectual and stimulating to others' minds as any tenured prof. etc...

Its second appearance, here

M: Just so -- and most poor folks have not and will not internalize the notion

that the "life of the mind" is more valuable than a new car and a good job and the like, and they don't have the family or personal resources to try to have both "the good life" and "a good life"

C: Well, again, it depends how you define the "life of the mind" and though I'm sympathetic to the "anti-materialist" or, better, "anti-acquisitive" thrust to your point here, the elitist sense of what "mind" or "life of the mind" is, is something I don't see in life---though I might see it in, say, Ezra Pound or in some LANGUAGE poetry if not so much in Whitman or Bob Dylan. To use another strictly literary reference, Shakespeare may straddle in a way that he can be beloved both by elitists---who see their reflection in him---as well as egalitarians--in a way that could probably prove both your point and mine---i.e. I see Shakespeare as someone who put the two viewpoints in dialogue with each other, and so often the joke is on those 'elitists' who think a highfalutin use of rhetoric and philosophy gives them more access to 'a good life' than the 'shallow fools' that also people his plays as a corrective to this attitude, though I know many people who read Shakespeare differently).

But even if one comes to appreciate 'higher art,'and even if one comes to NEED it, whether intrinsically or because one has something to prove, I still have to ask you WHAT exactly such VALUES are that these "poor folks" are missing out on....If you want to play the role of the didactic defender of the lost art of reading elite art on the ground that it will make others better, or even happier, people than they would be without it, you need to do much more to convince me.

The third appearance of that phrase appears here

M: But what you're

saying is that the poor are correct in their judgment that the life of the mind

is not worth living if the trade-off is poverty.

C: That wasn't what I intended to say, though I can understand how it came off like that. I'm questioning your definition of "life of the mind" and what criteria you use to determine whether someone is living it

And its 4th (and final) here--

M: if you're poor, even if

you're very talented, you're not very likely to internalize the values of the life of the mind, and if you're well-off, you still probably won't, but you

may;

| and if you do, you have a better chance of survival, and even of success.

C: What are these values? And why can't someone get them by turning on the radio and hearing "Check Out Your Mind" by Curtis Mayfield? for instance, at least as much as sitting in a poetry class where they discuss the "purposeful purposelessness" of the sublime?

I think I've gone on long enough.....Chris

On 5 May 2006 at 12:12, Chris Stroffolino wrote: I can see your point here, but aren't you using the word "elite" in two different ways, and conflating them. You talk about initiating the economic poor into the intellectual and artistic elite But you don't talk about initiating the economic rich into the intellectual and artistic elite (and, from what I see, except in the most amazing cases of autodidacticism, being part of the economic elite doesn't necessarily make one part of an artistic or intellectual elite)<

Well, I hope I'm not using "elite" in two sense and not distinguishing between them.

I'm trying to say that the chances of getting initiated into the artistic or intellectual elite is much better for the economically elite for at least two reasons: first, the students are more likely to see themselves as worthy of, and with entry to, the one kind of elite if they're of another kind, and, second, they're likely to have a lot better exposure to and teaching of the values and tenets of the intellectual and artistic elite if they're of the economic elite; and, third of two, they're more likely to see a path to success in the intellectual or artistic elite, or have the resources to experiment along the path of that success, if they're already part of the economic elite.

I'm not saying that being part of the economic elite makes one part of the artistic or intellectual elite -- it doesn't, and it can't: there is no royal road to learning -- but it sure gives you a better chance at it if you want it.

Nor initiating the economic poor into the economic elite (I bring this point up, because there's an implication in your argument that the poor are less likely to understand the elitism of art, where in my experience it's more often the case that poor people understand all to well the elitism of what they may call "bougie" (is that the spelling?) art, and the resistance to it has more to do with the usefulness of such art.<

Art isn't very useful, though, no matter what -- and thinking that it might be of use in the way a car or a job might be of use is part of the evidence that they haven't really broken the elitist code, in my judgment. Also, the economically disadvantaged students don't have the family or personal resources to support them, or help support them, in any attempt to achieve any sort of career in the arts, where the bottom rung of the ladder is a good deal higher and more slippery than in most other professions. My father used to point out that the 20,000th best plumber in the country can make a nice living but the 500th best violinist starves.

You've got to either so believe in yourself and your talent and in the system that judges and nurtures or dismisses that talent that you're willing to endure the economic disadvantages (as well as the social ones -- as when all your friends are buying cars because they're in the plumbing trades and you're still living with your

parents and bumming rides because you're still learning the violin), or you've got to be incredibly lucky.

It's not that the poor understand "all too well" the elitism, it's that they

are

not taught to value the "life of the mind" because they're so concerned with just getting from paycheck to paycheck that the life of the mind seems pretty silly and affected -- bougie.

It's not that they can't master the code, it's that they are more aware that it is often not an economically self-sustaining proposition.<

Just so -- and most poor folks have not and will not internalize the notion that the "life of the mind" is more valuable than a new car and a good job and the like, and they don't have the family or personal resources to try to have both "the good life" and "a good life".

Sorry if I find myself speaking in generalities here, but the acute discrepancy that is often felt in many poor people between being part of an artistic or intellectual elite and the economic realities need to be investigated further. There's often a price to be paid for being part of an ARTISTIC or intellectual elite, as you seem to be defining it, and that price, in contemporary America at least, more often than not may lead to people becoming even more economically poverty-stricken than they were before and it's understandable that one may not wish to continue to create such an art (even if they have been 'initiated,' like, say, Caliban)--or consider ways of redefining art and intellectual activities in less elitist ways.<

All very true: we seem to be saying the same thing, in fact. But what you're saying is that the poor are correct in their judgment that the life of the

mind

is not worth living if the trade-off is poverty. It may be that if you start off in poverty the notion of continuing in poverty by choice in order to pursue one's art seems pretty silly if one has the skills to make a living to give up that living in favor of the same kind of poverty you'd face if you didn't have any skills. And, of course, if you and your family are pretty well-off, there may be family resources to help you through the first rough years, and, if you finally decide to give up you can always get a pretty good job based on the pretty good education that you got in the pursuit of your art.

But in the end it all boils down to the same sauce: if you're poor, even if you're very talented, you're not very likely to internalize the values of the life of the mind, and if you're well-off, you still probably won't, but you

may;

and if you do, you have a better chance of survival, and even of success.

Marcus

On 4 May 2006 at 14:55, David Harrison Horton wrote: Marcus, Do you mean to say that the poor & working class kids in my East Oakland neighborhood are incapable of

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But to deny that it IS an elite into which you're initiating them is not merely counter-productive, it's intellectually dishonest. You're fooling yourself into thinking that poetry is a thing independent of its creation and appreciation by people. It's not. Poetry is an artefact of human invention, not a thing that would exist if there were no people, like gravity or rocks or Keith Richard.

The writing and appreciation of poetry is indeed an elite occupation. What makes it less likely that poor kids or blue-collar kids will write or appreciate it is a lack of people like you to initiate them. And you, I'm sure, have to admit that even out of the kids who take the class not all of them actually get it; and of those who get it not all of them become poets. It's an elitism of choice, and good on you for giving them one.

Marcus

David Harrison Horton

----Original Message Follows----

Wrong, wrong, wrong. Art is an elitist project of necessity. The very notion of presenting some words in context to mean more than they would ordinarily mean requires an audience that expects that context and a writer who seeks to create it -- all moving away from the ordinary, moving toward the elite. It cannot be otherwise. Anti-elite is anti-art. You cannot have art without elitism. I can't say it plainer, or less artfully, than "Wrong, wrong, wrong!"

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On 4 May 2006 at 13:44, furniture_press wrote:

> Oh, Chris! Tell it like it is! > > But this begs the question: is there a "working class language? > poetry?" I think once we get down to the kernel of it - that is, > language - and it's place in the world (how it's spoken, what's > spoken) then only can we see literariness (ornament) as an elitist > prank on Literature. > > C'mon, folks, what are we hiding when we say "the summer rain > brought splinters of heat to my brow, and, like a robin at sunset, > sing to my stars for heaven's love" > > See? I made that shit up. fuck that. FUCK that. > > This thread gives me new hope in Bukowski. I always thought he was a > chauvanist pig but, hey, when it comes down to it, he just states > what we're all afraid to say. And I think the line is appropriate: > > "Some People Never Go Crazy. What truly horrible lives they must > lead." > > Some people never tell the truth. They rely on adjectives. > > Big words from a little fish, but I stand behind it. > > /Pastamassima/ > > > > > > ----- Original Message ----- > > From: "Chris Stroffolino" <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> > > Subject: CA Conrad on Bukowski > > Date: Thu, 4 May 2006 11:44:37 -0700 > > > > > > And even a not so

very working class friend once sent me a > refrigerator > > magnet, with Bukowski's picture on it, and a quote > > > "Some People Never Go Crazy. What truly horrible lives they must > lead." > > Charles Bukowski > > > Don't think you're gonna get that from Billy Collins. or Sleepy > Time Tea > > > > ----- > > From: Craig Allen Conrad <CAConrad9@AOL.COM> > > > Subject: Re: on the OXFORD BOOK OF AMERICAN POETRY anthology > \\\\/\\\\\\ - > > + - > > > Date: Thu, May 4, 2006, 6:44 AM > > > > > > > Yes Kevin, I know people get sick of hearing about Bukowski, > > > and they get sick of hearing about class. > > > > > But let me tell you that I've met a LOT of working class men (a > couple > > > of women, all of whom are working class lesbians I know) who > came > > > to poetry through Bukowski. > > > > > He's not someone I've read in years, but I remember how much > his > > > poems spoke to me, about my life, my family. No, not > pleasant, > > > but beautiful in the drive WITH it under the arm. > > > > > What I remember most are the people I have met who have come > > > to poetry BECAUSE of Bukowski. There was this poet I knew > > > in Pittsburgh back in the early 90s who worked in a factory, > his > > > father before him at the steel plant, and he would get up in > front > > > of his friends at this bar, read his poems, and cry. Or maybe > he > > > just cried that one time, when I was there? And he LOVED by > > > the way, the poems of Mina Loy. He came to Mina Loy by way > > > of Bukowski because of coming to poetry in the first place. > > > > > Bukowski is a door thrown open! > > > > > Poetry is for everyone, and Bukowski demands that to be true. > > > Conrad > > > CAConrad is the author of *Deviant Propulsion* (Soft Skull Press, > 2006) > > > for poem samples from the book go to: > <http://CAConrad.blogspot.com/> > > > (<http://caconrad.blogspot.com/>) > > > "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough > to be > > > restrained...." > > > --William Blake > > > for PhillySound: NEW POETRY: <http://PhillySound.blogspot.com/> > > > (<http://phillysound.blogspot.com/>) > > > for CAConrad's tarot services: > <http://LightOfLakshmi.blogspot.com/> > > > (<http://lightoflakshmi.blogspot.com/>) > > > > > > Christophe Casamassima > Professor Emeritus, Modern Languages & Philology > University of Jamaica Avenue, Queens, N.Y. > > > -- > Graffiti.net free e-mail @ www.graffiti.net > Play 100s of games for FREE! <http://games.graffiti.net/> > > > Powered By Outblaze

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Bukowski and gender

15 May 2006

The Bukowski argument has moved from class to gender, with Mark Wallace faulting the thinness of the women in the books; rather than counter him, Chris invites him to turn the lens on himself.

In the thread, Mark Wallace had written · 15 May 2006 —

| The female characters often have nice asses and loud mouths and not much else.

Mark---

I like that in this last paragraph you start to bring yourself in. Feel free to take this opportunity for further, uh, self-promotion (don't worry, it doesn't have to be SHAMELESS self-promotion!) and maybe include an excerpt of your 'creative' prose in which you address some of this issues/feelings/actions less as a critic of

another but as a "large heterosexual male" in your own right... It can be 'self-criticism' if you wish. thanks, Chris

I do think it's kind of you to point out that loud,

large, white heterosexual males can also be stereotyped unfairly. Speaking as a large heterosexual male myself, one who grew up good at playing sports and who spent a lot of time camping in the wilderness, and who likes beer and bars quite a bit, I appreciate the gesture. But you don't do us any favors by saying that because some men like those things, our attitudes towards gender must either be predictable, understandable, or excusable. If you want to give us a break, please assume that even though we might be large and loud and heterosexual, it might also be true that we're capable of understanding (or at least trying to understand) the world we live in.

Keep blasting away, my friend.

Mark

CA, I myself am finding this discussion quite useful.

Actually, I have not said that Bukowski was a misogynist; I said that the representations of gender in his books are a problem. I can so easily imagine someone else calling him a misogynist that it doesn't quite seem necessary for me to do that.

There's a difference between being interested in sex and describing the women with whom you are involved primarily or solely in terms of their sexual attributes. His women characters on the whole are not particularly interesting or memorable; they tend to be shrill annoyances who appear and disappear along the road of his narrators' self-journey to a kind of romanticized down-and-outness that is as much hippie fantasy as it is revealing discussion of the lives of the poor and downtrodden. The female characters often have nice asses and loud mouths and not much else. Bukowski's descriptions of women strike me as closest to the work of another poet and fiction writer, Jim Harrison. Both of them share an obsession with a certain highly male version of freedom; the ability to come and go as they please without social constraints. These constraints tend mainly to take two forms: the wimpiness of male middle-class bureaucracies, and the social demands of respectability and responsibility placed upon them by women. Their most positive female characters are the ones who are most like the male main characters in seeing all sexual relationships as being about temporary pleasure and the right to move on when you're done with it; the most negative ones are the ones who insist that the men stay put. Interestingly, both Bukowski and Harrison finally rely on metaphors of wilderness; Harrison's wilderness is more literal (the woods of northern Michigan) while Bukowski's wilderness is more that of the neon jungle. Life is a wilderness full of dangers in which the male character is constantly risking his soul but manages to maintain it by not giving in to the artificiality and heartbreak of human ties.

The idea of freedom in the wilderness has a long and complicated history in American literature; Thoreau, Huckleberry Finn, Hemingway, many others. I find it all interesting, but I think it's also fair to say that the terms it uses can be questioned. That's what I'm trying to do: I'm NOT trying to call anybody names.

As to the question of his loving women, well, who knows. It's not the fact OF loving them that counts, I would say, but HOW one goes about it that's at stake. I'm not

talking about what he did or didn't do in his personal life (are you in possession of that information?), I'm talking about the issue as it appears in his books.

About the women who have responded saying that they liked Bukowski: of course women can like Bukowski's work, especially (as some of them suggested) if exposed to it at a time in their lives when Bukowski's romanticism seems most appealing. But I didn't see that any of the women who wrote in saying they liked Bukowski denied that gender was a problem in his work, because obviously it's a problem. One might like his work anyway.

I do think it's kind of you to point out that loud, large, white heterosexual males can also be stereotyped unfairly. Speaking as a large heterosexual male myself, one who grew up good at playing sports and who spent a lot of time camping in the wilderness, and who likes beer and bars quite a bit, I appreciate the gesture. But you don't do us any favors by saying that because some men like those things, our attitudes towards gender must either be predictable, understandable, or excusable. If you want to give us a break, please assume that even though we might be large and loud and heterosexual, it might also be true that we're capable of understanding (or at least trying to understand) the world we live in.

Keep blasting away, my friend.

Mark

Mark, what exactly are the problems with Bukowski and gender?

He was NOT a misogynist. The word misogynist is a very serious word and not to be taken lightly.

HOW was he one? Where do you read this? What? Where?

He never EVER beat women, never EVER mistreated women. In fact every woman ever interviewed about him who was either a lover or a friend has had nothing but great things to say!

Disagree with you? Yes, I have to. I'm COMPELLED to speak out when I see someone being unfairly judged or mistreated. It comes with the territory of being a queer and constantly judged.

I have KNOWN misogynists, and they're scum. And Bukowski was not one of them. Not only did Bukowski NOT beat women he also didn't talk down to them.

He Loved them! Why are straight men crucified for liking women I just don't get it!? Can a healthy appetite for sex actually be that bad?

And by the way he was also VERY supportive of women poets. He was also published by women editors. The editors of PEARL MAGAZINE loved him, two women.

He was a loud guy Mark, and arrogant, but the profile doesn't include these horrible judgments you make.

I'm a loud guy, why am I not a misogynist then? Why, well maybe because I'm NOT a misogynist, JUST LOUD!

AND BY THE WAY Mark, you say the "men" on this List, as though you haven't noticed some "women" on this List who have some okay things to say about Bukowski. Why are YOU just singling out the "men" on the List?

Don't the opinions of women count? And here I thought you were busy defending women.

Why am I always the queer defending straight guys? It's so fucking weird I can't even believe it!

I'm GLAD I'M NOT A STRAIGHT GUY! GEESH! You can be the nicest fucking guy on Earth and get called the WORST POSSIBLE names just for liking sex and being LOUD! OY! And for LIKING beer! Beer's great! I fucking LOVE beer! In my neck of the woods we drink Yuengling, and it's wonderful, especially with a nice rich cigarette! And I live in a city where we can still smoke and drink INSIDE! And they'll have to drag me out the door by my fucking hair if they ever ban either!

What a ridiculous country this is sometimes! The government does NOTHING to DuPont for polluting the rivers and soil with chemicals, Exxon has one of the WORST oil spills in history, and NEITHER company pays a dime to clean it up. But in some cities if you light up a cigarette in a bar (NOT a day-care mind you, but a bar!) you get a ticket for 200 dollars, AND thrown out onto the sidewalk without being able to finish your delicious beer! BASTARDS!

CAConrad

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Gil Scott-Heron - B Movie

19 June 2006

Ishaq, whose posts often crackle with anger, accuses the list of burying Gil Scott-Heron while he is still alive; Aldon Nielsen has been recommending the film Black Wax. Chris answers for the music.

In the thread, Ishaq had written · 19 June 2006 —

| why are you always hatin heron and burying the man while he's still alive

Ishaq--- thanks for posting B-Movie; that was my first experience w/ G S-H. I've heard most of the old albums, and saw him live alot in the 80s (once, in Philly, he was with Linton Kwesi, and said "people are wondering when I'm gonna put a new album out; well, i say, when you buy the old ones"----I love that)

Anyway, I've definitely heard some hatin on heron in recent years, and when I saw your post, I feared that he wasn't still alive, so it's good to hear he's still doing stuff with the hip-hop scene... but even if he wasn't still active, he's certainly done enough already-- one of the greats

C On Jun 19, 2006, at 5:57 PM, Ishaq wrote:

why are you always hatin heron and burying the man while he's still alive. he still has his game if you knew anything about what he does with the hip hop scene you might starting doing something twice that you haven't begun to to = think.

he has been through the ringer for his peoples and art without selling out and one gives that sort of bruh respect and not the samo break a man's legs and laugh at the way he walks bangarang like amerikkka likes to do nations under the gun

laterz

ALDON L NIELSEN wrote:

You can see Gil perform this piece in the 1982 movie BLACK WAX, currently available on DVD -- This movie is classic Gil, when he was still at the top of his game -- which makes it sad to watch now, but worth watching anyway -- Also worth it for the views of DC and the old WAX MUSEUM -- the original wax museum had been in downtown NorthWest -- then it moved to newer quarters not far from the marina -- but it didn't last long there -- an enterprising soul go the idea to turn it into a music club, and for a few years it was one of the top places to go -- I saw Buddy Guy, Ornette Colemean, Stevie Ray Vaughan, King Sunny Ade and a host of others there -- Some of the old statues were still scattered around the premises, and Gil has fun with them at the beginning of the film -- You also see Gil walking around the streets of DC, where he lived in those years, and near the tidal basin -- reciting his poems accompanied by his boom box -- check it out -- On Mon, 19 Jun 2006 14:13:31 +0000, Ishaq wrote:

The idea concerns the fact that this country wants nostalgia. They want to go back as far as they can - even if it's only as far as last week. Not to face now or tomorrow, but to face backwards. And yesterday was the day of our cinema heroes riding to the rescue at the last possible moment. The day of the man in the white hat or the man on the white horse - or the man who always came to save America at the last moment - someone always came to save America at the last moment - especially in "B" movies. -- gill scott heron <> <http://vancouver.indymedia.org/?q=node/632>

Well, the first thing I want to say is..."Mandate my ass!"

Because it seems as though we've been convinced that 26% of the registered voters, not even 26% of the American people, but 26% of the registered voters form a mandate - or a landslide. 21% voted for Skippy and 3, 4% voted for somebody else who might have been running.

But, oh yeah, I remember. In this year that we have now declared the year from Shogun to Reagan, I remember what I said about Reagan...meant it. Acted like an actor...Hollyweird. Acted like a liberal. Acted like General Franco when he acted like governor of California, then he acted like a republican. Then he acted like somebody was going to vote for him for president. And now we act like 26% of the registered voters is actually a mandate. We're all actors in this I suppose.

What has happened is that in the last 20 years, America has changed from a producer to a consumer. And all consumers know that when the producer names the tune...the consumer has got to dance. That's the way it is. We used to be a producer - very inflexible at that, and now we are consumers and, finding it difficult to understand. Natural resources and minerals will change your world. The Arabs used to be in the 3rd World. They have bought the 2nd World and put a firm down payment on the 1st

one. Controlling your resources we'll control your world. This country has been surprised by the way the world looks now. They don't know if they want to be Matt Dillon or Bob Dylan. They don't know if they want to be diplomats or continue the same policy - of nuclear nightmare diplomacy. John Foster Dulles ain't nothing but the name of an airport now.

The idea concerns the fact that this country wants nostalgia. They want to go back as far as they can - even if it's only as far as last week. Not to face now or tomorrow, but to face backwards. And yesterday was the day of our cinema heroes riding to the rescue at the last possible moment. The day of the man in the white hat or the man on the white horse - or the man who always came to save America at the last moment - someone always came to save America at the last moment - especially in "B" movies. And when America found itself having a hard time facing the future, they looked for people like John Wayne. But since John Wayne was no longer available, they settled for Ronald Reagan - and it has placed us in a situation that we can only look at - like a "B" movie.

Come with us back to those inglorious days when heroes weren't zeros. Before fair was square. When the cavalry came straight away and all-American men were like Hemingway to the days of the wondrous "B" movie. The producer underwritten by all the millionaires necessary will be Casper "The Defensive" Weinberger - no more animated choice is available. The director will be Attila the Haig, running around frantically declaring himself in control and in charge. The ultimate realization of the inmates taking over at the asylum. The screenplay will be adapted from the book called "Voodoo Economics" by George "Papa Doc" Bush. Music by the "Village People" the very military "Macho Man."

"Company!!!" "Macho, macho man!" "Two-three-four." "He likes to be - well, you get the point." "Huuut! Your left! Your left! Your left...right, left, right, left, right...!"

A theme song for saber-rallying and selling wars door-to-door. Remember, we're looking for the closest thing we can find to John Wayne. Clichés abound like kangaroos - courtesy of some spaced out Marlin Perkins, a Reagan contemporary. Clichés like, "itchy trigger finger" and "tall in the saddle" and "riding off or on into the sunset." Clichés like, "Get off of my planet by sundown!" More so than clichés like, "he died with his boots on." Marine tough the man is. Bogart tough the man is. Cagney tough the man is. Hollywood tough the man is. Cheap stick tough. And Bonzo's substantial. The ultimate in synthetic selling: A Madison Avenue masterpiece - a miracle - a cotton-candy politician...Presto! Macho!

"Macho, macho man!"

Put your orders in America. And quick as Kodak your leaders duplicate with the accent being on the nukes - cause all of a sudden we have fallen prey to selective amnesia - remembering what we want to remember and forgetting what we choose to forget. All of a sudden, the man who called for a blood bath on our college campuses is supposed to be Dudley "God-damn" Do-Right?

"You go give them liberals hell Ronnie." That was the mandate. To the new "Captain Bly" on the new ship of fools. It was doubtlessly based on his chameleon performance of the past - as a liberal democrat - as the head of the Studio Actor's Guild. When other celluloid saviors were cringing in terror from McCarthy - Ron stood tall. It goes all the

way back from Hollywood to hillbilly. From liberal to libelous, from "Bonzo" to Birch idol...born again. Civil rights, women's rights, gay rights...it's all wrong. Call in the cavalry to disrupt this perception of freedom gone wild. God damn it...first one wants freedom, then the whole damn world wants freedom.

Nostalgia, that's what we want...the good ol' days...when we gave'em hell. When the buck stopped somewhere and you could still buy something with it. To a time when movies were in black and white - and so was everything else. Even if we go back to the campaign trail, before six-gun Ron shot off his face and developed hoof-in-mouth. Before the free press went down before full-court press. And were reluctant to review the menu because they knew the only thing available was - Crow.

Lon Chaney, our man of a thousand faces - no match for Ron. Doug Henning does the make-up - special effects from Grecian Formula 16 and Crazy Glue. Transportation furnished by the David Rockefeller of Remote Control Company. Their slogan is, "Why wait for 1984? You can panic now...and avoid the rush."

So much for the good news...

As Wall Street goes, so goes the nation. And here's a look at the closing numbers - racism's up, human rights are down, peace is shaky, war items are hot - the House claims all ties. Jobs are down, money is scarce - and common sense is at an all-time low on heavy trading. Movies were looking better than ever and now no one is looking because, we're starring in a "B" movie. And we would rather had John Wayne...we would rather had John Wayne.

"You don't need to be in no hurry. You ain't never really got to worry. And you don't need to check on how you feel. Just keep repeating that none of this is real. And if you're sensing, that something's wrong, Well just remember, that it won't be too long Before the director cuts the scene...yea."

"This ain't really your life, Ain't really your life, Ain't really ain't nothing but a movie."

[Refrain repeated about 25 times or more in an apocalyptic crescendo with a military cadence.]

"This ain't really your life, Ain't really your life, Ain't really ain't nothing but a movie."

"B Movie" <>lyrics: Gil Scott-Heron

From the album "Reflections

<<http://www.leoslyrics.com/albums/>

80/jses-

sionid=A402CEF88EA9B11714706787FFFD0241>"

<<http://www.blackamericaweb.com/site.aspx/sayitloud/kane615>>

<<http://www.blackamericaweb.com/site.aspx/sayitloud/kane615>>

-- Stay Strong \ "Be a friend to the oppressed and an enemy to the oppressor" -- Imam Ali Ibn Abu Talib (as) \ "We restate our commitment to the peace process. But we will not submit to a

process of humiliation."

--patrick o'neil \ "...we have the responsibility to make no deal with the oppressor" -- harry belafonte \ "...in time, we will look back to this age with incredulity and

and horrible for doing so; then I read the policies and learned that clicking on my own ads is strictly prohibited. Nonetheless, I earned \$40 that day, which lasted 15 hours, a little better than \$2 per hour. Yesterday, I followed policy closely and earned just under \$3 for the whole day. Today I have earned zip. Also yesterday, I ate a rather lousy sandwich that cost \$34. How could it have cost so much? The beers (I drank almost 3 Coronas since they didn't have Rolling Rock) cost \$5 each. My friend's Miller Lites cost \$4. How could beer cost that much? How could advertising on my website cost so little? My blogging days tend to run long. I usually stay at it on a simple day for three hours, a harder day for ten. If I were earning \$10/hour for advertising, I would be content and also would feel nicely employed. That would equal \$240 per day.

\$250 per classroom hour is what our least-well paid teachers at U of Houston were earning. Each made \$18,000 for the semester s/he taught one undergraduate and one graduate workshop. It was one of those teachers who regarded me as the best writer currently in attendance at the school. Not best I would have thought since I am a Democrat. We were earning \$21 per contract hour to teach and grade undergraduates 15 hours per week. Typically, I put in 30 hours -- we had 54 students apiece -- so undercut my own pay by half in order to do a more thorough job grading student papers. Today, I would be very lucky indeed if an organization offered to pay me at graduate school wages. In Minnesota, where I have lived for ten years, pay is usually \$10 per hour, up from \$7.50 ten years ago. Those jobs require a high school diploma. Housing and food have gone up dramatically. Teaching here is done on a voluntary basis. It may be possible to win more than a p-t class or two and therefore earn more than \$4,000 per year. To tutor, which I prefer, I need to advertise. I need to wait to do so until the school year starts.

I am hoping to earn \$10,000 per year that I now lack, and this has been true for seven years running. Creative writing as an enterprise is leaving me feeling genuinely put out and fatigued. I have so far foregone \$400,000 in earnings due to having chosen to study cw as a field, and that number is only going to go up. I am dependent on the government for health insurance and family for sustenance.

My informal rank at Wisconsin, by Lorrie Moore, was top 2 or 3 then in attendance as an undergraduate; at SUNY-Binghamton, it was 1 going in, based on writing sample. At Houston, I got the fiction fellowship going in. Politically and aesthetically I was a little left and a little offbeat.

I would like to hear from anyone who has figured out a good way to earn \$10,000 per year. I have had 30 jobs and don't really want just another one.

Ann Bogle

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Dropped from these pages is a reflex he could never quite suppress: handed a thread, he answers with a pop song or a sight gag—a Kristoferson lyric, Starburst juice glimpsed in a bodega, Ron Silliman needled over Fibonacci verse, Frank O'Hara born on Second Avenue. The list often filed it under cranky or beside the point. It was neither; it was how the man thought.

Langston Hughes/W.Dixon/Jimmy Reed, etc--a question

2 July 2006

One of the rare threads he starts rather than answers: on Langston Hughes's blues poems and how they stand to the recorded blues of Ma Rainey, Willie Dixon, Big Mama Thornton.

Hey, I got in a really good discussion the other day about Langston Hughes' blues poems (and yes I know that he recorded quite a few of them) and their relationship to the blues lyrics of, for instance, the folks above, or John Lee Hooker, Big Mama Thornton, Ma Rainey, etc---

And if anybody else here would maybe be interested in talking about that relationship here-- Does it matter that Hughes worked primarily in a different field (in the artistic specialization sense) than these other folks? Is it somewhat analogous to the difference between, say, million selling hip hop artists today vs. a slam poet aesthetic which utilizes many devices of rap/hip hop? Or, for that matter, even the difference between say Bob Dylan and Allen Ginsberg's songs?

There's alot of room for discussion (and, sure, bring on the "blues bashers" though I'm definitely trying to avoid the tired argument "it doesn't stand up on the page" and will try not to engage it here if it comes up)-- Also, if anybody knows of any good essays on the subject---- specifically about Hughes and some of the other recorded bluesmen of the 20th C---that'd be a nice supplement, but I really am not a big fan of posts that just send LINKS without any commentary as to why I'm supposed to check out the link..... a discussion might be nice (but be careful what you ask for, Chris---)

C

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Langston Hughes/W.Dixon/Jimmy Reed, etc--a question

2 July 2006

In the thread, ALDON L NIELSEN had written · 2 July 2006 —

Most popular song lyrics don't hold up in the absence of music, and were never intended to

Aldon----thanks for getting the ball rolling on this---One follow up question for you would be, in reference to the "doesn't hold up to the page" objection, would be this: Given the fact that Hughes did publish them in his books, would you say that Hughes' stand up on the page more so than the others? Do you agree with the perception that Hughes was trying to confer a specifically "literary" legitimacy onto this form on par with, say, the more white euro form of the sonnet? Do you think he was trying to de-alienate "literature" and "music" from each other as specialized fields? As later, say, Baraka might be said to (or we could get into Gil Scott Heron again I suppose)---

Your point about their being no blues literary scene is a good one I think---and to me points to what is so, I'll say, pioneering about what Hughes (and Johnson---I assume you mean James Weldon Johnson not Robert) did---I'm trying to figure how this relates to this broader (empirical, but probably controversial) observation in today's society: In popular music, to a large extent, even the most white- power culturally segregated whites, have to acknowledge the crucial importance and influence and relevance of black musicians (though perhaps less so now than 25-30 years ago)---Yet, in the field of literature and poetry (if understood as cut off from music, and specifically that which 'holds up well on the page'), there are still quite a few 'well-intentioned' liberal whites groping desperately and/ or cluelessly to change their standards, or 'make exceptions,' when it comes to considering the history of diaspora poetry (warning: shorthand term) (Hughes being on the level of Pound or Williams, for instance, is not heard as much as say Bird on the level of Stravinski or 'the stones stole it from Chuck Berry').... and what to make of that, and where to go next....

(okay, that's my two posts for today....)

Chris

On Jul 2, 2006, at 5:00 PM, ALDON L NIELSEN wrote:

well, the one obvious intersection is that moment at Newport when the Muddy Waters band plays the song that Hughes wrote while listening - I think it's on the Muddy at Newport album, but don't have it in front of me -

And don't be so quick to dismiss that "it doesn't hold up on the page" objection -- Most popular song lyrics don't hold up in the absence of music, and were never intended to -- there are, of course, numerous exceptions -- so let's not rush to make that a general rule any more than we rush to rule out the page/stage distinctions --

there are blues lyrics that hold up quite well:

I'm going down to the river, gonna take my rocking chair; If the blues overtake me, I'll rock on out of there.

and there are blues lyrics that don't hold up so well-- which is one reason I just love those loving transcriptions that reverently preserve every "uh huh" etc.

Buddy Guy singing "Heard people tell, the mighty dollar done fell" - is poetry to me -- John Lee Hooker's BOOGIE CHILDREN is a great record, but it will never make compelling reading -- or reciting --

the essential difference between those slam poets you mention (yes I know them . . . I had to rearrange their faces . . .) and "hip hop artists, is the producer --

there was never a blues poetry "scene" coincident in the same way with blues as music in performance -- just several poets (Hughes, Brown, Johnson) who included the form in their repertoire -

On Sun, 02 Jul 2006 16:41:34 +0000, Chris Stroffolino wrote:

has something to do with that, but there still ain't much agreed criteria for what constitutes a "homer" or "bloop single" in poetry-- and that could be okay....it probably has to be....)

thanks again, Chris

****Doping Scandal Rocks Poetry****

by Mike Freakman

July 30, New York (AHP2 News Service) *The poetry world has been rocked by recent revelations that several of the most prestigious national poetry contest winners in 2005 and 2006 were written with the aid of performance-enhancing drugs.*

Over the past decade, poetry contests have emphasized our openness to all participants, with the promise that each manuscript is judged on its merits along said Guadalupe Maximino Glumstein, the Chancellor of the International Poetry Contests Federation (IPCF). Doping is a huge step backward in our efforts, since it gives an unfair competitive advantage to those who are willing to do anything, including risk long-term damage to their bodies and minds, in order to write the best poem.

The IPCF advocates testing for performance-enhancing drugs as a prerequisite for national book publications, slam competitions, as well a poetry contests. Poets that violate IPCF rules would be ineligible for prizes or anthologies for penalty periods of one year for first offenders to eternity for repeat offenders. Poets that comply with IPCF guidelines get a sticker to affix to all their publications certifying their poems as doping-free.

Unless we want poetry to sink back into the margins of society, we must assure readers that poets produce their work with their own sweat and imagination. When we teach a poem to a young person in a school setting, to inspire and instruct, we need to be able to say that anyone can aspire to write a poem as good as this. We can't afford to send a message that doping is necessary to write the best poems. We have to have an even playing field.

Several leading poets were asked to comment on the scandal but refused to talk on the record, for fear of provoking IPCF investigations of their conduct. Unlike the use of doping in track and cycling, poets often use poetry-performance-enhancing drugs to cause temporary physical and mental impairment or paralysis, in order to hyperactivate their imaginative capacities. The practice has been shown to cause a number of long-term physical and mental maladies.

But 11-year old Daisy Threadwhistle of Incontrobrogliaria, New Jersey, was eager to speak on the record. Ms. Threadwhistle said she was very disappointed when a poem from her school reader was removed when its author tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs. The Moon Is My Revenge, Venus My Soldier of Midnight was my favorite poem this year. I feel cheated. I don't think I want to read any more poems. In early 2006, IPCF introduced a battery of blood and psychological tests to detect poetic doping. An IPCF study group is now investigating whether the use of certain computer programs and search engines also should be banned from poetry.

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The Book of Disquiet

17 August 2006

In the thread, Michael Tod Edgerton had written · 17 August 2006 —

| *I want to finally remedy the Pessoa gap in my reading.*

Michael--- I won't get into the Book of Disquiet debates right now, but personally I think the best place to start with Pessoa is that 50 (or is it 70) page selection translated by Chris Daniels in a recent CRAYON magazine---I know it's just an excerpt in a literary journal, but it's so long and substantial it feels like a Pessoa book, and a great introduction to a more DYNAMIC, in my opinion, Pessoa than the B of D....C On Aug 17, 2006, at 7:03 AM, Michael Tod Edgerton wrote:

I want to finally remedy the Pessoa gap in my reading. Anyone have any helpful thoughts on the pros and cons of the different versions/ translations, Zenith/Penguin, Costa/Serpent's Tail, Mac Adam's/ Exact Change, and any others that out there? I remember someone once saying something about the Zenith version, but can't remember now whether that was a "the best bet" or "as long as you avoid that one..." remark.

Thanks!

Tod

Michael Tod Edgerton Poet-in-Residence, Spring 2006 Stonehill College

Peter Kaplan Memorial Fellow, 2004 - 2006 Program in Literary Arts Brown University

"There's the mute probability of a reciprocal lack of understanding" - Mei-mei Bersenbrugge

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payments for readings

17 August 2006

Joel Lewis's elegy for the vanished reading fee—killed off, he thinks, by the mega-bookstores —stirs an old memory of his own touring economics.

In the thread, Steve Dalachinsky had written · 17 August 2006 —

| *money is a strong metaphor*

Ah, Joel---

Thanks for this. It was many years ago I remember (fondly) you telling me you thought I was kinda crazy that I would fly to Chicago and SF (from Philly and/or NYC) to take a loss and read for free....

C

On Aug 15, 2006, at 11:02 PM, joel s lewis wrote:

One of the things, seems to me, that killed off fees for a reading was the proliferation of mega bookstore readings (less important in cities, but quite vital in suburban and small towns). When B&N and Borders first came to North Jersey --readers would get gift certificates, t-shirts, a day of reading employee discount and carte blanche at the coffe bar. once, at a Borders, a manager gave me thirty bucks out of petty cash! That stopped quickly and now you are lucky if you get a coffe + you can't pass the hat. This lack of non-payment seems to spread, as it used to be a point of honor for an organizer to give the reader something. (And, once upon a time, many small press magazines tries to pay 'something' for poems)

Do we hurt ourselves as a community by our willingness to perform too often for free-- or too often, at a loss? Even at venues that pay, say colleges, the \$100 dollar max fee for a local well-known poet seems set in stone from some point in late 60s (when, according Lewis warsh) you could pay your rent and still have something left over.

There is a poetry series at Stevens Tech in Hoboken that doesn't even buy the reader a coffee. I asked the organizer about maybe paying poets and he responded he had dozens of people, many w/ some rep, willing to read without a fee.

Or maybe attitudes have changed as so many of us are working full time (or, too often, all the time) and are less dependent on giving readings to make ends meet.

Joel Lewis

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Exsperm writhing progs rocks

23 August 2006

Daniel f. Bradley distrusts 'institutional experimental poetry' on principle; Chris, who has stood on both sides of the workshop desk, refuses the either/or.

In the thread, Daniel f. Bradley had written · 23 August 2006 —

| *sorry but it tends to leave a bad stain on the page*

Ah well ya finly gt my attn w/ this thread because of the "new improved" subject heading!

have way too many thoughts about it for this forum, but Daniel's point is refreshing after all the advertisements (and, yes, many of these advertisements do come from people I respect, and/or love, and/or consider friends, or work at schools at which I have played the institutional role of 'student' and even 'teacher' or edit magazines of which I have played the institutional role of "contributor"

but anyhoo--i don't think there's necessarily some big either/or about it... as a 'student' i was probably way more like daniel and as a 'teacher' i think i was always on the look at for 'students' like daniel (sometimes I had to poke around and dig beneath layers of 'training' to find them-- but they're there.... and sometimes the institutional bosses will tout freedom but still (secretly?) fear one is 'selling away the store' if one, however gently, tries to replace the role of

'authority figure' (uh, Althusserian ideological hailing!!---oops, my 'training' lingo is making a brief comeback---help! police!) with a different attitude....

Like I had teachers who genuinely believed themselves to be speaking for something less institutional because when (and where) they were students, say, STEIN AND WILLIAMS were considered outsiders and scorned by THEIR teachers....and, as they fight that battle, they often don't see when they're older how they are repeating the same thing for their students..... and so on.....ad infinitum.... but if ya can accept it as a game, and keep a distance, and realize, well, it's just buying time, and getting a teaching credential (if you need a job, and are a fascinating conversationalist), and maybe make some friends, and find a community that encourages 'each to his needs, each to her abilities' etc.... well, any of these programs can be okay for awhile-- as can less 'experimental' writing programs. And, though it didn't work for me, I bet there's some who can eschew the loans or get a scholarship to work on their writing while adjuncting at the local Burger King....

Chris

On Aug 23, 2006, at 5:10 AM, Daniel f. Bradley wrote:

sure read the books - i think i said read a lot of books (all sorts of books) poetry books pamphlets, street signs, the clouds everything

i'm not anti education - i just don't trust "institutional experimental poetry"

sorry but it tends to leave a bad stain on the page

Gabrielle Welford <welford@HAWAII.EDU> wrote: Date: Tue, 22 Aug 2006 09:01:35 -1000 (HST) proven or available for general use.

being taught doesn't mean you can't be experimental. just read frank mccourt's book on teaching, _teacher man_. twas lovely, as is derrick jensen's _walking on water_. best, g

On Tue, 22 Aug 2006, Daniel f. Bradley wrote:

are you fucking kidding -it isn't experimental if its being taught

if you want to write like someone else by all mean follow all these esteemed suggestions

if you want write differently

read a shit load of weird books (different types of book not justthose French guys in English) and start writing outside yourself

maxpaul@SFSU.EDU wrote: San Francisco State.

Quoting Pierre Joris :

as does our program at SUNY Albany, if I may say so myself.

On Aug 22, 2006, at 4:14 PM, Maria Damon wrote:

nothing as in-process as black mt, but there are programs that favor "experimental" writing: SUNY-buffalo (phd not mfa) naropa institute uc-san diego ? brown university california college of art new college of california upenn (phd) temple u (ma not mfa)

At 6:46 AM -0700 8/22/06, AG Jorgensen wrote: Been refamiliarizing myself with Black Mountain - the exchange between artists, a kind of collaborative, teachers and students as peers. Is there anything like this currently in the US? Anything being developed among the many excellent programs for writers and artists out there.

AGJ

--- "Our best security, our only security, is in the world of ideas, and I sense a slight foreboding," he said.-- Justice Anthony Kennedy

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= "Fascism should more properly be called corporatism,since it is the merger of state and corporate power." — Benito Mussolini = Pierre Joris 244 Elm Street Albany NY 12202 home: [REDACTED] cell: [REDACTED] office: 518 442 40 85 Paris: 01 43 54 95 13 French cell: 06 75 43 57 10 email: joris@albany.edu <http://pierrejoris.com> Nomadics blog: <http://pjoris.blogspot.com> =

helping to kill your literati star since 2004 <http://fhole.blogspot.com/>

gabrielle welford welford@hawaii.edu

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wilhelm reich anarcho-syndicalism gut/heart/head/earth

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The Outsiders

30 September 2006

The list is parsing 'outsider'—Dubuffet, art brut, Colin Wilson; Chris hears a band name and is gone, off into 1966 garage rock with trumpets.

They did one of the best classic top 40 (top 10) Am singles--uh garage rock but with trumpets--in 1966...

"I can't wait for ever....even though you want me too..."

a few years later, after the outsiders broke up the lead singer ended up in Climax-- uh from outsiders not being able to wait too long to "if i can't find my way back home---it just wouldn't be fair" (precious and few)....

On Sep 30, 2006, at 11:43 AM, Warren Lloyd wrote:

For an outsider to be an outsider an insider would have to have first insidered him, even if momentarily, so as to establish his status as outsider in comparison with or

through the scope of insiderness. The whole while, of course, promoting the status of the inside.

" The stars are eating" - Antonin Artaud

Jim Andrews <jim@VISPO.COM> wrote: when i think of 'outsider' in literary terms i think of colin wilson who published 'the outsider' in 1956. wikipedia says of it: "In 1956, at the age of 25, he published The Outsider, which examines the seminal works of various key literary and cultural figures (notably Hermann Hesse, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Vaslav Nijinsky and Vincent Van Gogh) and aspects of alienation in their works. The book was very successful and was a serious contribution to the popularization of existentialism in Britain."

ja

"The term Outsider Art was coined by art critic Roger Cardinal in 1972 as an English synonym for Art Brut (which literally translates as "Raw Art" or "Rough Art"), a label created by French artist Jean Dubuffet to describe art created outside the boundaries of official culture; Dubuffet focused particularly on art by insane asylum inmates.

Do you Yahoo!? Everyone is raving about the all-new Yahoo! Mail.

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GRAND PIANO blurb possibility

19 October 2006

Invited to blurb the Language writers' collective autobiography The Grand Piano, he sends back something nearer a prose poem than a blurb.

(feel free to excerpt)

The Grand Piano is an amazing machine. "Grand" like an old high flying flag, or a street or avenue in a neighborhood that used to be a central hub called downtown. Often it crosses Broadway. Broadway may have more songs, just like Georgia gets more songs than Houston, but "Funky Grand" doesn't have to sound (or mean) funky bland, especially if James Booker could play it. There's a picture of Booker playing one on my refrigerator. I don't know if it's a baby. At what point does it become a toddler? But more importantly, at what point will there be more public access to grand pianos, when even a good upright is hard to find buried beneath the karaoke machines. It's much more difficult to see the pianist's face (and more difficult for the pianist to see your face) over an upright than it is over a grand. But a grand also takes up more room. It's a grand accident that this book and the authors it writes have more room and thus recognizable faces, and also that it's upright enough not to be wheeled out from the cafe and into the chilly wind near the corner of what used to be called Love and what is still called Haight.

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(Call For)Defenses of lying and/or art*23 October 2006*

An announcement only in form: a mock call for papers on the ancient charge that poetry is a kind of lying, which turns out to be the essay itself.

In attempts to 'define' genres (as a form of social engineering), 'poetry' has been often accused, and/or celebrated, for thousands of years of recorded (largely written) history, as being intimately bound up in the activity of lying. While some have, with piercing insight, denied the charge by turning it on the prosecutor---"by what criteria do you determine the 'truth' of that which you use as a standard to judge our activity as lies? Oh, and how long have you been beating your wife?"---others try to defend poetry by carefully delineating a conceptual and ethical distinction between "lying" and "art." If "art" must have "artifice" at its root, is "artifice" a form of lovely necessary lying so crucial for a happy and healthful life, whether you're bourgeois or working class? Does "truth" have the same relationship

A book could be written about it (even though many have already), an album, or at least a weekly all-talk radio (I guess I should say podcast), in which people clank glasses and laugh and digress around the central hub of this issue. Maybe after one episode, though, we'd have to change the topic. Fuck the stranglehold of the station manager's syllabus, yet without it every idea could be nipped in the bud (some people are way better at assigning things for others to do than doing it themselves; this can be a beautiful form of creation but some call it a failure to put one's money where one's mouth is)

So this is a call for papers! It may not have immediate U-cred or play by what what one could call "Wayne State rules," but it's not necessary exposed to aspects of that style, as if to say a storming of the gates can't happen without a gating of the storms.

Nah, let others call for papers! (hell, maybe I'll even come running if there's bed and breakfast and such....) This is a call, but more for notes, scribbled down, like 'cliches' or 'buzzwords' you find yourself telling or being told (by what you know not, though you have your theories), as ethical maxims you kinda feel you're putting on trial.

So, what are your favorite defenses of lying (as opposed to say imagination or the truth---the less specialized terms), or questioning the so-called 'truths' presented as such, and granted much social validity in part do the such presentation? I use the term "lying" in part because of its wider-applicability, insofar as you can ask just about any person whether on some level they believe lying is necessary (even for the sake of the truth) than you can about the relationship of "lies" or "the imagination.'

A precondition for admission into this this discussion-party is that people who see themselves as "poets" (or even the slightly wider term "intellectuals") will only be invited on the precondition that they bring a friend who they consider very articulate verbally, intelligent and/or sensitive, but who does not define herself or himself as a "poet" or "intellectual" or even a "writer" (and, perhaps it needs to be said, and vice versa)

This discussion party will be held in Oakland---at a space to be determined, potentially outside, and with other non-verbal forms of entertainment such as music), and will be recorded for a podcast or broadcast on the radio. It will be informal and utilize a somewhat arbitrary (but highly scientific) selection process (see previous paragraph), but will hopefully become an ongoing occurrence so that everybody who has something to contribute will be allowed to (not to sound too utopian, but what the hell....).

What I need now, are very short (no more than a paragraph), quotes, with some sense of why these quotes, fascinate you, that address this question of "truth" and/or the necessity of lying. The quote could be from something in Plato, or Shakespeare, or Holland-Dozier-Holland, or something Abdul at the corner store told you. The more important criteria is that this quote troubled you, or made you wonder, and reopen up the question of whether there's any implications (and if so, what you are) into your believes about what is, and/or should be, your relationship to words like 'lies' and 'truth.'

If you're 'clever' enough, I may even allow a 'smartass' (how is that different than 'dumbass'?---ah, another potential topic---) begging of the question into the discussion. For instance, if you need to say that such words as "truth" and "lies" are NINETEENTH CENTURY WORDS, and thus not worthy of your mental-non-paying labor, you would have to do A LOT to convince me right now that this voice hasn't already had enough say in the last century, but I can be persuaded.

Send your "ABSTRACTS" publicly here on the poetics list (or for those not on these lists, send them to me personally). Must be willing to travel to Oakland (or pay for my flight to a venue in your town---but that can wait till later). After the initial screening based on the abstracts, there will be a roughly hour-long phone conversation that one could view as an 'audition,' though sometimes that could make one too self-conscious and make it stiffer, to determine things like verbal personality, charisma, willingness to think fast on one's feet and also let others' talk, appreciation for the importance of the non-verbal aspects of the event (can you play an instrument? if not, would you want to DJ? or be one of the dancers? how about some graffiti?).

The verbal interview is optional--I mean, you could always just befriend me, but a modicum of an entrepreneurial interest must have entered into the discussion as a criteria. We will then begin to develop a pool, or 'human resources' for a somewhat loose collectivist commercial enterprise that will at the same time also be more personally fulfilling and fun than the art, poetry, music, and general day job/nightlife split as most talker-types know, or experience, it.

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Alex Caldiero, Leonard Gontarek and Jane Ormerod will read Sunday at ABC No Rio celebrating CLWN WR

28 October 2006

The name Leonard Gontarek on a reading flyer carries him back to the Philadelphia poetry world of 1986-92.

In the thread, Bob Heman had written · 28 October 2006 —

| *Leonard Gontarek will be Amtraking in from Philadelphia.*

So nice to see you mention Leonard Gontarek's name on the poetry list, Leonard was a great force on the Philly Poetry scene when I was there from 86-92. For people like myself who were "too street poet for the academics, and allegedly too academic for the street poets" (and at the time in Philly it was pretty damn 'either/or'), Leonard's work was very helped widen the range in ways that gave a lot of younger poets and writers hope and permission. Have fun at the reading...

Chris

On Oct 28, 2006, at 2:59 AM, Bob Heman wrote:

Alex Caldiero flew in from Utah for this reading. Leonard Gontarek will be Amtraking in from Philadelphia. Jane Ormerod, yes, will be walking up from downtown. All to excite and entertain you. Three great poets celebrating the rebirth of CLWN WR. Please come and hear them. You won't be disappointed!

ABC No Rio Celebrates CLWN WR!!! Sunday, October 29, 7:00 p.m.

Alex Caldiero Leonard Gontarek Jane Ormerod introduced by Bob Heman editor/publisher of CLWN WR/Clown War since 1971

hosted by Patricia Carragon for ABC No Rio \$5.00 donation ABC No Rio, 156 Rivington Street ("F" Train to Delancey - walk north one block)

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apostrophe s (and ownership)

3 November 2006

A grammar question—why does English mark possession with an apostrophe and an s?—becomes, once Jim Andrews wonders about its history, his meditation on ownership itself.

I like your points here Jim....I don't know if anybody can really get to the bottom of the issue. Sometimes it's tempting to imagine some kind of conspracy that is

telling of 'national character' from such differences in language. To what extent do some very basic differences of language between languages cause people who are raised speaking that language to perceive the world differently..... And, even within the shared Euro-alphabets with which David' original question is concerned... So, some related issues for me, would be the words "OWE" and "OWN"-- In late 16c English texts, the word "owe" means what it means today, but it also means "OWN"---this could lead one to believe that ATTITUDES TO POSSESSION AND OWNERSHIP were not yet as reified as they later became, and that a lot of issues about "ownership" that today are often "assumed"-- such as "one can own the land" etc---were not as clearly assumed, because the alternative was encoded into the everyday language. Yet, I don't know if this is simply an interesting "cocktail party tidbit" or if one should give it much socio-political weight. What do you all think?

Like, in contemporary usage, how important is it that English say "I am thirsty" and Spanish say "I HAVE THIRST" Or what would be the significance that the word for LIBRARY in English is the word for Bookstore in French (and the word for bookstore in English is the word for Library in French)-- Would asking HOW DID THIS HAPPEN (in translating)? be as useful as a question, as what consequences this would have about differing sense of ownership and possession, and how the apostrophe plays a role in this....

Then there was the literary use of the apostrophe to cram in more syllables to fit meter--- like "From's"-----which means "From us"----but often Shakespearean actors today will say it like "FROMS"---a very interesting sounding word....

Chris

An essay that attempted to answer your question--what would it be like? It would explore the history of the issue, the history of the relation of the apostrophe and possession in the English language. Which might need to cover some interesting territory such as attitudes toward possession and ownership, historically.

On Nov 3, 2006, at 1:10 AM, Jim Andrews wrote:

Okay, I might come across as an idiot, but I really want to know this:Why, in the English language, do we use the apostrophe and s to show possession? (ex. Stephanie's yellow boots)The French de and other languages (like the Chinese de, for example) show possession expressed by a word. Why & when did English start using punctuation to do this?David Harrison Horton 1341 58th Avenue #9Oakland CA 94621

I agree that questions of this sort are very interesting. Not that I have an answer. I note that there are exceptions. Such as "its properties are in disarray," where possession is not indicated by an apostrophe. because that would also indicate "it is properties are in disarray".

One of the wonderful things about natural language is that it is so fucked up. Unlike, say, computer languages, which are marvelously logical. But are not as expressive as natural language. Or at least not as expressive in certain ways.

An essay that attempted to answer your question--what would it be like? It would explore the history of the issue, the history of the relation of the apostrophe and possession in the English language. Which might need to cover some interesting territory such as attitudes toward possession and ownership, historically. One would hope, at any rate, that such a topic would be germane to the history. Maybe it isn't, though. Perhaps possession came to be indicated by the apostrophe via contraction. I mean that perhaps possession was formerly denoted by something longer and was shortened to the apostrophe s.

That'd be my guess.

ja <http://vispo.com>

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Soldier/Student/Drop Out/Etc...

3 November 2006

Sprung from his own blog post on John Kerry's 'stuck in Iraq' gaffe, the thread has become a debate over why the young enlist; against the list's easy contempt, Chris keeps the eighteen-year-old's own view in the room.

"I'm 18, I don't know what I want"--Alice Cooper. (that's one thing that was true for many in the vietnam generation as well as today....)or one could add "but I know how to get it"---Johnny Rotten

some know what they DON'T want...and that's a start

or some do know what they want, or think they know what they want... alot of people, regardless of whether they choose the army or to go to nursing school, or whatever.... come to regret the consequences of decisions they made when they were 18...

some people have a very good education, or are very smart without the benefit of what somebody like Kerry calls a good education, and still have limited options due to the economy...

some people, yes, just wanna see some action...

when older people judge 18 year old people, 18 year old people are also judging older people... i don't know if there are many 18-22 year-olds on this list, but

(okay, i won't say more now--though this could in part at least address the question asked (perhaps merely rhetorically by Thomas Savage), "And what does it have to do with the writing to

| which this site is dedicated, anyway?"

On Nov 3, 2006, at 8:49 AM, Mary Kasimor wrote:

I teach college in a conservative community in the heart of Minnesota. I can't say this for sure, but I suspect that many young people who do sign up for the military do so because they love what it stands for (and I am not certain what it stands for) and they believe in the cause.

Simple. Perhaps not that simple, but that is a part of it. The Vietnam War generation was different.

Mary Kasimor

vulture protein <vulture.protein@GMAIL.COM> wrote: There are many people who need money for college and don't sign up to be war fodder (ie paid killers, ie or assist in killing through tech / med and assorted "support" positions).

You don't have to sign up for the military to go to college. But it's insulting to believe that this is the only option for these unfortunate people.

There are other ways, there always is.

How does signing up for the military because you "need money for college" make you not morally or ethically accountable for your actions and the outcome of the war? They are paid and willing participants. They are making money just like the old men at the top. (Shall we explore the reasons why the old and sexually impotent send the young and sexually virile to war? Isn't there some unconscious / conscious satisfaction involved in this? Isn't there something to that?)

I'd rather be an uneducated loser than a murderer.

Conversely there are some people who feel like a nobody and join the military to be somebody. Have you seen the commercial where the recruit comes back home and is talking to all of his buddies who are living a civilian life, and he stares smugly back at them while he has war flashbacks strobing through his mind? Who does he think he is?

Do I think recruits are stupid? I think they are morally suspect, carving out their corporate future in blood. But hey, they are being all they can be.

I think it would be interesting if the military recruited from our prison system. Why not send death row inmates off to fight the war? They already have a heightened killer instinct, and if they are killed in action, then there is no loss of innocent life. The judicial system is unreliable, so let's just send the people who were convicted on DNA evidence. Why not?

The difference between a marine, a suicide bomber, and a terrorist is what you call it.

One country's terrorist is another country's freedom fighter.

- Tony

On 11/2/06, angela vasquez-giroux wrote:

that i consider offensive.

there are many reasons young folks are going into the military-- none of them expecting (or able to expect) what terror war is.

it's not their "job" to know, b/c there is now way they possibly could--which is why kerry was right: the administration are idiots enough to allow these young men and women to enlist under false pretense...

young men and women now are enlisting because they need that money to get to college. they are being led into a quagmire of a war by someone (and his advisors) who live outside reality.

the comment posted here by vulture protein casts this debate back into black and white poles--clearly at the other end of the spectrum (or maybe not). maybe the admin also thinks that all soldiers are idiots, and so have no problem marching them off to their deaths.

but it's still the easy, incorrect way of casting this issue.

and frankly, it is insulting.

On 11/2/06, vulture protein wrote:

"Anyone . . . DUMB enough . . . to want to be in the military, should be allowed in. End of fucking story. That should be the only requirement."

- Bill Hicks

On 11/2/06, Jason Quackenbush wrote:

me too. of course, it's easy to get the wrong idea if the punchline is taken out of context and repeated incessantly as if John Kerry really did think a bunch of dummies were in the army. Of course, it just goes to show how stupid the media is, since the "stuck in iraq" comment doesn't even make sense if it's referring to the troops.

On Thu, 2 Nov 2006, Mark Weiss wrote:

It was perfectly obvious to me that Kerry was referring to Bush as the lazy student who got stuck in Iraq, and he tried half-heartedly to explain himself in those terms. I actually thought it was pretty funny.

Mark

At 02:41 PM 11/2/2006, you wrote: So, it's election time--and I thought I'd throw my hat in the ring---

If you're curious of some of my thoughts on the controversy unleashed by John Kerry's recent comments about being "STUCK IN IRAQ" if one doesn't get a "good education," you can read my informal, amateur (just coz I haven't found anyone to pay yet), thoughts ---replete with a cheesy football metaphor-conceit---and probably typeos at <http://blog.myspace.com/chrisstroffolino>

If you want more of my on-line essay-like writing (on music and such), you can still check out my monthly column (it used to be weekly, but they're cutting back) at www.bigtakeover.com (recent entries on The Coup, John and Yoko, Corporate Endorsements, etc)

Oh, and if you happen to be in San Francisco (yes, the city where the mayor tells people not to come out for 10/31 celebrations because of the self-fulfilling threat of violence; which KPOO says is more of a problem here than in NYC New Year's Eve and New Orleans Mardi Gras---and they got a point)---

and you want to see/hear some free music (donations accepted), come to the REVOLUTION CAFE on THURSDAY NOVEMBER 16th. I'll be playing some originals on solo piano and will be sharing the bill with JULIE NAPOLIN (CITAY) and ANTONIO

ROMAN-ALCALA (CONSPIRACY OF BEARDS---The Leonard Cohen tribute band);
they'll be doing solo guitar stuff....

and you don't have to wear flowers in the ipods

of what's left of your hair....

Oh, AND IF ANYBODY wants to join me with another instrument, FEEL VERY FREE
TO WRITE ME.....

22nd & Bartlett St; Nov. 16th. 8PM

-- <http://mother-of-light.blogspot.com>

Access over 1 million songs - Yahoo! Music Unlimited Try it today.

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Democracy inaction (to taylor b)...

10 November 2006

The midterms have just gone to the Democrats; it is Taylor Brady's guarded optimism, and his distinction between tactical and strategic gains, that Chris wants unpacked.

Hey Taylor thanks for this---

I am curious if you'd be interested in elaborating how you understand, conceive, or 'define' the difference between "Strategic" and "tactical"---I get a sense from context, but I get the sense that you've spent a lot of time working out a more fleshed out sense of how that distinction works for you that might be worth sharing here....

(I'm also curious about the difference between "cautious optimism" and "optimistic caution"--- but I can save that for another time...

Chris

On Nov 9, 2006, at 8:30 PM, Taylor Brady wrote:

Have to chime in to agree (guardedly) with Joe here. My sour note about Gates at DoD notwithstanding, I think a bit of cautious optimism is in order following this election, both for the immediate outcome and in a larger sense for how it (mis)represents (as all such "representative" political moments fundamentally distort) an underlying shift among -- what? -- "the people?" OK so I'm still too cynical to muster that one without scare quotes, and no one's sold me on a more accurate term sans irony. But it'll have to do as a placeholder.

I sympathize and agree with the critique of capital's stacking and skewing of political and class power, and how that minimizes the differences between electoral options. I really do. But I think we need to remind ourselves occasionally that even minimal differences have real effects in terms of setting horizons of possibility for future political action. Joe's mention of breathing here is apropos -- at minimum, what the election has bought is some breathing room. First, in that it's possible to imagine a bit of downshifting (I don't think any brakes are being applied yet, but you take what you

can get) in our downhill slide toward fully-elaborated police statism. And second, in that the modes of organization and mobilization that exceed the electoral -- the real that representative politics distorts -- get a good bit easier and more productive when they can proceed from a collective victory, however small and compromised.

The systemic critique, for me, has its strongest application as the reminder in the midst of all this that, because of the minimization of radical difference within electoral politics, any such victory, while having its actual effects, is a tactical rather than a strategic one. So, on the one hand (back in that runaway truck again), it would be politically suicidal to throw it into neutral, light up a smoke and give the whole disaster a self-satisfied "fuck it." And on the other hand, it'd be no less suicidal to figure everything's alright now because we'll hit that hairpin turn at the bottom of the grade doing 90 instead of 120. (Metric conversion available upon request for the rest of the world).

Taylor

Joe Amato <jamato2@ILSTU.EDU> wrote: Well -- chalk it up to my -- "US"? thank you George Bowering, and that level of cynicism surely crosses borders, no? (or to say it more bluntly, Canada is surely not immune to your insinuations) -- ignorance or innocence, but we really could do with a little breathing in & out before we launch head first into our polisci critiques, now that we've got, those of us who were looking for some sign of change, as much putative electoral change as one might reasonably have expected. I appreciate the pessimistic analyses, that is, and I'm with those of you who suggest that the hard work begins now.

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But political change isn't simply about verifying one's institutional suspicions. (Literary interpretation isn't simply about this either, but that's a whole nother story.) Pointing out just how dire the situation continues to be, as necessary as it might be to do so, might not bring anyone to the polls. (Yes, I'm suggesting a problem with the relationship between politics and political theory.) If you want change, you have at least, I think, to acknowledge, publicly, the incremental changes that could catalyze, however they do so, long-term social change. Pooh-poohing same, from where I'm sitting, can just as easily feed the opposition.

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Cheers!

Best,

| Joe

[↑ Index](#)***Demonaction (taylor b) poetscenedigres****10 November 2006**Brady having answered, Chris widens the tactical/strategic frame until email, the web and the poetry scene itself fall under its shadow.*

Taylor, thanks for these ruminations.....the idea of the "tactical outcome" still seems conceptually a little oxymoronic to me, yet many of us, at different times, do choose short term gains (or, as you say--De Certeau---shut out of access to the determination of broader social outcomes....), and that's certainly encouraged in the current political (and social) climates of American--mass-media culture.... Hell, one could say this very medium of email, the web, etc. (to say nothing of the idea of "poetry scenes" as they often manifest themselves) is one of the many tactics that could get mistaken for strategies. That's near the core of the issue---that "tactical outcomes" are often touted as strategic outcomes---whether it was the swift month-after VICTORY in Iraq a few years back, or whether the premature celebration of elections, even before the elected officials DO anything ("Happy Days Are Here Again," "Don't Stop Thinkin' Bout 2Morrow," the other idea Air America playing "Send Out The Clowns," even before the results were in)....A nearsighted vision of self- interest; fame-as-an-end-itself, quarterly profits, protecting privilege from responsibility and honesty, "immediate gratification" that often is neither immediate nor gratifying much less strategic.... (the poetry scene as microcosm or unconscious introjection of the very things it often claims to be opposed to)

So, yeah, I largely agree. I like to think the euphoria is gone, or if it persists at least does not get in the way of the realization that these Dems have a huge responsibility now.... coz 1) the republicans, and many disaffected republican voters who cast the vote at least as much to 'send a message to Bush' as for anything else, are going to be extremely skeptical of these new representatives and senators, like a "OKAY, SO YOU'VE BEEN COMPLAININ' ABOUT BUSH! WELL, LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN DO IT ANY BETTER..." (like a threat!)

and 2) However unfairly, these Dems are likely to have a VERY SHORT LEASH. Because if these Democrats can't deal with the MESS BUSH MADE in a somewhat quick easy way (remember the phrase MOPPING UP; there's a reason why Bush used that in "fast food nation"), they're probably going to be held more accountable. It doesn't matter if these DEMS either would have never gone into Iraq or the first place, or waged the war smarter, what matters to many voters (fairly or unfairly) is whether the Dems (working with the republicans) can almost do the impossible----"peace with honor" that pleases the "hawks," "doves" oh, and

of course the "chicken hawks," "masters of war," etc.... And if they can't, it's likely that the 2008 congress might end up even more "red" republican than 2004 was ("we gave 'em a chance, and they were just as bad"). The "burden of proof" is on the democrats to be more upstanding than the republicans---they will be held to higher standards---that's my hunch from watching this kind of thing first hand for a a few decades.... so maybe there's too much work to do to be "optimistic" (or "pessimistic" for that matter...) Chris

On Nov 10, 2006, at 8:49 AM, Taylor Brady wrote:

Chris,

In the military application that it usually refers back to, the distinction is similar (though it doesn't map precisely) to one between ends and means. Strategic outcomes are usually the those that affect an enemy's capacity to make war, make politics, make statecraft in some fairly large-scale and long-term way. Tactical outcomes are usually cast in terms of maneuver -- e.g., I outflank you here, which is a tactic used toward the strategic end of, say, cutting off one part of your forces from another and taking over your productive agricultural regions in between, thus diminishing your capacity as an economic actor over the long term, as well as your territorial sovereignty.

Incidentally, this distinction marks a moment where I think even certain people on the right who had a baseline of comfort with the idea of the U.S. pursuing political goals through the projection of military force began to realize that Bush had gone badly off the rails. Remember how he answered that question, "What's the strategy in Iraq?" -- "Well, we keep taking the fight to the terr'ists" or something like that. Which ain't by any measure a strategy: it's a tactic, and not a particularly good one at that. (This is glossing over, of course, the millions of us in that derided "focus group" who had been pointing out from the beginning that -- even leaving aside considerations of justice and moral conduct -- there simply were no good strategic outcomes to be imagined for this war).

The military connotations _are_ a bit unfortunate, aren't they? To open things up a bit, there's also all that stuff in de Certeau about tactics being the form of resistance of the weak. I.e., in a more broadly social sense, those groups that have been shut out of access to the determination of broader social outcomes (strategy) continue a struggle of maneuver and time-biding through tactical action. (Classic examples in labor would be la perruque, work-to- rule, etc.)

One thing that occurs to me is that the line between strategy and tactics tends to shift depending on the scope of one's frame of reference. Thus, if I'm tied at some deep level to the Democratic party (e.g., I'm a state campaign chair or full-time operative) and I've been working for the past 6 years to see something like this election happen, this might well look like a strategic victory. However, for what I think is the underlying question some of us are trying to ask here -- what, if anything at all, is the relationship between this election and the prospects for something like substantive social justice, an end to imperial uses of power, or even just an end to this goddamned war -- what was accomplished on Tuesday was accomplished at the level of tactics. It opened up a certain room for maneuver that had been a good bit narrower on Monday. The question now is what further work can be done within that space.

Taylor

P.S. to George Bowering: Yes, I have a dictionary too, though mine doesn't seem to hold sway over language as a kind of fate. So you're correct, the strict definition which links "optimism" to the "optimal" isn't what I'm looking for here, but I'm hearing as well a fairly widespread vernacular use that simply takes it as "hope for something better." But if you want to ask a bald man to split hairs, fine, let's call it a "limited meliorative perspective."

Chris Stroffolino <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> wrote: Hey Taylor thanks for this---

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Cheers!

Best,

Joe

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Tragic news -- kari edwards

3 December 2006

kari edwards—the transgender poet who had crossed his path on the list, and in his March film thread—has died suddenly of cardiac arrest; the news reaches him as he is already reeling from another death that week.

In the thread, Stephen Vincent had written · 3 December 2006 —

| I just spoke with Bob Gluck, who confirmed kari passed away yesterday.

..... (i'm speechless now...)

i was just going to post something about adrienne shelley's murder, and now this...

On Dec 3, 2006, at 10:33 AM, Julie Kizershot wrote:

kari has been a good friend to me and to many, a brave person, and an amazing innovative writer.

If anyone knows where her partner Fran is now or how to contact, please back channel .

Julie Kizershot jkizershot@earthlink.net

On Dec 3, 2006, at 11:27 AM, Joe Amato wrote:

I'm not sure I'm the best person to relay such terrible news, as we weren't intimate friends, but as it affects our list community generally:

I've just learned that our friend and correspondent for lo these many years, kari edwards, passed away this weekend from a cardiac arrest.

Very sorry to be the bearer of such tidings, and extremely sad --

Joe

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When First Looking Into Radio Orphan

12 December 2006

A reader called Patrick has taken against the memoir excerpt of his that appeared in print; Chris answers with the fullest account of the year of how the 2004 accident turned him, wheelchair-bound and near death, from theory toward plain remembered prose.

Hey Patrick---

Luckily, it's not my responsibility to defend that book, or its title, or even why the editor chose this particular piece of mine (rather than the kind of writing called a poem, or writing perhaps more relevant to the field of poetics),

but since you asked me a personal question about my piece in there, which apparently you didn't like, I guess it is sort of my responsibility to write something about it. Not exactly a defense, and I certainly don't expect it to make you like it, but just a little context. When the editor came over to my house (I was wheelchair immobile) to take some writing, what I was most excited by in that particular moment was the memoir I was working on, so I tried to find an excerpt that could kind of sort of stand on its own in a poetry-related venue.

I was excited about this kind of writing because 1) I had never been a memory-based writer (funny how a near death experience can change that) or 2) had never really gone that far into a kind of prose that didn't utilize (and even rely) on a more "poetics" or "academic" specialized jargon, or that wasn't often 'overanalytical'; I was experimenting in so-called "non-experimental" writing out

of some kind of (deathbed) feeling of urgent necessity. I never really got into a lot of so-called 'quotidian' narrative-like poetry (of what used to be called the APR/Iowa School sort before Jorie Graham and Bernstein etc formed some kind of alliance, etc), and still have a hard time warming up to it, but the prose form seemed less compromised (in a "temporary absolute" sense). I now felt I could put the thing, the illusion of the narrative self moving through time, out there, as a thing, and worry about analyzing it, later. To me (if not to you, fine), there was something strangely liberating in this, if not necessarily an appeal to common humanity at least starting from a place of trying to remember what I was like when 18 years old, and trying to look at subsequent years of my life from that perspective, for better or worse, or just different (which at the time HAD TO be better....).

Oh, sure, I could also say that if I had really thought about it at the time, I would've considered that maybe my decision to publish that piece (or at least give it to the editor, who could've said no, and did, in fact, ask for some changes..) was a "nose thumbing" gesture on my part, born out of a frustration to what I was feeling as an overcommitment of my energies to the quasi-social subculture that takes the idea of "poetry" (or more specifically of "being a poet") as central to its being in the world. Or, as you put it, a bemoaning. And at least a bemoaning is potentially more affirmative than a "nose thumbing" gesture....

To bemoan a lack of influence, if that's indeed what I'm doing (and that's the feeling you get from the piece, then you're right and I can't argue with that with any authority), may be shoddy, or may even be paradoxical (hypocritical), and certainly many poems transcend, ignore, sublimate or self-censor such 'base' thoughts or feelings. I've certainly done it....ALOT. But luckily there has been alot of "legitimate" (even canonical) poetry that has celebrated the wide gamut of bemoaning....So to say it has no place, well, you're entitled to your opinion....

As for your question, the best answer would probably be the book from which it is an excerpt. Not to cop-out on you, but yes the excerpt in Young's book does end with the gesture of lament and bemoaning---but that substance of that bemoaning is also a perception, a realization, that it was time for a change (and so this excerpt is not as "self-contained" as a poem may seem to be, because it's trying to whet the appetite for the next chapter, which isn't included)-but also a question, cold and analytical even, just what is the role of "mass culture" in identity formation, and what implications does it have for individuals, economic classes, or conceptions of labor in what's often referred to, sometimes dubiously, as 'consumer society'

Apparently some people can simply change their lifestyle and/or 'mindset' (and the relationship between the two) as easily and quickly as Cher changes

costumes, but some other people need to wrestle with it, verbalize it, write about it, and some other people like reading about it (or memoirs and self-help books and such wouldn't exist in such glut), and yeah maybe it's not my ultimate genre-forte, and yeah maybe I made the mistake of placing it in the wrong venue, like trying to push the envelope in terms of what's permitted, but not primarily BECAUSE of some art-history mandate, though it may have to be justified, and it can be okay to play that game sometimes (though I also bemoan all the S**t Alice Notley got when *Mysteries of Small Houses* came out)---and if hey the self-proclaimed poet-people didn't want to come with me into this, I can be cool with that (though, yeah, the "self-discovery through self-criticism" bag was part of what got me into poetry; as was the "if you point the finger at someone else, you got 4 more pointing back at you" trip...).

To her credit, Stephanie Young did. But whatever---I can see where it's as out of place as I've been feeling more often than not in primarily poet gatherings for years, and yeah perhaps I spent too much time "bemoaning" that rather than just up and making a clean break and reinventing myself and finding a new possibility of community or like-minded people---But I think it's doing something else too, speaking to other people, or at least realizing that writing to other people (who may have no or little knowledge or interest in the way poets talk or write to each other) really involves no more social compromise than speaking or writing, to poets, about, or 'in the form of,' what's called poetry does. "grace to live as variously as possible," etc....

Is that a poetics? Is it something to keep at bay? I have my silly social illusions and hopes too, and am fragile as anybody, but I still want to reach out, and love, be loved, still believe in 'each according to their abilities; each according to their needs' and "by whatever means necessary" and that there can be mutually transforming intensities that one build deep trust on, and go beyond fatalism of the business-as-usual approach, and I'm willing to stake what's 'left' of my life on it, and that one's first baby-steps at 'bemoaning' can be socially pro-active (especially in a social world that has offered one a kind of 'conditional love' as long as one keeps writing like one used to a decade earlier, and it that's the case, I have to either try to change some people's minds about that, or look elsewhere.... and, I guess that elsewhere can be here, or flarf or something...)

maybe....yes...

Chris

On Dec 12, 2006, at 5:57 PM, patrick dunagan wrote:

Posted at: <http://readingbaypoetics.blogspot.com/>

When First Looking Into Bay Poetics: San Francisco Responds

Stephanie Young assembles a diverse crew. She "asked friends" and friends of friends. Terrific. I'm certain many a happy gang bang and orgy executed to the enjoyment of all participants slowly came to in just such fashion. Why not? There's a certain pleasure coming up against the unexpected in such a situation. How did that get here, and whose is it? For myself there certainly is enough work by friends, mentors, and would-be crushes presented in this anthology that I would seriously entertain the thought of attending such a bash.

Ever the purist, I read poetry for poetry's sake. I adore the gossip and all (Sadly it's lacking here. I'd really like to know just who is fucking who, or has. Which women prefer women, which men prefer men. To leave it out of the work and distant is such a bore. The only gossip available is gossip about the thing itself. How Williams is that.), but the durability of the work arises from what is on the page alone. I object on general principle to shoddiness. I don't care whether it comes from Kathleen Fraser erecting her half-corpse of influence to thrust out shoddy imitative Susan Howe or a fellow like Stroffolino bemoaning his lack of "influence" in the poetry/rock/acoustic/radio (which is it Chris?) world taking up space in a text of supposed Poetics. It's a sacred act for some of us. For others it appears a smudged half-shot for stardom and glory among the living dead of blogs and cyberspace.

Bay Poetics thankfully does however have some surprises: James Meetze, that Whitmanesque failure; Alli Warren, those shifts of line; Tanya Brolanski, someone who actually cares; Cynthia Sillers, finally convincing blocks of verse; Brydie McPherson, somebody read their Oppen; Elizabeth Treadwell, I never knew!; Yuri Hospodar, fun and true, if a bit lite. & of course there are the Disappointments, why even mention: Hillman, Scalapino, Palmer, Cross, Cox, Cole, Koeneke, Nealon, Smith, Tuntha-abas, Kaipa, etc. Here because of time put in or friendships clung to, who knows or cares. & blessedly there are the Solids: Kyger (without doubt up in Bolinas wondering what the hell these people find in her work and how she got tangled up in their company), Ratcliffe, Berkson, Killian, Joron (thank god for his essay, a piece of thoughtful prose that is of actual use), Spahr, Robinson, Murray, Gluck, Ballard, Sigo, and Mackey.

Does this sum anything up? No, of course not. The reader will find her own highs and lows. This list is but the one meant for the city and its lovers. The bay is theirs alone.

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What does "logotomy" mean?

19 December 2006

Asked flatly what 'logotomy' means, he declines to define and lets the word breed instead—the pun-drunk mind in miniature.

it sounds like lobotomy, but is probably more like logonomy as opposed to logology.... and logonomy has the same relation to logology as astronomy does to astrology, economy to ecology, egonomy to ecology, though egotomy is but a metonymy for the deeper metology...

i guess i still have a ways to go in weaning myself from that vobacularic discourse they slipped in my drink when i got my degree in psychomony at the church of autonomy or our lady of the logo-tummy

C On Dec 19, 2006, at 7:41 PM, mIEKAL aND wrote:

Begin forwarded message:

mailing list, because some users are unable to see the "Subject:" field from the original message.

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MLA off-site poetry reading - updated list of readers

21 December 2006

Joe Amato wonders why sixty-odd poets convene at the MLA off-site reading only to read at one another instead of talking; Chris knows the feeling, and has acted on it.

In the thread, Charles Bernstein had written · 21 December 2006 —

these off-site readings have always been a way for local poets to read together with those in from out-of-town

Hi Joe---I felt something similar last time I went to an MLA thing (in Philly, 2 years ago) and when it was my turn to read, instead I just started talking to and/or about the previous poets I met and knew and read before. I didn't get to mention everybody, and the "price" one pays for this sometimes is not being taken as "seriously" as a poet (being "too much" the "mere entertainer" as if poetry readings are 'above that' like the white catholic church of my youth, etc), but it felt like the right thing to do, and seemed worth it...a candle lit (disguised as a curse), etc....

anyway, just wanted to say I'm glad you're thinking about this. i find it playful rather than cranky, but then again alot of my thoughts about the basic status quo notion of poetry readings often fall on deaf ears and get called 'cranky' so feel free to ignore what i say...

happy darkest day of the year to those in the northern hemisphere

Chris On Dec 20, 2006, at 2:07 PM, Joe Amato wrote:

Here's a thought, and I really do hope nobody takes this as raining on anybody's parade, esp. in light of the effort it takes to pull this kind of thing together:

Why can't 60+ poets get together just to jaw, as opposed to reading to one another? I'm puzzled by this, and have been for years now. I show up every year, I listen, I try to eek out a few words under my breath to someone I haven't seen in months or years, someone who's doing likewise. Often we talk -- whisper, gesture -- about how nice it would be just to shoot the shit, and often we pretend to pay attention, esp. as the evening wears on.

Now that's just me. I like to gab. I don't like readings with 60+ people. Aldon -- someone with whom I would like to shoot the shit at said reading -- thinks it's fun. I don't think it's fun -- I think it's something of a drag, in fact, b/c there are so many people that I won't otherwise have a chance to talk to, given the dynamics of MLA. So I always leave said reading feeling like it's a missed opportunity. It's certainly not the note I'd like to see my MLA experience conclude on. I'd much rather be, well, gabbing.

Again, not to rain on anyone's parade. I don't wish to come off as even a little bit cranky. I'm just suggesting something that I've suggested to any number of individuals (i.e., participating poets) for years now, generally (generally) to nods of agreement. And yet here we all are, talking about that MLA group reading again.

Best,

Joe

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Strong JB

25 December 2006

Christmas Day, and the year ends as much of it ran: with Chris bringing Black music to a poetry list. James Brown, dead at seventy-three.

Just thought I'd mention this here first---

James Brown died last night....73 If you don't know his Xmas album, now you got two reasons to play it today...

now back to your talk about Allen Iverson, etc...

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January opens mid-banter: Andrew Jones had floated the notion that performing at all 'takes a massive ego,' and for two posts Chris worries the phrase like a bone — asking Jones to say more, then answering his little poem with a smaller one ('wee eye / can't keep trying to eliminate'). What follows is where the joke turns serious.

2007

2007 finds Stroffolino settled uneasily in Oakland — a borrowed performance space on San Pablo Avenue, a workshop to teach, his old earthlink address quietly slipping away — and answering the list as ever: haiku's smuggled hilarity, whether a single pop song can unmake feminism, James Brown and Johnny Cash pressed into evidence against anyone who'd rank one music 'more musical' than another. Philadelphia keeps surfacing out of the poverty, and Laura (Riding) Jackson runs through the year like a watermark.

Rebeggining (fluffy) band new brag*15 January 2007*

The dare that finally draws him out comes from Laura Winton, who signs herself Fluffy: is wanting to be read at all just ego with better manners? He takes the bait sideways.

thanks for sharing these thoughts...feelings....words...

i like that these words don't seem to approach the subject judgmentally (or, if so, only by judging the impulse to judge...)

what is the feeling of "a massive ego" anyway?

something to be lost in the process/product of creation? something to be found (and/or gained) in said process? or, sometimes, both simulatanously? I wonder if I've been trying to articulate something like the "poetics of James Brown" off and on since boxing day eve-eve, James Brown's relation to "the massive ego?" James Brown, as a verb as much as a noun, even to himself... to DO the "James Brown" and the more strictly speaking "poetic" analogues or references of same... "how can we tell the dancer from the dance" etc...

or Whitman's "massive ego"---so massive it is also on another level an impersonal force (not merely "no ideas but in things"), but relational, dramatic, so-called 'eastern' notions of the self--- ah, some may need to call it anti-intellectual--in Brown's case-- but "Think" from the early 60s can be as intellectual as any Bob Dylan or Stravinski....Ashbery..

just some rudimentary notes right now... more later... perhaps 'elsewhere...'

Chris

On Jan 15, 2007, at 2:10 PM, Laura Winton wrote:

For that matter, thinking that you have something others should read also takes a massive ego . . . putting any creation of yours out into the world and thinking others would or should care is all of the same impulse, n'est pas? That gets to the whole question of why we create at all???

Is this merely a lesson of the internet? Doesn't the barrage of new books at the front table of Barnes & Noble (paid for by Random House), the new releases at Tower Records (probably paid for by some record label), etc. etc. etc. confirm that impulse?

Fluffy

Just to think that you have something others should hear takes a massive ego (one of the great lessons of the Internet). I suppose the audience will confirm or disprove that.

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haiku*12 February 2007*

For a fortnight he has been pressing Michael Dylan Welch, the list's haiku champion, on a single point — where wit and hilarity sit in the form — while MDW keeps insisting one may subvert the tradition only from knowledge, never ignorance.

In the thread, Michael Dylan Welch had written · 12 February 2007 —

| feel free to subvert all you want, but from a position of knowledge, not ignorance.

Michael---

Part of my issue with the invocation of those 'legitimate' Euro- American modernist analogies for haiku practice is because they rely on a notion of 'objective' and 'things' which still largely operate against a backdrop, or within an 'understanding,' of a 'subject-object' dichotomy that lopsidedly favors one side.... They both become such 'reductive' catchphrases, even if ideally they open the door to a less clamped-down understanding.

I've used both phrases in non-pejorative ways in certain (pedagogical) situations, but when people try to separate the "Objective Correlative" (GOOD) from the "pathetic fallacy" (BAD), I tend to want to "elevate" the "pathetic fallacy" to acknowledge that the "objective-subjective matrix" is not a one-way street. As for "no ideas but in things," what I tend to see in the very same poems that people often champion for meeting the non-pejorative standards of exemplary in the "no ideas but in things vein," is "No Ideas but in relationships"--- so, in that hAIKU you quoted, that's what I saw....a relationship between things (but at the same time "things" that are 'of' relationship.... as it seems to me (and I believe you'd have to agree) that the best haiku involve the relationship between the 'word' and 'thing,' the word as thing, and has as much of counter- pull away from the 'thing' as toward it....

Is it really "the emotive power BEHIND things" as you put it? I can appreciate that you want to be a spokesman for haiku, and I am not going to claim that I am as learned in it, as you, and am quite willing, along with Barry Schwabsky and others, to let you have that word, but, as an outsider, I am curious as to what role you think what a contemporary American (or from wherever) would call 'humor' or 'wit' had, or may have had, in that founding impulse to the haiku.

You've sufficiently established that the traditional haiku form is a more serious art than many give it credit for, but I'm curious in what ways you also find that the traditional haiku form a more hilarious art form than many give it credit for. I ask this question with no disrespect to you, or the traditional haiku form as you understand it, but more out of a genuine desire to BE CONVINCED by your understanding of the form, because, for me (whether rightly or wrongly), there

can't be one (high seriousness) without the other ('hilarity' for lack of a better word-thing approximation)....

Chris

On Feb 9, 2007, at 2:43 PM, Michael Dylan Welch wrote:

Chris Stroffolino also writes that one of the "shorthand staples of early 20th c.---eliot's objective correlative? or no ideas but in things?" . . . "seems to distort/ reduce too the haiku suggestiveness."

I would answer by saying this: Because haiku -- perhaps more than any other poetry (because it's so short) -- relies on the emotive power behind things, the notion of the objective correlative increases its suggestiveness rather than distort or reduce it. We have an immediate reaction to the word chair that's different, say, than our reaction to the word soup. And think, too, of how we react differently to "easy chair" compared with "electric chair." I'm just naming things with these examples, but these objects correlate to immediate emotions or feelings, or connotations and associations. Even a "stone" will carry some feeling for us when we read the word in a poem, though of course the nature of that feeling may vary from person to person. There's more to the concept of the objective correlative than just this, of course, but haiku relies on the emotive power of things perhaps more strongly than other poetry. To the extent that haiku is mostly objective, focusing on nouns and things such as they are (yet presented in such a way to imply a relationship and an intuitive feeling), haiku strongly rely on the emotive weight associated with each thing named in the poem. Certainly there are subjective or nonliteral elements in some haiku (such as in Shiki's poem, "for me going / for you staying / two autumns," or Basho's haiku about the cicada's cries piercing the rocks), but not every haiku is or needs to be strictly objective. It's a matter of finding balance, within each poem, and in a particular poem relative to other poems. They are examples of controlling the objectivity and subjectivity, and typically, where there's a subjective element in haiku, it's usually in the context of something that's clearly objective -- something that grounds the rest of the poem so the subjective element isn't overpowering.

Sure, you can do ____ (whatever: fill in the blank) in a haiku -- but not necessarily often (heck, even have a title once in a very rare while, if it somehow really needs it). Haiku is not a strict set of rules (don't think that I think it is). Rather, haiku is a field of multiple targets, and a good haiku will hit multiple targets at once, but not necessarily all of them -- and occasionally miss one or two of them (on purpose) that certain people might feel are more important and should never be missed. That's why it's good to see haiku as a continuum with other kinds of poetry. Poetry first, labels later (if at all). But, I hasten to say, as soon as you label something as haiku, it had better be a proper understanding of haiku that you mean -- and for too many folks, that's not the case.

Michael

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Quasha with Halley and Ringgold at CAA ARTspace

15 February 2007

Barry Schwabsky wonders what a CAA panel pairing Peter Halley with Faith Ringgold could possibly be about; Chris, who watched Halley's cell-and-conduit machine run in the eighties, answers from memory.

What's Halley up to these days....for years it was "yellow cell green ground, blue cell on yellow ground, orange cell with blue ground, purple cell with orange ground, etc"---Oh yes, and then the twist, "red cell with orange conduit and green background." I remember he had a waiting list; people having paid up front for works he hadn't even done yet. He was a fast taker, but was able to confine his talk into the cell (with conduit) of a meta-theory.... His theatre of words became as much the 'thing' as the paintings, but the minimalist conceptual vocabulary at times made him seem a little dogmatic in his anti-expressionism, and frankly I didn't keep up, but I have to admit I was somewhat hooked by the mere fact of his intellectualizings and verbal agility-- like the bespectacled bookish post-Warhol-axis bureaucratic 80s-style artist notion of 'charisma' still lent a glamour to contemporary theory (and vice versa), and doesn't seem so much of a 'tepid rehashing' of earlier 20th century concept-conscious art as it did at the time and it'd be interesting to see how his thought-art, or art-thought has developed... If anyone wants to talk about it here,....

Chris

On Feb 15, 2007, at 1:35 PM, Barry Schwabsky wrote:

What a wild combination! What's the topic?

4. Speaking on a CAA panel with Peter Halley and Faith Ringgold : Friday, Feb. 16--9:30-noon.

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AWP....

7 March 2007

Stephen Vincent points him to Kasey Mohammad's daydream of an anti-AWP in Ashland; the reply weighs the vision against who could actually afford to get there.

Ah, yeah, but could Kasey get travel money, or rooms, for the visitors?

If the "price" of securing something like that could render it susceptible to 'careerist components,' that may not be so bad. Oh, I'm sure some people can get their schools to pay for it--which is also not so bad.... but then there's going to be those who can't afford to go, or an inequality between those who get paid to go and those who don't....

not to sound cynical, and say it can't be done; and maybe kasey could pull it off.... The closest I'm aware of anybody coming to this in the past 15 years was that

"New Coast" conference and something could be done even better, but it's daunting

(i went to awp once, though (CHICAGO), and though i dreaded the worst, it ended up not being so bad....

eye wonder-- can de-alienating fun and/or true connection be fostered through institutional organization of any sort?

or to wander lonely as a crowd, etc....

Chris

On Mar 7, 2007, at 10:20 AM, Stephen Vincent wrote:

I suggest taking a look at Kasey S. Mohamed's blog <http://lime-tree.blogspot.com/> where he has an ongoing discussion of the creation of an alternative format for an AWP - a festival of poets and poetries and presses and parties without the careerist components. I think it's a sweet vision. And Ashland, Oregon, as Kasey offers - home of one of the best on-going Shakespeare, Renaissance and contemporary theater venues in the country - would be a great site for such. (Bars, restaurants, the works).

Stephen V <http://stephenvincent.net/blog/>

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Suzanne Stein at SPT

26 March 2007

Stephen Vincent's account of Suzanne Stein's darkened, question-only 'presence' at Small Press Traffic draws out an old solidarity; a postscript, half swallowed, marks him losing the earthlink address as the hard years press in.

I wasn't at the event, but Suzanne and I have had very intense long talks once upon a time, and I always felt a sense of solidarity. I also feel Treadwell's point, and don't feel it's totally fair to single out the SPT as what Suzanne was dealing with. My guess it was something broader, like the institution of 'proper' poetry readings and what that does to writing, communities, friendships, etc (but, I don't want to speak for Suzanne there, that's probably more my issue, but I do think there's some solidarity)

Chris

PS--I have a feeling my message isn't getting sent to poetics list as I'm transitioning to another email account (i still receive on earthlink, but can't respond through them regularly anymore, and will leave, So please make note of my new email).

Chris

On Mar 24, 2007, at 2:29 PM, Stephen Vincent wrote:

Susan Stein - poet and performance artist - created what might be called "a presence" (rather than a 'reading' or 'performance') to an audience of primarily poets last night (Friday) at Small Press Traffic. The event was a combination of 'off-putting', 'embracing' and 'thought provoking.' As all SPT events, this one took place in the Timken Lecture Hall on the San Francisco Campus of the California College of Arts - the home of SPT since - in the opinion of many - its sad departure from the much more 'user friendly' neighborhood of New College on Valencia, which included the occasional use of a theater space with a much kinder ambience for both poets and audience. Indeed, one of Susan's unfolding objectives came to deal with the architectural limits of Timken Hall - a dark space (unless its full) that sucks the energy out of both audience and whoever might be the poet who is reading. Listeners, poets and whatever language goes into the air of Timken Hall have to work real hard to protect, hear and enjoy each other! Indeed the lecture hall must have been designed as an architectural afterthought (Oh, yes, 'we should have a place for students to hear an occasional lecture.'")

But that's merely preface to circumstance. Susan did - what seems in retrospect - a quite brave thing. Dressed in black, all the lighting was turned off, the audience 'darkened', and one stage light was pointed at her face. She announced she had 25 minutes, and that she would take questions. Other than that, she gave no sense of agenda, objective or whatever. The questions began to come forth. I should say it was an audience of poets most of whom had some kind of association with Susan, from distant to familiar. The questions from pedestrian to more complex - each one of which she considered carefully or even admitted that she was unable to answer. Some were predictable, "Are you working on a poem now," many forgettable. Nobody asked anything stupidly personal. Yet, as things evolved - what was most interesting to me anyway - were issues around how she was experiencing the space and how other poets may or may not have been able to establish a sense of presence in this particular space (which it was agreed between her and us to be an historic problem). X poet with equipment was able to make it work, and, by implication not poet a, b, or c.) Sporadically through the 25 minutes, persons would ask what she was feeling at the moment to which she sometimes addressed as a sense of 'vulnerability' - being exposed as such. I asked what was the difference between 'vulnerability' and 'intimacy' - a question, like each one, she honored as such, but questioned. But having a 'good answer' - one that would excite the audience did not seem to be the objective in any case.

As a person in the audience, I felt back and forth 'impatient' and then intrigued with a response here or there, or a particular question. Only gradually - and this is the brave part - did it become clear what she was doing, or so it seemed to me. What we witnessed was 'presence' in which the the whole scaffolding normally implicit to a reading or performance was stripped bare. As much as we in the audience waited for or called out questions that might provoke a desired response, a 'stream called poetry', (a narrative, an image, an epiphany!! anything!) nothing of the sort was forthcoming beyond Susan's analysis of her ability to answer the question. Her tone was neither judgmental or dismissive.

It was in that 'frustration' (no poetic goods) to 'hear something' that I gradually (after) came to realize what Susan was stripping the architecture off the condition/expectations/rhetoric of readings, performances, and - in the darkness - the

normal architecture of this most often dreadful space. Maybe, thinking more about it, Susan's presence was a Barthian version of 'performing' instead of 'writing degree zero. Ironically her "presence" had an insistence to it, one in which, in its baldness, we were taken to a point that precedes every conceivable apparatus of poem, performance and space.

Where one goes from there - particularly in Timken Hall - I am not about to speculate. But it was timely, and, the day after, as I suggested, it seems quite brave, as well as unique to my experience of poets and audiences in shared spaces.

No doubt, and hopefully others who were there, will put their 'take' in here.

Stephen V <http://stephenvincent.net/blog/>

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books -- trade?

9 April 2007

Catherine Daly's swap list closes by refusing to trade for a whole demographic of verse; he answers her gatekeeping in its own idiom.

In the thread, Catherine Daly had written · 9 April 2007 —

I am probably not interested in trading for lyric/narrative left-justified free verse

wow, a statement of poetics...

ah lyric/narrative left-justified free verse written by men about anything in children....

what would "the politics of poetics form?" police thing of that?

anything men in urban (or suburban) children can be celebrated if it's "free-justified left verse" and the thematic restriction seems to carry equal weight as the formal....

thanks...

On Apr 9, 2007, at 5:52 PM, Catherine Daly wrote:

available to trade (these books mostly cost me a dollar)

The owning Stone, Jim Peterson, Red hen, 1999 prize winner Jonah & Job, Judson Jerome, John Daniel & Co, 1991, bible poems the trouble making finch, len roberts, u of i press, some markings lucid suitcase, diane wald, red hen, 1999, I reviewed this for the boston review ralph burns, swamp candles, iowa prize, 1996 gaylord brewer, devilfish, red hen, 1998 prize winner norman stock, buying breakfast for my kamikaze pilot, mostly prose poems, peregrine smith winner, 1993 stephen gibson, roschach art, red hen, 2001 for the kingdom, anthony piccione, boa, 1995 good hope road, stuart dischell, hardcover, nps tom lux selection, viking 1991 I'm going to be getting rid of more books soon, probably mostly mainstream stuff from the 90s by men -- thus, I am probably not interested in trading for lyric/narrative left-justified free verse written by men about anything in woods or farmland, or children

-- All best, Catherine Daly c.a.b.daly@gmail.com

[↑ Index](#)***Maya Angelou on Imus -- and another missed opportunity?****12 April 2007*

CA Conrad had just accused Maya Angelou of calling, over the Imus affair, for the very fascist control of the airwaves she'd otherwise deplore; Chris steps in for the defence, bell hooks in hand.

CA--

Opportunity isn't yet missed... Obviously, there's a debate amongst blacks about the representative role of hip hop....

there's the brilliant bell hooks argument (from the early 90s) when she was asked to criticize the sexism of hip-hop by a white-run magazine, and instead talked about the seemingly more 'benign' forms of sexism in the white media (the movie 'the piano' for instance, she mentioned)

sure, angelou in many ways is saying what imus himself said (in imus' 'apology,' he said he just got those words from hip hop....) and eliding the possible difference between what happens when a black uses a word and a white uses the same word....

but she does raise the question about whether the mostly white- controlled media's pushing of certain forms of hip hop that use words that, yes, some blacks find demeaning (whether rightly or wrongly; i leave that debate for others), at the expense of other forms of rap/hip hop or even other genres that black musicians often feel they have to 'go against the grain' to work in might itself be a fascist control of the media while pretending to be freedom (Oh we're just 'giving the people what they want,' 'letting boys be boys" etc....)

Angelou's statement may be short on deep social analysis here (in contrast to bell hooks and others), but it is a valid point, and I don't think she's arguing for fascism and media control-- in a way, i think her statement can be read as arguing for less of it (if you accept the argument that there was a white sanctioned 'bling' conspiracy that forced a lot of the most progressive rap off the mainstream commercial airwaves in the last ten or so years....

(on another point---and it's not really an argument, or defense of imus, but i'm not so sure that really is the way he really talks; it may not have been intended to 'shock' per se, but like so many whites attempting to appropriate black slang to give them some kind of 'edge' and not really getting it....not that i do either.... I'm hearing a lot of blacks speak up about this, and that to me is a good thing, especially as it moves into these larger issues that got shut up after the New Orleans diaspora..

Chris

On Apr 12, 2007, at 5:42 AM, CA Conrad wrote:

she answered with, "I don't think so, the airwaves have been so polluted by him, and rappers and Hip Hop!"

Is she out of her mind? This is the VERY SAME poet who I'm sure would LOVE to smack down any pro Patriot Act conversation, yet she calls publicly for the TOTAL fascist control of the airwaves!

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Virginia Tech/Nancy Shaw

17 April 2007

The Virginia Tech killings a day old, the coverage everywhere; amid it he pauses to mourn Nancy Shaw, the Kootenay School poet, newly dead.

Yes. Please don't take this as flippancy, but it's fortuitous for those who need to deflect attention from the Gonzales hearing for instance....

Also, R.I.P Nancy Shaw, who I deeply admired.

Chris

On Apr 17, 2007, at 4:28 PM, Alison Croggon wrote:

When I first saw the headline "massacre", I actually thought it was referring to the carnage of the most recent car bombs (what, 54 dead?) No disrespect to the dead at Virginia, it is unambiguously a terrible thing, but there is something deeply discomfoting about the coverage.

All best

A

On 4/18/07, Stephen Vincent <steph484@pacbell.net> wrote:

from recovering neo-con, Andrew Sullivan. To the point.

Imagine that this kind of massacre happened every day. Imagine a police force that was far too small to even respond to most of them. Imagine this occurring repeatedly for years until the perpetrators and their accomplices became the de facto power-brokers throughout the land. Imagine the shootings also being accompanied by the brutal torture of victims. Imagine families never having finality on whether their own siblings or parents or children have been murdered or not.

This is Iraq today. Now think of the justified rage many feel at the VT campus police chief and university president for misjudgments. Now imagine them presiding over several more massacres in the same place. Ask yourself: why do we not feel as enraged by those responsible for security in Iraq? Are those victims not human beings too? Are they not children and mothers and fathers and sons? Are we not ultimately responsible for them, having destroyed the institutions of order in their country?

(forward from Susan Schultz, the poet, publisher in Hawaii)

-- Editor, Masthead: <http://www.masthead.net.au> Blog: <http://theatrenotes.blogspot.com> Home page: <http://www.alisoncroggon.com>

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virginia tech/nikki giovanni/jan richman

18 April 2007

As the thread turns Nikki Giovanni's reporting of Cho into an argument for vigilant teachers, he counters with the 1998 case of Jan Richman, who did exactly that at San Francisco State and was fired for it.

This is starting to remind me (more as a point of a contrast) with that incident in San Francisco a few years back, when Jan Richman brought disturbing writings by a student to the attention of her chair. The student was promptly expelled, but then they fired Ms. Richman too. Many protested; Rushdie and Eggers, et al, wrote letters of support. Stories in national press, etc. But Richman didn't get reinstated at her job.

Chris

On Apr 18, 2007, at 9:04 AM, Crane's Bill Books wrote:

"...Ms. Roy, the department chairwoman, said she brought Ms. Giovanni's concerns to university authorities and the campus police but was told that because he was expressing himself freely in his writings, there was nothing that could be done."

But where is this going? Police powers for creative writing teachers? The fact is, Cho Seung-Hui had been reported to the police for harassing and threatening women, which means this horror would have been prevented by a simple background check before guns were made available to him. We can wring our hands all we want about whether there were failures on the part of "university authorities," but if a background check had been required, this would not have happened. Sorry, I know this isn't poetics, but it seems like an important point to make.

J. A. Lee Crane's Bill Books

----- Original Message ----- From: "Sina Queyras" <squeyras@HAVERFORD.EDU>

This just gets more and more disturbing.

Teacher had Cho moved out of class ALAN FREEMAN Globe and Mail Update BLACKSBURG, Va. - One of Cho Seung-Hui's English professors at Virginia Tech said Wednesday that she so feared the intimidating nature of 23-year-old English student that she threatened to resign if he were not removed from her class.

"He was a very intimidating student to my other students," poetry professor Nikki Giovanni said. As a result of his disturbing presence and his graphic writing, she actually wrote to the chairman of the English Department, Lucinda Roy, asking that he be removed from her class, which he was.

"I was willing to resign before I was going to continue with him," Ms. Giovanni told CNN.

Mr. Cho killed 32 students and faculty members at the university on Monday, the worst such shooting in U.S. history before ending his own life.

Related to this article

Cho Seung-Hui, in an undated photo, was identified as the gunman in the massacre that left 33 people dead at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., on Monday. (Virginia State Police/AP) Articles

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"There was something mean about this boy, and it was the meanness that bothered me," she said.

On Monday, as she heard about the shooting while travelling back to the university from California and there were rumours that the perpetrator was Asian, she said she knew immediately that he was Mr. Cho.

"In front of my mind, I knew it was" him, she said in an interview.

Ms. Roy, the department chairwoman, said she brought Ms. Giovanni's concerns to university authorities and the campus police but was told that because he was expressing himself freely in his writings, there was nothing that could be done.

As a result of these concerns, she had him removed from class and began to teach Mr. Cho privately in a special workshop.

Ms. Roy said that Mr. Cho appeared to be deeply disturbed, "very withdrawn and very depressed."

"There was this steady tone of anger in his writings. It seemed as if he was expressing emptiness and fury at himself and at people around him," Ms. Roy said.

She said that was worried that Mr. Cho could be a threat to other students as well as to himself.

"I really felt very strongly that he was suicidal, that he was so depressed that he had a negativity about him, like it was like talking to a hole sometimes, that the person wasn't really there," she said.

| "Of course, we never imagined these kinds of things."

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several strands

19 April 2007

In the thread, Dillon Westbrook had written · 19 April 2007 —

| *I'm recalling the year I spent volunteer-teaching a creative writing class in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.*

Dillon--- these are great thoughts, and it certainly re-grounds the academic poet discussion of the word "confessional" (often seen more in terms of a trembling Robert Lowell panting and sweating in the back of a church...) One question about your rules for acceptable work in this context---taking this in particular--from your post---

"you ought not write something that you would find indefensible in actual practice (I think you could create a tertiary guideline that says if you're doing so consciously, as in writing form an anti-hero or such, you ought to have some intention behind what you're doing to people's expectations of good and just behavior)"

I would love to hear more about the 'mixed results' you found as a result of thus, about how or why you think some students shut down, and if there's strategies you think you can develop to prevent such shutting down within those perimeters. I can see how such a rule can be interpreted, or misinterpreted, by some as being closed off to the ethical complexity of many situations, dialogue poems (or songs for that matter) that don't necessarily club the reader over the head with their moral, and can therefore sometimes be called morally irresponsible, in presenting that "dirt" of which Russell Simmons speak. I'm not at all saying that you shouldn't continue to try this, I'm just curious about why you think some students shut down because of it.

Chris

On Apr 19, 2007, at 9:35 AM, Dillon Westbrook wrote:

| *After a couple days trying not to think about Virginia, lots of things seem to be coalescing around this discussion. One of the news stories that got back-paged after Tuesday was the meeting between Russell Simmons and several other prominent CEO's with ties to the hip-hop industry (and lets not forget that there is one) about the fallout from the Imus thing. Simmons had interesting things to say.*

| *"Whether it's our sexism, our racism, our homophobia or our violence, the hip-hop community sometimes can be a good mirror of our dirt and sometimes the dirt that we try to cover up," Simmons said. "Pointing at the conditions that create these words from the rappers ... should be our No. 1 concern."*

I'm recalling the year I spent volunteer-teaching a creative writing class in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. I'm sure there's other people on this list who have worked in detention facilities, youth or adult, and maybe you have thoughts on this. When I moved away from very specific craft exercises and opened up the floor to whatever they were writing, very violent stuff immediately made its way in. To this day, I think the majority of those kids (and the whole time I taught there, that's what I kept thinking every week- these are kids!) were grand-standing and posing, participating in a certain dialogue which applauds boasting about one's potential for violence. At the same time, I know for a fact that some of these kids' actions were indeed as violent as their writing. When I started to piece all of this out and try to establish some guidelines for how we would proceed in class, it got incredibly complicated incredibly quickly.

On one hand, the presence of the "confessional" voice had a very literal meaning- anything they said in detention could become evidence, and whenever one of them got a court date or an actual conviction, they would come back the next week thinking I was a snitch- i.e. they were worried their poems had become confessions. I had to start warning them against writing "confessionally", i.e. against portraying actual events of their lives. At the same time, the staff there wanted the class to be all about positivity- staff didn't want the word "nigger" to appear in their poems (which was used by all the kids, latino, black, loatian, even white- and none of them ever blinked or seemed to think it was an issue), didn't want drug use represented or glorified (which was an even more common theme than violence in their writings), and of course didn't want violence or references to guns or weapons. But, as depressing as it sounds, the removal of these topics left these kids with nothing they found worth writing about. Everything that was salient and poetic to them was criminal/criminalized, right down to the name of the street they live on (which signifies "turf", and "turf" is also illegal).

So, while my dilemma didn't involve asking whether to report the writings of my students to authorities (they were already in the room), I often return to this experience when I teach in other classrooms. One thing I tried to do, in order to keep them writing, was to let them write what they were going to write, and ask them to analyze it with me. If it was a character they were creating, which was their assignment one time, I asked them what they intended their audience to think about that character, whether anyone besides the character himself would applaud his actions. In short, I tried to have an ethical discussion with them, one time going so far as to look at passages of Plato's Republic (Book II, I think, where Socrates argues that it is better to suffer injustice than commit it). Like anyone, these students had a rich and complex ethical world, and felt accountable when they fell short of those ethics or discovered an inconsistency. The rules I established about writing came out of those discussions, and they were quite simply that you ought not write something that you would find indefensible in actual practice (I think you could create a tertiary guideline that says if you're doing so consciously, as in writing form an anti-hero or such, you ought to have some intention behind what you're doing to people's expectations of good and just behavior). The results were very mixed, with some students continuing to write comfortably in these perimeters, and some completely turning off, but it did allow me not to have to forbid them upfront from writing any particular poem or story.

I still use this notion in other classrooms. I get right up in the face of someone writing something I think is indefensible ethically, and often require that a defense be presented to credit it as work for the course. That second level of writing, the apology, is usually richer and more interesting than the original stuff. So I guess that's my contribution to the discussion on how to proceed in writing classes. I don't try to draw the distinction between writing that's just writing and writing that's somehow symptomatic of real disturbance- the writing itself is an act, with its own set of repercussions. I deal with those, because that's all I'm equipped to deal with. Of course, I also try to get any student who seems to be having real trouble to appropriate counseling services (and I've been lucky enough to have classrooms small enough to recognize this- which is to me the best argument for keeping those small class sizes that writing departments everywhere are constantly trying to defend), and I take it Ms. Giovanni and Ms. Roy acted about as well as anyone possibly could have, even going beyond normal expectations of identifying and working with a troubled student. But I don't think we simply let all the students who are writing purely fictitiously, the ones we have no suspicion of going out and acting on violent fantasies, off the hook. The writing itself needs accounting for, and even treated casuistically, needs some good reason for existing.

Dillon

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Bay Area (Scene/Venue) Question

13 May 2007

One of the rare occasions he starts a thread rather than answers one: with a performance room in Oakland on his hands and a scene he wants to convene rather than merely join.

First off--apologies for those who find this to be a geographical-- specific question clogging up the placeless 'virtual' discussion space, but since I'm not aware of any "Bay Area specific" literary/cultural/ poetry discussion list, and I know there's quite a few 'bay area' folks on this list, I figured it's worth a shot, and I wouldn't be adverse to others getting into discussions of other regions that aren't immediately relevant to mine)....

Anyway, I currently got (I mean "have") access to a very cool "performance" SPACE in Oakland, and I'm trying to figure out what to DO with it.... If there's a way I can hold some kind of event, that would INCLUDE poets (people who call themselves that) and have the potentials of being exciting and/or relevant to people in other scenes....

Ever since Patrick Dunagan (i hope I'm spelling your name right) wrote his critique of an anthology called "Bay Poetics" on this list, I've been thinking that his comments could provide some kind of opportunity for talking or writing pro-actively about possible future social configurations here in the Bay Area, as manifested in 'scenes' or ad-hoc reading events, presses, etc---...

Questions about how important solitude is for one's writing, or calling, and how a scene or community may help that? Questions about what mediates the social aspects in which some people find some form of community, perhaps as a kind of replacement family, a feeling of security, of mutual goading, or competitive cooperation? How important, or central, is "the book?" or "the written text" as the basis for something like 'community?' How important, or central, the reading of one's work (to, for the most part, other people who call themselves poets) as the basic for something like community? How important, or central, the phone conversation? Or the bar- meeting? The talking? The just liking to hang-out? Or go to the same musical events, baseball games, political rallies, day-care centers, the ostensibly 'non-poetry related' social aspects? (teach, or be a student, at the same school; The SFSU poets vs. The New School poets vs. The CCA poets, vs The Stegner Fellow vs. The Berkeley poets vs. The Mills poets (they used to be called "The New Brutalists"--mostly class of '04)? (okay, I know some people cross over; it ain't just VS either/or..... and the so-called 'independents'--and not just because they're happy being loners...

then there's also the young and old question, which is different than the 'established' vs. 'non-established' Were the "MANIC D" people originally connected with a school? What about the various segregations? How significant is the black and white one? (do you want to make it less?) How significant is the difference between one side of the Bay and the other? The various more 'sophisticated' and the more 'populist' etc etc? Various "interfacings" with other so-called scenes, 'McSweeney's' to name but one much touted one....

I don't have time to get into a FATALISTIC discussion about it right now (and I'm going to try to avoid that temptation when I'm done--- Ah, "I used to be disgusted, now I try to be amused'), and if you find yourself Happy with existing social configurations in your life and art right now, (or if not entirely happy, at least thinking that "IT's GOOD ENOUGH AS IS" and it would "TAKE TOO MUCH ENERGY to try to change it), that's fine with me.

But I may not have much going for me right now, but one thing I got is a SPACE where we could at least get something started (or help something along that's already started), and I still got what Marx once called "LABOR POWER" (and "while there's still life, there's hope" as John Lennon said before he died) and a belief in creative competition, unity in diversity, 'united we stand, divided we fall' and a burning feeling that something that needs to be changed is in our power to change....

and, well, I figured I'd just try it out (ya know, run it by y'all) here. Feel free to contact me backchannel, though frontchannel would probably be better....

If you want, you could also pay for the 'writing workshop' I'm planning to teach here soon. I'll send an announcement out about that soon. But in the meantime, feel free to respond to this free offer (which may end up costing 'more' than money, but that's a whole other essay thing..)

Chris

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A day earlier he had botched an introduction, mistaking one Chris for another; but CA Conrad's reply — a roll-call of Philadelphia poverty, Ron Swegman, Gil Ott — was enough to open the floodgates.

Rush Philly 89 Swegman...

22 May 2007

The tribute to Gil Ott shakes loose his own Philadelphia myth-hoard: Tiberino Nation, Killtime, Lamont Steptoe, the squats — a history of the poor he half-apologises for backchanneling in public.

CA---

Thank you for this, and for the opportunity to 'compare mythologies' in terms of our senses of philly late 80s. (I ain't gonna apologize in shame ways my cohen reference)... I love your sense of Zulli Nation.... I had actually never heard that phrase before. I don't even know if people called my West Philly 88-89 primary scene window Tiberino Nation. But The Tiberinos (In my myth, Joe was larger than life figure with Bachannal on South Street, and Ellen for her famous Move Confrontation mural which I was proud to say my courtyard looked out on) had a similar presence and VISION to the what you describe as Zulli, so I might as well say Tiberino Nation... but when we started Killtime Place in 1989, probably more of the younger folks associated it with that, as the Tiberinos were kinda passing the torch to us... Big Mess Theatre, the squats, the hippy-vs-punk thing, sharing a space with Cheryl Dunye (I miss Cheryl Dunye....I know she's all famous and everything...but I gotta find her again)...

Anyway no slight to Gil (we had our differences, largely over 'language poetry,' but we made up later, and not just because he changed his mind), but for me in terms of poetry in philly, it was much more LAMONT STEPTOE, the late JEROME ROBINSON in terms of the older folks who, let's say, 'kept me honest'. Oh there's so much more to say about those times (i've written, with larger brushstrokes, about it in my unpublished memoir-like thing, but it's good to have my memory juggled here--

and sorry Poetics List if this seems like I should be BACKCHANNELING CA in some marginalized history of the poor, the poor who may change the meaning of

the word poor before we die... and changing the connotation can be social work in that it manifests itself non-verbally as well

Anyway, CA, we could (maybe should) do a book of it, or at least a film or talking book, coz I smoke less cigarettes when I talk than I do when I write... especially in, or from, the 'mines' of memory...

C

Ron SWEGMAN is great, yes. Poor as a beggar like the rest of us here, crowded now with all this hip import of rich kid stock. Ah, misery in Philadelphia! But Love! And we cook one another beans when someone's too poor, which does happen more than we like.

HEY CHRIS STROFFOLINO, before I forget! There is a big, beautiful Gil Ott Tribute about to happen. And one of the things I want to mention at the microphone was the days when I first moved to town, and you and Candance Kaucher and others were already here. As was Molly Russakoff. But those were the days our downtown, center city was dubbed The Zulli Nation, after Al Zulli the landlord. Molly and I were just talking about him. Our rent WAS FUCKING CHEAP, and it's because Zulli truly Loved the arts, and wanted us all to have affordable rent. I was paying 210, Molly was paying 240 (or 250?), but my old place is now 1500 a month. That stinking fucking shoe box I lived in is now 1500 a month!

But Gil Ott was central to that Zulli Nation, and it was his GENIUS to spread it out. And he did, he fucking did. He started arts centers in deep North Philly, West Philly, South Philly, and then created a bus tour of these centers, and showed off the much hidden talent. Wonderful, golden years those were, and Gil Ott insisted on the Love of community where it didn't even exist. And who knows how many changed lives were a result, right?

Yesterday I was mucking around in my little garden plot downtown looking at all the fucking condominiums (literally dozens of them) coming up out of the ground, and it made me a little sad, because these rich bastards moving in have no clue whatsoever what this city had to offer not that long ago. What a rich, glorious time we had though!

Chris, you were busy bringing Alice Notley and others down from NY to read. Gil Ott was bringing Harryette Mullen and others. Between the two of you you both managed to ignite some experiment in poetry which was mostly absent. Well, there was a lot of experiment with the other arts, especially jazz, especially sculpture, etc., but it was you and Gil who gave Philadelphia the much needed injection to the poetry!

Now of course there are so many experimental poets that there's clearly defined battle zones of the slam poets, the Sharon Olds poets, and the lump-sum of the avant garde, which of course is far more various than anyone can even begin to imagine, but at one time...

And by the way, I'm not that sad.

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i-outlaw 2.5 featuring Compton and Montaigne*22 May 2007*

Bob Marcacci's Montaigne tag and his 'i-outlaw' webzine set Chris spinning — Prince, flarf, the royal 'we,' a crooner's come-on ('I'm so appropriate for you baby') built to be sung with the right band.

On May 22, 2007, at 1:18 PM, Bob Marcacci wrote:

Hi Bob Marcacci (the greeting is also a title)

Thank you for the Montaigne quote and for word of your i-outlaw (so much better than e-racism)

and partying like it's 1999

(not like prince per se, his word-creating space wasn't saying that there was no real 1984 --or whatever that would make 1983-- but the "1984" in "1999" probably differs as much from the "2007" in "1999" differs from the artist formerly known as the artist formerly known as

one of the pleasures....'our metaphors' and some folks don't care much for 'the royal we' or the 'we' some call 'royal' to legitimize proletarian disconnection or even bougie (is there standard spelling for "bougie yet? does it bogart...)

but i suppose one can always find sinister intentions (ah, the Poe-like proper melancholy of conspiracy theories the pleasures of anger or the agony of defeat the world colored by shaped by valued by...

i don't mind the ' we' harbour doubts about its royalty (like the 'pain in the arse'), but don't mind minding and carelessly dance out the words to 'we care alot' i mark it (or did to be called a teacher-student teetering on the double meaning of 'fail the test') ah, remember that poetry movement "The new Prole Poes!" (how it went toe-to-toe with the Free Francine Prose! (the pose, the pros the cons and neo-cons...)

fuck the heart you know you want to (is trying really trying to resist the temptation to put quote marks around any familiar phrase a desperate attempt at parlour game (a parlour game called 'desperate attempt?')

i mean (or yearn) to make the words one's own (here comes the crooner, fun therefore dum:

"i'm so appropriate for you baby, appropriate in the night appropriate in the morning in too sure Saussure light I'm appropriate when I'm clunky with my polysyllabic hat and flarf dignifies the nobles and the slaves are free to scat"

(ah, with THE RIGHT BAND....uh huh to bare the aesthetic device sometimes called 'personal ad')

appropriate owing what I own and owning what I owe they know about the fault line here and they'll still reap what they sow

i take responsibility I shaped them language bed (though I may mean music bed) and the folly evil i decry is their hat inside my head....

i won't presume to give responsibility

fuck the fault line break (it's the New olsonian 'breath'

& fuck the heart (you know you want to), da capo, etc. (and cagean silence.... to boot or knot...

or dress up like a question mark and the naked mysterians

and we don't mind the eye (art about words maybe more...)

Chris Stroffolino

Listen to i-outlaw <<http://i-outlaw.blogspot.com/>> version 2.5 also featureing fine poetry by:

- Ren Powell - Luis H. Valadez - Amy Bernier - K. Silem Mohammad - Amber Nelson - Steven Schroeder - Emmy Pérez - Erik Rzepka - Tim Martin - Shanna Compton

"One of the pleasures of poetry is inhabiting that world-creating space. I'm not saying there is no real world (but when is the last time you heard anything real?) or that the world is simply a product of our language (please pass the margarine) but rather that the world is colored by our words, shaped by our grammar, valued by our metaphors. But poetry is not an illustration of philosophy and while such ideas as these are relevant (who are you calling an idea?), what's necessary about poems is the way they make their own logic, quite different than the logic of philosophical ideas about imitation or representation."

I have a poem in "My Way: Speeches and Poems" that touches on this: DON'T BE SO SURE (DON'T BE SAUSSURE)

My cup is my cap & my cap is my cup When the coffee is hot It ruins my hat We clap and we slap Have sup with our pap But won't someone please Get me a drink

- Charles Bernstein from a 1999 interview with Bradford Senning.

Spread the word far and wide. Don't forget to enter our contest to win a free book of poetry! Listen to i-outlaw now and find out how...

-- Bob Marcacci <<http://marcacci.blogspot.com/>>

Nothing fixes a thing so intensely in the memory as the wish to forget it. - Michel de Montaigne

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david horton's very good question*25 May 2007*

David Harrison Horton had asked the thread to hear the editor's side of the 'previously unpublished' question; Chris, who has been underpaid on both sides of the desk, answers as neither and both.

Should an editor expect fresh material?

As someone who has been both an editor of money-losing propositions as well as a writer who hasn't been paid (by other editors who don't recoup their losses), I can see how both "sides"--insofar as there is antagonism between them--may feel exploited (of course, nowadays so many are both).

The issue may very well be different if both editor and poet are making money, but I'll restrict these notes to what David's talking about....

Perhaps what I say may be seen as taking the side of the "unpaid writer" rather than the "money-losing editor's" side in what I say here, but increasingly I've become very skeptical of the value of such "freshness"--as defined as "Previously Unpublished Work." For me it has had a lot to do with a value of quantity more than quality--Yes, they need not be opposed, but I know I'm not the only writer (or editor for that matter), who has felt an institutional pressure that thereby places less value on a single poem (oh, it's "fetishizing") and more on "author of 19 books, published in 150 magazines" and I wonder about alternatives to that that could benefit both writer and editor

and maybe yes I'm too hung up on what some could deride as "an economy of scarcity" or that I like the kind of poems (or whatever) that "even 15, 150, 1500, years later, still feel FRESH"

Well, back when I did a lot more unpaid readings, I largely operated in a scene in which it was kind of a badge of honor to not read things that most people in the audience already heard, but then I started realizing, when I was in the audience, that if a reader occasionally did that, and if the work was good, I actually liked the familiarity. Perhaps on the page, or the electronic format, it's different, and laws of intellectual 'property' forbid people from even 'plagiarizing' themselves, and it can get all touted and glorified as PROCESS-ORIENTED writing that can't be fetishized and is free (or at least money-losing for both editor and writer)--but how free is it? and how fresh is it? And what I'm writing now, "of course," isn't a poem by any standards but in a way I am submitting it and in a way it is "fresh material" (okay, now I'll go out to the park and play a fetishized song I've played many times before but to people who maybe have never heard it, or can hear it with FRESH EARS).

love, Chris

On May 25, 2007, at 9:17 AM, David Harrison Horton wrote:

Hi all,

I didn't hear too many voices from the editor's perspective on this string. And I think it would help round out the conversation.

Print journals spend anywhere from \$100 (Kinkos and a good stapler at home) to upwards of \$5000 for a (McNaughton & Gunn) 1,000 print run.

The economics of this issue has been very poet-centric.

We can argue till we're blue whether or not the print journal is the last bastion of bourgeois Kultur, but the fact remains that these folks throw down cold hard cash to push your product (even if they don't pay you for it; most don't recoup their losses).

*So why, if they ask for it, shouldn't they expect fresh material? David Harrison Horton
1341 58th Avenue #9 Oakland CA 94621 chasepark@hotmail.com*

nic_sebastian@HOTMAIL.COM> Subject: Re: blog-posted poems - responded on this thread. Ended up with some great input also from the editors of four different publications -- coming at the issue from different sides and rather interestingly. There's an overview here: <http://verylikeawhale.wordpress.com/2007/05/25/blog-posted-poems-redux/> and the editorial views in the four preceding posts. Regards and thanks again. Nic Sebastian <http://verylikeawhale.wordpress.com>

Create the ultimate e-mail address book. Import your contacts to Windows Live Hotmail. www.windowlive-hotmail.com/learnmore/managemail2.html?locale=en-us&ocid=TXT_TAGLM_HMWL_reten_impcont_0507

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Gil Ott correspondence

14 June 2007

Charles Alexander and Eli Goldblatt, gathering letters for a Gil Ott Selected, turn out to be hunting a correspondence now boxed at someone's house — the archive of his youth held hostage to the same lean years.

thanks charles.... Chris On May 16, 2007, at 12:13 PM, charles alexander wrote:

Thank you! I remember first meeting you through Gil, years ago, at Painted Bride. Anything you find will be a help. We'll likely have to limit the "letters" section to 20 pages or so, and we're figuring there will be a lot of sifting to do.

Charles

At 11:25 AM 5/16/2007, you wrote: Charles-----Gil And I had a big correspondence, largely pre-email, circa 1987-1992 when I lived in Philly. I diligently used to save all my correspondence, xeroxing off my notes, etc., and may have it somewhere. I fell on hard times in the last few years and had to store a lot of things at someone's house, but I may still have much of this stuff. It just may take a lot of time and work to find them.

Chris

Begin forwarded message:

Friends,

For a projected volume of *Selected Works* by Gil Ott, my co-editor Eli Goldblatt and I are looking for selections of correspondence written by Gil to writers, artists, friends, etc., which are not among the archive of Ott papers. If you possess, or know about, correspondence you believe would be valuable to our efforts, please let us know, and, if possible, send copies (hard copy or digital) to me at Chax Press: <chax@theriver.com>. Also, please feel free to pass this notice on to other individuals and list-serves.

Thank you,

Charles Alexander Chax Press 101 W. Sixth St. Tucson, AZ 85701-1000



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'The Cult of the Amateur?-- Poetry and Art

12 July 2007

Barry Schwabsky offers Barnett Newman's line about supplying one's own demand; Chris supplies his, in the form of a song.

In the thread, *Barry Schwabsky had written* · 12 July 2007 —

| Barnett Newman said that an artist writes when he needs something to read.

Or as the song puts it: The void is luggage holds you back but you return for one last snack Empty fire's not so wild demand's a parent, supply's a child (false glamour lures you here but you have to pass through it to get better love will lose its looks so tonight you want to get inside its sweater)

On Jul 12, 2007, at 1:21 PM, Barry Schwabsky wrote:

Barnett Newman said that an artist writes when he needs something to read. Likewise a poet. Our aim (never achieved but often more and more so as one grows older) is to supply our own demand.

Thomas savage <tsavagebar@YAHOO.COM> wrote: The relationship of supply/demand to poetry is indeed very strange. There is an enormous supply of poetry but very little demand for it. Outside the community of poets there is almost no demand for it and inside that community, poets tend to be interested mostly in their own poetry and that of their friends only.

Jim Andrews wrote: Concerning the issue of financing, Dan, I agree with what you say and liked the final Shirky quote you highlighted about being able to do big things with love.

A friend of mine, Jack Saturday, addresses the abundance/scarcity issue constantly in his work at <http://theworldowesyouliving.org>. Not concerning digital information but other types of abundances created by other technologies. Concerning food and wealth, for instance. It does seem that the matter of the creation of abundance is a recurring issue in the history of many technologies. We live in a world where we create abundance of many things people need, yet too often they are not available to those who need them, despite the abundance. On the other hand, when they are made

easily available, the price/value often plummets to the point where the producers can barely afford to continue production.

Presumably the poetry food chain is different. There never was much money involved in it. So that the supply/demand arguments are not quite accurate concerning poetry. Yet the abundance created by the digital has its effects in poetry and any art carried through the digital. Not so much concerning the economics as in shaping directions of the art that deal with cliché--through any number of strategies from radical avoidance to automated cultivation/harvest and reprocessing. Though there is effect in the financial 'economics' as well, such as they are. But I'm thinking more of 'economies of attention' -- I've heard that term used by several people.

ja <http://vispo.com>

Fussy? Opinionated? Impossible to please? Perfect. Join Yahoo!'s user panel and lay it on us.

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"An 80-Year-Old Poet for the MTV Generation"

29 August 2007

George Bowering plays the innocent and asks who Stephen Malkmus might be — a question aimed squarely at the one man on the list who would soon be touring with the Silver Jews.

In the thread, George Bowering had written · 28 August 2007 —

| *And Stephen Malkmus is?*

A 41-year old musical colleague.... MTV is 27 years old, so what is the MTV generation anyway?

Anyway, Steve's a great guitarist/singer...combined some nice soulful melodies and some "avant" noise aspects for many he, and P Harvey and others, were the essence of that "indie-rock" 90s, in contrast to the more commercial 90s indie rock, after Cobain, went into Pearl Jam/STP/Live/Creed progressively more macho late 90s arena postures. I'm sure Wiki says this better. It was cool working in the studio with him in '98; he's just finishing up a new album....

C

On Aug 28, 2007, at 7:56 AM, George Bowering wrote:

On Aug 27, 2007, at 9:52 AM, Barry Schwabsky wrote:

I agree that his poetry resonates with a lot of contemporary music...not that its necessarily played on MTV...but for instance I remember Stephen Malkmus in an interview specifically citing Ashbery as an inspiration.

And Stephen Malkmus is?

George Bowering, OBC Did not fall down on Denman Island

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Poetry, Art, and the Book: a Conference at Yale Univeristy

25 September 2007

A Yale symposium notice prompts the year's best backstage tale: the detective work, for the PSA, of tracking down the reel-to-reel tapes of Anne Sexton's rock band, Her Kind.

In the thread, Joel Bettridge had written · 25 September 2007 —

| *The symposium will highlight strengths of the Yale Arts of the Book Collection*

And the Yale Collection also may be the only place that has the reel- to-reel archives of Anne Sexton's rock band, Anne Sexton and her kind--if you consider that a strength. When I was doing some detective work (because the PSA in NYC wanted me to recreate her rock band, well, before Alice Quinn took over---long story--), I couldn't find it anywhere in NYC and luckily Caroline Crumpacker and I found it in Yale (even if they wouldn't let us make a recording of it, but we had to sit in the rare tape room). Chris

On Sep 25, 2007, at 9:21 AM, Joel Bettridge wrote:

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Arts of the Book Collection at Yale University invite historians, literary scholars, poets, artists, publishers, and book arts enthusiasts to participate in Metaphor Taking Shape: Poetry, Art, and the Book, a symposium to be held on March 13 & 14, 2008, on the campus of Yale University. Speakers will include Carolee Campbell, Macy Chadwick, Steve Clay, Simon Cutts, Johanna Drucker, Ann Lauterbach, Anna Moschovakis, Chad Oness, Kyle Schelessinger, Buzz Spector, C. D. Wright, and John Yau. The symposium will highlight strengths of the Yale Arts of the Book Collection and the Modern European and American collections at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in the accompanying exhibitions: "Metaphor Taking Shape: Poetry, Art, and the Book" at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and "The Publisher's Roundtable: Book Artists in Dialogue" at the Arts of the Book Collection.

*Additional details are available online:
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/metaphor/index.html>*

*For more information about Poetry at Beinecke Library visit:
<http://beineckepoetry.wordpress.com/>*

Nancy Kuhl Associate Curator, Yale Collection of American Literature The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Yale University 121 Wall Street, P.O. Box 208240 New Haven, CT 06520-8240 Phone: [REDACTED]

*African American Studies at Beinecke Library: <http://beineckejwj.wordpress.com/>
Poetry at Beinecke Library: <http://beineckepoetry.wordpress.com/>*

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Which pop song most sets feminism back?

29 September 2007

A radio show's claim that women have grown less happy since the seventies had unsettled Tracey Gagne; Ryan Daley answers it with a koan, and Chris answers the koan.

In the thread, Ryan Daley had written · 29 September 2007 —

| If feminism can be set back by a single pop song, is feminism worth having?

Tracey---thanks for bringing that up. I definitely see your point, and as a male I may not be the most qualified to weigh in on this issue, but I would like to propose another interpretation to that message. If it's true, that statistics can show that American women in general are less happy now than they were in the 70s (which is certainly debatable, but I don't want to dismiss it out of hand), it's also possible that American males are less happy now than they were in the 70s, and in the sense the message can be interpreted less as a divisive gender issue, but more as an issue that many of the other cultural changes that occurred since then (27 years of a Reagan revolution, etc) have trumped the hard-won liberation struggles that came to a head in the 55-75 era. Somewhere I have a citation for a study (which I tend to find rings true) that makes that claim. It's interesting they say the seventies, being that that was when feminism (as well as integration, etc) seemed to be most embraced by pop-culture. All I'm saying is I don't think that study necessarily has to be read in a way that supports a backlash against feminism. Curious what you and others think

Chris

On Sep 28, 2007, at 11:44 AM, Tracey Gagne wrote:

As I think on this one, because there have been songs that have crossed my path where I've said, "Ooh! Yikes! Don't like that message!", I want to mention what I heard on the radio on my way into work this morning. Some research discovered that men, on the whole, are happier than women, which is the opposite of when this was last done in the seventies or something like that. One of the radio personalities gave us all the idea to consider: "Have women's lib and equality made women less happy?" The message I heard-- women were happier when they were subservient to their husbands.... Yuck!

Cheers, Tracey

On 9/28/07, W.B. Keckler <bewitjanus@aol.com> wrote:

Was just trying to compile a list of songs which people find the most offensive vis-a-vis women and those which are perceived to set the clock back the furthest on feminism/equality?? My first vote is for Sheena Easton's "(My Baby Takes) The Morning Train," which seems to be an anthem for those who feel women are parasitic sex bunnies and happiest thus....of course there are the so-called obvious songs like "Stand By Your Man," although I always focused on the line "After all, he's just a man..." as a very funny condescending line...any suggestions? send to

Bewitjanus@aol.com and the final top ten or twenty or whatever will be blog-logged at Joe Brainard's Pyjamas (www.joebrainardspyjamas.blogspot.com)?...merci. Bill

Email and AIM finally together. You've gotta check out free AOL Mail! - <http://mail.aol.com>

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pj harvey/ l(r)j, etc...

4 October 2007

*The passage he transcribes is from Laura (Riding) Jackson's *The Word 'Woman'*, written in the 1930s and unpublished until 1993 — a book he keeps returning to across the year.*

maybe relevant to some of the discussion...

Around the time of PJ Harvey's "Sheela-Na-Gig" (which some call a feminist pop-song, and some call an assimilationist compromise-), ah, but it rocks (in more than one sense of that word!), I found this book by Laura (Riding) Jackson, largely written in the early 1930s but not published until 1993. Here's a quote from it:

"Woman, because she is an absolute, unindividualistic being, can only get a sense of her difference from man through man's sense of her as something different. But for this sense she must go to man's feelings, not to his reason: to the evidence of her actual impact on him. Man's reason tells nothing about woman; it is an attempt to integrate itself, merely, and by suppressing evidence of what differs....But man's reason is not perception-proof; it is shot through with involuntary reactions to experience. And it is these reactions alone which can provide accurate information about woman as an observable phenomenon, and which we must be careful to separate from rational statements about woman. And when the rational statement is made by a woman it is likely to be more false to the nature of woman than when made by a man: because a woman has no external experience of herself which might discredit the statement, while a man cannot but supply, along with the rational statement about woman, a reaction that contradicts it. (77, 78...)

earlier she writes men invented feminism (pg. 53)...

Chris

Oh, since I'm out of POSTS for today, a PS to SARAH ROSENTHAL, another book you may want to include an excerpt of for your class would be GARY SULLIVAN and NADA GORDON'S "SWOON"----based largely on an email correspondence.

C

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Foetry & Pavement Saw Press and David Baratier*7 October 2007*

Foetry.com, the era's self-appointed watchdog on contest corruption, had reposted an old list message by David Baratier and then complained of being misquoted; Chris takes the accused's side, and Pavement Saw's.

Dear Alan Cordle---

David Baratier's post does not seem "completely careless" to me... If, indeed, you are not "Monday Love," then maybe David's post is slightly careless for not making it clear that you're not this person (if indeed you aren't) Also, why do you use the term "self-righteously denounce" to describe Baratier's letter? Baratier is doing no more than defending himself and trying to set the record straight after having himself been 'denounced' in a piece of writing sanctioned by Foetry--even if you yourself didn't write it. (oh, we could debate on whether Foetry's denunciation of Baratier's work is 'self-righteous' I suppose or simply 'righteous'--but it's certainly a denunciation, and one based on innuendo and spurious allegations).

Oh, and for the sake of full-disclosure, here as well, before you do any more research, yes, my first full-length book of poetry, back in 1994, was the first book Pavement Saw Press published (the book is now out of print now, and, no, it was not supported by any taxpayer's cream), but this is not the reason I'm defending David against Foetry's accusations and I'm open to the possible usefulness of Foetry as a kind of 'watchdog' I suppose, but in this case, there's more than enough evidence to support Baratier's counter claims and nothing but conjecture to support those posted by Foetry (even if not by you personally).

Chris

On Oct 6, 2007, at 1:02 PM, Alan Cordle wrote:

Pavement Saw Press and David Baratier

October 5th, 2007 by alan

In recent research I've been conducting, I came across the following post Pavement Saw Press, from April of this year.

It frustrates me to see someone so self-righteously denounce Foetry.com's work, particularly in light of the fact that I did not write _one word_ of the paragraph he attributed to me. Another forum member, Monday Love, wrote it. Baratier was completely careless in this post. And no, I'm not against all contests either. And I'm pro Monday Love too.

Thank you for allowing me to correct the record.

Alan Cordle founder of Foetry.com

From: David Baratier situation with foetry affects all of us. It is apparent from my interactions with foetry that Alan Cordle is against all contests, even an honest one. Foetry first went after me insinuating that I appeared in the Denver Quarterly because I had Bin Ramke as a judge. That statement sat on their site for many months even after the timeline was shown to them that proved that the accusation was false. I am not sure why we were brought onto their site except for an apparent need of Cordle to attack Ramke and anyone who used him as a judge. The passage below written by Cordle is yet another instance of his making things up without evidence:

----- Let's see. Please tell me if I got anything wrong. David Baratier's letters and poems have appeared in the Denver Quarterly, editor Bin Ramke, professor, University of Denver. Baratier is editor of Pavement Saw Press, in Ohio, which gets money from Ohio taxpayers in order to establish, according to Pavement Saw Press's mission statement, a "non-university affiliated press" which helps Ohio's economy by attracting outside attention and publishing "works of national signifiance." Dana Curtis, Ph.D. University of Denver, wins Pavement Saw Press Prize, picked by Ramke. Curtis is founder & editor-in- chief of Elixir Press, based in Denver. Jake Adam York, director of creative writing, University of Colorado at Denver, and Colorado Council on the Arts fellow, wins Elixir Press Prize. Sounds to me like university-affiliated Denver is the cat and the Ohio taxpayers are the cream. It looks like, so far at least, there's a nice little Denver system in place here. Very nice.

----- Ok, Back to my side again The above written by Cordle is a total fabrication. York and Curtis didn't know each other in fact, at the time Dana was in Minneapolis, not Denver I did not know Bin except for asking him to judge the contest and I asked him because I called to find out if they were going to run a interview I did with Simon Perchik (which appeared as a feature in an early issue of Jacket) and while he was on the line I asked if he would be interested. I'll just stop here. The whole thing is starting to bother me again. Our contest is blind judged, the manuscripts are stripped of the name and publication credits, if we can afford a judge, the judge is sent 25 manuscripts out of all recieved. If not I end up judging the batch I am sent back from the readers. If I am able to afford publishing two books (1000 run each) from the entries I do. Then we pay to mail everyone at least their entry fee worth of books we have published. I think we run one of the fairest contests there is, I challenged Cordle to come up with a place that did better. I am still waiting. Anyway, my experience is that we would have something false written about us with no evidence, and once that material appeared on the foetry website it became my job to "prove him wrong." I should also mention that Levine is one of our authors. And that (for the record, as to avoid more wild speculation) his book won our contest before Tupelo was publishing. I also do not see why Levine being accused of a problem with the way he runs his press should affect the acceptance of his poems into journals. This is heading into an ugly direction, what is next? Will AGNI apologize about publishing poems if a poet is accused of running a red-light? Maybe AGNI should apologize for all of the poems they publish until they get a spine. Considering the student teacher problems with poetry awards and with contests who have chosen a winner beforehand, my amazement with Cordle is how inflated he is over the little he has revealed. Be well David Baratier, Editor Pavement Saw Press PO Box 6291 Columbus, OH 43206 <http://pavementsaw.org>

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"musical" as descriptive of poetry*6 November 2007*

The first of two long turns on a word he distrusts; Barry Schwabsky and angela vasquez-giroux will draw out the rest.

For me, there can be a shorthand usefulness to the term on a specific ("technical" or "nuts and bolts") level....

assonance, alliteration, internal rhymes, so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' line endings, rhythmic push and pull, even in the most 'prosey' of poetry, or poetry conceived of, or operating in a context, or largely on the page, and not even necessarily uttered verbally, or read silently so that one feels the poem physically (in the sense of lips, throat, as much as 'eye' or 'ear')----these can all be considered aspects of the poem's 'music.' So even though I'm tempted to conclude that "music" is only an analogy or metaphor when applied to poetry not literally sung (to, or with, a lyre or handclap, bongo-esque accompaniment), I don't mind using that term as a way of considering the feeling (or connotational) aspects of any piece of writing (as in "the music of the New York Times Op Ed page," even but also "Music is feeling, then, not sound" or "unheard sounds are sweeter," etc).

But, I do think the term "music," like the term "ear," can be (and often is), oh I'll say, "abused," when applied more generally. When, for instance, "music" is opposed to "meaning," as it often is. Some critics speak in terms of a continuum. Music on one side, and meaning on the other. Poet X Or Poem M is valued as "musical" however abhorrent, or even lacking, in "meaning" he or she or it is. Poem N or Poet Y, by contrast, is considered to be much stronger in terms of "logopiea" ("dance of the intellect," though the word 'dance' alludes to music as well), but weaker in terms of "melopiea" (I may be spelling these wrong, because of my spell check). And then somewhere "in between" is the perfect balance, a poem O, that seems more meaningful because it is more musical, or that seems more musical because it seems more meaningful.

Yet, when one says one poem is more Musical than another poem, the term becomes less descriptive and much more subjective and judgmental. It's one thing to say that one appreciates a certain kind of "music" over another kind of music, categorically. It's certainly valid to say "I categorically appreciate opera over punk music" (or vice versa) It's another (and in my opinion less valid) thing to say "Opera is music, punk is not" (or vice versa)-- Yet I feel this is often how the term "music" (and also the term "ear"---as in "tin ear") is used in discussions of poetry. I may not be moved or transported by the 'music' of Auden, Pound or Robert Duncan as much as I am by Robert Creeley, Laura Riding, or Pessoa (in Chris Daniels translation at least), for instance, but I won't therefore make the

claim that Auden, Duncan or Pound are thereby less 'musical' than the others (as is too often done), and though I tend to generally prefer punk to opera, there's definitely some opera I prefer to some punk....

Sorry if this seems heavy handed, and not 'musical' enough (ah, but I can love the music of the essay, letter and manifesto...) Nor is it intended to sound relativistic.

Chris

On Nov 6, 2007, at 2:59 PM, wil Hallgren wrote:

I agree that using "music" in connection with poetry is distracting. Shall we attempt to replace "musical" with "cadenced" -- (from Webster's "cadence" (n.) #'s 3 & 4 -- "inflection or modulation in tone" -- "'flow of rhythm").

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Wystan Curnow <w.curnow@AUCKLAND.AC.NZ> wrote: Jason (1) for my money, the impulse to collapse distinctions is also the impulse to replace them with different distinctions (2) it was tomas's musing about meaning that drove me to respond in the first place and (3) I am really glad to hear you have found some better philosophies and aesthetics than I'm always on the lookout myself.... Anyway, I don't find the sentence, paragraph distinction of much use. What about stanzas then? Or Faulkner. But then we began, not with a distinction between poetry and fiction at all, but between poetry and expository prose. Cheers, Wystan

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to say that poetry has line breaks and prose doesn't, but there are too many prose poets and flash fictionaries that have muddied that water up, so we're left with something that is fundamentally a structural issue in that it relates to the architecture of language arts, but against which there's been such an assault for no apparently good reason that we no longer have a way to draw a line where one is useful.

perhaps more to the point is the reading angle, but for me, honestly, my reading habits aren't that different for poetry or for prose. I find Ezra Pound as absorbing as I find Philip K. Dick, and respond to them both in similar ways albeit for different reasons. which is why for me, the impulse is to draw the distinction from a compositional point of view. And that works for me, and not only that, but i find it works also when I'm reading other people as well. If I read something about "poetry" and I substitute "language art composed at the level of the sentence" it works and can makes sense of what is being said, just as if I read something about "prose" and substitute "language art composed at the level of the paragraph." I think this distinction makes sense because it relates directly to what people actually do, as well as to the nature of information being conveyed by the two different species.

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Elizabeth, perhaps another distinction I'd rather not draw is that between the 'state of literature' and 'external circumstances'. You might say just so long as prose rules the world blurring its boundaries with poetry remains worth doing. I don't go for the idea that poetry creates meaning, prose conveys it. All writing does both to such an extent I'd want to hold all writers to account for doing both. I don't know whether Tomas meant that writing that creates meaning, IS poetry (whether we take it to be poetry or prose, like on the page or in a Creative Writing class on poetry) or that what we take to be poetry CREATES MEANING. Either way, I'm against it. I take your point about reading, and its relation to time management and personal entertainment value, what what other purposes are being served? Cheers, Wystan

-----Original Message----- From: UB Poetics discussion group On Behalf Of Elizabeth Switaj

Wystan, playing into the hands of what? When you say "the age" do you refer to the state of literature or to external circumstances? If the former, I suppose one could argue, if they were so inclined, that enough blurring of the boundaries has happened for it to be useful to attempt to redraw them (if only as an experiment).

For me, the primary difference between poetry and prose is not in how I write them (certain types of prose excepted) but in how I read them. My reading of poetry is much slower and deliberate to the point where I've even been known to say that I read prose and think about poetry. Exceptions to this are James Joyce and crappy poetry, which is to say great prose and crappy poetry, though that says much more about my personal preferences and biases than anything else, of course.

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advantage.

Wystan

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"musical" as descriptive of poetry

7 November 2007

The quoted thanks are angela's, but the argument answers Barry Schwabsky, who had ventured that country and hip-hop are 'less musical' because the words come first.

In the thread, angela vasquez-giroux had written · 7 November 2007 —

it is the abuse and the shorthand of so many terms applied to poetry that get my goat

Barry, this is interesting, but I think your examples actually prove my point. Yes, Sarah Vaughan, when she's singing phonemes or 'scat' might play her vocal instrument much more like Charlie Parker than Cash does, But there are many levels of communication (even on a strictly vocal level) in Cash "abstracted from any overt content" as well. The "abstract" might be more obvious in Vaughan, because on first listen the listener may not be as "distracted" by the alleged "overt content" as they could be in Johnny Cash, but the more one listens to Cash, the more one can hear how the delivery (even if his vocal palate may not be as "virtuoso" by certain standards), even on a strictly vocal level, is not a mere transparent conveying of the story or persona.

Of course, it's hard to abstract the mere vocal elements of either Cash or Vaughan (or of hip hop and country or vocal-jazz in general) from the other instruments. Even if one could make the claim that Cash's voice is "less musical" than Vaughan's (which I'm not willing to claim), it would be even harder to claim that Cash's sound (with The Tennessee Two or Three) is "less musical." there's that flat top box that gets rhythm while it gets the blues (even the words of those early hits of his point away from the 'persona' or 'story'). Likewise, I think if you asked many people in hip-hop, it's about the beats as much as the words and the voice. And "beats" (in hip hop parlance) is also texture, and to some extent melody, as much as rhythm. One could argue that country and rhythm and blues (both generally from the U.S. southland) emphasized immediacy of rhythmic backbeat, but we may all have our preferred styles, but I still don't see how one is less "musical" than the other.

Chris

On Nov 7, 2007, at 5:11 AM, Barry Schwabsky wrote:

I'm generally with you, Chris, but there is a possible non-biased way to understand how some forms of music might be less "musical" than others--for instance, I would hazard to say that in country and hip-hop, the presentation of the words, and of the story or persona that those words embody, tends to take precedence, and in that sense they could be called "less musical" than some other forms. If you think Sarah Vaughan is a great singer, you have to have different reasons behind this judgement than you would if you think Johnny Cash is a great singer--in her case, you have to accept some kind of more abstract communication of the musical content of the syllables she is singing, somewhat abstracted from any overt content they might have.

Chris Stroffolino <cstroffo@EARTHLINK.NET> wrote: For me, there can be a shorthand usefulness to the term on a specific ("technical" or "nuts and bolts") level....

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[↑ Index](#)**response to Bobbi Lurie**

22 November 2007

Bobbie Lurie had pressed the list on American feminists' silence about Muslim women; he relays an Iranian woman's warning that 'World War 3' talk endangers exactly the women it claims to defend.

A woman from Iran spoke to me recently about the abuses she and other Muslim women face, and also felt betrayed that the American media mentions the abuse women face in Sunni Saudi Arabia even less than the abuse women face in Iran. She fears for her safety and freedom in her homeland, but told me that America's talk of "World War 3" with Iran is just making matters worse back home. She suggested that American's selectively singling out Iran (while generally letting Saudi Arabia slide) made it clear, to her, that women's rights has very little to do with the assault on her country as a rogue state, etc., by the Bush regime. It's a complex issue, but of course her voice isn't going to be heard too much in the U.S.A. American media either. She's not saying that American women shouldn't support, or find ways to be in solidarity, with Iranian women in this struggle. But why single out Iran and not, say, Saudi Arabia where the abuse is just as bad? Chris

On Nov 22, 2007, at 6:27 AM, Bobbie Lurie wrote:

We do not live in a regime where we are being pulled off the streets for not dressing correctly (I refer to Iranian women (specifically right now) who, by the way, feel betrayed by American feminists who they have tried to gain support from but haven't gained any support from--I mean, very little has been said publicly by American feminists re: abuses women face in the Muslim world)-- we (I have to speak for women now because I feel the way women are treated in the Muslim world is key to all that is happening today) are not stoned to death.

[↑ Index](#)**20th century (Angela!)**

15 December 2007

The year ends where it recurred, angela vasquez-giroux asking after the long poem: Laura (Riding) Jackson set once more against the Pound/Olson line, with Leonard Cohen entering the Hall of Fame the same day as Madonna.

Angela--- really glad you brought this up... I don't think it's cheating....

nor is it cheating to question the status of the long poem, as "epic" and such...

I always felt that what Laura (Riding) Jackson wrote about the 20th Century "long poem" is pretty spot on for me personally too. I don't want to paraphrase it (I want to say it's in Contemporaries and Snobs, 1928, but it could be elsewhere....it's been a while, forgive my rust)...

And if one wants to use the term "poem" and "long poem" as the honorific terms, one could call her *The Telling* (the book version, in the early 70s) a "long poem" I suppose (she wouldn't like that though)--and talk about it in relation to, say, Ashbery's *Three Poems*, as kind of a counter to the Pound/Olson/Zuk/Enslin/Ronald Johnson/DuPlessis/S.Howe notion....

Nothing against the latter tradition or genre, but I don't think it's got a monopoly on the "20th century long poem" (and in a way Whitman is far less heroic macho than Pound, in a way "song of myself" or Blake's long works are very modest and personal... but, nah, don't want to get into that one again. school's out, etc....) Pessoa

But, then I wouldn't be being flippant by saying that Beckett's *Trilogy* could be a "long poem" as well... and David Henderson's biography of Jimi Hendrix (or, to some extent, Baraka's *Blues People*...) at least as much an epic as Olson, etc... The 20th century definition of "poem" (and especially "long poem") by so many standards so narrow (as in "not mere prose" nor "entertainment"...yet 'of cultural relevance'.....

Is it an "accident" that when "rhyme" (as in end rhyme) became unfashionable around the same time the disconnect between many "poetry" and "prose" conventions became greater....

Bye bye, American century, oh country-built-on-cars and electricity cars that could've run on alcohol (until prohibition). Insert Poundian ideogram here. (ugh)....

It's personal as a freezing December...Kosmic Kulchur.. In other news (that stays news), Leonard Cohen is inducted into the rock and roll hall of fame the same day Madonna is...) Langston Hughes and John Cage didn't get enough votes this time (like Art Monk).

C

On Dec 14, 2007, at 11:25 AM, angela vasquez-giroux wrote:

is it "cheating" to recognize many collected poems as one "long" poem?

i think we tend to use "long" as a synonym for "epic". and epic has to include something of the heroic, right?

olson, writing in the epic american / whitman tradition seems to really define the american "long" or epic poem.

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2008

2008 opens with Stroffolino at full seminar strength — a New Hampshire sound-bite spun into weeks of O'Hara and Shelley, a bruising round on Pound and Perloff — and closes with him as an Oakland impresario, the list his bulletin board for songs and shows. Between the two lies the year he stopped mostly arguing and started mostly inviting.

"Poetry" versus "Prose" in New Hampshire

7 January 2008

Barry Alpert lobes a campaign-trail aphorism into a room full of poets; the thread it starts will run for weeks and drag Shelley, Cuomo, and O'Hara to the New Hampshire primary.

In the thread, Dr. Barry S. Alpert had written · 7 January 2008 —

| *Just encountered this germane formulation, but am skeptical whether*

Thanks for passing this on Barry. I may have to write about it more. Did Hilary mean the "you" as a negative thing, something she disagrees with (that the 'inexperienced' Obama does, for instance), or did she mean it as a self-characterization? As something "one" does?

Chris On Jan 7, 2008, at 4:20 AM, Dr. Barry S. Alpert wrote:

Just encountered this germane formulation, but am skeptical whether it holds up to rigorous analysis.

At a raucous rally in a high school gymnasium in Nashua, Clinton skewered Obama for several votes he has cast in the Senate, such as his vote in favor of the Patriot Act and for energy legislation she described as "Dick Cheney's energy bill." She never mentioned Obama's name but left no doubt about whom she was discussing. "You campaign in poetry, you govern in prose," Clinton said.

Barry Alpert

Watch "Cause Effect," a show about real people making a real difference.
http://im.live.com/Messenger/IM/MTV/?source=text_watchcause

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"Poetry" versus "Prose" in New Hampshire

10 January 2008

A week on the thread has gathered Mark Weiss and a Post columnist claiming paternity of the line; steve russell relays the confession, and Chris answers at length.

In the thread, steve russell had written · 10 January 2008 —

| *E.J. Dionne Jr. takes credit for the quote.*

Cuomo did say it, but used it in a different context (which is a little less ignorant about the possibilities of poetry than Hillary's recontextualization). I just wrote a really long piece about that; backchannel me if you want to see it. I didn't know about E.J. Dionne though. I'll look for it, but in the meantime, do you have a sense of the context in which (he or she?) used it? The essay or speech? When, etc?

Many of the pundits are saying it was Hillary's "crying" (and there's debate over whether it's authentic crying or a feigned attempt to campaign in poetry) that won the election? But others say that the main issue in exit polls was "the economy" and Clinton has spoken more often about the economy than Obama (regardless of genre). Other pundits say that the pundits who say that Hillary won because of her tears are just saying that so they can later discredit her.

Do you cry in poetry or cry in prose? In music or in movies?

(Did Frank O'Hara for instance govern more in his art criticism did he campaign more in "The Personism Manifesto?" than in "Easter" or govern more in the posthumously published 'prosey' dialogue Fire Island Sun piece...?)

When was the last time you governed by crying? (campaign in hurricane and govern in eyes)

(you don't have to answer if you don't want to. But it might be a prose-poetry contest sponsored by "I heart the Huckabee for President" foundation. Prizes! Experience! Change! (can u keep....)

On Jan 10, 2008, at 12:09 PM, steve russell wrote:

E.J. Dionne Jr. takes credit for the quote. After the New Hampshire vote, he adds, "To eat some of my own words, maybe prose wins elections after all." Washington Post, 1/10/08

Mark Weiss <junction@EARTHLINK.NET> wrote: It's gonna cost her a lot of poet votes.

At 03:51 PM 1/7/2008, you wrote: She must have meant it as a negative.

And Mario Cuomo said it years ago. (Did she attribute the quote to him?)

And it displays a slapdash ignorance of the possibilities of poetry. (I hear Shelley turning over in his grave.)

Mark

Thanks for passing this on Barry. I may have to write about it more. Did Hilary mean the "you" as a negative thing, something she disagrees with (that the 'inexperienced' Obama does, for instance), or did she mean it as a self-characterization? As something "one" does?

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Barry Alpert

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"Letters cast".. Cabri-Chirot

17 February 2008

David has circulated an odd piece yoking Saddam Hussein's hanging to an MLA off-site party for Marjorie Perloff's presidency; Louis Cabri had just offered the definition of fascism Chris here picks up. Two men answered in one breath.

Dear Louis---

Thanks for that journalistic clarification, If Fascism's primary definition is the merger of state and corporate power (or even the subordination of the former to the latter), then "anti-democratic capitalism" (or corporatism) seems a very fitting characterization of fascism (to say nothing of the contemporary American cultural/ economic situation). Whether or not this has anything to do with Pound I'll leave to the self-proclaimed Poundians and Pound apologists....

Dear David--

Who wrote this article? The idea that 60 American poets celebrated Dr. Perloff becoming the new MLA President (with CB as their spokesperson) in the wake of Hussein's murder is.....interesting. A better word than interesting? Hilarious? Scary? Absurd? Sneaping? Is the analogy accurate? In a way no, but in a way yes---

Against the backdrop of the severed Hussein head, there's Haliburton/ blackwater regime and Marjorie Perloff. (as if the old MLA "cultural studies" regimes were like Hussein)...

Of course, if CB is to be believed, I'm just writing about 29 December 2006 as a "Work of Art," here, and not trying to "extract sociological or historical information from" it--

Yet, even though the Dead Saddam image's cultural relevance may be tangential to the main point of this article, and to the politics of the MLA (and was used by Bush et al to 'wag the dog' for Iraqis and Americans), if we consider this article a 'work of art,' it becomes an effective journalistic device....

I don't really agree with the academic either/or binary between "Cultural Studies" and "Poetics,"-- If that is, indeed, the "two party system" that dominates the academic/literary landscape today (and I bet that Bernstein would still claim room for 'cultural studies' in his idea of poetics, though Perloff, like Vendler, is a

formalist---and both are Pound apologists (though different forms of Pound...and much intraparty wrangling has been known to occur over this)

I'm glad you bring up Baraka as an alternative; another "third party candidate" who goes beyond the "Cultural Studies" (Saddam Hussein supported by the U.S. Gov't in the 1980s?) and "Poetics" (the Haliburton/Blackwater regime....)... and I'm glad it wasn't he who was hanged on that cold December 29th of 2006...

"be a spirit, not a ghost"

Chris

On 29 December 2006, Saddam Hussein was hung in Baghdad , and, outside Philadelphia, at an MLA "off site" reading, roughly 60 American poets celebrated each other's works, and Dr Marjorie Perloff's becoming the new President of the MLA. With Dr Perloff's Presidency, the general consensus was that the long dark ages of cultural studies were over with, and a new era of focus on poetics would begin.

"What we're interested in is talking about these works as works of art, rather than extracting the sociological or historical information from them", On Feb 17, 2008, at 12:20 AM, Louis Cabri wrote:

Maria and Nick raise important points. Perhaps the phrase "misunderstood poet Ezra Pound" that appears in the title of The Independent's review refers to Pound's criticisms, in The Cantos, of what the reviewer calls "anti-democratic capitalism": i.e. Pound's criticisms of "anti- democratic capitalism" have been "misunderstood." But this also needs to be questioned. What the review's elliptical language irresponsibly enables a reader to presuppose is that, were Pound's criticisms properly "understood," The Cantos or Pound would come off as being "for" something either like "democratic capitalism" or "democratic anti- capitalism." The latter two options form one of the binaries of journalese today (hence Pound is "really like us liberals," if only we "understood" him, and fascism, then and now, need never be addressed, let alone "understood").

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assuming the defense position?

17 February 2008

Amy King has taken the previous post for opportunism and read it as an assumed attack; hence the raised hands of the title.

Dear Amy---

I'll respond to the "opportunistic and pointless" charge... In my response to David, I was primarily curious in the language of that piece of journalism he was quoting. I hadn't really been following this thread that deeply, so forgive me if I missed some history, but I was mildly (but genuinely) curious (still am) who wrote the

piece, as I couldn't tell in David's post when the MLA journalist's writing stopped and David's own commentary started. I thought asking David to talk more about it would be an interesting entry into the conversation about Pound and such (since I'm less interested in Pound than in the issues that often come up when his name is evoked).

Regardless of who wrote that piece (the one that begins with the Hussein reference), I was curious about what the writers' attitude/ stance/agenda, what-have-you- might be, because it's interesting for me to hear what others (alive) think, and put-forth, when they use words like 'cultural studies' and 'poetics'--hotly contested words and phrases in certain circles that I sometimes have to put an appearance in...

Anyway, even if I may end up largely disagreeing with the author of that piece, I also have to admire the intelligence that made the 'inappropriate' leap from Hussein to whomever was head of the MLA before Perloff- So I tried in that post to parse out what he was saying. I guess I don't see what is 'opportunistic' or 'pointless' about that.... Yeah, maybe because my piece tried to be somewhat playful (as I was thinking about the two allegedly opposing views---"cultural studies" and "poetics"--I felt I had to try to balance the "deadly serious" tone with a playful one to find that balance), my tone could be read as flippant.

But I'm curious about how (or why) what I wrote can be taken as "assuming an attack position".... I distrust the naturalization of many aspects Pound's poetics (I'm not even talking about the fascism issue here, though that may play a part) in contemporary American poetry, and I find myself confronting it, almost daily, in my work as a teacher, poet, and other writing (not so much in my music, coz the Pound-assumptions aren't so much an issue there). Sure, there will be times I catch my self spouting a Poundian-ism here and there, or find points of agreement with Vendler, Perloff, Bernstein, and others,

but I do agree with those who argue that contemporary poetry is still understood too narrowly (I'm trying to avoid the word 'boring') and want to encourage students (and others who may be skeptical toward "poetry") to realize that "poetry" can have a wider range than many spokespeople for it acknowledge or admit (whether 'mainstream' or whatever...), to say nothing of what others who never really read much poetry (besides say "My Papa's Waltz" and "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers") often reduce it to... In short, that poetry can accomodate their most profound needs if they need those needs accomodated.

But, oh no, now I might be doing nothing more than "Assuming a Defense Position." Well, so be it. The long and short of it is, re: your point (stutter, stutter)-- Some of my disagreements with Bernstein for instance are probably well-

documented somewhere, but we do agree on some things (like, for instance, the need to argue about poetics and/or culture in a public context, and try to be entertaining about it in one way or another), and that argument sometimes becomes an "argument against argument" (or we'd probably all be dead by now)... and we may disagree over MUSIC, the meaning of music, the kind of music we like, or even play, but such disagreements, if respectful and playful, do not mean we couldn't sit on a panel together...

Maybe Amy, we then disagree on the meaning (or feeling) of play and respect (now those two 1967 "Queen of Soul" hits a re going through my so-called head) and that's why I'm asking you now

On Feb 17, 2008, at 12:55 PM, amy king wrote:

David and Chris,

This kind of 'criticism' feels a bit opportunistic and pointless ... first, who stopped their day short when Saddam Hussein was, unbeknownst to the American public, hanged? I didn't even hear about it until the nightly news. Should I have foreseen the event and stopped teaching my Writing Poetry class earlier that evening?

Second, the quote from the MLA event does not exclude the kind of inquiry Bernstein outlines in "Pounding Fascism" -- he did not say, "We will not teach students to consider the sociological and historical effects on poetry or vice versa." What he did say is something that is taught in most basic poetry courses, which is that we will study poems as works of art ("art" certainly does not exclude considerations of the influence of history and sociology), and we will not teach students to 'extract sociological information,' as in, we're not mining poems for facts ("information") and throwing the stylized husks away, but rather something more complex: we'll study how poems function, create and sell what they seem to sell, how artifice illicit/solicits emotional and intellectual response, etc. Nice mining for that quote though ...

What I find more compelling about this kind of reaching 'argument' is its frequency and that it seems to appear whenever Bernstein is mentioned as though he is some kind of pariah to be dealt blows on appearance alone ... I'd really like to know what it is about Language Poetry (I'm assuming this is an associative response) that is so threatening that a) everything he has written is blanketly stamped with disapproval and b) the mere mention of the man conjures an aggressive affront worthy of a murderer. I should note that those who react to the mere mention of his name usually tend to be a rotating few. But the vehemence ... it astounds me. Usually when I don't agree with someone's politics and/or poetry, I say I don't like it, I might even go so far as to not like them and dismiss the entire package -- but I don't assume the attack position if they walk into the room, reach for the fact that he sneezed and then read it as an insult to validate my punch. My experiences with Bernstein (studied with him, but moreover, read his books) have revealed a generous spirit -- he has promoted poets of all kinds of flavors and styles, he allows for a wide range of ideas and discourse in his classroom as an educator, he has given poets this platform to voice their opinions, disagree, including criticism of his own work -- but some of that criticism has extended to him as a person, and that's the part I don't get. He has

maintained this forum for many years now where I likely would have buckled. So really, I guess I'm just wondering about the handful of poets here who go beyond criticizing his work to transparently misconstrue and attack him in a way that really speaks to the attackers' desires ...

Amy

Blog

<http://www.amyking.org/blog>

Faculty Page

<http://faculty.ncc.edu/kinga>

----- Original Message ----- Dear David--

Who wrote this article? The idea that 60 American poets celebrated Dr. Perloff becoming the new MLA President (with CB as their spokesperson) in the wake of Hussein's murder is.....interesting. A better word than interesting? Hilarious? Scary? Absurd? Sneaping? Is the analogy accurate? In a way no, but in a way yes---

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"Letters cast".. Cabri-

18 February 2008

Cabri had closed by wondering whether anyone reads the Cantos for their economics; the two are sparring as friends here, not foes.

Who reads the Cantos, symptomatically even, for their criticisms of "finance capital"? Tellingly, not even Fredric Jameson, it would seem. Maybe it's time, as it would let the history into a form that does its utmost to include it, a form that has barely begun to be closely read.

Go for it Louis! (though I'd rather hear a Cabrian critique of finance capital than a critique of finance capital mediated by the terms of a long poem written before Reaganomics for instance... (even if losing one's center (fighting the world) is truly 'news that stays news', etc....)

C On Feb 17, 2008, at 7:28 PM, Louis Cabri wrote:

Like Chris suggests, "anti-democratic capitalism" can be taken in many directions. I resort to a Marxian view that criticizing finance capitalism is what the reviewer means, when he suggests Pound's Cantos criticize "anti-democratic capitalism." That's to read the Cantos only for their detective plot ("fifteen years on the case!" etc). And "finance capital" isn't Pound's theoretical generality (no more than is "modernism"). Anyway, so this reviewer, I'm suggesting, says that what is "misunderstood" is that that is Pound's real subject, namely finance capitalism.

The problem with such a generous New Leftish reading is that the Cantos don't merely point to the material effects of finance capital like some Agassiz towering over a fish. The text also and very amply offers, in almost all its nooks and crannies, theories about systemic "root" causes of, and solutions to, what a Marxist would call finance capitalism. These purported causes and solutions are offensive, stupid, terrifying, fascistic.

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Best, Louis

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Roland Barthes

29 February 2008

Amanda Earl had asked the list where a newcomer should begin with Barthes; Barry Schwabsky pointed her to the late work, and Chris to a single remembered sentence.

In the ipod of memory, there's a phrase like "rereading is an activity that works against the commercial and ideological habits of our culture" (a loose paraphrase, which is probably missing something, but it's the basic gist) in, I think, the introduction to S/Z (Zed). That phrase, whether rightly or wrongly, gets at the heart of Barthes for me, is my personal 'greatest hit' when his name comes up (and even sometimes when it doesn't)--. Is the phrase true? Maybe not in any absolute sense, but it's got a ring....

C

On Feb 28, 2008, at 10:36 AM, Barry Schwabsky wrote:

There are different periods of his work and Barthes' readers have different preferences accordingly. I would call your attention above all to his later work, that is, from the '70s, esp. A Lover's Discourse, Camera Lucida, and The Pleasure of the Text. In the French editions of his Oeuvres completes, these are in the 4th and 5th of the five volumes.

Amanda Earl <amanda_earl@STORM.CA> wrote: i often see references to / excerpts from the work of Roland Barthes, particularly in discussions on language poetry. i was wondering if anyone had any recommendations as to what would be a good overview of his writing or where to start.

| Amanda

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After February the seminar voice recedes, and the rest of 2008 reaches the list mostly as flyers — a summer workshop, a 24-hour lyric contest, the monthly "Nicely Out Of Tune" nights at Oakland's China House, even an MLA off-site to rival the one he had mocked in the spring. All are gathered below under announcements. Only a lone December query, hunting English translations of Cambodian survival poetry, still sounds like the reader he had been; the showman had moved to the stage.

2009

By 2009 Stroffolino has all but left the list; the year holds two brief surfacings only — a call for help with a Notley project, and a dispatch from his long effort to marry poetry to music.

Alice Notley poem questionnaire

16 February 2009

One of the rare times the list's habitual responder opens a thread himself; the aside that he no longer reads the list daily measures how far he has drifted from its old centre.

Hello! I think some people on this list may be fans, or at least enjoy reading the work, of Alice Notley. So, I need a little help for a project I'm working on.

Could you send me a list of, say, your Top 5 favorite Alice Notley short (meaning no more than 2 pages, preferably closer to 1) poems---

If it's less than 5, that's fine too.... (if not in any definitive sense, at least as a guide...)

You will remain anonymous if you prefer....

You may CC your reply to the list, but please backchannel me as well, as I don't read this list every day.

Thanks again--

Chris

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2010

The fullest of the final years, and the one where the endings gather: an eviction filed almost as ad copy, an elegy for a dead friend, and a last scrap of verse before the quiet closes in.

45 RPM Books...*17 April 2010*

The 2004 car accident had already put him in a van in Los Angeles years earlier; the address here grows more provisional still.

Excerpt from book "in progress"---Still Life With Silver Jew up at www.chris-stroffolino.com

Also, some new POP SNOB singles---including one featuring a spoken word piece by poet Delia Tramontina-- at www.chrisstroffolino.com

There's also "calls for proposals" etc...

join the POP SNOB group on Facebook if you wish, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pop-Snob/106602229379153?ref=ts>

I'm being evicted, but WE take requests! I may be a little slow getting back to you--- but I haven't lost a home, just gained a web-site!

cheers! C

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Michael*29 September 2010*

Michael Gizzi (1950-2010), poet and old east-coast running-mate from Stroffolino's younger days, had just died; a decade gone from the east, he eulogises a friend he had latterly known mostly at a distance.

There's too much to say about Michael Gizzi He was fun. He did so much for me. The first poem of his that struck me was called "Possum's Creed" (one day he called to tell me he was singing "The Farmer In The Deli") He wore the badge of high art lighter than most (does that sound pretentious---ugh). At times wickedly cynical. Glint eyes (try to hide your deep suffering by whatever means necessary). Often in a tandom. John Yau and he were running buddies, verbal sparring partners when I first met him (circa 90?). Also, he and Clark Coolidge (when CC and I both lived near Michael).

Even when he was bed-ridden in the mid-90s, he was one of those guys who could really HOLD COURT as it were from his bed; Barbeio (sp?) and her amazing art was around a lot then--he'd play Basement Tapes & a lot of James Brown (he was into James Booker too). Going to see Dylan at Tanglewood with him and Clark Coolidge was a trip (Clark kept on saying, "he better not play that religious stuff." Michael laughed at me mischevously; he not-so-secretly was hoping Dylan would (more so to piss CC off probably---the lord works in mysterious way; just like a real Italian kid). & Shakespeare plays. Michael & Ashbery

There's too much to say about Michael; and I know I've only scratched the surface. I haven't made it back east for almost a decade; but we became facebook friends in the last year. We wrote a few comments on each other's walls....

On Sep 27, 2010, at 9:03 PM, POETICS automatic digest system wrote:

There are 21 messages totalling 1474 lines in this issue.

Topics of the day:

1. Olson query (2) 2. language and poetry after godel and turing (5) 3. [New-Poetry] From Their Ringtones You Shall Know Them 4. The Swan's Rag: Issue Two 5. this week on the 30 word review 6. Hank Lazer interviewed by Chris Mansel --- The Argotist Online 7. Fwd: Poetry Chapbook Reading Wednesday, September 29 8. Marsh Hawk Press Fall Book Launch (Readings by Finkelstein, Morris et al.) 9. Sweetness, the riff 10. New Writing Series @ UCSD next Wednesday, October 6 11. IMPROVISATIONS by Vernon Frazer now on Scribd 12. habenicht press announces: CRASS SONGS OF SAND & BRINE by Micah Robbins 13. RECONFIGURATIONS: Call for Submissions (Special Feature / Graphic Non-Fiction) 14. »SOUS LES PAVÉS« vol.1 no.1 15. Chris Funkhouser and Alan Sondheim event, Fri. Oct 1, Unnameable Books, Brooklyn! (please announce/forward) 16. Ken Edwards & Ken Edwards & Myung Mi Kim in San Francisco

=

Hey Ric,

I believe Ralph Maude is working on a collection of Olson's unpublished late works.

Cheers, Margaret

On Thu, Sep 23, 2010 at 9:57 AM, Carfagna, Richard <rcarfagna@simplexgrinnell.com> wrote:

Hi, I was wondering if anyone knows who took over the official scholarship of Charles Olson after the death of George Butterick?

Also, what with the release in the past couple of year of the Daybooks of Oppen and the collected Notebooks of Frost, does anyone know of plans to mine the Olson collection at Storrs to produce a similar type of tome?

Thanks, Ric

= guidelines

=

interesting. but i'm wary of the word forefront. does poetry necessarily need to be ... there.

not everyone has to be there, of course. poetry 'covers' many mentalities. many 'mansions'.

the lights are pretty much off, though, in the poetry mansion and it's black as night, concerning knowledge about things like the theory of computation, Godel, and so forth. and folks are frightened: computer art is fascistic, don't you know, and computers are to blame for the economic collapse, etc etc. we can't be machines

because that would mean it's all an empty mechanical random concourse of atoms. and so on. people are frightened by computers and computing in many ways, from the challenge they pose just in how to use them in day to day life, to the 'threats' they pose to our identity, to the role they sometimes play in art and poetry.

yet here we are using computers to talk about poetry. and using them to do so many other things in our pursuit of poetry.

knowledge of things like the theory of computation not only can help dispel fear--because the fear is mostly of the sort where we fear what we do not understand--but, in matters of poetry, also provides us with, say, approaches to language that can be useful in poetry and poetics.

also, the theory of computation and godel's work are fundamental to the poetics of computation.

i'm happy to see it in the bleachers, or with the cheerleaders.

ha. yes i think it would be very pleasant to be with the cheerleaders in the bleachers.

really, i may have to re/read the esher/bach/GOD-el thing.

if yer after a hofstadter book, try 'i am a strange loop'. i'm finding that one more readable. rebecca goldstein's book called 'incompleteness' is good on godel, his proof and biography (and friendship with einstein)-- and also concerning godel/wittgenstein. martin davis's book 'engines of logic' is an instant classic in the 'history of ideas'. it looks at the life and work of leibniz, boole, frege, cantor, hilbert, godel, and turing concerning the development of the computer. it was leibniz's dream to create an 'aide to human reason', which, he felt, required a language of symbolic logic. martin davis is, himself, a renowned usamerican logician. his book is excellent on the math and logic, on the history of ideas, in its biographical sketches, and in its historical perspective. great book. another relevant book is the oulipo compendium edited by harry matthews. oulipo started in 1960 and is/was the first erm poetry movement or group or whatever to seriously cross the borders of math and poetry. also, theirs is/was a kind of 'axiomatic' approach that relates closely to mathematical logic. another inerestin book is prehistoric digital poetry by chris funkhouser. this looks at digital poetry from 1959 to 1995. basically pre-web. this mainly looks at the work of the earlier poet-programmers.

occassionally, it's fun to actually have something of a clue, or sort of know what i'm talking about. which, in my book, means ... Witt vs. Godel: it's a tie.

ha. well, wittgenstein is still, of course, very influential in matters of philosophy and even, somewhat, in literary matters. whereas godel's work never really was, except in mathematical logic.

ja <http://vispo.com>

--- On Thu, 9/23/10, Jim Andrews <jim@VISPO.COM> wrote:

language and poetry after godel and turing.

but, in poetry circles, godel and turing just do not compute, as you see in the responses to this thread, which dealt with derrida, not godel and turing.

and this is one of the reasons why poetry itself is isolated.

poetry, these days, needs to be an umbrella term for deep concerns of language and art cross-stitched amongs many fields and modes of perception/reception. for instance, the role of language in contemporary mathematical logic is of philosophical significance and also has turned out to be of very practical significance in that the work of godel and turing led to the creation of the computer, that universal number +language machine.

the philosophical underpinnings of the poetics of computation, of computer art, can be strongly linked with the work of godel and turing and its consequences concerning language, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and the multimedial/intermedial.

poetry needs to be able to travel at the forefront of any field.

ja <http://vispo.com> =

=

=

Hi Tijani! Thanks for reading the article & responding. Regards. Obododimma.

On Sat, Sep 25, 2010 at 12:38 PM, BY TJMST <by.tjmst@gmail.com> wrote:

hi Obodo et al thanks for psychologically sharing the repugnant but atimes soothing palaver of ringtones. I must say i will reminisce in delightfully, distatefully later on this web. Frankly i dont think i like them - almost a loathing experience personally. The bad aspect of it is tat a customised ringtone might even turn off someone else that's a turn-on. The CELL PHONE is an interesting tool for a wide variety of gaiety yet there's a challenge to users conscience...whom to blame? The softwar e pedlers or the buyer or the licenceeor communication commission? Amen for answered prayers or poetry. Gbemi TIJANI MST

On 9/14/10, Obododimma Oha <obodooha@gmail.com> wrote:

"A ringtone advertises the owner of the mobile phone. It says: listen to me as I tell a bit about this fellow's difference. By extension, the medium has become the addressee and could even be a signifier of the addresser. These days when mobile telephony has brought further stress upon marriages and other relationships, is it not ingenious to configure the rings in such a way that the clever addressee can tell who is calling, at least to be able to know whether to answer, where to answer, what to answer; or to know which story to tell later to the person eavesdropping by the side? The medium will eventually be the accomplice as well as the evidence."

To read the full text of "From Their Ringtones You Shall Know Them" <<http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Opinion/Columns/5618388-182/story.csp>>," visit:

<http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Opinion/Columns/5618388-182/story.csp>

-- Obododimma Oha <http://udude.wordpress.com/>

Dept. of English University of Ibadan Nigeria

&

Fellow, Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies University of Ibadan

Phone: +234 [REDACTED]; +234 [REDACTED]; +234 [REDACTED].

New-Poetry mailing list New-Poetry@wiz.cath.vt.edu
<http://wiz.cath.vt.edu/mailman/listinfo/new-poetry>

-- Obododimma Oha <http://udude.wordpress.com/>

Dept. of English University of Ibadan Nigeria

&

Fellow, Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies University of Ibadan

Phone: +234 [REDACTED]; +234 [REDACTED]; +234 [REDACTED].

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"the philosophical underpinnings of the poetics of computation, of computer art, can be strongly linked with the work of godel and turing and its consequences concerning language, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and the multimedial/intermedial."

As far as I can see, all you are saying here is that poetry is not poetry unless related to Godel and Turing's work.

I would hope you're the only one who reads it that way, Murat. Cuz that's not what I said. But, by now, how could I be surprised by your reading it that way, considering that you've also said that computer art is fascistic and that computers are to blame for the economic collapse. Computers, computer art, and, possibly, computer artists seem to freak you out. I find it hard to talk with you about these things cuz yer always jumping to this sort of conclusion.

What I was saying is this. The work of Godel and Turing is fundamental to the poetics of computation and computer art and the multimedial/ intermedial because it is fundamental to the theory of computation; and the theory of computation is concerned with exploring the theoretical capabilities and limitations of computing machines.

*Turing invented the 'Turing machine', the 'abstract machine', the mathematical model of a computing machine, to show that there are some tasks that no computing machine can *ever* carry out. In other words, he invented the modern computer to show that it has certain limitations. As opposed to inventing it to get it to do stuff that couldn't be done otherwise. Which, to me, is the sort of poetical thing that we see time and again in Godel's and Turing's work.*

That's quite a bit of a tall order, don't you think, though I can understand their potential or realized importance in some kind of poetry.

"poetry needs to be able to travel at the forefront of any field."

What does also this sentence mean, that poetry should become a kind of supermench, the way opera was for Wagner?

Supermench? No. When we look at the impact of computing on language, we can talk about it in many ways, can concentrate on different things. The way, for instance, that the net crosses X with Y, brings ideas into contact with one another, and, consequently, the languages associated with those ideas. Or the way it brings media into contact with one another, by being capable of representing all sorts of different media all on the same screen or in the same machine; and, consequently, brings the

languages both of and about those media into contact with one another. Or the way it brings people into contact with one another, being capable of representing communication channels (such as telephone) as well as traditional media like print, recorded sound, and video/TV, etc.

The impact of computing on language is in all sorts of cross- fertilization of language X with language Y, whether the languages are natural or other types of languages.

Poetry is one of the fields that can use those energies expressively, innovatively, in a way that captures the contemporary, and furthers our understanding of what is happening to language(s) and us via computing.

ja <http://vispo.com>

=

thanks for making me realise rimbaud looks like ben affleck

Hello Swans,

We at Dirty Swan Projects are happy to announce THE SWAN'S RAG ISSUE TWO! The line up speaks for itself.

ROB HALPERN: L O V E S O N G (T O M Y F A L L E N S O L D I E R) BOB GLÜCK: Ed's First Sexual Experience CEDAR SIGO: 7/23/10 ROB HALPERN: from Trolley's Kind An Interview with WILDE BOY ALEX DIMITROV BRUCE BOONE: My Walk with Evan JACK FROST: Ex/Sex is a High School History Class You Remember TED REES: Bahd Nay Foo Yah TOM MEYER on Jonathan Williams Threesome Polaroids from JONATHAN WILLIAMS A Poem from SARA LARSEN

Images of Rimbaud in West Oakland from JOHNNY TOWNMOUSE, additional images from ŁUKASZ SEAWINSKI.

Images and purchasing instructions here: <http://theswansrag.blogspot.com> (NSFW?).

Kisses and misses,

Dirty Swan Projects

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=

does poetry need anything?

i could say poetry needs to be more like blondie - but thats really my need= -

interesting. but i'm wary of the word forefront. does poetry necessarily need to be ... there.

i'm happy to see it in the bleachers=2C or with the cheerleaders.

really=2C i may have to re/read the esher/bach/GOD-el thing. occassionally=2C it's fun to actually have something of a clue=2C or sort = of know what i'm talking about. which=2C in my book=2C means ... Witt vs. G= odel: it's a tie.

--- On Thu=2C 9/23/10=2C Jim Andrews <jim@VISPO.COM> wrote:

language and poetry after godel and turing.

but=2C in poetry circles=2C godel and turing just do not compute=2C as yo= u see in the responses to this thread=2C which dealt with derrida=2C not go= del and turing.

and this is one of the reasons why poetry itself is isolated.

poetry=2C these days=2C needs to be an umbrella term for deep concerns of= language and art cross-stitched amongs many fields and modes of perception= /reception. for instance=2C the role of language in contemporary mathematic= al logic is of philosophical significance and also has turned out to be of = very practical significance in that the work of godel and turing led to the= creation of the computer=2C that universal number+language machine.

the philosophical underpinnings of the poetics of computation=2C of comp= ter art=2C can be strongly linked with the work of godel and turing and its= consequences concerning language=2C epistemology=2C philosophy of mind=2C = and the multimedial/intermedial.

poetry needs to be able to travel at the forefront of any field.

ja <http://vispo.com> = 3D = 3D = guidelin=

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Two theories of the present=97preservation & sincerity.

Lovejoy by Phoebe Wayne Tout Va Bien by Suzanne Stein

<http://the30wordreview.blogspot.com/>

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Online

Hank Lazer interviewed by Chris Mansel --- The Argotist Online

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Lazer%20interview%202.htm>

Excerpt:

CM: Where do you suppose the self-destructiveness trait comes from that occ= urs in so many writers?

HL: From frustration, as a consequence of marginalization, and from succumb= ing to a dangerous set of culturally romanticized stereotypes. First, the f= rustration and maginalization routes. A writer, particularly a poet, places= himself in an odd position in relation to dominant cultural value. A poet = decides to value certain kinds of somewhat aimless, impractical, non- money-= making activities, and he decides to make room and time in his life for the= se activities. Furthermore, he=E2=80=99s apt to be pursuing a rather elusiv= e mode of language =E2=80=93 not necessarily the direct, communicative, =E2= =80=9Cuseful,=E2=80=9D commercially manipulative kind of language skill tha= t society readily appreciates and rewards (in advertising, in journalism, a= nd in other modes of persuasive and/or manipulative writing). So, what he= =E2=80=99s doing with his time is aberrant =E2=80=93 hard to explain. And y= et, if he is really engaged in a serious and profound relationship to poetr= y, he does have certain sporadic validating experiences =E2=80=93 a sense o= f connection to a longstanding human enterprise of

considerable wisdom, joy, and pleasure. The self-destructiveness may arise as a gesture of anger and frustration, arising from a sense that one's primary life activity is not appreciated or understood or respected. The self-destructiveness becomes an act oddly complicit with that ignoring and marginalizing by the society at large, while it is also a somewhat desperate call for attention and significance.

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Lazer%20interview%202.htm>

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Ric, Please read my review of Ralph Maud's Charles Olson at the Harbor (talonbooks 2008) in Pacific Rim Review of Books #10 for a possible answer to your first question...

<http://www.prrb.ca/articles/issue10-olson.html>

Peter

Hi, I was wondering if anyone knows who took over the official scholarship of Charles Olson after the death of George Butterick?

Also, what with the release in the past couple of year of the Daybooks of Oppen and the collected Notebooks of Frost, does anyone know of plans to mine the Olson collection at Storrs to produce a similar type of tome?

Thanks, Ric

=

Dear Friends, Writers, Teachers,

Please see the announcement below. It should be a terrific evening!

Sharon

Sharon Dolin sdolin@earthlink.net www.sharondolin.com

Having difficulty viewing this email? [Click here](#).

Don't miss out on autumn courses! [Click here](#) for course descriptions and to register!

Alternatives to Type Learn how to fashion, handle, and print from movable type-high elements on the letterpress. With Bryan Baker October 2-3

Crossed Structure & Secret Belgian Binding A two-day workshop in contemporary book structures based on pre-16th century bindings. With Emily Martin October 9-10

Bookbinding I This core class will introduce students to the basic materials, techniques and history of bookbinding. With Shanna Yarbrough October 7-December 13

Japanese Water-Based Woodblock Printing Create images using the ancient traditional Japanese Ukiyo-e style of printing by hand, still widely used in Japan today. With Takuji Hamanaka October 11-December 13

Save The Date!

Artist Talk: Catya Plate

Wednesday, October 13, 6:30 p.m. Featured Artist Catya Plate discusses her newest work, *Clothespin = Tarot*, a series of 78 watercolor and pencil drawings inspired by the = traditional Tarot. \$10/\$5 CBA Members Suggested Donation

~

Center BroadSides Reading Series

Wednesday, October 20, 6:30 p.m. Poets Alex Cuff and David Henderson will read their work. Organized = by Lisa Jarrot. \$10/\$5 CBA Members Suggested Donation

Quick Links:

Browse our Upcoming Classes

Current Exhibitions Opportunities Online Calendar Flickr Facebook Twitter Blog

This Week:

Poetry Chapbook Reading

Wednesday, September 29, 6:30 p.m.

Join us for a reading celebrating the release of Alexander Long's = limited-edition, artist-made chapbook *Still Life*, published as part of = the Center for Book Arts' annual Poetry Chapbook program. This year's = chapbook was letterpress printed and hand bound by Barbara Henry in an = edition of 100. Also available will be a letterpress chapbook by = Terrance Hayes, *Between Ghosts*, designed and produced by Amber McMillan = in an edition of 100. In addition, the Center is producing three = limited-edition broadsides of poems by Jennifer Perrine, Deborah = Flanagan, and Hadara Bar-Nadav. The four poets will read their work, = joined by series organizers Terrence Hayes and Sharon Dolin.

Alexander Long's manuscript was selected from a pool of 400 entries. = Terrance Hayes commented, "This imaginative collection had the wildly = associative qualities of a poet bound to the past and present. His = meditations on the likes of Malcolm X, Kafka and Lincoln combined the = personal to the historical, the lyrical to the narrative. These poems = made an immediate and enduring impression on me."

Where: Center for Book Arts 28 West 27th Street, Third Floor New York, New York 10001

Gallery Hours: M-F 10am-6pm Sat 10am-4pm

Suggested Admission: \$5 members/\$10 non-members Next Week:

Professional Development Workshop: Find a Collaborator! Artists and Writers Mixer With Wennie Huang and Ed Go

Wednesday, October 6, 6:30pm

Have you ever wanted to work collaboratively? Are you looking for a = new collaborator? Bring a piece of your visual or written work to this = Professional Development Workshop to learn more about the collaborative = process and meet other emerging artists and writers. Wennie Huang and = Ed Go will discuss their collaboration, and we will experiment with = short hands-on exercises.

Where: Center for Book Arts 28 West 27th Street, Third Floor New York, New York 10001

Suggested Admission: \$5 members/\$10 non-members Currently on View in our Galleries:

Ear to the Page

Ear to the Page explores the interaction between recordings and books, = using three categories: sound works that reflect the structure and = aesthetic of books; packages that thematically entail a book as well as = a CD or vinyl record; and books that have a sound component or somehow = serve to transcribe or document ideas that previously existed, or = potentially can exist, as sound.

Artists/Musicians included in the exhibition are: Vito Acconci, Juan = Arkotxa & Leslie Mackenzie, Bernard Baschet & Francois Baschet, Cathy = Berberian & Eugenio Carmi, George Brecht, Inge Bruggeman & Hank Lazer, = Jose Luis Castillejo, Jon Gibson, Kenneth Goldsmith, Grace Jones, Jennie = C. Jones, Allan Kaprow, Dan Lander & Micah Lexier, Christian Marclay, = Marshall McLuhan with Jerome Agel, Quentin Fiore, & John Simon, Michalis = Pichler, Steve Roden, Allen Ruppersberg, Tate Shaw & Andrew Sallee, = Masumi Shibata, Michael Snow, Jan van der Marck/Art by Telephone, and = Dennis Yuen & Morry Galonoy. Organized by James Hoff and Alan Licht, = Independent Curators.

Artist Talk: Wednesday, November 3, 6:30 pm

Featured Artist Project: Catya Plate: Clothespin Tarot

This project comprises a series of original drawings and an artist = book as well as an animated film. Since 2003 Plate has been working on = a series of 78 watercolor and pencil drawings inspired by the 78 cards = of the traditional tarot. Clothespins have always played a key role in = Plate's work and in this exhibition they become Clothespin Freaks; = figures who, made of clear plastic clothespins, doll's body parts and = sewn pieces, are the real heroes in this subversive Tarot adventure. = The installation features a new animated film, The Reading, which is a = culminating artist project to this body of work.

Artist Talk: Wednesday, October 13, 6:30 pm

Featured Artist Project: Barbara Tetenbaum and the Triangular Press: Recent Works 2010 Bishop Faculty Fellow

Every year the Center for Book Arts invites an artist/ instructor from = outside of New York to teach a master class and to give a formal lecture = in New York City. Barbara Tetenbaum, The Sally R. Bishop Master Faculty = Fellow for 2010, has been printing artist books under the imprint, = Triangular Press, since 1979. She is currently Professor and Department = Head of Book Arts at Oregon College of Art & Craft in Portland, OR. She = is the recipient of two Fulbright awards to teach in Leipzig, Germany = and in Usti nad Labem in the Czech Republic, and has received other = awards of support for her artwork and research. Her books are held in = public collections in the U.S., Canada, England, France, Germany and the = Netherlands. Her master class, Artist Book Strategies: Exploring Music = and Musical Scores, will be held at the Center on November 19-21.

Artist Talk: Friday, November 19th , 6:30 pm

Where: Center for Book Arts 28 West 27th Street, Third Floor New York, New York 10001

Gallery Hours: M-F 10am-6pm Sat 10am-4pm

Admission: Free Support the Center and receive great benefits...

Discounts on all Center for Book Arts classes Reduced admission to the Center's public events, readings, and = workshops Discounts at select NYC art supply stores and the Center's bookstore Receive course catalogues and special invitations to exclusive events Membership starts at \$50 Click here for more information and join today!

28 West 27th Street, Third Floor New York, New York 10001

www.centerforbookarts.org

The Center's Visual Arts Program and related Public Programs are = supported in part by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, the Wolf Kahn & = Emily Mason Foundation, and the Dedalus Foundation. Additional support = for the Center's programs is provided in part by the Achelis Foundation, = the Carnegie Corporation, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Milton and Sally = Avery Arts Fund, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the = New York State Council on the Arts, and the Pine Tree Foundation of New = York. Programs are also supported, in part, by public funds from the = New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the = City Council. Support for the Center's Collections Initiative comes from = the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute of Museum and Library = Services, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, and the Gladys = Krieble Delmas Foundation. Major funding for the Center's Capacity = Building programs is provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the = Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, the Hyde & Watson Foundation, and the = New York Community Trust. Special support for the Center's = Artist-in-Residence program has been provided by the Foundation for = Contemporary Arts. The Center also acknowledges the generous support of = its patrons and members.

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Morris et al.)

Please join us for the Marsh Hawk Press Fall Book Launch featuring readings= by Norman Finkelstein and other Marsh Hawk Press authors.

Thursday, October 14, 2010 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Ceres Gallery 547 W 27th St # 201, New York, NY

Refreshments in our usual abundant over-the-top style

Fall Books:

Inside the Ghost Factory <<http://www.marshhawkpress.org/Finkelstein2.htm>

Norman Finkelstein

Inside the Ghost Factory finds Norman Finkelstein returning to his pre-Trac= k fascination with the Coleridgean fancy, first delineated in *Restless Mess= engers*. Here, however, Samuel Coleridge meets William Gibson and the result= is a retro-Blakean myth for the age of Text and Tweet. These transmission= s from "elsewhere," manufactured on the assembly lines of "Ghosts, Incorpor= ated. Poetry, Incorporated" (Limited, I might add), are gleefully dissected= by Finkelstein as so much "clap-trap." Still, there's no correcting the bl= ur of occultation and occlusion for the poet who believes "Books were made = for secrets they cannot/keep: this is what it means to be/read."- Tyrone Wil= liams *If Not for the Courage* <<http://www.marshhawkpress.org/Morris2.htm>> Daniel Morris

Everyday life in the household and memory of Daniel Morris's suburban Jewis= h-professorpoet and father of toddlers has rarely been rendered with the en= ergy, good humor, and luminous detail we meet in Daniel Morris's *If Not for= the Courage*. These poems are at once hilarious and heart-breaking; they ta= ke us straight to the scene of the crime, allowing us to witness the most a= bsurd and agonizingly funny moments of daily routine against the backdrop o= f unrelieved media blitz. The courage of Morris's title is evident througho= ut. -Marjorie Perloff

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Sweetness

Chris Funkhouser and I were writing back and forth about riffs and I realize I rarely use them, at least not consciously, since they tend to repeat themselves uncomfortably; in any case, *sweetness1* uses a riff one way or another for a little song; in *sweetness2*, the riff's dissolved, deconstructed, transformed, to no end, or one and another; just a little guitar music dealing with a "theme" of sorts, maybe time for a hit tune maybe.

<http://espdisk.com/alansondheim/sweetness1.mp3>

<http://espdisk.com/alansondheim/sweetness2.mp3>

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New Writing Series presents:

A reading by Rachel Loden

Wednesday, October 6

4:30 pm

Visual Arts Performance Space

UC San Diego

Free

Sponsored by the Dean, Arts & Humanities Division and the Department of Literature

<http://literature.ucsd.edu/news/currentevents/writingseries.html>

*Rachel Loden is the author of *Dick of the Dead* (Ahsahta Press), a finalist for both the 2010 PEN USA Literary Award for Poetry and the California Book Award. It was also one of the three most-cited books in *Attention Span 2009* ("a collectively-drawn map of the field"), landing on lists by Rae Armantrout and others. The *Washington Post's* "Poet's Choice" column featured a poem from the book and it has been called "oddly sublime" and "intoxicating" by the Poetry Project Newsletter and "expansive and whimsical" by the Brooklyn Rail. Loden's first book, *Hotel Imperium* (Georgia), won the Contemporary Poetry Series competition and was selected as one of the ten best poetry books of the year by the San Francisco Chronicle, which called it "quirky and beguiling." It was also short-listed for the Northern California Book Award. Loden has published four chapbooks, including *The Last Campaign* (which won the Hudson Valley Writers' Center chapbook competition) and *The Richard Nixon Snow Globe* (Wild Honey Press). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *New American Writing*, *Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion*, two editions of the *Best American Poetry* series, *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*, and many other magazines and anthologies. Loden's microplay, "A Quaker Meeting in Yorba Linda," was performed in New York as part of *Plays on Words: A Poets Theater Festival* curated by Tony Torn, Lee Ann Brown and Corina Copp. She is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, a Fellowship in Poetry from the California Arts Council, an &NOW Award, and a grant from the Fund for Poetry.*

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Vernon,

A formatting achievement par excellence! What a wonderful opportunity for readers to access your spontaneous poetry, a nearly extinct form.

Mary Jo

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*<http://thisshiningwound.blogspot.com/>
<http://apophisdeconstructingabsurdity.blogspot.com/>*

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Micah Robbins

*I=92m pleased to announce this new chapbook <<http://habenichtpress.com/?p=523>>by *Micah Robbins*, publisher of Interbirth Books<<http://www.interbirthbooks.org/>>. Thanks to Micah, as well as to *Richard Owens* and *Clifford Riley* for helping design the cover.*

"We are the kids in black =97 night-worn hangers-on tired and out of smokes piss wasted =97 dead in the eye

watching shubie legs pump rusted pedals rattle hoary boards as they pass the pavilion =97 ours taken in the night"

12pp. Letter-press cover designed by Richard Owens and Clifton Riley. Hand-sewn. Habenicht Press, 2010. \$7 plus shipping.

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Graphic Non-Fiction)

RECONFIGURATIONS=3A A Journal for Poetics =26 Poetry / Literature =26 Cu=lture=2C =

ISSN=3A 1938-3592=2C =

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Volume 4=3A Special Feature / Graphic Non-Fiction =

Submissions=3A September thru October=2C 2010 =

Publication=3A November=2C 2010 =

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Guidelines=3A Volume four of Reconfigurations=2C http=3A// reconfiguratio=ns=2Eblogspot=2Ecom/=2C seeks a variety of works for a special feature c=oncerning graphic non-fiction=2E Marshall McLuhan=92s =93Understanding =Media=94 describes comics as a =93cool media=2C=94 where the tension bet=ween medium and message is key=2E That notion seems especially relevant= to graphic non-fiction=2C where the desire to =91report=92 often collid=es with visual expression=3A the result being a work that demands intens= e reader participation and interpretation=2C thus calling attention to t= he author=92s choice to work within the comics form=2E =

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Reconfigurations seeks essays that explore this tension within the mediu= m=2C art=2C and/or texts of graphic nonfiction (such as memoir=2C histor= y=2C reports=2C journalism=2C travel writing)=2E =

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Reconfigurations=2C ISSN=3A 1938-3592=2C http=3A// reconfigurations=2Eblo=gsport=2Ecom/=2C is an electronic=2C peer-reviewed=2C international=2C an= nual journal for poetics and poetry=2C creative and scholarly writing=2C= in= novative and traditional concerns with literary arts and cultural stu= dies=2E Reconfigurations publishes under a Creative Commons 3=2E0 open= access license=2C is MLA indexed=2C EBSCO distributed and independently = managed=2E =

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Electronic Submissions=3A crowe=40du=2Eedu=2E Submissions should be att=ached as a single =2Edoc=2C =2Ertf=2C or =2Etxt file=2E Visuals should = be at= tached individually as =2Ejpg=2C =2Egif or =2Ebmp files=2E Please = include the words =93Special Feature (Graphic Non-Fiction)=94 in the sub= ject line of your message=2E

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=BBSOUS LES PAV=C9S=AB is a FREE bi-monthly newsletter of ideation and po=etry distributed by mailing list only & funded by the generous donations o= f its readers.

To join the mailing list & to donate visit =BBSOUS LES PAV=C9S=AB at http://interbirthbooks.com/?page_id=161 or write Micah Robbins | 3515 Fairview Ave. | Dallas, TX 75223 ~ editor@interbirthbooks.org

Vol.1 No.1 includes work by The Rejection Group, Richard Owens, Edmond Caldwell, Linh Dinh, Lisa Burdige, David Hadbawnik, Micah Robbins, Gene Tanta, Brenda Iijima, and Brooks Johnson.

Please support this effort by donating & joining the growing list of recipients . . .

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Unnameable Books, Brooklyn! (please announce/forward)

Chris Funkhouser and Alan Sondheim event, Fri. Oct 1, Unnameable Books

Friday, October 1 7:30pm - 9:30pm Location Unnameable Books 600 Vanderbilt Ave. Brooklyn, NY Created By Unnameable Boox More Info DIGITAL POETICS 10.01.10

Performances of fingered music, digital projection, codework and text. Viola, oud, saz, guitar? Keyboard. Laptop. Microphone. Books.

CHRIS FUNKHOUSER is a poet, scholar, and multimedia artist. In 2009, the Associated Press commissioned him to prepare digital poems for the occasion of Barack Obama's inauguration. He is author of the documentary study, *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995*, and an eBook (CD-ROM), *Selections 2.0*. He currently teaches at New Jersey Institute of Technology and University of Pennsylvania, is a Senior Editor at PennSound, a member of the scientific review committee of the digital literature journal *regards crois?s* (University of Paris 8), is on the Advisory Board of the Digital Poetry Archive of Canada, and is an External Collaborator with Ncleo de Ciberteatro, Instituto Politecnico do Porto (Portugal). Since 1986 he has been an editor with We Press, with whom he has produced poetry in a variety of media. A widely published author, he was Visiting Fulbright Scholar at Multimedia University in Cyberjaya, Malaysia (2006), on the summer writing program faculty of the Naropa University (2007), and is presently Digital Poet-in-Residence at Bowery Poetry Club (New York City).

ALAN SONDEHEIM is our (all our) resident genius and provocateur. He is also an important artist, theorist, code-worker, poet, musician, choreographer, essayist, filmmaker, video-maker, performer and new-media innovator, who has been working tirelessly and prolifically and with astonishing results since before I was born. If you're lucky, you may be on one of his email lists, which are the primary way he distributes his writing and other work.

Sondheim has a new book of poetry out from Salt Press: *DEEP LANGUAGE*. Maria Damon says it tangles us up in these hypnotically repetitive, abject, slyly humorous and childishly gleeful, philosophically, aesthetically, theoretically and psychologically dense and insightful poems, that are also essays, diasporic riffs and incantations, true confessions, Platonic dialogues, shtick, tantrums, aphorisms and manifesti. John Cayley says he is one of the precious few who joyfully and in abject misery risks these terrors of writing for us, for our pleasure and our undoing. What happens? Language disposes of us.

=

=A0=0A Ken Edwards & Myung Mi Kim gave phenomenal readings this past Saturd=ay night for the SF State Poetry =0ACenter at the Meridian Gallery. Amazing= (& not improbable) how the =0Aremains of war (England/WW II & Korea/Americ= an) keep poking their shards up into a=A0=0Amemoried & active present. Inte= resting, or the persuasion of poetry to make the shard penetrate the consci= ousness much more pointedly (memorably) (convincingly)=A0 than prose of a m= ore detached/abstracted order. Kudos. Stephen V <http://stephenvincent.net/blog/>

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derrida does borrow another word from the construction industry - subjectile. it refers to a surface before it is painted. if you do a google search you'll find it used to describe priming, sanding, and finishing products in the french dry-wall trades.

On Sat, Sep 25, 2010 at 7:23 PM, michael farrell <limecha@hotmail.com> wrote:

does poetry need anything?

i could say poetry needs to be more like blondie - but thats really my need -

interesting. but i'm wary of the word forefront. does poetry necessarily need to be ... there.

i'm happy to see it in the bleachers, or with the cheerleaders.

really, i may have to re/read the esher/bach/GOD-el thing. occassionally, it's fun to actually have something of a clue, or sort of know what i'm talking about. which, in my book, means ... Witt vs. Godel: it's a tie.

--- On Thu, 9/23/10, Jim Andrews <jim@VISPO.COM> wrote:

language and poetry after godel and turing.

but, in poetry circles, godel and turing just do not compute, as you see in the responses to this thread, which dealt with derrida, not godel and turing.

and this is one of the reasons why poetry itself is isolated.

poetry, these days, needs to be an umbrella term for deep concerns of language and art cross-stitched amongs many fields and modes of perception/reception. for instance, the role of language in contemporary mathematical logic is of philosophical significance and also has turned out to be of very practical significance in that the work of godel and turing led to the creation of the computer, that universal number+language machine.

the philosophical underpinnings of the poetics of computation, of computer art, can be strongly linked with the work of godel and turing and its consequences concerning language, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and the multimedial/intermedial.

poetry needs to be able to travel at the forefront of any field.

ja <http://vispo.com> =

=

= guidelines

=

To say that "Poetry is one of the fields that can use those energies expressively, innovatively, in a way that captures the contemporary, and furthers our understanding of what is happening to language(s) and us via computing" is far different than proposing a "poetics of computation." The latter reduces the concept of poetics to nonsense. There are things in the world that are simply different from each other.

At 05:13 PM 9/25/2010, you wrote: "the philosophical underpinnings of the poetics of computation, of= computer art, can be strongly linked with the work of godel and turing and its consequences concerning language, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and= the multimedial/intermedial."

As far as I can see, all you are saying here is that poetry is not poetry unless related to Godel and Turing's work.

I would hope you're the only one who reads it that way, Murat. Cuz that's not what I said. But, by now, how could I be surprised by your reading it that way, considering that you've also said that computer art is fascistic and that computers are to blame for the economic collapse. Computers, computer art, and, possibly, computer artists seem to freak you out. I find it hard to talk with you about these things cuz yer always jumping to this sort of conclusion.

What I was saying is this. The work of Godel and Turing is fundamental to the poetics of computation and computer art and the multimedial/intermedial because it is fundamental to the theory of computation; and the theory of computation is concerned with exploring the theoretical capabilities and limitations of computing= machines.

*Turing invented the 'Turing machine', the 'abstract machine', the mathematical model of a computing machine, to show that there are some tasks that no computing machine can *ever* carry out. In other words, he invented the modern computer to show that it has certain limitations. As opposed to inventing it to get it to do stuff that couldn't be done otherwise. Which, to me, is the sort of poetical thing that we see time and again in Godel's and Turing's work.*

That's quite a bit of a tall order, don't you think, though I can understand their potential or= realized importance in some kind of poetry.

"poetry needs to be able to travel at the forefront of any field."

What does also this sentence mean, that poetry should become a kind of supermench, the way opera was for Wagner?

Supermench? No. When we look at the impact of computing on language, we can talk about it in many ways, can concentrate on different things. The way, for instance, that the net crosses X with Y, brings ideas into contact with one another, and, consequently, the languages associated with those ideas. Or the way it brings media into contact with one another, by being capable of representing all sorts of different media all on the same screen or in the same machine; and, consequently, brings the languages both of and about those media into contact with one another. Or the way it brings people into contact with one another, being capable of representing communication channels (such as telephone) as well as traditional media like print, recorded sound, and video/TV, etc.

The impact of computing on language is in all sorts of cross-fertilization of language X with language Y, whether the languages are natural or other types of languages.

Poetry is one of the fields that can use those energies expressively, innovatively, in a way that captures the contemporary, and furthers our understanding of what is happening to language(s) and us via computing.

ja <http://vispo.com> = 3D = 3D = 3D =

New from Chax Press: Mark Weiss, *As Landscape*. \$16. Order from <http://www.chax.org/poets/weiss.htm>

"What a beautiful set of circumstances! What a lovely concatenation of particulars. Here is the poet alive in every sense of the word, and through every one of his senses. Instead of missing a beat or a part, Weiss=92 fragments are like Chekhov=92s short stories=ADthe more that gets left out, the more they seem to contain=85 One can hear echoes from all the various ancestors...[but] the voice, at its center, its core, is pure Mark Weiss. His use of the fragment is both elegant and bafflingly clear, a pure musical threnody=85[it] opens a window, not only into a mind, but a person, a personality, this human figure at the emotional center of the poem."

M.G. Stephens, in *Jacket*. <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/r-weiss-rb-stephens.shtml>

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End of POETICS Digest - 25 Sep 2010 to 27 Sep 2010 (#2010-226)

[↑ Index](#)

D&Gtombstonechuckle

20 November 2010

The phrase desiring machine gains resonance
if played for description
of the schizoid subject-under--scanner--
scanject subner

the corporate welfare of
the new airport security system
in more ways than
want

blegh

hello

[↑ Index](#)

2013

His last year on the list thins to three notices and then nothing: a workshop for hire, a father's death carried in on a blogroll, and a closing question left hanging.

New & Old Writings

5 May 2013

The pop-music squibs — written for Jeff Feuerzeig's cover-songs project — had become his main critical mode by now; the private grief enters the notice almost sidelong, in its final line.

Recent Writings (and some republished poems):

including short Pieces on

The Replacements (The Westerbergian Sublime), Richard Hell, Lou Reed, Evie Sands, Neil Diamond and Leonard Cohen for the Jeff Feuerzeig Video Covers Project

And a tribute to my dad who died on April 3.

<http://chrisstroffolino.blogspot.com/>

On Apr 9, 2013, at 9:01 PM, POETICS automatic digest system wrote:

There are 2 messages totalling 80 lines in this issue.

Topics of the day:

1. MY SHAME IS NOT ENOUGH (2)

=

Making Matter Move: Philosophy and =

Plug for upcoming workshop online: Making Matter Move: Philosophy and Physics in Poetry As we consider major philosophical subjects in our work, we will also look to the seemingly separate realm of physics for challenge and material. Though philosophers traditionally tend to work in ideas, poets go the next step, integrating intellectual considerations with tangible aspects of the ephemeral and the carnal - with matter itself. Poetry allows us to broaden knowledge, bridge schools of thought and access new inroads for processing the world, rooted in our potential to imagine and conceive. Each week we will focus on one major philosophical topic such as Life, Love, War, and Death by crafting poems that approach related issues and by employing the poet's intuitive senses as well as the intellect. We'll employ poetry as permission and a means to not only be moved, but to move the matter of world and words. A medley of poems will be stimulate us by Anne Carson, Paul Celan, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Wislawa Szymborska & many more. Seats are filling fast! Register for this Workshop Class size: 12 Dates: May 6-31, 2013 <http://www.poetrycoop.com/poetry-workshops/making-matter-move-philosophy-physics-poetry>

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Each week we will focus on one major philosophical topic such as Life, Love, War, and Death by crafting poems that approach related issues and by employing the poet's intuitive senses as well as the intellect. We'll employ poetry as permission and a means to not only be moved, but to move the matter of world and words. A medley of poems will be stimulate us by Anne Carson, Paul Celan, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Wis=C5=82awa Szymborska & many more.

Seats are filling fast!

Register for this Workshop

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End of POETICS Digest - 6 Apr 2013 to 9 Apr 2013 (#2013-42)

[↑ Index](#)

Ashbery (April Galleons) Question

18 August 2013

His last post to the list. The great responder signs off as he always worked — asking a question, here hunting the exact wording of an Ashbery line (April Galleons, 1987) for an essay we never see.

Does anybody have a copy of April Galleons handy? Or know, off hand, the name of the poem that this comes from--

I have a vague memory of it, so I'm pretty sure I don't have the exact words, but I know I'm pretty close--

"But the thing has to come into being, or else all we'll have is disagreements, disagreements, to name a few...."

C

I'd love to get the exact quote so I can use it for a little essay I'm writing....

thanks! Feel free to email me at chris.stroffolino@gmail.com i don't always check this list....

On Aug 18, 2013, at 9:01 PM, POETICS automatic digest system wrote:

There are 7 messages totalling 285 lines in this issue.

Topics of the day:

1. Shameless self-advert 2. above/ground press participates in the fisher small press fair at university of toronto, september 7, 2013 3. "Cusp" and other poems at On Barcelona 4. Shameless self-advert PS (2) 5. Unlikely Stories: Episode IV 6. from Yumpu: "Quiddities (Philosophical Poetry)"

[↑ Index](#)

IV

Announcements & Notices

The readings, launches, and new sites — a working literary life, by year.

Not reproduced in full; gathered here so the record of what he was doing is kept apart from what he was writing. 76 in all.

1995

1 September 1995 Joris's Celan and Corn on L poetry - 24 Aug 1995 to 25 Aug 1995
 21 October 1995 outpost entropy, etc. Well, I don't know if this is "the next KEVIN DAVIES" or anything, but I received the first issue today of a magazine from an old dear friend in a small town in PA. and she is definitely looking for submissions from people other than the "local yokels" and so this list seemed a highly fitting place to start i thought--- Anyway, the magazine is called "OUTPOST ENTROPY" and though I don't wish to speak for the editor's taste, I will quote in part from the letter she sent me today: :By the way I watched Louis Farrakhan speak to the million man march today---very interesting to say the least--insightful, highly, in certain ways, lots of strawmen and specious reasoning though. He gave a speech/sermon specifically tailored to appear to be for black men, yet it was generalizing enough to appeal to ANYONE margin- alized in this society and subsequently malcontent...." Okay---Not that she's JUST a politico---She likes Ashbery too... Anyway---in the wake of the near death i hear of THE IMPERCIPIENT-- you should all send to: OUTPOST ENTROPY c/o C.Kaucher 226 W. Main St. Kutztwon, Pa. 19530. Also, I wanted to make a correction addition to the note posted by Bill CLinton's house saxophonist, Kenny G., about the poetry reading to benefit LINGO mag that will be held here in Albany, NY--- "the weakness of an albany" as Olson would say-- exactly a week from today 10-28-- Aside from myself, Jean Donnelley, Juliana s. lisa j., michael g., linda s. and the local blues band fb&c there will also be featured ROD SMITH---yes ROD "Aerial/edge" SMITH---or RODOMY as they say in PRI. For any info--feel free to call me at 518-He-Binge..... chris stroffolino

1996

3 February 1996 warning: i break for hallucinations
 8 April 1996 new york city, a bag
 5 May 1996 Book Announcement (forward)
 11 May 1996 chapbook (new)
 30 May 1996 just thought you'd want to see this
 22 June 1996 Painted Bride submissions

1997

27 February 1997 Cheryl Dunye, etc.
 4 March 1997 SEGUE READING(rehm/stroffolino)
 25 March 1997 In Other News....
 12 May 1997 WANTED: FORMATTER/PROOFREADER

1998

17 February 1998 RANSOM STROFFOLINO READING
 9 June 1998 -----
 18 June 1998 Knife and Fork reading
 15 October 1998 FAREWELL TOUR
 19 November 1998 BOOK PARTY

1999

2 March 1999 Reading in Reading, PA...
 4 May 1999 STUCK IN SELF-PROMO WITH YOU
 27 May 1999 workshops with Chris Stroffolino

2 July 1999 THING....
 27 August 1999
 29 September 1999 ET AL STROFFOLINAN
 15 December 1999 Upcoming Gig

2000

29 September 2000 OF RELATED INTERESTS TO FLUXUS FANS, 6-8pm
 13 October 2000 Looking for FLUTE Player
 28 November 2000 December events involving NYC

2001

5 April 2001 New Laura(Riding)....
 12 April 2001 Gil Ott tribute
 30 April 2001 May Events
 14 June 2001 COME CELEBRATE THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF JIM MORRISON'S DEATH
 2 July 2001 COME CELEBRATE THE 32nd ANNIVERSARY OF BRIAN JONES' DEATH
 20 November 2001 Deirdre Kovac, Dan Farrell, Sianne Ngai, Kevin Davies: Reading & Panel on "Recent Events" (Vancouver) 11/24-25
 27 November 2001 Qui Parle: The Poetics of New Meaning
 5 December 2001 SPIN CYCLE

2002

21 February 2002 G.E. Patterson Reading in Bay Area
 12 March 2002 No subject was specified.
 11 November 2002 David Berman Reading (Bay Area)
 5 December 2002 CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

2003

19 June 2003 CONTINUOUS PEASANT (JULY 8)--
 26 September 2003 CONTINUOUS PEASANT on 9/28
 10 October 2003 GRAVES Bros deluxe nat'l tour
 12 October 2003 New Brutalism: Fisher, Stroffolino

2004

5 January 2004 JAN EVENTS in BAY AREA
 11 February 2004 new PROSEY things
 9 March 2004 Will Alexander
 13 April 2004 CLINT BURNHAM & JUDITH GOLDMAN
 8 June 2004 SF EVENT---TONIGHT! (FREE!)
 5 October 2004 SupportPirateCatRadio
 15 October 2004 5 Chris Stroffolino Fans Can't be Wrong
 23 December 2004 PHILLY-DEC 27-30

2005

18 April 2005 ANYBODY FROM PHILLY HERE?
 26 April 2005 ALBERT & CHRIS'S READING @ POETRY FLASH @ CODY'S
 4 May 2005 REVIEW POSSIBILITY?
 20 May 2005 PEASANT TOUR & SF RELEASE PARTY
 14 June 2005 CP: INTENTIONAL GROUNDING one day sale!
 27 July 2005 SEATTLE, VANCOUVER, ETC...
 11 September 2005 HELP W/ NEW ORLEANS SONG PROJECT?
 25 September 2005 U can listen to our NEW ORLEANS SONG now!

2006

3 January 2006 GREIL MARCUS JAN 9th (FREE)
 12 February 2006 Shadow Train e-zine launched
 21 March 2006 3/26, 3/25
 17 April 2006 Mayday Mayday (& news)
 27 April 2006 Boog's First 15th Anniversary Event

9 October 2006 Nickels on Laura Riding at SPT this Fri 10/6
2 November 2006 A Rebuke to The John Kerry (Collins) In Me

2007

12 January 2007 Binoy Majumdar (1934-2006)
27 April 2007 YAPANCHITRA (A Portrait of Life)
4 June 2007 ...a different kind of writing workshop...

2008

17 May 2008 Workshop Thang
14 October 2008 24 Hour Contest (Lyric, Poem)
3 November 2008 Nicely Out Of Tune (#2)
7 November 2008 MLA IN SF: Offsite Event in Oakland
20 December 2008 12/27 EVENT (in Oakland)

2009

12 March 2009 POE TICS Dig 2009-55

2013

11 January 2013 Los Angeles Creative Writing Class

Appendix — A Complete Catalogue

Every message in the archive, in order. Reviews and essays are reproduced above; the rest — announcements, forwards, reading notices — are logged here so the record is complete. 1015 in all.

1994

- 7 December 1994 prayer · reproduced
- 7 December 1994 prayer · reproduced
- 9 December 1994 prayer · reproduced
- 9 December 1994 Personal Blisters/Impersonal Burns · reproduced
- 9 December 1994 Univeral Blisters/Individual Burns · reproduced
- 10 December 1994 town/gown/marriage/kindergarten/bottle · reproduced
- 11 December 1994 The National Question, etc. · reproduced
- 12 December 1994 town/gown/marriage/kindergarten/bottle · reproduced
- 12 December 1994 town/gown/marriage/kindergarten/bottle · reproduced
- 14 December 1994 Academy, etc. · reproduced
- 14 December 1994 ASSORTED · reproduced
- 16 December 1994 ASSORTED · reproduced
- 16 December 1994 ASSORTED · reproduced

1995

- 1 January 1995 Domesday Dictionary · reproduced
- 1 January 1995 discursive disruptions//whether poetry makes anything happen · reproduced
- 8 January 1995 motives for metaphor · reproduced
- 18 January 1995 Apex of the M · not reproduced
- 19 January 1995 Freely Espousing Update · reproduced
- 23 January 1995 apex of the m... · not reproduced
- 24 January 1995 apex of the m... · not reproduced
- 25 January 1995 apex of the m... · not reproduced
- 25 January 1995 apex of the m... · reproduced
- 27 January 1995 CALL FOR A DECISIVE BREAK WITH THE PAST (NURTURE THE APEX) · not reproduced
- 28 January 1995 CALL FOR A DECISIVE BREAK WITH THE PAST (NURTURE THE APEX) · not reproduced
- 28 January 1995 reified names vs. boundless vocabulary · reproduced
- 29 January 1995 reified names vs. boundless vocabulary · reproduced
- 1 February 1995 CALL FOR A DECISIVE BREAK WITH THE PAST (NURTURE THE APEX) · reproduced
- 7 February 1995 apex of the m... · not reproduced
- 8 February 1995 Espousing 2/8 · not reproduced
- 8 February 1995 freely espousing · not reproduced
- 10 February 1995 reified names vs. boundless vocabulary · not reproduced
- 11 February 1995 reified names vs. boundless vocabulary · reproduced
- 12 February 1995 theory & truth · reproduced
- 12 February 1995 deified theories and unfounded vocabularies · not reproduced
- 14 February 1995 reified names vs. boundless vocabulary · not reproduced
- 15 February 1995 Boy Talk · reproduced
- 17 February 1995 More Boy Talk · reproduced
- 22 February 1995 theory and being heard · reproduced
- 24 February 1995 POETICS Digest - 21 Feb 1... · not reproduced
- 24 February 1995 More in re: Radical Artifice · not reproduced
- 25 February 1995 NY School · reproduced
- 25 February 1995 theory & truth · not reproduced
- 28 February 1995 PBS · not reproduced
- 28 February 1995 Thoughts About Engagement · reproduced
- 4 March 1995 Form As Discussion Point · reproduced
- 6 March 1995 Close Reading · reproduced
- 7 March 1995 Close Reading · reproduced

9 March 1995 Teaching close reading · *reproduced*
 15 March 1995 Lost Classics · *not reproduced*
 17 March 1995 close reading · *reproduced*
 17 March 1995 close reading · *not reproduced*
 17 March 1995 "Berdie" and "Berdie, Berdie" · *not reproduced*
 17 March 1995 Doug Messerli · *not reproduced*
 19 March 1995 what i'm reading · *not reproduced*
 19 March 1995 poetry v the sharp mind · *reproduced*
 20 March 1995 poetry v the sharp mind · *reproduced*
 20 March 1995 poetry v the sharp mind · *not reproduced*
 23 March 1995 what does it do? · *not reproduced*
 2 April 1995 Back to poetry · *reproduced*
 3 April 1995 ian macdonald · *not reproduced*
 3 April 1995 Back to poetry · *not reproduced*
 4 April 1995 Boring · *not reproduced*
 6 April 1995 prevaricating intellectual goo (sex power...) · *not reproduced*
 7 April 1995 Consent of the governing · *reproduced*
 8 April 1995 The mysteries of the mysterious menses · *not reproduced*
 14 April 1995 Last Names · *not reproduced*
 15 April 1995 april · *not reproduced*
 17 April 1995 politics · *not reproduced*
 17 April 1995 WHite History Month · *reproduced*
 18 April 1995 I feel pink · *not reproduced*
 18 April 1995 Hallmark · *not reproduced*
 20 April 1995 throttled by angels · *reproduced*
 25 April 1995 Definition · *reproduced*
 26 April 1995 Not definition 2 · *not reproduced*
 1 May 1995 cordelia · *not reproduced*
 1 May 1995 gimmicks/"poetry" that's got nothin' on zimmerman · *reproduced*
 1 May 1995 who wrote this??? · *reproduced*
 3 May 1995 cordelia · *reproduced*
 3 May 1995 Gerald Stern · *not reproduced*
 4 May 1995 Gerald Stern · *not reproduced*
 8 May 1995 Aleatory Poetry · *not reproduced*
 9 May 1995 Aleatory Poetry · *not reproduced*
 9 May 1995 Aleatoric Spree · *reproduced*
 9 May 1995 Aleatory Poetry · *not reproduced*
 10 May 1995 lyric and/or · *reproduced*
 14 May 1995 really Real · *not reproduced*
 15 May 1995 really Real · *not reproduced*
 17 May 1995 four poems · *reproduced*
 17 May 1995 irony and the Really real · *not reproduced*
 22 May 1995 eignier, address, reality · *reproduced*
 28 May 1995 milo deangelis · *not reproduced*
 29 May 1995 Actually actual? · *not reproduced*
 30 May 1995 milo deangelis · *reproduced*
 2 June 1995 Meet the G that killed me · *reproduced*
 2 June 1995 sentimentality · *not reproduced*
 7 June 1995 Warren Sonbert 1947-1995 · *reproduced*
 7 June 1995 sentimentality · *not reproduced*
 7 June 1995 Actually actual? · *reproduced*
 9 June 1995 palinode on a nightingale · *reproduced*
 9 June 1995 poetry 'n roll · *not reproduced*
 10 June 1995 opportunity knocks · *not reproduced*
 10 June 1995 opportunity knocks · *not reproduced*
 10 June 1995 palinode on a nightingale · *not reproduced*
 14 June 1995 What is this list for? · *not reproduced*
 21 June 1995 rules and reverse thinking · *not reproduced*

- 22 June 1995 Fuzzy Logic Poetics · *not reproduced*
 23 June 1995 cobain · *not reproduced*
 23 June 1995 Bedside reading · *not reproduced*
 24 June 1995 bedside reading list · *not reproduced*
 24 June 1995 bedside reading list · *not reproduced*
 29 June 1995 bedside reading · *reproduced*
 3 July 1995 women & tech · *reproduced*
 4 July 1995 well, if we're going... · *reproduced*
 5 July 1995 sensitive · *not reproduced*
 7 July 1995 Poetic Briefs is not dead · *not reproduced*
 7 July 1995 fuzzy bookside bedding · *not reproduced*
 7 July 1995 fuzzy bookside bedding · *not reproduced*
 12 July 1995 flaming children · *reproduced*
 16 July 1995 Soul Train · *not reproduced*
 17 July 1995 gnostics · *not reproduced*
 20 July 1995 Soul/body · *reproduced*
 20 July 1995 Recording the Devil in the Details · *not reproduced*
 25 July 1995 POETICS Digest - 23 Jul 1995 to 24 Jul 1995 · *reproduced*
 25 July 1995 POETICS Digest - 23 Jul 1995 to 24 Jul 1995 · *not reproduced*
 27 July 1995 Herb to George · *not reproduced*
 27 July 1995 beowulf (willa jargon) · *reproduced*
 28 July 1995 beowulf (willa jargon) · *reproduced*
 28 July 1995 Studio space · *not reproduced*
 5 August 1995 Rengaphobia · *not reproduced*
 11 August 1995 "marketing strategies" · *reproduced*
 12 August 1995 "marketing strategies" · *reproduced*
 13 August 1995 "marketing strategies" · *reproduced*
 13 August 1995 Larkin fucks again · *not reproduced*
 14 August 1995 Rejected posting to POETICS@UBVM.CC.BUFFALO.EDU (fwd) · *reproduced*
 17 August 1995 "marketing strategies," CAP-L, & the gap (mind it or lose it) · *not reproduced*
 18 August 1995 "marketing strategies," CAP-L, & the gap (mind it or lose it) · *not reproduced*
 20 August 1995 Value in Poetry · *reproduced*
 20 August 1995 Value in Poetry · *reproduced*
 23 August 1995 Perelman's forthcoming and recent · *not reproduced*
 23 August 1995 Language Poetry and Music · *not reproduced*
 24 August 1995 Wallace who? · *not reproduced*
 24 August 1995 Criteria (fwd) · *not reproduced*
 25 August 1995 who is this guy? · *not reproduced*
 25 August 1995 Criteria (fwd) · *not reproduced*
 25 August 1995 new & forthcoming · *not reproduced*
 26 August 1995 trading cards and WAC · *not reproduced*
 26 August 1995 place genre heading here and behead · *reproduced*
 26 August 1995 dylan · *reproduced*
 28 August 1995 Children of the Corn · *not reproduced*
 28 August 1995 Children of the Corn · *not reproduced*
 29 August 1995 poetry and music · *not reproduced*
 29 August 1995 MisunderstandingsPOETICS Digest5 · *not reproduced*
 29 August 1995 pardon my formalism · *reproduced*
 29 August 1995 Laughlin/Corbett · *not reproduced*
 1 September 1995 Joris's Celan and Corn on L poetry - 24 Aug 1995 to 25 Aug 1995 · *announcement*
 7 October 1995 The Art and Poetry Worlds I'm jumping in here late(so may be redundant), but Carolyn's def. of "active participation" may need to be questioned on the grounds that while I do agree that the reading assignments should be done, the imposition of collaborations and other workshop assignments may do more harm than good in a long term level (as opposed to short term). I am operating on a particular assumption here--and perhaps generalizing from my own experience which is that I've never been able to write poetry as well when in a workshop environment than when "on my own" as it were---the pressures of performance, etc and also the particular audience (rather than the faceless(sic) one of not being in a

- workshop) may present obstacles to certain students--and I think this should be accounted for by workshop teachers---chris stroffolino · *reproduced*
- 7 October 1995 Bien Pensant Pinking Shears Dear Steve Evans--You put the address on where to get Jennifer's Chapbook, but you did not put the address on how to order the other book of hers-- the full length book...Actually, I can't believe it came out in July and I just found out now...Didn't I visit you in July? Talk about modesty... Anyway---please post the address (please please please) and I will try not to say anything bad about some of your other choices(!)---thanks, chris stroffolino · *not reproduced*
- 13 October 1995 Emily Dickinson- the potential range of meanings and tones that the dashes make possible in dickinson's poetry has not yet received much more than perfunctory treatment---even Howe (and her "followers") have turned away from the dashes per say to focus on the handwriting etc. I think much more can be done, the "authorities" have for the most part very SELECTIVELY plumbed some of the complexities and not the others that may be inherent in the dashes. These dashes are hazardous, of course, but no more than ignoring them would be. Susan Howe's Book probably would be better if called "SEVERAL OF MY EMILY DICKINSON'S" since it doesn't resolve in the idea of singular author, and such work is useful in reminding one that the "I" in any given poem is not the same "I" as in another poem---In fact, the "I" in one poem may be like the "master" (or "owner") in another poem yet-- though Howe doesn't quite say THAT! ---chris stroffolino · *reproduced*
- 14 October 1995 The Art and Poetry Worlds so Ron (Silliman), when are you going to publish your memoirs and/or autobiography---it sounds "juicy," "a page turner" etc--a la Baraka's auto. It would certainly be a change from much of your poetry.... Or, maybe, THE COLLECTED EMAIL NOTES OF RON SILLIMAN..... forward by stephen weed, etc---chris s. · *reproduced*
- 15 October 1995 Emily & top ten poems I guess "meaning" has gone out of fashion when it comes to Dickinson and dashes--or perhaps never was in....For many of the critics who were obsessed with meaning ignored the complexity of meaning the dashes afforded--Judging by recent comments by Pat Phillips and Diane Ward (are you THE diane ward, I mean the one who ROOF published, etc)-- which DO bring up important points (don't get me wrong--as chrissy wd sing)--it seems the gestural concerns (TAKEN ALONE) can eclipse the possibilities of meaning---and to some extent can deny the difficulty of the work..... chris s. · *not reproduced*
- 15 October 1995 Emily & top ten poems OOPS---sorry diane---just read your note about your "identity"-- please accept my apologies--chris · *not reproduced*
- 15 October 1995 Emily & top ten poems Also, the trend that seems to be championing the gestural zaniness of Dickinson's dash, as a perloffian radical artifice or something, has to contend with the idea that for every "pomo" dash there exists a folk art "rhyme scheme"-----cs · *not reproduced*
- 16 October 1995 grandma Emily? Tenney--But the rhymes and rhythms ARE there compared to most of the poetry people on this list write (or publish)---even if ironic and "off" and, yes, terrifying (what else is new). And some people--trained in "free verse" or "blank verse" at first find her work offputting for that--and others of course find it somewhat reassuring for that--and the rhymes and rhythm does lend her work a more memorable quality than much unrhyming work of contemporaries...I don't think the "avant- garde" Dickinson is any more real than the "mainstream" Dickinson-- I guess that's the "agenda" behind most of my postings on her.... And maybe Burt has got the best take at all--the dashes are just pauses in thought (while the ink dripped from the quill---Burt that's absolutely deliciously perverse!) And Patrick, well I guess I will meet PUDGY PARCHESI and you someday "where the meanings, are"----- COMMA vs. DASH! chris · *reproduced*
- 19 October 1995 Niedecker and Zukowski I like the conflation of Zuk and Buk! Thanks, dodie. I mean "thanks dodie" · *not reproduced*
- 20 October 1995 Zuk, Buk, and Cuke Well Dodie I am only a "clever young man" to the extent you write "unmarketable gibberish" or to the extent that Zukofski lived a "glamorous" life away from India as I sit here lising to Oti and Carla singing "TRAMP"!----chris s. · *not reproduced*
- 21 October 1995 Respelling LZ Ginsberg, Gunsberg-- I still say LOUIE rather than LOUIS too, so there! · *not reproduced*
- 21 October 1995 Niedecker and Zukofsky dear mark scroggins---do you really see PLACE as that big in Zuk's work? It seems more bookish---now NYC is the book capital allegedly (i mean publishing--even if the bookstores increasingly suck--), but... (it always seemed to me that he could have written them in INDIANA and followed LN....). cs · *not reproduced*

- 21 October 1995 outpost entropy, etc. Well, I don't know if this is "the next KEVIN DAVIES" or anything, but I received the first issue today of a magazine from an old dear friend in a small town in PA. and she is definitely looking for submissions from people other than the "local yokels" and so this list seemed a highly fitting place to start i thought--- Anyway, the magazine is called "OUTPOST ENTROPY" and though I don't wish to speak for the editor's taste, I will quote in part from the letter she sent me today: :By the way I watched Louis Farrakhan speak to the million man march today---very interesting to say the least--insightful, highly, in certain ways, lots of strawmen and specious reasoning though. He gave a speech/sermon specifically tailored to appear to be for black men, yet it was generalizing enough to appeal to ANYONE margin- alized in this society and subsequently malcontent...." Okay---Not that she's JUST a politico---She likes Ashbery too... Anyway---in the wake of the near death i hear of THE IMPERCIPIENT-- you should all send to: OUTPOST ENTROPY c/o C.Kaucher 226 W. Main St. Kutztwon, Pa. 19530. Also, I wanted to make a correction addition to the note posted by Bill CLinton's house saxophonist, Kenny G., about the poetry reading to benefit LINGO mag that will be held here in Albany, NY--- "the weakness of an albany" as Olson would say-- exactly a week from today 10-28-- Aside from myself, Jean Donnelley, Juliana s. lisa j., michael g., linda s. and the local blues band fb&c there will also be featured ROD SMITH---yes ROD "Aerial/edge" SMITH---or RODOMY as they say in PRI. For any info--feel free to call me at 518-He-Binge..... chris stroffolino · *announcement*
- 22 October 1995 Metroplex Dear Ron (and others): Even before the "communications revolution" there seems to have been a decided shift away from metroplex centers for poets. Certainly in my generation, there has been much less incentive to live in NYC, SF and Chicago for instance (in part because of \$\$\$ and in part because there's hardly viable academic institutions there) than other places--and this is even amongst more urban-oriented sensibilities it seems to me. Chris Stroffolino · *not reproduced*
- 23 October 1995 cd-ro(a)m Charles A. wrote "Will books wake up and continue to expand?" Oh no, sounds like the beginning of the RENG!-----cs. · *not reproduced*
- 23 October 1995 Metroplex Beth R: Metroplex wasn't my term--Ron used it before me and I think maybe someone before him---so I can't help you DEFINE.... Ron S: Point well taken--Yes, there wasn't much academic affiliation back in the good old days--and perhaps the reason so many of my generation have gone "back to school" (if belatedly) may reflect a larger social/economic question that i wanted to raise as well as "a genuine urge to learn"... But the OTHER point I raised I think should be considered too-- There has been a noticeable decentralization it seems and aside from the lack of good bookstores in major cities (or just about anywhere) the idea of vital poetry communities as in say roughly 1953-1977 (I say roughly) in major cities has also been a source of frustration for many and I think is related to the skyrocketing rents that perhaps were systematically designed to divide the potentially "countercultural" forces from each other, etc. etc-- Since I am contemplating moving back to a large city (perhaps Philadelphia again, but wherever...) I certainly would like to see this change. But it seems more possible in places where the rents are a little cheaper and people are not so pressured by having to work 60 hours a week to pay for a phone-booth shaped (and sized) apartment--with little time for writing much less a "scene" that includes musicians and painters etc etc as much as poets.....chris · *not reproduced*
- 24 October 1995 BAAAAAAD villanelle! Thanks for mentioning Lisa Robertson's work, Pat... · *not reproduced*
- 24 October 1995 Metroplex Dear Ron--this should almost be a backchannel question. But I will ask it anyway (in the spirit of the discussion on Minneapolis a few months back): Why do you think Philadelphia has not been able to produce a kind of self-reproducing scene that has sustained itself as much as say Washington DC? It's a much bigger city and has some resources that could definitely be tapped. I know you are new there--but when i was there I was able to bring certain poets who suprisingly would not have come otherwise to a downtown art gallery for VERY LITTLE MONEY. I felt bad about the sums I paid out, and even worse in some ways that I had to almost pull teeth to draw audiences for Carla Harryman, David Shapiro, Leslie Scalapino, Alice Notley, Alan Davies for instance as well as Bob Perelman (who at that time had just moved to Phila.)--(to name some of just the most famous--I'd have to list too many other names however to stave off potential charges of being a "starfucker"). Anyway, TEMPLE does do better in terms of bringing poets in than many institutions of similar size (say, SUNY ALBANY) and there has been The Painted Bride there as well at least enough magazines for someone to "get started" (Phila. was definitely MY

springboard in that sense). And now perhaps Perelman will have more power at penn---when I was there he didn't have much--taught no grad classes, etc. Now I hear they are letting him bring poets in. to read in the series. Yet though there are magazines and series, there are not book publishers or even chapbooks. Nor is there much of a salient community---It's like every time something gets started, someone moves to japan or albany, etc. Again, the nomadism that careerism entails etc that many married friends of mine have had to negotiate in thorny ways (though it effects us all, and to add insult to industry their ideological justifiers speak of "family" and "hometown" values--- oops, sorry, digression)--Anyway, I am definitely PLUGGING Philadelphia despite the seeming negativity. It is afterall by far the cheapest big east coast city (Albany and even providence has rents about as hi and albany, at least, unlike Phila. is not a WALKING CITY). Perhaps the proximity of NYC effects it. Effects it negatively. But it COULD affect PHILA. positively (aside from the poets I had read that wanted to VISIT BOB or GIL OTT anyway, I probably could not have gotten as many to read there for the price I paid had it not been for NYC proximity)... Anyway it seems that a more livable and viable scene could exist there than exists in NYC (the problems at St. Marx; the recent inbreeding at the EAR--the lack of communication among "factions" etc)--- So what the hell I'm the pied piper....chris · *reproduced*

- 24 October 1995 Villanelle Tom Kirby-Smith, could you share with the list more about May Swenson-- (not to be confused with may "the fur person" sarton). She isn't much talked about, and I'm curious how you would talk about her--or which poems you would direct one to, etc. Thanks, cs. · *not reproduced*
- 26 October 1995 Metroplexities Jordan: Yes, I share hope for "an intelligent and friendly scene" in NYC and it is certainly achievable in non (or para) institutional contexts, the interstices, late night chance encounters, etc--but it would be helpful I think to see more of a mutually challenging community there. One thing I keep coming back to is the Perelman WRITING/TALKS series and the "frutiful collision" that seemed to allow. in the then-developing and wide ranging group of poets brought into dialogue with each other. If the inbreeding at the ear is as you say but "the growing pangs of a coalescing group" let's hope that coalescing doesn't mean reifying (or more dreadfully reified). As for your talk on FACTIONS---well, another thing i keep coming back to from my experience in Phila. was that it seemed that the knowledge that there were less poets there enabled an openness to cross-pollination or at least dialogue of the NYC equivalent of the Jewish Y scene and the nuyorican and the ear inn tyes (I mean the phila equivalent) than I have seen in NYC from my admitted "peripheral" perspective. Nonetheless, much morew can be done on these points in BOTH cities (and should be). · *not reproduced*
- 28 October 1995 & Ralph Waldo I've been reading the Emerson-Stevens Money thread with some "interest"-- I wonder what kind of "toll" it has taken on me (for surely once the microcosm-macrocosm metaphor is entertained it becomes difficult to wish or wisk away without a shot of Lethe that Universal Health Care would surely make available to all)--- "Seriously" however-- I have often distrusted and been skeptical of (which isn't to say I myself do not "employ" I mean "deploy" perhaps far too much) the linkage it seems Nathanson for instance is making (though I too may be tone deaf)--not so much between "politics" and "poetic form" (via a bi-directional OF),but between....Maybe this is better stated by way of an "oversimplistic" Spielbergian (alias Manichean) binary a fellow- teacher of mine told me she used to generate class discussion: She wrote STEVENS=InSURANCE SALESMAN and WILLIAMS=DOCTOR on the board and basically meant the former as "evil" and the latter as 'good'-- Such a GRID seems to lie at the "root" of much recent work (again the work on Yeats' Fascist Metrics coming out, for instance) and I am curious WHY people seem to be so interested in such arguments? I may be seem to be conflating two things here, two kinds of "form" that seem to "inform" the "content" of the poem. Insofar as the form is the content, to what extent is the POET the POEM? And though these are important questions, the whole notion that the reader and the writer are collaborators in the making of the work, if taken seriously, would seem to render questionable predetermined notions of exactly what STEVENS' or WCW's (for instance) stance truly is--insofar as their work lives more in the (un?)consciousnesses of those who read them than it does in the books. But, when the question of poetry as a kind of money comes up (as in THE MERCHANT OF VENUS), I don't mean to beg it. But, it's always possible that such "large-scale cultural thinking" may not be that different from the kind of so-called "solipsism" that is purely aesthetic (also in quotes) like "the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella...". In other words, money as poetry and poetry as money (either way), in Stevens and in Perelman, and in others, are

- tropes, metaphors with two vehicles vying for the status of tenor. And theory here can be "endlessly productive" no doubt but FOR WHAT? cs · *reproduced*
- 28 October 1995 & Ralph Waldo (continued from last note--which ended with FOR WHAT?) or FOR WHOM? cs · *not reproduced*
- 29 October 1995 the shape of jazz to come/gone Right On, Aldon!--Never saw him live unfortunately, but was hoping too-- Currently have his "Until the rain comes" on my answering machine message, chris s. · *reproduced*
- 30 October 1995 & Ralph Waldo Dear Ed--- Could you please elaborate, or support your argument (gosh, i feel like i'm grading a student paper) about "different poetries" being "different economies"---Do you mean "psychic economies" and if so how is that NOT a trope? If you mean the COST of books, or the LABOUR involved in reading a certain poet, is there a way to determine what is the MOST COST-EFFECTIVE poetry? Hmmm--the kind of poetry that has 5 words per page is more "taxing" than maximialism? The kind of poetry that works good on a first reading but not as much on subsequent ones is certainly a ripoff? (This is all very vague). If some poetry DEMANDS more from the reader than others (how do you define demand?), is it possible it doesn't DRAIN the reader but actually stirs the reader to an activity s/he wouldn't otherwise. Please, Ed, tell me more--I am quite open to this--- But I also am skeptical about the validity of what seems to me to be a kind of quantification here-- It's like sleep. Why is it, for instance, that sometimes I am MORE tired when I have just woken from a 12 hour sleep than i am when I have woken from a 3 hour nap? (I don't expect you to answer that....) Chris S. · *not reproduced*
- 1 November 1995 dunno but · *reproduced*
- 2 November 1995 dunno but · *reproduced*
- 6 November 1995 do know but? · *not reproduced*
- 7 November 1995 dunno etc. · *not reproduced*
- 8 November 1995 Indulgence · *not reproduced*
- 14 November 1995 (no subject) · *reproduced*
- 17 November 1995 yep & yep · *reproduced*
- 17 November 1995 trouble, slightly revised · *reproduced*
- 26 November 1995 Questions · *not reproduced*
- 27 November 1995 Questions · *reproduced*
- 28 November 1995 Question · *not reproduced*
- 28 November 1995 Condition of Poetry in the Academy · *reproduced*
- 28 November 1995 Condition of Poetry in the Academy · *not reproduced*
- 28 November 1995 Theory etc. · *reproduced*
- 29 November 1995 The break you're seeking · *not reproduced*
- 29 November 1995 Theory etc. · *reproduced*

1996

- 1 January 1996 Wanna date? · *reproduced*
- 2 January 1996 WEB POETRY, RESTRUCTURING LANGUAGE ARTS DEPARTMENTS · *not reproduced*
- 2 January 1996 WEB POETRY, RESTRUCTURING LANGUAGE ARTS DEPARTMENTS · *not reproduced*
- 3 January 1996 vitalism? · *reproduced*
- 4 January 1996 vitalism? · *not reproduced*
- 4 January 1996 MLA Doings? · *not reproduced*
- 4 January 1996 The Anguish Dept. · *not reproduced*
- 4 January 1996 Welcome, my friends... · *not reproduced*
- 8 January 1996 worldwide web presses · *not reproduced*
- 9 January 1996 worldwide web presses · *reproduced*
- 9 January 1996 outside in the web press · *reproduced*
- 11 January 1996 worldwide web presses · *reproduced*
- 18 January 1996 kevin spacey · *not reproduced*
- 22 January 1996 new book · *not reproduced*
- 23 January 1996 new book · *reproduced*
- 25 January 1996 Japan (Toshiro Yamizaki) · *not reproduced*
- 26 January 1996 Japan (Toshiro Yamizaki) · *not reproduced*
- 26 January 1996 Paul Mariah · *not reproduced*

- 27 January 1996 music and poetry · *reproduced*
- 27 January 1996 music and poetry · *not reproduced*
- 27 January 1996 music and poetry · *not reproduced*
- 28 January 1996 Paul Mariah · *not reproduced*
- 29 January 1996 Music and poetry · *not reproduced*
- 30 January 1996 Music and poetry · *not reproduced*
- 31 January 1996 Poetry City (Feb.29-Mar.14) · *not reproduced*
- 31 January 1996 space is the place · *not reproduced*
- 1 February 1996 Poetry City (Feb.29-Mar.14) · *not reproduced*
- 2 February 1996 poetics of the quotidian · *reproduced*
- 2 February 1996 poetics of the quotidian · *not reproduced*
- 2 February 1996 poetics of the quotidian · *reproduced*
- 2 February 1996 Bernadette Mayer Fan Club (charter member) · *reproduced*
- 3 February 1996 challenges · *reproduced*
- 3 February 1996 warning: i break for hallucinations · *announcement*
- 3 February 1996 challenges · *not reproduced*
- 3 February 1996 Challenges, Chris · *not reproduced*
- 5 February 1996 trail Blasing · *reproduced*
- 5 February 1996 Larry Eiger (1927-1996) [long post] · *reproduced*
- 5 February 1996 warning: i break for hallucinations · *not reproduced*
- 6 February 1996 We all break for hallucinations · *not reproduced*
- 9 February 1996 Eigner · *reproduced*
- 11 February 1996 e=r=o=t=i=c · *not reproduced*
- 13 February 1996 writing the body · *reproduced*
- 13 February 1996 P*A*S*S*I*O*N, anyone? · *reproduced*
- 13 February 1996 Sun & Moon Press · *not reproduced*
- 14 February 1996 write that body · *reproduced*
- 14 February 1996 write that body · *not reproduced*
- 14 February 1996 writing the body · *not reproduced*
- 15 February 1996 (C) up for grabs · *reproduced*
- 16 February 1996 (C) up for grabs · *not reproduced*
- 16 February 1996 (C) up for grabs · *reproduced*
- 16 February 1996 re re rewriting that Blasing · *not reproduced*
- 17 February 1996 (C) up for grabs · *reproduced*
- 19 February 1996 Brownie McGhee · *not reproduced*
- 21 February 1996 legacies · *reproduced*
- 21 February 1996 103d Street · *reproduced*
- 21 February 1996 legacies · *reproduced*
- 21 February 1996 legacies · *not reproduced*
- 22 February 1996 103d Street · *not reproduced*
- 22 February 1996 the none study · *reproduced*
- 25 February 1996 Trans Sending · *reproduced*
- 26 February 1996 message in a bottle · *not reproduced*
- 26 February 1996 snoozers · *reproduced*
- 27 February 1996 dead horses, live theories · *reproduced*
- 29 February 1996 dead classes, living classes, theory? · *reproduced*
- 29 February 1996 academic poet/ry · *not reproduced*
- 29 February 1996 academic poet/ry · *not reproduced*
- 29 February 1996 academic poet/ry · *reproduced*
- 29 February 1996 prefatory remarks · *reproduced*
- 1 March 1996 academic poet/ry · *not reproduced*
- 2 March 1996 academic poet/ry · *reproduced*
- 3 March 1996 academic poet/ry · *reproduced*
- 4 March 1996 Silliman et al. on JAZZ, &c. · *not reproduced*
- 6 March 1996 BOO Magazine · *not reproduced*
- 6 March 1996 BOO Magazine · *not reproduced*
- 9 March 1996 POETRY CITY book offer · *not reproduced*
- 13 March 1996 avant-garde · *not reproduced*

- 14 March 1996 let's talk about fascists, bay-bee... · *reproduced*
 14 March 1996 in the public domain... · *reproduced*
 14 March 1996 in the public domain... · *not reproduced*
 15 March 1996 ghost titles · *not reproduced*
 15 March 1996 AN: Aldon Nielsen: BAD · *reproduced*
 15 March 1996 let's talk about fascists, bay-bee... · *not reproduced*
 16 March 1996 let's NOT talk about fascists, but ourselves · *not reproduced*
 16 March 1996 Baraka again · *reproduced*
 21 March 1996 Forgotten hours chime louder/In the meantime... · *not reproduced*
 23 March 1996 Adelaide Crapsey · *not reproduced*
 23 March 1996 you decide · *reproduced*
 24 March 1996 reading report: hunt/killian/foster · *reproduced*
 24 March 1996 Adelaide Crapsey · *not reproduced*
 28 March 1996 borders and wobblies · *not reproduced*
 28 March 1996 query abt stein/toklas · *not reproduced*
 28 March 1996 raw and cooked · *reproduced*
 29 March 1996 AWP Chronicle, discussions of form · *reproduced*
 1 April 1996 For Nicanor Parra · *not reproduced*
 1 April 1996 new york city, a bag · *reproduced*
 4 April 1996 poetry video... · *not reproduced*
 5 April 1996 my script for a poetry video... · *not reproduced*
 5 April 1996 my script for a poetry video... · *reproduced*
 7 April 1996 contrasimilacrum · *reproduced*
 8 April 1996 symmetry · *reproduced*
 8 April 1996 new york city, a bag · *announcement*
 8 April 1996 Poetry video & Performance · *not reproduced*
 8 April 1996 Poetry video & Performance · *reproduced*
 9 April 1996 why is art and how did she get in my backstroke. the soup? · *reproduced*
 10 April 1996 stop breathin', breathin' for me now · *reproduced*
 10 April 1996 seven tapes of ambiguity · *not reproduced*
 11 April 1996 Minnesota · *not reproduced*
 11 April 1996 symmetry · *not reproduced*
 11 April 1996 Minnesota · *not reproduced*
 11 April 1996 Tennis With/out A Net, Anyone? · *not reproduced*
 12 April 1996 contrasimilacrum · *not reproduced*
 14 April 1996 minnesota · *reproduced*
 14 April 1996 Elmslie · *reproduced*
 14 April 1996 Often I am permitted to return to Tom Raworth · *reproduced*
 16 April 1996 guided by payment? t(o)eachers Cale. et Richman · *not reproduced*
 16 April 1996 minnesota · *not reproduced*
 16 April 1996 Massachusetts · *not reproduced*
 21 April 1996 poetry and audience in the nation · *reproduced*
 24 April 1996 looking for liz brennan... · *not reproduced*
 1 May 1996 all this OPEN LETTER BUSINESS · *reproduced*
 2 May 1996 I Think of Can; US reception of Aus/NZ writing · *not reproduced*
 5 May 1996 Book Announcement (forward) · *announcement*
 7 May 1996 beckett · *not reproduced*
 8 May 1996 USOP · *reproduced*
 9 May 1996 POETICS Digest - 6 May 1996 to 7 May 1996 · *not reproduced*
 9 May 1996 beckett · *not reproduced*
 10 May 1996 POETICS Digest - 8 May 1996 to 9 May 1996 · *reproduced*
 11 May 1996 = = = = · *not reproduced*
 11 May 1996 chapbook (new) · *announcement*
 13 May 1996 formal continuum/conspicuous repetition (fwd) · *reproduced*
 14 May 1996 sometimes a formal Finch comes · *reproduced*
 14 May 1996 sometimes a formal Finch comes · *not reproduced*
 15 May 1996 quertzblatt · *not reproduced*
 15 May 1996 poetry on the net · *not reproduced*

- 15 May 1996 quertzblatz · *not reproduced*
- 16 May 1996 a foraml Finch comes · *reproduced*
- 17 May 1996 a foraml Finch comes · *not reproduced*
- 19 May 1996 fromal Fnich cmoes a/ a fomral Ficnh coems/ · *not reproduced*
- 19 May 1996 Will Alexander's work · *reproduced*
- 20 May 1996 fake book · *reproduced*
- 22 May 1996 Will Alexander's work · *reproduced*
- 24 May 1996 KSW Events for June, 96 · *not reproduced*
- 30 May 1996 Nonset Form · *not reproduced*
- 30 May 1996 just thought you'd want to see this · *announcement*
- 31 May 1996 Nonset form · *reproduced*
- 4 June 1996 mainstream art critic nonsense · *not reproduced*
- 8 June 1996 signafump · *not reproduced*
- 9 June 1996 the eternal "summer" reading thing · *not reproduced*
- 9 June 1996 singnafump · *not reproduced*
- 10 June 1996 no weirdos please (apologies to kevin davies) · *not reproduced*
- 10 June 1996 Oppen Sesame · *not reproduced*
- 11 June 1996 Passings · *reproduced*
- 11 June 1996 adventures in paradise · *not reproduced*
- 11 June 1996 mainestays · *not reproduced*
- 11 June 1996 what matter who's speaking · *not reproduced*
- 12 June 1996 what matter who's speaking · *reproduced*
- 12 June 1996 clamdiggers (fwd) · *not reproduced*
- 12 June 1996 post language poetry, post modernist poetry, fakes · *not reproduced*
- 16 June 1996 post language poetry, post modernist poetry, fakes · *not reproduced*
- 17 June 1996 The Twentieth Century · *not reproduced*
- 17 June 1996 Sonnet!: What to Name the 20th-century World-Baby? · *reproduced*
- 22 June 1996 Painted Bride submissions · *announcement*
- 23 June 1996 some questions from orono (tentative toe testing) · *reproduced*
- 24 June 1996 50s in Orono - the Reviews · *not reproduced*
- 24 June 1996 "50s in Orono - the Reviews" · *reproduced*
- 24 June 1996 Query · *not reproduced*
- 29 June 1996 Beatle Bones and Smokin' Stones · *not reproduced*
- 29 June 1996 oh no orono · *reproduced*
- 30 November 1996 taste, judgment, etc... · *reproduced*
- 1 December 1996 Burt Bacharach's Western music · *not reproduced*
- 2 December 1996 TOMORROW PEOPLE · *reproduced*
- 6 December 1996 jeff mcdaniel · *not reproduced*
- 9 December 1996 sublimation (sex, etc) · *reproduced*
- 17 December 1996 lesson plan/ sales pitch · *reproduced*
- 24 December 1996 N/O · *reproduced*
- 27 December 1996 FALLING IN LOVE (JUST SAY NOH) · *reproduced*
- 29 December 1996 POETICS Digest - 27 Dec 1996 to 28 Dec 1996 · *not reproduced*
- 31 December 1996 MLA GROUPIE QUERY · *reproduced*
- 31 December 1996 WCW QUOTE--- · *reproduced*

1997

- 2 January 1997 WCW quote · *reproduced*
- 3 January 1997 "tough love" WCW (the judge he holds a grudge) · *reproduced*
- 6 January 1997 a boughn to pick (ULRO) · *reproduced*
- 6 January 1997 POETICS Digest - 4 Jan 1997 to 5 Jan 1997 · *reproduced*
- 8 January 1997 Historically Riding Bernstein · *reproduced*
- 27 January 1997 POETICS Digest - 25 Jan 1997 to Doug Messerli · *not reproduced*
- 3 February 1997 Blackberry/ Cranburn..... · *not reproduced*
- 4 February 1997 selfless shame promotion · *reproduced*
- 7 February 1997 POETICS Digest - 5 Feb 1997 to 6 Feb 1997 · *reproduced*
- 12 February 1997 HOW BRIEF THE HUMAN SPAN.... · *reproduced*
- 14 February 1997 OH CANADA · *not reproduced*

18 February 1997 POETICS Digest - 16 Feb 1997 to 17 Feb 1997 · *reproduced*
 20 February 1997 POETICS Digest - 18 Feb 1997 to 19 Feb 1997 · *reproduced*
 25 February 1997 FRANK as HANK? · *reproduced*
 27 February 1997 Cheryl Dunye, etc. · *announcement*
 4 March 1997 SEGUE READING(rehm/stroffolino) · *announcement*
 13 March 1997 Perloff/Kellogg, et al. · *reproduced*
 16 March 1997 DIVING Into The (Human) Zoo... · *reproduced*
 25 March 1997 THEY WANNA COVER US WITH MARGARINE(alization) · *reproduced*
 25 March 1997 In Other News.... · *announcement*
 3 April 1997 POETICS In · *not reproduced*
 10 April 1997 LAURA NYRO (one child born to carry on, etc....) · *reproduced*
 14 April 1997 So How did The Weiners I mean Wieners event go? · *not reproduced*
 27 April 1997 TUBERCULOSIS (and individuals) · *reproduced*
 12 May 1997 WANTED: FORMATTER/PROOFREADER · *announcement*
 20 May 1997 Neg. Cap. (oh providence and the russians) · *reproduced*
 20 May 1997 QUESTIONS · *not reproduced*
 20 May 1997 thedeathofthekennethauthorangertrashtalktrashtalk · *not reproduced*
 23 May 1997 PATHETIC CREATURE (seen on tombstone) · *reproduced*
 23 May 1997 Joel K and Scott P. · *not reproduced*

1998

5 January 1998 citation (ginsberg) · *not reproduced*
 8 January 1998 song lyricists (was teaching h.s....) · *reproduced*
 8 January 1998 psychepoedelics · *not reproduced*
 10 January 1998 Dead ants are blowin' in the wind · *reproduced*
 12 January 1998 And Lady Mondegreen · *not reproduced*
 12 January 1998 your move · *not reproduced*
 14 January 1998 dylan or · *not reproduced*
 15 January 1998 LOOSE SUGAR 2nite in my tea · *reproduced*
 21 January 1998 Missing "e"s · *not reproduced*
 24 January 1998 "actually new" · *reproduced*
 28 January 1998 Material/Physical · *reproduced*
 30 January 1998 Missing generation · *reproduced*
 1 February 1998 criticism rules · *not reproduced*
 4 February 1998 Love Poems · *reproduced*
 4 February 1998 Was: Re: Uh, <snip> · *not reproduced*
 6 February 1998 "My man" · *not reproduced*
 6 February 1998 various - a spray · *reproduced*
 6 February 1998 Sex, Power and Poetry · *reproduced*
 8 February 1998 sex power shakespearey · *reproduced*
 10 February 1998 INDIVIDUAL-UNREAL · *reproduced*
 10 February 1998 bb's bd · *not reproduced*
 10 February 1998 colding & heating · *reproduced*
 10 February 1998 Missing persons · *not reproduced*
 12 February 1998 FEBRUARY 14.... · *not reproduced*
 13 February 1998 Angle magazine · *not reproduced*
 16 February 1998 EMERGENCY · *not reproduced*
 17 February 1998 RANSOM STROFFOLINO READING · *announcement*
 18 February 1998 Hughes' Crow · *not reproduced*
 19 February 1998 Plath and Hughes · *not reproduced*
 22 February 1998 acker/scalapino · *reproduced*
 28 February 1998 QUERIES · *not reproduced*
 11 March 1998 sinister · *not reproduced*
 12 March 1998 metaphoracity redux · *reproduced*
 17 March 1998 political unconscious metaphors · *reproduced*
 18 March 1998 The Metaphor Express · *not reproduced*
 7 April 1998 alineanalien · *not reproduced*
 8 April 1998 aliens (in SF) · *not reproduced*

- 9 April 1998 Was: Censorship and Belief NOW: Something of great constancy · *not reproduced*
- 13 April 1998 Dodie chat · *not reproduced*
- 20 April 1998 Has anyone heard of this magazine... · *not reproduced*
- 22 April 1998 NYC APARTMENT SHARE POSSIBILITY · *not reproduced*
- 30 April 1998 fresh · *reproduced*
- 30 April 1998 : fresh trace · *reproduced*
- 30 April 1998 Re freshly stale · *not reproduced*
- 5 May 1998 SHK 9.0423 Caliban and Sycorax: Moons of Uranus (fwd) · *not reproduced*
- 12 May 1998 My Mediocrity · *reproduced*
- 12 May 1998 F O'H · *reproduced*
- 21 May 1998 question · *not reproduced*
- 27 May 1998 Byrd's reply 2 Alex and droffolino's quest · *reproduced*
- 31 May 1998 Quo Vadis? · *not reproduced*
- 3 June 1998 soi disantra · *not reproduced*
- 4 June 1998 APOLOGIES TO RON SILLIMAN · *reproduced*
- 4 June 1998 APOLOGIES TO RON SILLIMAN · *not reproduced*
- 8 June 1998 Valentine de Saint-Point · *not reproduced*
- 9 June 1998 ----- · *announcement*
- 10 June 1998 DRUNKEN BOAT · *not reproduced*
- 11 June 1998 Anarchy · *reproduced*
- 12 June 1998 Anarchy · *not reproduced*
- 12 June 1998 seedy underbelly · *not reproduced*
- 15 June 1998 poetry/money/careers · *not reproduced*
- 15 June 1998 ps to Double Academy of c.w. · *not reproduced*
- 18 June 1998 Knife and Fork reading · *announcement*
- 22 June 1998 framing frenzy · *not reproduced*
- 22 June 1998 framing frenzy · *not reproduced*
- 26 June 1998 Boundary 2 · *not reproduced*
- 26 June 1998 MFA/PhD · *reproduced*
- 30 June 1998 7/4/70 · *reproduced*
- 1 July 1998 part(y) · *not reproduced*
- 1 July 1998 Slams and Lorri Jackson · *not reproduced*
- 6 July 1998 China 2 · *not reproduced*
- 10 July 1998 why I love country music & poetics (artist of the floating womb) · *not reproduced*
- 10 July 1998 Kerenyi's use of "opposite" · *not reproduced*
- 10 July 1998 Not romantic, but drowning · *reproduced*
- 17 July 1998 wrasslin with Rasula (what about a. watts?) · *reproduced*
- 17 July 1998 *wrasslin with Rasula · *reproduced*
- 21 July 1998 Came to Cambridge: Not Bean-ville · *not reproduced*
- 23 July 1998 John Yau's MY SYMPTOMS (relavant to Russo/bAron etc. discussion) · *reproduced*
- 23 July 1998 Party · *not reproduced*
- 23 July 1998 DICKINSON · *reproduced*
- 27 July 1998 John Yau's MY SYMPTOMS · *not reproduced*
- 27 July 1998 Saving Private Ryan · *not reproduced*
- 31 July 1998 John Yau's MY SYMPTOMS · *reproduced*
- 31 July 1998 Question of a "good war" · *reproduced*
- 31 July 1998 Poetics programs, etc. · *reproduced*
- 12 August 1998 PS to DLB · *not reproduced*
- 18 August 1998 QUERIES (CB and DS) · *not reproduced*
- 19 August 1998 QUERIES (CB and DS) · *not reproduced*
- 23 August 1998 Bullworth · *reproduced*
- 28 August 1998 HELP! · *not reproduced*
- 2 September 1998 Valerie Fox · *not reproduced*
- 5 September 1998 ANSELM B's QUESTION · *not reproduced*
- 6 September 1998 QUERIES (CB and DS) · *not reproduced*
- 8 September 1998 Love New York Style · *not reproduced*
- 10 September 1998 10-4 good buddy · *reproduced*

13 September 1998 Best Sellers (?) · *not reproduced*
 13 September 1998 Something to do when depressed (in whose hands?) · *reproduced*
 13 September 1998 you can hear them blow · *not reproduced*
 14 September 1998 *numbers · *not reproduced*
 22 September 1998 I Sing the Body Apoplectic · *not reproduced*
 23 September 1998 Rilke · *reproduced*
 24 September 1998 WCW's line · *not reproduced*
 24 September 1998 St. Mark's Rain Taxi · *reproduced*
 28 September 1998 Levistky--O'Connor · *reproduced*
 1 October 1998 didacticism · *reproduced*
 5 October 1998 WALLACE STEVENS HORROR MOVIE · *not reproduced*
 5 October 1998 money for poets · *not reproduced*
 12 October 1998 "Our" Laura (Riding) Jackson · *not reproduced*
 13 October 1998 "our" laura (riding) jackson · *reproduced*
 15 October 1998 "My" Laura Riding · *reproduced*
 15 October 1998 FAREWELL TOUR · *announcement*
 15 October 1998 troika..... · *not reproduced*
 15 October 1998 Laura Riding · *not reproduced*
 19 October 1998 Lehman & the last avant garde · *reproduced*
 2 November 1998 TUSK! (or aerial view of a huckster graveyard) · *reproduced*
 6 November 1998 f.y.i. · *not reproduced*
 11 November 1998 COMMUNITY CHEST · *reproduced*
 11 November 1998 COMMUNITY CHEST · *reproduced*
 19 November 1998 BOOK PARTY · *announcement*
 24 November 1998 Fescue Rant (asy) · *not reproduced*
 28 November 1998 Critic-Penitents, Poet-Penitents · *reproduced*
 7 December 1998 ATTENTION KEVIN AND DODIE--- · *not reproduced*
 8 December 1998 a modest proposal · *reproduced*
 11 December 1998 ADOPT A "POET" · *reproduced*
 13 December 1998 The Hatters · *not reproduced*
 18 December 1998 please don't bother to backchannel either · *reproduced*
 18 December 1998 THANK YOU · *reproduced*

1999

4 February 1999 Armand Schwerner (1927-1999) · *reproduced*
 8 February 1999 BATTLE OF THE SEXES · *reproduced*
 22 February 1999 ASIDE / FROM THE BATTLE · *reproduced*
 24 February 1999 RONK AND/OR RATCLIFFE REQUEST... · *not reproduced*
 27 February 1999 PHIL LEVINE · *not reproduced*
 1 March 1999 BARDFEST 99 Berks County ~ Reading, Pennsylvania · *reproduced*
 2 March 1999 Reading in Reading, PA... · *announcement*
 29 March 1999 LYNN KELLY's Q & SUSAN HOWE'S A · *reproduced*
 29 March 1999 Barnard Conference... · *reproduced*
 1 April 1999 CAT REQUEST!!!!!! · *not reproduced*
 3 May 1999 STUCK IN SELF-PROMO WITH YOU · *not reproduced*
 4 May 1999 STUCK IN SELF-PROMO WITH YOU · *announcement*
 8 May 1999 CHARLES ALTIERI · *not reproduced*
 8 May 1999 NOTLEY on "the youth".... · *reproduced*
 15 May 1999 MOXLEY ADDRESS.... · *not reproduced*
 21 May 1999 Highwire and the B.L. SYNDROME · *not reproduced*
 24 May 1999 DYLAN B-DAY THOUGHTS OF LUOMA · *reproduced*
 27 May 1999 workshops with Chris Stroffolino · *announcement*
 7 June 1999 QUESTION (ALAN GOLDING) · *not reproduced*
 7 June 1999 Berman Time Out Review · *not reproduced*
 24 June 1999 quandry · *reproduced*
 1 July 1999 Reviews.... · *reproduced*
 2 July 1999 THING.... · *announcement*
 6 July 1999 THING....(TYPO CORRECTION.... · *not reproduced*

12 July 1999 WCW, anti-semitism.... · *reproduced*
 12 July 1999 COPE'S OPPEN--- · *not reproduced*
 19 July 1999 Nada Gordon & Gary Sullivan · *reproduced*
 19 July 1999 Nada and Gary (continued) · *reproduced*
 27 August 1999 (no subject) · *announcement*
 29 September 1999 ET AL STROFFOLINAN · *announcement*
 29 October 1999 Will Alexander · *not reproduced*
 29 October 1999 to post or not to post.... · *reproduced*
 7 December 1999 Jameson's Perelman · *not reproduced*
 15 December 1999 Upcoming Gig · *announcement*
 27 December 1999 from Ron Silliman? · *not reproduced*
 30 December 1999 @poetics · *not reproduced*

2000

26 July 2000 inquiry · *not reproduced*
 9 August 2000 Golddiggers · *reproduced*
 28 August 2000 POETICS Digest - 24 Aug 2000 to 25 Aug 2000 (#2000-140) · *reproduced*
 29 August 2000 language in lingua franca · *reproduced*
 7 September 2000 San Francisco Address & L, · *not reproduced*
 12 September 2000 PUBLIC APOLOGY (for Wendy Kramer, etc.) · *reproduced*
 14 September 2000 Metaphor/Metonymy · *reproduced*
 19 September 2000 Metaphor/Metonymy · *reproduced*
 26 September 2000 SLAUGHTER · *not reproduced*
 26 September 2000 Burnham Blurb by Bowerwing · *reproduced*
 29 September 2000 Jakobson on Metonymy & Metaphor · *reproduced*
 29 September 2000 OF RELATED INTERESTS TO FLUXUS FANS, 6-8pm · *announcement*
 3 October 2000 Colloquium 1.6: The STRAP-HANGER - Kevin Killian · *reproduced*
 12 October 2000 Colloquium · *reproduced*
 13 October 2000 Looking for FLUTE Player · *announcement*
 28 November 2000 baudelaire beauty products · *not reproduced*
 28 November 2000 December events involving NYC · *announcement*
 13 December 2000 From Laird Hunt · *reproduced*
 27 December 2000 BlueXmas(or things to do when you don't get an MLA job interview in
 your stocking) · *reproduced*
 30 December 2000 CALL FOR DOCTORS · *reproduced*

2001

6 January 2001 CALL FOR DOCTORS · *reproduced*
 19 January 2001 Creeley on Corso · *reproduced*
 20 January 2001 Dark End of The Street · *reproduced*
 31 January 2001 Pass This On To Bob · *reproduced*
 8 March 2001 NY Sublet, Shaw/Clark Loft, March 30--April 13 · *not reproduced*
 21 March 2001 NYC SPACE QUERY · *not reproduced*
 29 March 2001 McKuen trashing · *reproduced*
 5 April 2001 New Laura(Riding).... · *announcement*
 12 April 2001 Killian & Lu · *not reproduced*
 12 April 2001 Gil Ott tribute · *announcement*
 15 April 2001 another brother gone · *reproduced*
 30 April 2001 May Events · *announcement*
 3 May 2001 Is it Patrick Heron? · *reproduced*
 7 May 2001 May Events · *not reproduced*
 8 June 2001 m&r...everybody's protest poetry... · *reproduced*
 14 June 2001 COME CELEBRATE THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF JIM MORRISON'S DEATH ·
announcement
 24 June 2001 absurd poetry · *not reproduced*
 2 July 2001 COME CELEBRATE THE 32nd ANNIVERSARY OF BRIAN JONES' DEATH ·
announcement
 14 August 2001 motherhood poetry gospels · *reproduced*
 20 August 2001 Godfrey is God · *reproduced*

20 August 2001 Question for Paul H.; Maxine C., or whoever.... · *not reproduced*
 14 September 2001 The last couple of days · *reproduced*
 17 September 2001 polipo · *reproduced*
 21 September 2001 What is to be criticized · *reproduced*
 27 September 2001 Backstreet Boy apologizes... · *reproduced*
 21 October 2001 Fear of Thinking (article-link) · *not reproduced*
 10 November 2001 No comment needed · *reproduced*
 20 November 2001 Deirdre Kovac, Dan Farrell, Sianne Ngai, Kevin Davies: Reading &
 Panel on "Recent Events" (Vancouver) 11/24-25 · *announcement*
 27 November 2001 Qui Parle: The Poetics of New Meaning · *announcement*
 5 December 2001 SPIN CYCLE · *announcement*

2002

18 January 2002 Question--- · *not reproduced*
 6 February 2002 apostrophe · *not reproduced*
 8 February 2002 (no subject) · *not reproduced*
 21 February 2002 G.E. Patterson Reading in Bay Area · *announcement*
 9 March 2002 Question of Gossip..... · *reproduced*
 12 March 2002 No subject was specified. · *announcement*
 14 April 2002 Spahr-ing (to David hess) · *reproduced*
 16 April 2002 nature poetry & other semantics questions · *reproduced*
 16 April 2002 Nature Poem from Kyger · *reproduced*
 19 April 2002 monikered romance · *not reproduced*
 21 April 2002 Karen Kelley ("query") · *not reproduced*
 22 April 2002 Permission for listserv cites · *not reproduced*
 23 April 2002 What Is? · *reproduced*
 25 April 2002 boasting poems? · *reproduced*
 27 April 2002 Last Call for Materiality · *not reproduced*
 29 April 2002 cfp · *not reproduced*
 30 April 2002 Democratic Cabbagery · *reproduced*
 4 May 2002 Hail Pataki? · *reproduced*
 6 May 2002 I won Cuntups to "The Fuck" · *not reproduced*
 6 May 2002 Rules · *not reproduced*
 9 May 2002 poets ignore criticism? · *reproduced*
 12 May 2002 ... · *reproduced*
 12 May 2002 Author Photos · *reproduced*
 15 May 2002 Scandal of the Pure Credit Economy · *not reproduced*
 15 May 2002 trials in literature · *not reproduced*
 16 May 2002 trials in literature · *not reproduced*
 19 May 2002 "My Fare, Lady" (notes from Louis' Cab) · *reproduced*
 21 May 2002 Tonight: TELLING IT SLANT panel discussion · *reproduced*
 26 May 2002 Fake response · *reproduced*
 28 May 2002 lyric ca. 2002 · *reproduced*
 28 May 2002 "Susan Howe, who is a genuinely exciting poet" · *not reproduced*
 15 June 2002 Source Codes · *not reproduced*
 18 June 2002 a brief hystery of the pun · *not reproduced*
 21 June 2002 Modernism in the service of understanding · *not reproduced*
 22 June 2002 Elliptical Poets · *not reproduced*
 24 June 2002 Close reading: Lu, "Pamela: A Novel" · *reproduced*
 28 June 2002 Evaluative Criticism Is The Highest... · *not reproduced*
 5 July 2002 Close Reading: Wolsak, _Pen Chants_ · *not reproduced*
 17 July 2002 cellphone number, me · *reproduced*
 24 July 2002 Joel on Bill · *reproduced*
 31 July 2002 a modest proposal · *not reproduced*
 1 August 2002 Send a Poem to POETICS! · *not reproduced*
 8 August 2002 Rising Shotgun · *reproduced*
 8 August 2002 Resentments · *reproduced*
 13 August 2002 using the music's structure as a vase · *not reproduced*

- 15 August 2002 Larry Rivers (1924-2002) · *reproduced*
- 17 August 2002 self-publish-or-perish · *reproduced*
- 27 August 2002 Lyric Naming--Trivial? · *reproduced*
- 28 August 2002 question for NP · *not reproduced*
- 28 August 2002 why Ramon Noodles (naming, et--) · *not reproduced*
- 29 August 2002 A Question of Scope · *not reproduced*
- 2 September 2002 Translations (4 Gary Sullivan?) · *reproduced*
- 3 September 2002 A Question of Scope · *reproduced*
- 6 September 2002 On Being Rejected · *reproduced*
- 6 September 2002 BEST AMERICAN POETRY 2002 - Iowa Poets · *reproduced*
- 12 September 2002 Ioway or the Highway · *not reproduced*
- 20 September 2002 sonnet experiments · *not reproduced*
- 20 September 2002 sonnet experiments · *not reproduced*
- 21 September 2002 sonnet experiments · *not reproduced*
- 30 September 2002 hole poems? · *reproduced*
- 30 September 2002 hole poems? · *not reproduced*
- 1 October 2002 Perelman's interview · *reproduced*
- 1 October 2002 PROBABLY NOT OF STATUS AS "PROSE POEM" · *reproduced*
- 4 October 2002 Perelman's interview; Pound's Shakes... · *reproduced*
- 4 October 2002 plagiarism is so easy... 3 Sonnets · *not reproduced*
- 5 October 2002 & sonnets: son, nets &/or sew: nets · *not reproduced*
- 22 October 2002 Happy 69 David Bromige · *not reproduced*
- 22 October 2002 Virginia Vs. The Greedy Mugs · *not reproduced*
- 25 October 2002 "Experimental" ("Fragment") · *reproduced*
- 27 October 2002 KIT ROBINSON READING TENTATIVELY POSTPONED · *not reproduced*
- 4 November 2002 Of late on the Blog · *reproduced*
- 11 November 2002 David Berman Reading (Bay Area) · *announcement*
- 28 November 2002 palindrome · *not reproduced*
- 29 November 2002 fear of palindromes · *not reproduced*
- 30 November 2002 Humorism: A Joking Word · *reproduced*
- 4 December 2002 Christopher Alexander · *not reproduced*
- 5 December 2002 CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS · *announcement*
- 6 December 2002 Troupe resigns teaching post over resume · *not reproduced*
- 10 December 2002 Bruce Andrews' Vietnam · *reproduced*
- 10 December 2002 the wink · *reproduced*
- 12 December 2002 KSW Men's Choir Sings Seasonal Favourites (Vancouver) · *not reproduced*
- 20 December 2002 To blog or Nada blog · *reproduced*

2003

- 21 January 2003 poetry careerists · *reproduced*
- 21 January 2003 Baltimore, etc. · *not reproduced*
- 1 February 2003 SF POETS THEATRE THING · *reproduced*
- 7 February 2003 war · *reproduced*
- 10 February 2003 Jerome Robinson 1952-2003 · *reproduced*
- 12 February 2003 Bay Area Residents Only · *reproduced*
- 23 February 2003 ?? · *reproduced*
- 11 March 2003 Torres March 15 · *reproduced*
- 16 March 2003 Weblogs · *reproduced*
- 24 March 2003 "Help!" by Robert Creeley · *reproduced*
- 26 March 2003 ATLANTA??? · *not reproduced*
- 30 April 2003 Ashbery Parody(?) · *not reproduced*
- 6 May 2003 Question for Joris or others? · *not reproduced*
- 17 May 2003 writing which destabilises place · *not reproduced*
- 21 May 2003 [mocr@SBCGLOBAL.NET: urgent, cite needed] · *not reproduced*
- 4 June 2003 CONTINUOUS PEASANT · *not reproduced*
- 11 June 2003 Robert Corbett · *not reproduced*
- 11 June 2003 HI EVERYONE · *not reproduced*
- 17 June 2003 EXILE IN BABYVILLE · *not reproduced*

19 June 2003 CONTINUOUS PEASANT (JULY 8)-- · *announcement*
 20 June 2003 question regarding "alette" · *reproduced*
 20 June 2003 question regarding "alette" · *not reproduced*
 26 June 2003 Behrle on EXILE IN BABYVILLE · *reproduced*
 27 June 2003 If Robert Lowell... · *reproduced*
 27 June 2003 If Robert Lowell... · *not reproduced*
 9 July 2003 Musical Acts needed for Boog Elvis Costello show at CB's · *reproduced*
 19 July 2003 Anthology of Poets Born After 1966 · *not reproduced*
 6 August 2003 Any SF Poets who BIKE or WALK? · *reproduced*
 27 August 2003 Free Oakland A's Game Tomorrow · *not reproduced*
 10 September 2003 NY Times · *reproduced*
 21 September 2003 GARY SULLIVAN'S DEFENSE.... · *not reproduced*
 22 September 2003 Kasey's review of Carla's play in SF · *not reproduced*
 26 September 2003 CONTINUOUS PEASANT on 9/28 · *announcement*
 30 September 2003 Emails · *not reproduced*
 9 October 2003 COMBO news plus reading tonight · *not reproduced*
 10 October 2003 GRAVES Bros deluxe nat'l tour · *announcement*
 12 October 2003 New Brutalism: Fisher, Stroffolino · *announcement*
 17 October 2003 Levy, Locklin, Lifshin, Bukowski, underground press. · *not reproduced*
 29 October 2003 Captain America Project - Please Help! · *reproduced*
 5 November 2003 Marianne Shaneen & Nada Gordon/Zinc/Nov. 9 · *not reproduced*
 6 November 2003 Niedecker in San Francisco · *reproduced*
 14 November 2003 Congo · *reproduced*
 17 November 2003 44309 · *not reproduced*
 19 November 2003 is there a problem using the word "hermaphrodite" in a poem? · *not reproduced*
 20 November 2003 "....operation" · *reproduced*
 20 November 2003 "....operation" · *reproduced*
 24 November 2003 Creative Persons w/Bi-Polar issues · *reproduced*
 25 November 2003 Eliot Citation · *not reproduced*
 25 November 2003 Creative Persons w/Bi-Polar issues · *not reproduced*
 25 November 2003 Creative Persons with BiPolar Issues · *reproduced*
 3 December 2003 the knife in art & lit · *reproduced*
 5 December 2003 KNIFE · *reproduced*
 17 December 2003 response to blog · *reproduced*

2004

2 January 2004 Reading, PA · *reproduced*
 5 January 2004 JAN EVENTS in BAY AREA · *announcement*
 7 January 2004 Lord of the Rings and racism · *not reproduced*
 16 January 2004 What do you think? A good use of 1.5 billion? · *reproduced*
 11 February 2004 new PROSEY things · *announcement*
 20 February 2004 Columbia MFA program under fire · *reproduced*
 20 February 2004 Columbia MFA program under fire · *reproduced*
 25 February 2004 I want to marry a chair! · *not reproduced*
 28 February 2004 While We're At It. . . · *not reproduced*
 28 February 2004 Myles/Andrews/ Dante? · *reproduced*
 1 March 2004 Dante/Virgil - Narcissicism vs Classicism · *reproduced*
 1 March 2004 blogs · *not reproduced*
 3 March 2004 Blog Arguments... · *reproduced*
 8 March 2004 UCB reading: Singleton, Davies, Scalapino,/Fischer, Synder · *not reproduced*
 9 March 2004 Will Alexander · *announcement*
 10 March 2004 The Text of Shelley's Body · *not reproduced*
 10 March 2004 ah (questions about poetics) · *reproduced*
 12 March 2004 ah (questions about poetics) · *reproduced*
 16 March 2004 <no subject> · *not reproduced*
 13 April 2004 Check out The Chatelaine's Poetics · *not reproduced*
 13 April 2004 CLINT BURNHAM & JUDITH GOLDMAN · *announcement*
 15 May 2004 McFadden Shot Dead In Philadelphia at 55 · *not reproduced*

- 15 May 2004 Whitehead Shot Dead In Philadelphia at 55 · *reproduced*
- 28 May 2004 Croggon on Johnson's Abu Ghraib poem · *reproduced*
- 1 June 2004 American Poetry · *reproduced*
- 2 June 2004 Vincent · *reproduced*
- 4 June 2004 Steve Lacy · *reproduced*
- 8 June 2004 SF EVENT---TONIGHT! (FREE!) · *announcement*
- 18 June 2004 Help with quote · *not reproduced*
- 29 June 2004 SAN DIEGO! · *reproduced*
- 7 July 2004 Cheryl Dunye's One Degree from Poetry World · *reproduced*
- 22 July 2004 DIA #1 RE: RPT: gil scott-heron--rap's fallen godfather · *not reproduced*
- 22 July 2004 Gil Scott-Heron (another view) · *reproduced*
- 25 July 2004 In defense of Love like Rilke's · *reproduced*
- 27 July 2004 Derkson's law (and corollary #1) · *reproduced*
- 5 August 2004 Immediate Authority? · *not reproduced*
- 17 September 2004 collaborators/pro fascist poets? · *not reproduced*
- 23 September 2004 poetry of omission or erasure · *not reproduced*
- 26 September 2004 Poetry sous rature/my first post · *not reproduced*
- 3 October 2004 hopefully this will not offend · *reproduced*
- 3 October 2004 a little offensive · *reproduced*
- 5 October 2004 SupportPirateCatRadio · *announcement*
- 8 October 2004 POETRY is the U2 of poetry · *not reproduced*
- 9 October 2004 Bush is the Ike Turner; Poetry is the U2... · *reproduced*
- 12 October 2004 Is there an audience for Audio Poetry? · *reproduced*
- 15 October 2004 5 Chris Stroffolino Fans Can't be Wrong · *announcement*
- 21 October 2004 jon stewart on crossfire... · *not reproduced*
- 21 October 2004 poetry as precognition · *reproduced*
- 23 October 2004 Mary... · *reproduced*
- 23 October 2004 jon stewart on crossfire... · *not reproduced*
- 25 October 2004 The Persistence - Part 2 · *not reproduced*
- 28 October 2004 smoking ban in NYC bars · *not reproduced*
- 3 November 2004 time for a new start (inchoate, but a start) · *reproduced*
- 4 November 2004 Laura (Riding) Jackson: A Panel Discussion at Poets House on 11/4/04 · *not reproduced*
- 5 November 2004 passive moralists · *reproduced*
- 6 November 2004 ELECTION INFO QUESTION · *not reproduced*
- 9 November 2004 poetry is futile - prove me wrong · *reproduced*
- 24 November 2004 NEA outrage · *reproduced*
- 16 December 2004 Michael Rothenberg · *not reproduced*
- 23 December 2004 PHILLY-DEC 27-30 · *announcement*

2005

- 15 January 2005 a little help? Oatmeal! · *not reproduced*
- 12 February 2005 Graves · *not reproduced*
- 25 February 2005 as suggested by Pam · *reproduced*
- 4 March 2005 [polemics] Dear Poet Son · *reproduced*
- 6 March 2005 Ashbery in the NYTBR · *reproduced*
- 8 March 2005 Walter Benn Michaels on Susan Howe?? · *reproduced*
- 11 March 2005 Philip Lamantia, 1927-2005 · *reproduced*
- 11 March 2005 Ashbery in the NYTBR · *reproduced*
- 12 March 2005 Ashbery in the NYTBR · *reproduced*
- 15 March 2005 rewater: rewetting · *reproduced*
- 15 March 2005 rewater: rewetting: o poem for chris s · *reproduced*
- 28 March 2005 studying the anger for Oprah Winfrey's love of Anna Karenina · *reproduced*
- 30 March 2005 On Creeley · *reproduced*
- 4 April 2005 say what, ma? · *reproduced*
- 12 April 2005 Creeley (from Annie Finch) · *not reproduced*
- 18 April 2005 ANYBODY FROM PHILLY HERE? · *announcement*
- 22 April 2005 Presences by Creeley&Marisol/Collaborations · *not reproduced*

- 24 April 2005 How Some Stand on ALLEN GINSBERG Today · *reproduced*
- 26 April 2005 ALBERT & CHRIS'S READING @ POETRY FLASH @ CODY'S · *announcement*
- 4 May 2005 REVIEW POSSIBILITY? · *announcement*
- 8 May 2005 Hey Gloria--- · *reproduced*
- 18 May 2005 The Apt Word · *reproduced*
- 18 May 2005 Reminder: Text/Styles 5/22 · *reproduced*
- 20 May 2005 PEASANT TOUR & SF RELEASE PARTY · *announcement*
- 23 May 2005 Upgraded ELO Website · *not reproduced*
- 23 May 2005 Photos and report from the Text/Styles event at BPC · *not reproduced*
- 29 May 2005 Recommended Summer Reading · *not reproduced*
- 13 June 2005 Creeley/Poe/Riding/Lawrence/Williams/Dickinson/bells bells bells bells bells bells
bells! · *reproduced*
- 14 June 2005 Continuous Peasant on your Blog · *not reproduced*
- 14 June 2005 CP: INTENTIONAL GROUNDING one day sale! · *announcement*
- 18 June 2005 Book Release L.A. · *not reproduced*
- 29 June 2005 Close Listening / WPS1 · *reproduced*
- 2 July 2005 Was Robert Creeley "stupid about gender" and love? · *not reproduced*
- 3 July 2005 Was Robert Creeley "stupid about gender" and love? · *reproduced*
- 4 July 2005 Lorenzo Thomas (1944-2005) · *reproduced*
- 6 July 2005 JUST FOR ONE MINUTE · *not reproduced*
- 11 July 2005 NEW BLOG ENTRIES & Final Bay Area Performance · *not reproduced*
- 27 July 2005 SEATTLE, VANCOUVER, ETC... · *announcement*
- 7 August 2005 New On PeasantBlog · *not reproduced*
- 30 August 2005 New Orleans poets and friends. · *reproduced*
- 30 August 2005 From Skip Fox--NAWLINS NEWS · *not reproduced*
- 31 August 2005 katrina news (longish report) · *not reproduced*
- 31 August 2005 some news of Bill Lavender · *reproduced*
- 1 September 2005 NEW ON PEASANTBLOG · *not reproduced*
- 2 September 2005 New Orleans poets and friends. · *reproduced*
- 7 September 2005 NADA'S WORKSHOPS AT THE POETRY PROJECT · *not reproduced*
- 10 September 2005 or "embrace your narcissism"? · *reproduced*
- 11 September 2005 HELP W/ NEW ORLEANS SONG PROJECT? · *announcement*
- 13 September 2005 or "embrace your narcissism"? · *reproduced*
- 14 September 2005 [Fwd: SAVE OUR POETS FROM STAGNATION?] · *reproduced*
- 23 September 2005 Progressive USA performance poetry????? · *not reproduced*
- 25 September 2005 U can listen to our NEW ORLEANS SONG now! · *announcement*
- 9 October 2005 Good News from THE KATRINA PAPERS · *reproduced*
- 10 October 2005 new on peasantblog, etc... · *not reproduced*
- 5 November 2005 NEW ON PEASANTBLOG · *not reproduced*
- 14 November 2005 Fence email list (backchannel) · *not reproduced*
- 17 November 2005 *Reviews Needed ASAP for Boog City* · *not reproduced*
- 5 December 2005 Call for Participation: 2 Factory School Textbooks · *reproduced*
- 6 December 2005 Wiki · *reproduced*
- 7 December 2005 Wiki · *reproduced*
- 7 December 2005 drummer seeks musicians to play wiki · *reproduced*
- 8 December 2005 drummer seeks musicians to play wiki · *reproduced*
- 15 December 2005 Nola Evacuees & Activists Testify... Role of Race & Class in
Response to Katrina -- concentration camps · *not reproduced* Govt's
- 19 December 2005 suffered aspirin · *not reproduced*
- 22 December 2005 drummer seeks musicians to play wiki · *reproduced*
- 23 December 2005 drummer seeks musicians to play wiki · *reproduced*

2006

- 3 January 2006 GREIL MARCUS JAN 9th (FREE) · *announcement*
- 4 January 2006 Recommended Riding · *reproduced*
- 5 January 2006 Riding (Jackson) & Stein · *reproduced*
- 6 January 2006 Riding (Jackson) & Stein · *reproduced*
- 6 January 2006 Riding (Jackson) & Stein · *not reproduced*

- 16 January 2006 **Recommneded Riding (1/16)** · *reproduced*
- 16 January 2006 **Favorite Poetry Readings: RSVP** · *reproduced*
- 29 January 2006 **Poetry Foundation Article** · *not reproduced*
- 30 January 2006 **Poetry Foundation Article** · *reproduced*
- 1 February 2006 **meet me on myspace** · *not reproduced*
- 2 February 2006 **NEGLECTORINO PROJECT** · *not reproduced*
- 5 February 2006 **NEGLECTORINSKI (Nilesen/Vincent)** · *reproduced*
- 6 February 2006 **NEGLECTORINSKI (Nielsen/Vincent)** · *reproduced*
- 12 February 2006 **Shadow Train e-zine launched** · *announcement*
- 16 February 2006 **HE'S A FUCKING LIAR!** · *not reproduced*
- 21 February 2006 **Frazer's IMPROVISATIONS** · *not reproduced*
- 26 February 2006 **Segue at SeattleHow Much Time Are Readers Given to Read?** · *reproduced*
- 28 February 2006 **aging BABY BOOMERS can make aging SEXY, Notley, Hejinian, Silliman, AN APPEA** · *reproduced*
- 28 February 2006 **aging BABY BOOM SEX, Not, He AN APE** · *not reproduced*
- 5 March 2006 **Freedom of speech in the classroom** · *reproduced*
- 6 March 2006 **Poetry Project Newsletter** · *not reproduced*
- 10 March 2006 **amerikan movies?** · *not reproduced*
- 13 March 2006 **biographies** · *not reproduced*
- 21 March 2006 **3/26, 3/25** · *announcement*
- 23 March 2006 ***Boog City Complete Sets for Sale*** · *not reproduced*
- 26 March 2006 **regregation by age** · *not reproduced*
- 29 March 2006 **current long poems in prograss** · *reproduced*
- 14 April 2006 **Fibs** · *not reproduced*
- 15 April 2006 **One More Guitar-Strumming, Poetry-Reading Dreamer** · *not reproduced*
- 17 April 2006 **Mayday Mayday (& news)** · *announcement*
- 17 April 2006 **Mayday Mayday (& news)** · *reproduced*
- 20 April 2006 **New Work ::: Starburst** · *not reproduced*
- 27 April 2006 **Boog's First 15th Anniversary Event** · *announcement*
- 4 May 2006 **CA Conrad on Bukowski** · *reproduced*
- 5 May 2006 **CA Conrad on Bukowski** · *reproduced*
- 5 May 2006 **CA Conrad on Bukowski** · *not reproduced*
- 7 May 2006 **Bales on "the life of the mind" (was Conrad on Buk)** · *reproduced*
- 15 May 2006 **Bukowski and gender** · *reproduced*
- 17 May 2006 **Not to be missed: tonight in San Francisco: music video panel** · *not reproduced*
- 18 May 2006 **The crux of it all** · *not reproduced*
- 16 June 2006 **ELSEWHERE 2: "Coney Island Avenue"** · *not reproduced*
- 19 June 2006 **Gil Scott-Heron - B Movie** · *reproduced*
- 22 June 2006 **Economic message** · *reproduced*
- 2 July 2006 **Langston Hughes/W.Dixon/Jimmy Reed, etc--a question** · *reproduced*
- 2 July 2006 **Langston Hughes/W.Dixon/Jimmy Reed, etc--a question** · *reproduced*
- 30 July 2006 **Doping Scandal Rocks Poetry** · *reproduced*
- 17 August 2006 **The Book of Disquiet** · *reproduced*
- 17 August 2006 **payments for readings** · *reproduced*
- 23 August 2006 **Exsperm writhing progs rocks** · *reproduced*
- 3 September 2006 **thanks to Ishaq** · *not reproduced*
- 27 September 2006 **a walk with thomas jefferson** · *not reproduced*
- 28 September 2006 **tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE book** · *not reproduced*
- 30 September 2006 **The Outsiders** · *reproduced*
- 7 October 2006 **(no subject)** · *not reproduced*
- 9 October 2006 **Nickels on Laura Riding at SPT this Fri 10/6** · *announcement*
- 12 October 2006 **Oh, and thank you** · *not reproduced*
- 13 October 2006 **SES** · *not reproduced*
- 19 October 2006 **GRAND PIANO blurb possibility** · *reproduced*
- 23 October 2006 **(Call For)Defenses of lying and/or art** · *reproduced*
- 28 October 2006 **Alex Caldiero, Leonard Gontarek and Jane Ormerod will read Sunday at ABC No Rio celebrating CLWN WR** · *reproduced*
- 2 November 2006 **A Rebuke to The John Kerry (Collins) In Me** · *announcement*

2 November 2006 A Rebuke to The John Kerry (Collins) In Me · *not reproduced*
 3 November 2006 apostrophe s (and ownership) · *reproduced*
 3 November 2006 Soldier/Student/Drop Out/Etc... · *reproduced*
 10 November 2006 Democracy inaction (to taylor b)... · *reproduced*
 10 November 2006 Demonaction (taylor b) poetscededigres · *reproduced*
 16 November 2006 Dead · *not reproduced*
 23 November 2006 THANKSGIVING DAY FAST FOR PEACE · *not reproduced*
 29 November 2006 Tonight on Long Island · *not reproduced*
 2 December 2006 urgent query on Stein · *not reproduced*
 3 December 2006 Tragic news -- kari edwards · *reproduced*
 12 December 2006 When First Looking Into Radio Orphan · *reproduced*
 18 December 2006 Jasper Johns quote · *not reproduced*
 19 December 2006 What does "logotomy" mean? · *reproduced*
 21 December 2006 MLA off-site poetry reading - updated list of readers · *reproduced*
 25 December 2006 Strong JB · *reproduced*

2007

12 January 2007 begging the beguine - to andrew jones · *not reproduced*
 12 January 2007 Binoy Majumdar (1934-2006) · *announcement*
 13 January 2007 Rebe - to andrew jones · *not reproduced*
 15 January 2007 Rebegging (fluffy) band new brag · *reproduced*
 8 February 2007 HAIKU LIFE · *not reproduced*
 11 February 2007 Vagina Monologues Gets New Name · *not reproduced*
 12 February 2007 haiku · *reproduced*
 14 February 2007 Rodney Allen Jones Prize · *not reproduced*
 15 February 2007 Quasha with Halley and Ringgold at CAA ARTspace · *reproduced*
 6 March 2007 baraka · *not reproduced*
 7 March 2007 AWP.... · *reproduced*
 26 March 2007 Suzanne Stein at SPT · *reproduced*
 30 March 2007 clothing makes the poet · *not reproduced*
 9 April 2007 books -- trade? · *reproduced*
 12 April 2007 Maya Angelou on Imus -- and another missed opportunity? · *reproduced*
 17 April 2007 Virginia Tech/Nancy Shaw · *reproduced*
 18 April 2007 virginia tech/nikki giovanni/jan richman · *reproduced*
 19 April 2007 several strands · *reproduced*
 27 April 2007 YAPANCHITRA (A Portrait of Life) · *announcement*
 13 May 2007 Bay Area (Scene/Venue) Question · *reproduced*
 20 May 2007 Rush 2 Press? Ron Swegman... · *not reproduced*
 22 May 2007 Rush Philly 89 Swegman... · *reproduced*
 22 May 2007 i-outlaw 2.5 featuring Compton and Montaigne · *reproduced*
 25 May 2007 david horton's very good question · *reproduced*
 25 May 2007 david horton's very good question · *not reproduced*
 4 June 2007 ...a different kind of writing workshop... · *announcement*
 4 June 2007 Spare Room Collective in Portland? · *not reproduced*
 14 June 2007 Gil Ott correspondence · *reproduced*
 19 June 2007 the beautiful books · *not reproduced*
 12 July 2007 Irony/Inherent Contempt · *not reproduced*
 12 July 2007 'The Cult of the Amateur?-- Poetry and Art · *reproduced*
 29 August 2007 "An 80-Year-Old Poet for the MTV Generation" · *reproduced*
 25 September 2007 Poetry, Art, and the Book: a Conference at Yale Univeristy · *reproduced*
 29 September 2007 Which pop song most sets feminism back? · *reproduced*
 4 October 2007 Epistolary Forms--Your Ideas? · *not reproduced*
 4 October 2007 pj harvey/ l(r)j, etc... · *reproduced*
 7 October 2007 Foetry & Pavement Saw Press and David Baratier · *reproduced*
 6 November 2007 "musical" as descriptive of poetry · *reproduced*
 7 November 2007 "musical" as descriptive of poetry · *reproduced*
 22 November 2007 response to Bobbi Lurie · *reproduced*
 15 December 2007 20th century (Angela!) · *reproduced*

2008

- 7 January 2008 "Poetry" versus "Prose" in New Hampshire · *reproduced*
- 10 January 2008 "Poetry" versus "Prose" in New Hampshire · *reproduced*
- 17 February 2008 "Letters cast".. Cabri-Chirot · *reproduced*
- 17 February 2008 assuming the defense position? · *reproduced*
- 18 February 2008 "Letters cast".. Cabri- · *reproduced*
- 29 February 2008 Roland Barthes · *reproduced*
- 17 May 2008 Workshop Thang · *announcement*
- 14 October 2008 24 Hour Contest (Lyric, Poem) · *announcement*
- 3 November 2008 Nicely Out Of Tune (#2) · *announcement*
- 7 November 2008 MLA IN SF: Offsite Event in Oakland · *announcement*
- 1 December 2008 CAMBODIAN POETRY QUERY QUESTION THING · *not reproduced*
- 20 December 2008 12/27 EVENT (in Oakland) · *announcement*

2009

- 16 February 2009 Alice Notley poem questionnaire · *reproduced*
- 12 March 2009 POE TICS Dig 2009-55 · *announcement*

2010

- 17 April 2010 45 RPM Books... · *reproduced*
- 17 August 2010 Clark Coolidge Polaroid 20 · *not reproduced*
- 29 September 2010 Michael · *reproduced*
- 20 November 2010 D&Gtombstonechuckle · *reproduced*

2013

- 11 January 2013 Los Angeles Creative Writing Class · *announcement*
- 5 May 2013 New & Old Writings · *reproduced*
- 18 August 2013 Ashbery (April Galleons) Question · *reproduced*