

LE PROCESSUS DE CONCRETISATION.

Texte : pp. 25 à 31.

ÉVOLUTION DU TUBE ÉLECTRONIQUE

de 1924 à 1952

(au dessous de chaque modèle
est représenté le support
correspondant.)

Le culot en
bonite se réduit
de format, la
piémisation
entraîne ses
développements,
la miniaturisation
de la volume de
l'enveloppe de
verre.

1924

LAMPE À
4 BROCHES
(BALLON)

1930

LAMPE
SCREEN
(BULBE)

PENTHODE
À CULOT
OCTAL

1940

SEAL
TRANSISTUBE
(CINCINNATI)

1950

MINIATURE
À 7 BROCHES

SUBMINIATURE
À 9 BROCHES

1952

SUBMINIATURE
À 9 BROCHES
(MINIATURE
NOVAL)

The Only New Device

Appropriation, Procedure,
and the New on the
UB Poetics List, 1994-2013

A large working anthology of
posts from the UB Poetics List
tracing the appropriative and
procedural turn – from the
mid-1990s “New Coast” debates
to Flarf and conceptual writing.

Edited with an introduction by
Kristen M. Fabians

Fig. 7.

LE PROCESSUS DE CONCRETISATION
ÉVOLUTION DU TUBE ÉLECTRONIQUE

de 1924 à 1952

PENTHODE

PENTHODE

The Only New Device

Appropriation, Procedure, and the New on the UB Poetics List, 1994–2013

Assembled from the UB Poetics List archive, 1993–2014

For twenty years the UB Poetics List worried a single question in a hundred forms: whether there is anything genuinely new under the poetic sun, or whether every “new device” — appropriation, procedure, the found object, the machine-made poem — is an older inheritance under a newer name. This book follows that argument from the mid-1990s “New Coast” generation through Flarf and conceptual writing.

It gathers that argument from upward of ninety voices across two decades; every post is verbatim, in the writer's own spelling, beneath its original subject line, and attributed to the member who sent it, arranged into four parts. Where a member relays or quotes another writer — a letter, an essay, a poem sent round — the borrowed words are set as a block quotation and, where they can be, their author is named. The web addresses are live; the fuller threads remain in the archive.

Edited, with an introduction, by Kristen M. Fabians

Rebuilt from the July 21, 2026 edition · Anthropic Claude

Introduction

How the argument came before the names.

Two of the noisier poetic movements of the 2000s — Flarf and conceptual writing — arrived on this list already holding their names, their manifestos, and their enemies. What neither arrived holding was a new subject. Both are appropriation engines: Flarf trawls the internet with idiot search terms and files the catch as poems that are deliberately bad, deliberately funny, deliberately rude; conceptual writing retypes what already exists and calls the retyping, with a straight face, “uncreative.” Set the two side by side and the family resemblance is plain enough. Set them against the list's own back pages and something quieter appears — that the argument they were built to have had already been had, at length, years before either owned a word for itself.

The pattern was old long before the list was born. Once or twice a generation, American poetry stages the same drama, and it is worth remembering how the drama goes, because this book is one more performance of it. A younger, rawer cohort announces itself — usually in an anthology — and the incumbents ask whether it has invented anything or merely made a noise; the quarrel is conducted less over poems than over the right to the word new. It was staged most famously in 1960, when Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry* — the book that made a single movement of the Beats, the New York School, and Black Mountain simply by binding them together — squared off against the genteel *New Poets of England and America*, and the decade learned to sort its verse into the “raw” and the “cooked.” The Beats had already supplied the template a few years earlier: a generation dismissed as a fad, defined as much by the sneers it drew as by anything it published, and canonized before its elders had finished denying it existed. The UB Poetics List, founded in 1993 around the Electronic Poetry Center at Buffalo, inherited the whole drama and gave it something it had never had: a permanent, searchable, twenty-year record of the argument as it actually happened, sneers and typos and midnight second thoughts included.

The list's own performance opens with “Writing from the New Coast,” the *o•blék* anthology and Buffalo festival of 1993 that introduced a younger experimental generation and promptly set the elders wondering what, if anything, was new about it. The book turns on a single sentence from October 1994. Reviewing that anthology, Ron Silliman remarked that, with the lone exception of one poet's lift from Jenny Holzer, the collection contained no device you could not already find in the elders. Appropriation was the one new thing in the room; the rest was inheritance. The young did not take it lying down, and the fight it touched off — over “motivation,” over whether a rising generation is owed the same political reading its parents had claimed for themselves — runs from there to the conceptual-writing wars of 2009 with striking continuity. This book borrows its title from Silliman's phrase, in what I trust he would recognize as the appropriate spirit. And the New

Coast quarrel did not run alone: from the same mid-1990s, and on the same list, a second discourse was already underway — an extended argument over electronic literature and avant-garde poetics, the poem remade by the machine and the screen — that ran concurrent with the generational fight for two decades, now and then crossing it, and that this book gathers into a section of its own rather than scattering through the chronology.

Underneath every skirmish is the oldest anxiety the avant-garde carries. The shock of the new, in Robert Hughes's phrase, is also the avant-garde's habit, and a habit is not quite a program: to be new is at once the boast the movement must make and the claim it most distrusts when someone else makes it. The list worried this for two decades under a rotating cast of headings — “the fetish of newness,” “the zombie avant-garde,” “masculinity and the fetish of newness,” “50 years behind” — and never resolved it, because it does not resolve. That is the argument's engine, and it is why a debate that looks, from a distance, like squabbling over local reputations keeps turning out to be about something larger: what novelty is worth, who is allowed to claim it, and whether the claim is a discovery or a marketing department.

There is a vocabulary for this that the list never quite reached for, though the cover of this volume borrows its central image. In *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, Gilbert Simondon argued that a machine does not arrive whole and new but *concretizes* — it evolves from an abstract assembly of parts, each doing a single job, toward an integrated individual in which every element serves several functions at once, the way the vacuum tube thickened, cooled, and shrank across three decades from blown-glass balloon to subminiature without ever quite becoming a different thing. A device, in this account, is not so much invented as *individuated*; its novelty lies in the order and integration of its elements, not in the elements themselves. That is very nearly what Silliman meant in the sentence that gives this book its title — that there is no device in the anthology one cannot already find — and it is the suspicion the whole list keeps circling. Appropriation, procedure, the found text, the search engine, the poem made by machine: read across twenty years they look less like new organs than old ones concretized, tuned at last to a medium that could carry them. The screen did not invent the wish to write with a machine; it gave a very old wish a body it could finally live in.

I assembled the book backward. I went first to the quarrels that carried the names — to “Flarf,” to “uncreative writing,” to the bonfire of 2009 over Kenneth Goldsmith's *Day* — and let those threads tell me what the room could never quite stop arguing about: whether appropriation is a real device or a dodge; whether a work's charge sits in its concept or in the thing actually on the page; whether procedure frees a poem from expression or merely excuses it from feeling. Then I read backward, into the mid-1990s, to find out whether the list had been here before. It had — very nearly word for word.

What the reader will find, then, is less a chronicle of how a community operated than the anatomy of an argument, and it is sorted here into strands so the anatomy shows. Appropriation and theft — the found, the plagiarized, the readymade, the

hoax — recur from the mid-1990s cut-up and piracy threads straight through to Goldsmith's "uncreative writing." Procedure, chance, and constraint run from Jackson Mac Low and the Oulipo to the "longest poem in the world" machines. Gatekeeping — who gets into the anthology, who confers the prize — is the room where the pressure builds. Gender surfaces the sharpest charge in the book, that the cult of the new works, among its other offices, to "police the feminine." A digital strand follows the machine and the screen, from Christopher Funkhouser's 1994 "technopoetics" through the Buffalo e-poetry festivals to the arguments over codework and the unprintable. And all of it gathers, at last, into the *Day* affair, the longest single argument the list ever managed to have.

The four parts follow that arc. Part I, "Before the Name," is the mid-1990s: the "apex of the M," "G-ology," and "motivation" skirmishes over the new generation; the "missing generation"; Charles Bernstein's circulated catalogue of writing experiments; chance and Oulipo and the cut-up and a postmodern piracy festival; and, six years before he minted the word, Gary Sullivan on the Ern Malley hoax. Part II, "Machines & the Screen," follows the quieter argument the list kept up over electronic writing — hypertext and "technopoetics," the E-Poetry festivals at Buffalo, net art and code poetry and the unprintable poem. Part III is Flarf: the spam-poems and the manifesto, the Google method caught in the act, the invasion-of-Iraq "outing," the five minutes on the BBC, the T-shirts and the self-mockery. Part IV is conceptual writing, built around the *Day* affair — Kent Johnson's page-for-page parody of Goldsmith, and the many-sided quarrel it set off.

This is a fat and frankly over-generous book — a working archive, not a curated slim volume. I have kept the one-liners, the throwaways, the dismissals, and the plain rudeness, because on this particular subject the friction lives in a sneer as fully as in an essay, and a movement is defined as much by who rolled their eyes at it as by who signed on. Every post appears in its writer's own words, under its own subject line, with a name and a date. Reply-tails and list boilerplate are gone; where a member relays or quotes another writer, the borrowed words are set off as a block quotation; a handful of the longest posts are trimmed at the tail with a bracketed ellipsis; the web addresses are live; and everything else stands verbatim, misspellings included, because the misspellings are frequently the point. A Reader's Guide of twelve strands follows this introduction; then the full contents; then the posts themselves; brief lives of the contributors; and a note on sources.

None of this is meant to prove that Flarf and conceptual writing were frauds — a verdict that would flatter some of their practitioners and injure none of them. It is meant to show something quieter, and to my mind stranger: that a mailing list, left alone with a question for twenty years, will work it over so thoroughly and from so many sides that by the time a named movement turns up to settle the matter, the matter is already half-settled — and was often put best, and earliest, by someone who had not yet thought the argument worth a manifesto.

— *Kristen M. Fabians*

The Four Sections

Each title links to the start of its section.

I. Before the Name 1994–2003 · 40 posts

The “New Coast” generation arrives, and the list falls to quarreling over what, if anything, it has invented — the “apex of the M,” “G-ology,” the “missing generation,” and the anthology wars. The section is mostly argument: position posts, polemics, and thread-replies, with a few reviews and reading reports. Contributors include *Ron Silliman, Steve Evans, Joel *Kuszai, Chris Stroffolino, Stephen Vincent, Charles Bernstein,* and others.

II. Machines & the Screen 1994–2011 · 23 posts

A discourse on electronic writing and the machine of composition runs alongside the New Coast quarrel: hypertext and “technopoetics,” the Buffalo E-Poetry festivals, code poetry, chance, and constraint. It is the book’s most formally varied section, gathering essays and a manifesto alongside a relayed letter, a festival program, code-poetry exchanges, and whole reposted documents. Contributors include *Charles Bernstein, Brian Kim Stefans, Patrick *Herron, Christopher Funkhouser, Alan Sondheim, Jim Andrews,* and others.

III. Flarf 2002–2010 · 58 posts

The Flarf collective mines the internet for the deliberately bad and deliberately funny — spam-poems, the Google method, the scandals, the merchandise, and the self-mockery. It is mostly jokes and actual flarf poems, with one manifesto, a *Publishers Weekly* review, and a book announcement. Contributors include *Gary Sullivan, Michael Magee, K. Silem *Mohammad, Sharon Mesmer, Gabriel Gudding,* and others.

IV. Conceptual Writing 1998–2013 · 63 posts

Conceptual writing reframes the appropriative impulse as “uncreative writing,” and the list fights for years over Kent Johnson’s parody of Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Day*. The section collects essays, manifestos, and long debate threads, along with machine-poems, anthology announcements, and reposted documents. Contributors include *Kent Johnson, David-*Baptiste Chiot, Murat Nemet-Nejat, Geoffrey Gatza, Lewis LaCook, Derek Beaulieu,* and others.

A Reader's Guide

Twelve strands to follow through the volume; each name links to a post.

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 essay by Chirot to go with works at the UA Poetry Center — *David Chirot*, 30 May 2008
 Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center) — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 1 June 2008
 Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center) — *Barry Schwabsky*, 1 June 2008
 Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center) — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 1 June 2008
 Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center) — *Troy Camplin*, 3 June 2008
 Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center) — *Ryan Daley*, 3 June 2008
 Re: The “originality” of appropriation vs the mass media — *David Chirot*, 22 July 2008
 Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history? — *David-Baptiste Chirot*, 1 November 2008
 Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history? — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 2 November 2008
 Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history? — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 3 November 2008
 Re: capitalism and the long poem — *David-Baptiste Chirot*, 30 December 2008
 Re: capitalism and the long poem — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 31 December 2008
 Re: capitalism and the long poem — *Troy Camplin*, 31 December 2008
 Re: capitalism and the long poem — *Steve Russell*, 2 January 2009
 Re: The Longest Poem in the World — *David Chirot*, 22 August 2009
 Re: The Longest Poem in the World — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 24 August 2009
 Re: The Longest Poem in the World — *Daniel Zimmerman*, 24 August 2009
 Re: The Longest Poem in the World — *David-Baptiste Chirot*, 25 August 2009
 Re: The Longest Poem in the World — *Steve Russell*, 27 August 2009
 “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jeffrey Side*, 26 September 2009
 New blog post: “Another Day for Kent Johnson” — *Jeffrey Side*, 27 September 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jonathan Ball*, 28 September 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Skip Fox*, 30 September 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jason Harmon*, 30 September 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Bobby Baird*, 30 September 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Mairéad Byrne*, 30 September 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jonathan Ball*, 1 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jeffrey Side*, 2 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jonathan Ball*, 2 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Mairéad Byrne*, 2 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Murat Nemet-Nejat*, 2 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Hugh Tribbey*, 2 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jeffrey Side*, 2 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Jonathan Ball*, 4 October 2009
 Statement from Kent Johnson — *Kent Johnson*, 5 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Wystan Curnow*, 6 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Alison Croggon*, 6 October 2009
 Production film of Day by Kent Johnson — *Geoffrey Gatz*, 7 October 2009
 Re: “Day” by Kent Johnson — *Mark DuCharme*, 8 October 2009
 Re: 50 years behind — *Jeffrey Side*, 9 October 2009
 Re: 50 years behind — *Michael Marsh*, 10 October 2009
 Re: 50 years behind — *Chris Jones*, 12 October 2009
 Fitterman and Place Discuss the Response to “Notes on Conceptualisms” — *UbuWeb*, 17 December 2009
 Against Expression: Introductory Essays Available — *UbuWeb*, 12 February 2011
 I’ll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women — *Jennifer Karmin*, 9 August 2011
 Re: “Post-Avant: A Meta-Narrative” — *Michael Farrell*, 25 August 2011
 New from Snare: “Seen of the Crime: Essays on Conceptual Writing” — *Derek Beaulieu*, 19 September 2011
 Doggerel for the Masses by Kent Johnson — *William Freind*, 23 January 2012
 Charmless and Interesting: What Conceptual Poetry Lacks — *Jeffrey Side*, 4 August 2013
 The Compleat Purge by Trisha Low — *Patrick Durgin*, 29 October 2013

I

Before the Name

1994-2003

The younger generation gathered under the banner “Writing from the New Coast” arrives, and with it a quarrel over what — if anything — it has invented. The section is almost entirely talk about talk: position posts, polemics, and thread-replies, conducted less over poems than over the right to a word. Ron Silliman lights the fuse in October 1994 with a diagnosis he calls “Social Formalism” — the younger poets have inherited the devices of Language writing but not its motivation, working now under a movement that “sits owl-like on the landscape,” their “increasingly modest forms” marking, he says, “a draining of the social.” Steve Evans answers with the G1/G2 shorthand that will haunt the list for a year, and the argument is off: what is owed a rising generation, whether device without motive is theft or inheritance, and who gets to certify the new.

Underneath the schematics the friction turns personal and political by turns. Charles Bernstein makes the founding case for the small press with a thought experiment — if every trade and university magazine stopped printing poetry, “new poetry in the United States would hardly feel the blow.” Maria Damon names the gatekeeping when an anthology takes her Bob Kaufman essay but passes on the bolder one, about poetry by teenage girls in a Boston housing project, as outside a “traditional understanding” of the avant-garde. Kevin Killian corrects a lament about a “missing generation” of San Francisco poets with the truer absence — those who died of AIDS before the 1991 drugs arrived. And the anthology itself takes the worst of it: Gabriel Gudding torches it in Eisenhower's cadences, warning of “the anthologico-critical complex” and closing, “War is the health of the anthology.” It is a section of arguments still looking for their names.

Provisional Institutions

— Charles Bernstein · 16 August 1994

The founding case for the small press, opening with a thought experiment: if every trade, university, and national magazine stopped publishing poetry, “new poetry in the United States would hardly feel the blow.” Those institutions, Bernstein argues, marginalized themselves.

Charles Bernstein

Provisional Institutions: Alternative Presses and Poetic Innovation

In our period, they say there is free speech.
They say there is no penalty for poets,
There is no penalty for writing poems.
They say this. This is the penalty.

-- Muriel Rukeyser, "In Our Time", *The Speed of Darkness*

Imagine that all the nationally circulated magazines and all the trade presses and all the university presses in the United States stopped publishing or reviewing poetry. New poetry in the United States would hardly feel the blow. But not because contemporary poetry is marginal to the culture. Quite the contrary, it is these publishing institutions that have made themselves marginal to our cultural life in poetry. As it is, the poetry publishing and reviewing practices of these major media institutions do a disservice to new poetry by their sins of commission as much as omission -- that is, pretending to cover what they actually cover up; as if you could bury poetry alive. In consistently acknowledging only the blandest of contemporary verse practices, these institutions provide the perfect alibi for their evasion of poetry; for if what is published and reviewed by these institutions is the best that poetry has to offer, then, indeed, there would be little reason to attend to poetry, except for those looking for a last remnant of a genteel society verse, where, for example, the editor of *The New York Times Book Review* can swoon over watered-down Dante on her way to late-night suppers with wealthy lovers of the idea of verse, as she gushed in an article last spring. Poetry, reduced to souvenirs of what was once supposed to be prestige goods, quickly gets sliced for overaccessorizing, at least if the stuff actually talks back. If poetry has largely disappeared from the national media, nostalgia for poetry, and the lives of troubled poets, has a secure place. One of the clichés of the intellectual- and artist-bashing so fashionable in our leading journals of opinion is that there are no more "public intellectuals." The truth of the matter is that writing of great breadth and depth, and of enormous significance for the public, flourishes, but that the dominant media institutions -- commercial television and radio, the trade presses, and the nationally circulated magazines (including the culturally upscale periodicals) -- have blacklisted this material. Intellectuals and artists committed to the public interest exist in substantial numbers. Their crime is not a lack of accessibility but a refusal to submit to marketplace agendas: the reductive simplifications of conventional forms of representation; the avoidance of formal and thematic complexity; and the fashion ethos of measuring success by sales and value by celebrity. The public sphere is constantly degraded by its conflation with mass scale since public space is accessible principally through particular and discrete locations. Any of us teaching college will have ample proof of the frightening lack of cultural information, both historical and contemporary, of even the most searching of our new students. These individuals have been subjected to cultural asphyxiation administered not only by the barrage of network television or MTV, but also, more poignantly, by the self-appointed keepers of the cultural flame, who are unwilling to provide powerful alternative programming, prefer to promote, as a habit and a rule, a sanitized and denatured version of contemporary art, debunking at every turn the new and untried, the edgy or the cutting, the odd or unnerving; --that is those works of contemporary culture that give it life. Could I possibly be saying that the crisis of American culture is that there is inadequate support and distribution of difficult and challenging new art? Does a tire tire without air, an elephant blow its horn in

the dark, a baby sigh when the glass door shatters its face? The paucity of public funding for the arts has done irreparable damage to the body politic. Arts funding is as important as funding for public education. It's time for our federal, state and local governments to consider linking arts funding with education budgets: a percent for the arts! & if that seems farfetched, it goes to show how far afield our educational priorities are. Every dollar spent on the development and distribution of new art will save thousands of dollars in lost cultural productivity over the next fifty years.

At the community ("free") clinic I worked for in the early 1970s we sold T- shirts that said, "Healthcare is for people not profit." Not that we were ahead of our time. Times are just behind where they could be. Whenever I go into a Barnes & Noble Superstore or Waldenbooks (If we don't have it it must be literature!), I'm reminded that our slogan for healthcare applies to poetry too. Does anybody wonder anymore what the effects will be of the consolidation of publishing and book distribution companies into large conglomerates? Let them read cake. This month's bestseller list contains the perfect symbol for the current state of affairs as the two top slots are occupied, in effect, by the publicity machines designed to promote "cultural product". What sells, in this purest form of hype-omania is the apparatus of publicity itself: for here we have self-consuming artifacts par excellence -- no external referent need apply. Meanwhile, in the upscale journals that condescend to the truth bared by H. Stern and R. Limbaugh, no book has been more attended to than a memoir by one of the originators of this phenomenon, Willie Morris, formally editor of Harper's: for what better subject for promotion than promotion?

There is a world outside this semblance of culture. In poetry, its institutions go by the name of the small press and the reading series. Along with small press magazines and books, poetry reading series are the most vital site of poetic activity in North America. Readings provide a crucial place for poets not only to read their new work, but also to meet with each other and exchange ideas. Readings provide an intimately local grounding for poetry and are commonly the basis for the many regional scenes and groups and constellations that mark the vitality of the artform. Despite the fundamental importance of readings in the creation of North American poetry over the past forty years, very little attention has been given to this medium either in the press or by scholars and critics. While reading series are more concentrated in New York and the Bay area, many American cities have long-running local reading series. The best source of information about readings in New York City area is The New York City Poetry Calendar, which has been publishing a monthly broadside of poetry events since 1977 (60 E. 4th St #21, New York, NY 10003). The calendar lists about 300 different readings each month, has a print run of 7500 and a readership of well over 10,000. Poetry readings range from small bar and cafe and book store and community center series, with audiences ranging from ten to a hundred to poetry center readings that can draw from twenty to several hundred people. Community reading series differ in several crucial ways from university- sponsored series. These series often offer a forum for new and unpublished local poets through "open mike" and scheduled readings. The

organizers of these series rarely receive any compensation for their work -- and often can run a series for incredibly little money: the money from the door going to the poets plus a few hundred dollars a year for publicity. State and local arts agencies will sometimes provide such series up to a few thousand dollars for featured readers, which allows for some out-of-town poets to get travel money or a small fee of fifty to a few hundred dollars. Poets & Writers, Inc., is particularly helpful in these contexts, providing matching money for poets's fees. A community reading series can run a year of readings on less than many institutions spend on a single cultural event or speaker. That effects the spirit of the event. The atmosphere at a local reading series is often charged and interactive. In contrast, university series often suffer from a stifling formality. Unfortunately, English departments have been slow to include and support local readings series in their areas -- despite the fact that these series can often provide a lively point of entry into poetry for students new to its forms and formats. Despite the striking vitality of poetry readings, readings are never reviewed in any of the nation's daily or weekly newspapers, even though these papers routinely review theater and dance and art events whose scale is comparable. I suspect the reason is that cultural editors, like most literary critics and scholars, wrongly assume that the book is the only significant site of a poet's work. Contemporary North American poetry is realized as significantly in its performances in live readings as it is in its printed forms. Critical response to contemporary poems that fail to account for its performance are, for the most part, inadequate. For the scholar, the audio archive of poet's performance has become as fundamental as manuscripts, publication history, and letters; indeed, it is equal in importance only to the published text. Yet studies of the distinctive features of the poem-in-performance have been rare. In contrast, the drift of much literary criticism of the past decade has been away from the auditory and performative -- and therefore material -- aspects of the poem, partly because of the prevalent notion, commonly attributed to Saussure, that the sound structure of language is relatively arbitrary. In contrast, cognitive linguists such as Reuven Tsur, following Roman Jakobson, have recently emphasized research that demonstrates the expressiveness of sound patterns, at the same time, the "phonotext" -- or acoustic dimension -- of the poem has begun to receive some scholarly attention. This work, combined with the range of new work on performance theory, suggest a crucial new direction for literary studies.

The past thirty years has been a time of enormous growth of small press publishers. According to a Loss Pequeno Glazier's statistics in *Small Press: An Annotated Guide*, the number of magazines listed in Len Fulton's *International Directory of Little Magazines & Small Presses* has gone from 250 mostly poetry magazines in 1965 to 700 in 1966 to 2,000 magazines in 140 categories in 1976 to 4,800 magazines in 1990, of which about 40 percent were literary. The importance of the small press for poetry is not restricted to any aesthetic or indeed to any segment of poets. According to a recent study by Mary Briggs, independent noncommercial presses are the major source of exposure for all poets, young and old, prize winning or not. The staple of the independent literary press is the single-author poetry collection.

Douglas Messerli, publisher of Sun & Moon Press, a high-end small press comparable to Black Sparrow, New Directions, and Dalkey Archives, provided me with representative publication information for a 100-page poetry collection: Print-runs at Sun & Moon go from 1000 to 2000, depending, of course, on likely sales. Messerli notes that print-runs of less than 1000 drive the unit cost up too high and he encourages other literary presses to print a minimum of 1000 copies if at all possible. Sun & Moon titles are well-produced, perfectbound, and offset with full color covers. The printing bill for this runs from \$2600 to \$4000 as you go from 1000 to 2000 copies. Messerli estimates the cost of editing a 100-page poetry book at \$300: this covers all the work between the press receiving a manuscript and sending it to a designer (including any copyediting and proofreading that may be necessary as well as preparation of front and back matter and cover copy). Typesetting is already a rarity for presses like Sun & Moon, with authors expected to provide computer disks wherever possible. Formatting these disks (converting them into type following specifications of the book designer) can cost anywhere from \$300 to \$1000, one of those variable labor costs typical of small press operations. The book designer will charge about \$500. The cover will cost an additional \$100 for photographic reproduction or permission fees or both. Publicity costs must also be accounted for, even if, as at Sun & Moon, no advertising is involved. Messerli estimates publicity costs at \$1500, which covers the cost of something like 100 free copies distributed to reviewers, postage and packing, mailings and catalog pages, etc. The total cash outlay here, then, for 2000 copies, is around \$6800. (For the sake of this discussion, overhead costs -- rent, salaries, office equipment, phone bills, etc -- are not included; such costs typically are estimated at about 30 percent more than the cost of production). If all goes well, Sun & Moon will sell out of its print run in two years. Let's say Sun & Moon prints 2000 copies of the book and charges \$10 retail; let's also say all the books were sold. That makes a gross of \$20,000. Subtract from this a 50 percent wholesale discount (that is, most bookstores will pay \$5 for the book) and that leaves \$10,000. Subtract from this the 24 percent that Sun & Moon's distributor takes (and remember that most small presses are too small to secure a distributor with a professional sales force). That leaves \$7600. Now last, but not to be totally forgotten, especially since I am a Sun & Moon author, the poet's royalty; typically no advance would be paid and the author would receive 10 percent of this last figure, or \$760. That leaves \$6840 return to the publisher on a cash cost of about \$7000. As James Sherry noted years ago in *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*: a piece of paper with nothing on it has a definite economic value. If you print a poem on it, this value is lost. Here we have a vivid example of what George Bataille has called general economy, an economy of loss rather than accumulation. Poetry is a negative -- or let's just say poetic -- economy. But of course I've stacked the decks a bit. Many small presses will eat a number of costs I've listed. Copyediting, proofreading and design costs may be absorbed in the overhead if they are done by the editor-cum-publisher, proofreader, publicity department, and shipper. Formatting and production are commonly done on in-house computers. But these costs cannot be absorbed away -- 600 dpi laser printers and late-night

"poofreading" can cause some serious malabsorption problems for which your gastroenterologist has no cure. Then again, if a book generates enough of an audience to require reprinting, modest profits are possible, allowing the publication of other, possibly less popular, works. The situation for the independent literary magazines is similar to presses, and indeed many small presses started as little magazines. *o.blek*, a beautifully produced magazine edited by Peter Gizzi and Connel McGrath, was started on borrowed money in 1987. One thousand copies of the first 148-page issue cost \$1000 for typesetting, \$2700 for the printing, and \$400 for postage. That cost has remained relatively consistent, although a switch to desktop halved the typesetting cost. That first issue, with a cover price of \$5.50 (and with the distributor taking 55 percent), sold out in a year and a half. After one year, *o.blek* had about 75 subscribers; after six years, that number is 275 (a figure that does not include libraries, who mostly subscribe through jobbers). *o.blek*'s most ambitious publication (edited by Juliana Spahr and Gizzi) is just out: 1500 copies of a two-volume set, 600 pages in all, collecting poems and statements of poetics from mostly younger poets, many of whom participated in the Writing from the New Coast Festival held at the University at Buffalo last spring. Compare this to *Sulfur*, edited by Clayton Eshleman, who reports that there were 1,000 copies printed of the first issue in 1981 -- "maybe 50 subscribers at the time the issue was published, with perhaps 300 to 400 going out to stores. Now, 2000 copies per issue; around 700 subscribers, with 800 to 900 copies going to stores." Of course, many small presses and magazines produce more modest publications than *Sun & Moon*, *Sulfur* or *o.blek*. Indeed, the heart of the small press movement is the supercheap magazine or chapbook, allowing just about anyone to be a publisher or editor. In this world, marketplace values are truly turned upsidedown, since many readers of the poetry small press feel the more modest the production, the greater the integrity of the content. There is no question than many of the best poetry magazines of the postwar period have been produced by the cheapest available methods. In the 1950s, the "mimeo revolution" showed up the stuffy pretensions of the established, letterpress literary quarterlies, not only with their greater literary imagination, but also with innovative designs and graphics. In 1965, 23 percent of little presses were mimeo, 31 percent offset, 46 percent letterpress, according to *Fulton's Directory*. By 1973, offset had jumped to 69 percent, with letterpress at 18 percent, and mimeo only 13 percent. As Loss Glazier notes, the mimeo in "the mimeo revolution" is more a metaphor for inexpensive means of reproduction than a commitment to any one technology. Indeed, poetry's use of technology often has a wryly aversive quality. For example, as offset began to dominate the printing industry in the early 1970s, letterpresses became very cheap to acquire, so that presses like Lyn Hejinian's *Tuumba* and Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop's *Burning Deck* could produce books with little other cash expense than paper costs and mailing, given the editors willingness to spend hundreds of hours to handset every letter and often enough handfeed each page. In the metaphoric sense, then, the mimeo revolution is very much alive in the 1990s, with some of the best poetry magazines today -- such as *Abacus*, *Witz*, *Mirage* #4 (Periodical), *The Impercipient*, *Interruptions*, *lower limit speech*, *Letterbox*,

Situation, lyric& and Object -- consisting of little more than a staple or two holding together from 16 to 60 sheets of paper that have been xeroxed in editions of 50 or 100 or 150. Yet the new mimeo revolution for poetry is surely electronic. Because the critical audience of poets, mostly unaffiliated with academic institutions, does not yet have access to the internet, attempts to create on-line poetry magazines remain preliminary.

& technical problems abound; computers actually make reading and writing harder than previous technologies -- but it's just the difficulties that make for poetic interest. Still, the potential is there and a few editors have started to propose some basic formats for creating virtual uncommunities. In 1993, the first three electronic poetry magazines I know about were founded -- We Magazine, collectively edited in Santa Cruz, the Bay Area, New York City, and Albany (c/o cf2785@albanyvms) -- which in its active periods sends out one short poem per post to a list of subscribers; Grist, edited by John Fowler (████████), which has produced two full-length issues so far; and Rift, edited by Ken Sherwood and Loss Glazier (e-poetry@ubvm), which produced an ambitious array of material for its first issue a few months ago: the main body of the magazine featuring poems by 16 poets (the equivalent of 50 pages), plus a series of associated files of translations, poetics, a set of variations on a poem, and a chapbook. Also online is Luigi-Bob Drake's, and friends', Taproot Reviews (████████), an heroic effort to review hundreds of small magazines and chapbooks committed to "experimental language art & poetry." Experiments with poetry and poetics "listserve" discussion groups have also begun, with Joe Amato's pioneering Nous Refuse (████████), but as yet the intriguing mix of newsletter, group letter, and bulletin board has not yet found its place. It seems certain, however, that the net will be a crucial site for the distribution of works of poetry, especially out-of-print works, as well as for information on obtaining books and magazines, and, I suspect, for long-term local, national and international exchanges of ideas and work in progress. The new computer technology -- both desktop publishing and electronic publishing -- has radically altered the material, specifically visual, presentation of text. No doubt a new aesthetic will emerge. But at this point, the absence of visual aesthetics in the production of many desktop magazines is discouraging. Simply having access to a laser printer does not mean an editor has any idea how to design type. Ironically, many of the typewriter and mimeo publications of the past thirty years were visually richer than some of the more poorly designed desktop products. In the case of e-space, editors have, as of now, little control over the visual appearance of the text.

Distribution remains the most serious problem for the small press and one of the least understood parts of the process. While larger independent presses have distributors with sales representatives to visit bookstores, most small presses must rely on mailing lists and informal contacts to circulate their books and magazines. Small Press Distribution (1814 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702) is the most important source for alternative press titles published in the United States. With the recent demise of over half-a-dozen alternative press distributors, it is also the "sole

remaining noncommercial literary book distributor left in the entire country." SPD, which must take 55 percent of the retail price of a book (bookstores will typically take 40 percent or more of this), now distributes about 52,000 books a year, from over 350 presses, with net sales of \$360,000. Their quarterly catalogs and annual complete catalogs are fundamental resources. From 1980 to 1993, Segue Distributing published an annual catalog that offered a curated selection of small press titles that could be ordered through a central address. Segue, unlike most distributors, was able to articulate an aesthetic commitment with its choices, as well as being able to include presses and magazines too small to be handled by other distributors. In addition, Segue included selections of small press books and magazines from the UK, as well as New Zealand and Australia. Segue Distribution was discontinued this year after losing its government grant support. I suspect that in the future activities such as Segue's will best be handled through electronic bulletin boards or similar formats. One of Segue's most useful assets is its mailing list, which it makes available to affiliated presses. The mailing list keeps track of a shifting community of readers, with special attention to the local audience who wishes to receive notices of readings as well as the national and international audience who wishes to receive notices of book and magazine publications. I say community because audience is too passive a term to describe this matrix and because there is a tendency to speak of community when referring to a small press readership or, especially, the local "scene" for a reading series or a magazine. But I resist the term community as well, since it is more accurate to think of constellations of active readers interested in exchange but not necessarily collectivity. While much distribution of poetry takes place in the mail, we all owe a great debt to the few remaining independent bookstores that make an effort to keep in stock a full range of poetry titles. There is no substitute for flipping through new books and magazines in a bookstore, and such bookstores themselves are crucial sites of whatever a poetry community might be. We also owe a debt to those publications that are committed to reviewing and discussing small press publications, since one of the most involving aspects of the small press is the intensity of interchange that takes place in reviews, letters, correspondence and conversation. This is what makes *The American Book Review* so much livelier than *The New York Review of Books*. At their best, reviews and essays in the alternative poetry press are less concerned with evaluation than with interaction, participation and partisanship; in this respect, the prose of the small presses offer a refreshing alternative to the evaluative focus of newspaper and mainstream magazine reviews as well as the often stifling framelock of academic discourse. Indeed, the literary small press provides a forum not just for innovation in poetry but equally for innovation in prose, in the process demonstrating that a free press means giving writers stylistic freedom, not simply the freedom to express their opinions in mandated forms.

The power of our alternative institutions of poetry is their commitment to scales that allow for the flourishing of the artform, not the maximizing of the audience; to production and presentation not publicity; to exploring the known not

manufacturing renown. These institutions continue, against all odds, to find value in the local, the particular, the partisan, the committed, the tiny, the peripheral, the unpopular, the eccentric, the difficult, the complex, the homely; and in the formation and reformation, dissolution and questioning, of imaginary or virtual or partial or unavowable communities and/or uncommunities. Such alternative institutions benefit not just from the support of their readers and writers, but also from contributions from government, individuals, and foundations. Recently, such large foundations as the Lila Wallace - Readers Digest Fund have committed substantial funds to independent literary presses, but they have done so in ways that are often destructive to the culture of the institutions they propose to support. Rather than provide funds to directly support the production of books and magazines, or, indeed, editors or authors, such institutions insist on primarily funding organizational expansion, for example, by providing money to hire new staff for development, publicity, and management. While any money is welcome, the infrastructural expansion mandated by these foundations -- defended in the name of stabilizing designated organizations -- makes the small press increasingly dependent on ever larger infusions of money, in the process destroying the financial flexibility that is the alternative press's greatest resource. By pushing the presses they fund to emulate the structures of large non-profit and for-profit institutions to which they stand in honorable structural opposition, these foundations reveal all too nakedly their commitment to the administration of culture rather than to the support of poetry. Ironically, the negative economy of poetry is one of its greatest assets for our culture in that it provides an alternative system of valuation to the bureaucratic professionalism of the academy and to the commercialism of the book industry and art world, not to mention the TV and movie industries. But the value of the alternative institutions of poetry is not just that they do not seek, or make, a profit. In that respect, they are no match for such mainstream magazines as *The New Yorker*, which, despite a circulation that has recently surged to 750,000, appears to be losing as much as \$10 million a year (that's something like \$13 per subscriber) -- an amount that could finance a good part of the annual cost of the alternative poetry presses and readings and magazines. *The New Yorker's* parent company, S. I. Newhouse, is apparently less concerned with profit than with cultural dominance -- legitimating the cultural product that forms the basis of its media empire; for this exercise in hegemony, circulation and publicity are more important than profit. Literature is never indifferent to its institutions. A new literature requires new institutions, and these institutions are as much a part of its aesthetic as the literary works that they weave into the social fabric. The resilience of the alternative institutions of poetry in the postwar years is one of the most powerful instances we have of the creation of value amidst its postmodern evasions. When you touch this press, you touch a person. In this sense, the work of our innovative poetries is fundamentally one of social work.

Notes

Presented at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association on Dec. 29, 1993, in Toronto.

1. Rebecca Pepper Sinkler, "Hell Night at the 92nd Street Y," in *The New York Times Book Review*, 98:31 (May 9, 1993), p. 31. "For some" ("We lucky few" is the last sentences of the article) "there was to be a post-poetry spread laid on by Edwin Cohen (a businessman and patron of literature) back at his apartment at the Dakota, a Dantesque menu announced in advance: roast suckling stuffed pig stuffed with fruit, nuts, and cheese; Tuscan salami; prosciutto and polenta, white beans with fennel."

2. "The budget for the National Endowment for the Arts, which has not changed appreciably in the last 12 years, is smaller than the Department of Defense's budget for its 102 military bands," according to an article in *The New York Times*, 3/13/93, p. C13.

3. Rush H. Limbaugh 3d, *See I Told You So* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993) and *Howard Stern Private Parts* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

4. Loss Pequeno Glazier, *Small Press: An Annotated Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), pp. 2-3.

5. Mary Biggs, *A Gift that Cannot Be Refused: The Writing and Publishing of Contemporary American Poetry* (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990); cited in Glazier, p. 38.

6. Clayton Eshleman, letter to the author, 11 January 1994. Information on Sun & Moon Press is based on an interview with Doulgas Messerli in November 1993; information on o.blek is based on an interview with Peter Gizzi in December 1993.

7. *Abacus*, edited by Peter Ganick (181 Edgemont Avenue, Elmwood, CT 06110) is the longest running of these magazines; in February, 1984, they published their 80th issue, *Cornered Stones Split Infinities* by Rosmarie Waldrop. *Witz*, edited by Chritopher Reiner (P.O. Box 1059, Penngrove, California 94951), is a newsletter feauturing poetics, reviews, and listings of recent publications; it is published three times a year in associaton with *Avec*, a magazine comparable to *Sulfur* and *o.blek*. The other magazines mentioned feature new poetry, often by younger or infrequently published poets: *The Impercipient*, ed. Jennifer Moxley (61 East Manning Street, Providence, RI 02906); *Letterbox*, ed. Scott Bentley (379 Latimer Place, Oakland, CA 94609); *Mirage #4/ Period(ical)*, ed. Kevin Killian and Dodie Bellamy (1020 Minna, San Francisco, CA 94103); *Situtation*, ed. Mark Wallace; *object*, ed. Kim Rosenfeld and Rob Fitterman (229 Hudson Street #4, New York, NY 10013); *lyric &*, ed. Avery E. D. Burns (P.O. Box 640531, San Francisco, CA 91640-0531); *lower limit speech*, ed. A. L. Neilsen (1743 Butler Avenue #2; Los Angeles, CA 90025); *Interruptions* (a magazine of collaborations), ed. Tom Beckett (131 North Pearl Street, Kent, OH 44240).

8. In February 1994 Grist announced its first electronic book, *Gleanings: Uncollected Poems of the Fifties* by David Ignatow, including many poems "published here for the first time." Cost is \$25 on diskette; the text is also available online.

9. Letter, dated October 22, 1993, to affiliated publishers from Lisa Domitrovich, Executive Director, SPD.

10. During much of this period, I worked as editor of the catalog.

11. Elizabeth Kolbert, "How Tina Brown Moves Magazines," in *The New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 5, 1993, p. 87.

12. Publishing statistics are notoriously unreliable, especially when they concern the amount publishers are willing to lose -- less to obtain cultural legitimacy, I would say, than to establish cultural values. According to *The New York Times* (3/2/94, p. C20), Harold M. Evans, the publisher of Random House's adult trade division, told an audience at the PEN American Center that "the 29 books he published that made it on to *The New York Times*'s 1993 list of Notable Books lost \$680,000" and the eight books that "won awards from the American Library Association lost a total of \$370,000." Evans went on to say that three of these books had advertising budgets of \$71,000 to \$87,000 each and that these books lost from \$60,000 to \$300,000 each. Innovative works of literature or criticism or scholarship that challenge the dominant cultural values of institutions such as Random House are not the most likely candidates to receive this type of support; yet without such subventions they stand little chance of being reviewed or recommended in *The New York Times*, whose reviews are closely correlated to its advertisers. The point is not that official "high" culture, just as alternative-press poetry, requires subsidies; but that a system of selection and support favors certain works over others; it is this system of selection and promotion that allows the media conglomerates to control cultural sectors that they have written off as largely unprofitable. Note, however, that the content of the selections is less important for this system of dominance than the system of selection and promotion itself, since the alternative presses can never afford to lose as much as these corporations. It should be no surprise that it is neither the audience nor quality nor accessibility that creates official literary product, nor that much of official "high" culture is a loss leader. Advertising and promotion of targeted "loss leaders" are evidently worth the price in influencing literary and critical taste, specifically by fostering a cultural climate in which genuinely profitable products may thrive. The recent "fiction" issue of *The New Yorker* (June 27/July 4, 1994) is a perfect example of how that magazine goes about promoting the idea that "Only what sells has value and value is determined by the extent of the sales." The issue included a "good cop" feature on a struggling "serious" fiction writer that, while seeming to question the value system of commercial publishing, actually reinforced its claim to exclusive value. Remarkably, the piece, and indeed the whole magazine issue, systematically avoided any reference to alternative and independent presses so as to better foster the illusion (not to say comic notion) that the New York trade presses are the sole purveyors of literature. The story on the "struggling" writer emphasized that he had been praised

by the Times (which, inevitably, is where the author of the profile had first heard about his work, since that's where you hear about worthwhile fiction) and had five books with HarperCollins that are neither (Si forbid!) "inaccessible or highbrow". The problem seemed to be that he was shifting from one New York trade press to another (a Disney affiliate) and that his projected advance would be only \$10,000 (nonetheless, considerably more than most literary writers in this culture receive) (pp. 48-9). The New Yorker's sell was so hard that the following "bad cop" article got right down to business. It was devoted exclusively to promoting the preeminent cultural value of the top ten books on the Times's best seller list: "They have a better ear [than nonbestselling fiction] for what we say, or try to say, or don't notice we're saying -- for the small ways in which the mind works and stumbles" (p. 80); so eat your Wheaties, kids! "Wonder Bread helps build bodies 12 ways" (& that wholewheat stuff doesn't taste as good either!) I don't think "we" can say it any better than that.

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Re: absurd category

— Ron Silliman · 25 October 1994

Silliman grants that "language" poetry was always an "absurd category," then recovers the names that came first — Grenier's "nonreferential formalism," Perelman's "steady state" — before the label stuck via the May 1979 Poetry Flash issue. The Fauvists, he notes, were once "beasts" too.

Take the absurd category of something called "language" poetry. Somebody explain to me what that means and what its usefulness is outside of hand to hand combat with some other equally absurd category called "mainstream".

The category IS absurd.

People had been using a wide variety of terms to indicate a movement within poetry (movement in the tidal/glacial sense more than in the civil rights movement sense), particularly w/in the New American Poetry tradition, since about '70. Grenier had proposed "nonreferential formalism" by at least '72, Perelman was trying "steady state," Michael Davidson & Bruce Andrews had both used formulations with the word "language" in it, but the reality was there was no name and everyone involved new there was a real creative tension between what we were doing and poets who saw themselves much more strictly "within" a given New American tendency. (A couple of editors of the St Marks Newsletter during the 70s, for example, simply refused to acknowledge our existence and would list every single contributor to a publication like The World EXCEPT myself, Watten, Andrews, Bernstein, etc. It had a Kafka-esque quality to it, and I won't say that we did not react emotionally to that sort of behavior.)

But the LP name was attached as a label to a number of poets after the Poetry Flash special issue on same (May of '79), where it was used by two of the authors, Steve

Abbott, who was simply looking for a shorthand term, and Alan Soldofsky who was looking to denounce whatever it was that was new. So it was not unlike the Fauvists being called "beasts" or the "Beats" having been named by a newspaper columnist with very similar intentions to Soldofsky's.

Not surprisingly, everybody's reaction to the term for the first five years was to deny its existence or that he or she was a LP (I heard the term LangPo at Naropa this summer, and I rather like that variation). Other people threw out alternatives, such as Watten's Social Formalism (still the best and most inclusive term, since the term language poetry suggests a focus that was never so sharply fixed as the category makes it seem).

One of the reasons the term stuck was the magazine, of course, but I think also that another reason was precisely everybody's defensive reaction to it. It was/is a tease.

Tinker Greene used to say "the only way to tell a language poet is that they deny being a language poet." I used to counter that with "anybody is an LP who has been attacked as an LP" although admittedly even Jorie Graham has been attacked for her LP proclivities.

But as a marketing device, there is no question that the term had profound (and generally positive, to our surprise and I suspect to the frustration of Soldofsky & those who agreed w/ him that what was absurd was our poetry) impacts on all our lives.

Lately, the naming game I've heard most has been for the nexus around Lew Daley, Pam Rehm, Kristen Prevallet, Will Alexander, Alan Gilbert, Elizabeth Robinson et al.

Terms that I heard used at Naropa for that nexus included: The Christian Language Poets The New Mysticism The Buffalo Problem The New Coasters and a few others (I wrote them down as I heard them). Whatever one thinks of the writing (my position is that some is interesting, some is not, just like everything else), they certainly have created a sense of collective unity as to make people want to join them into a noun phrase, whatever it might mean.

I'm generally intrigued at this process of naming. What does it mean that 17 generations of the New York School keep getting called New York School. Just how New York is it when someone like Lee Ann Brown, with that terrific southern accent and dividing her time between Providence & Boulder, becomes a central mover?

All language is very close to the act of naming, as my two-year old twins remind me several thousand times a day. But between naming as such an "categorization" enters a whole other level, society.

Ron Silliman

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Re: Motivation

— Ron Silliman · 28 October 1994

Silliman coins "Social Formalism" and drops the line that will rankle: younger poets share the devices but lack the social motivation, working under a Language poetry that "sits owl-like on the landscape." o•blék's "return to the lyric," he says, marks the social draining out.

What I like about Social Formalism is that it combines both the general thrust of the activity with the general thrust of the motivation for such activity, i.e., that these writings are/were motivated for explicitly social reasons, even where (as often enough was the case) the definition of the social reason would have been hard to get at beyond "general sense of dissatisfaction w/ the present condition of things"

What separates most of the writers in *In the American Tree*, for example, from poets now ages 25-30 doing superficially similar things on a page, is precisely that sense of motivation. Not that younger poets don't have motivation, but it's a different one, generally. And the fact that something like *LangPo* sits owl-like on the landscape is part of the problem any younger poet must thus face.

The impulse to write in the way that, say, Stephen Rodefer did 10 years ago, is not the same today. Even for Stephen.

I actually think that is why in the *O•blék* anthology we see such a "return to the lyric" as a mode. It represents precisely the draining of the "social" from that equation.

Which may be why, w/ the exception of Mark Mendel's appropriation of Jenny Holzer's sense of display for poetry, there are no literary devices in that collection that you cannot already find in *The New American Poetry*, *In the American Tree* or *The Art of Practice*.

"Experimental poetry" I think tries as a category to express the same combination of activity & motivation, but both terms in the equation seem too vague ultimately. And I do think that for many poets, esp. during the 1950s, the first term in that category carried with it some connotation of the "prestige of science" -- Think of Bern Porter, or even Kostelanetz. Or Eli Mandel, who went from "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" (one of the interesting attempts at the American long poem during the so-called modernist era which has not made it even into the most retro canon as yet) to true crackpot science "curing gays of homosexuality" on the rightwing homophobic circuit before he died. Zukofsky has that same sense of wearing the lab coat at the blackboard. The Doctor will see you now.

What has always struck me about the negativity we see with the word formalism has been those people who presume it to represent an impulse toward stasis--the new formalists are a positive expression of this, but it could be found in inverted ways in Tom Clark's attack on *LangPo* and elsewhere.

Every label expresses an agenda. Think of the terms for the apex of the M nexus: "Christian Language Poets" definitely throws them into some role as

variant/tributary--definitely a subservient position. The New Mysticism says nothing of their practice as writers (which in turn is a slam on their writing) The Buffalo Problem may be cute but in fact their work cannot be generalized to the larger Buffalo scene where, I'm told, they've largely disappeared Ditto the New Coasters Somebody told me off-line that in Buffalo they are called the Scroll Swallowers altho I've not seen the poem that refers to.

But if every label expresses an agenda the hidden nature of that agenda is what would make the 17th generation of The New York School an interesting intellectual problem as such

There are real strategic advantages to having access to a term whose meaning has become as vague as that, almost a protective covering

So when I see a label, I ask what does it say of the activity & motivation of those are labeled? "Poets associated with United Artists" seems to deliberately skirt some of these issues, tucked right under the name of the magazine

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Motives & Devices

— Steve Evans · 30 October 1994

Evans steps into the generational seam and tries to strip Silliman's claims of their "obviousness," introducing the soon-notorious G1/G2 shorthand and schematizing the elder's argument into three numbered claims about motivation, device, and generation.

Ron Silliman's recent posting on "motivation" raised some difficult questions about the current state of inter-generational relations within one sub-domain of oppositional poetry. I want to dwell on a few of the claims Ron made in his posting, claims that struck me as problematic and provocative in equal proportions. If possible, I'd like to rob of their "obviousness" certain assumptions that seem to have hardened along the seam where two generations, one established and one emerging, meet. Though I doubt the following re- marks can achieve that goal, perhaps other people can find a way to move us towards it?

Ron makes three claims in the first five graphs of his posting, each of which pertains to the inter- section of motivation/device/generation. I don't have a "copy" function available to me, so I will reproduce these claims schematically before noting what seems problematic about them to me.

Claim 1: "what separates most of the writers in In the American Tree, for example, from poets now ages 25-30 doing superficially similar things on a page, is precisely...motivation."

[For the sake of economy, in the following I'm going to use the shorthand G1 to indicate "writers in *In the American Tree*," and G2 for "writers now ages 25-30" (some of whom appear in o-blek 12: *Writing from the New Coast*).]

Ron identifies the "motivation" of G1 as "explicitly social...even where (as often enough was the case) the definition of social reason would have been hard to get at beyond 'general sense of dissatisfaction w/ the present condition of things.'" This seques into

Claim 2: the "return to the lyric" in o-blek 12 "represents precisely the draining of the 'social' from" the concerns of G2. Which in turn leads to

Claim 3: this "draining of the 'social'" explains "why, with [one exception], there are no literary devices in [the *New Coast*] that you cannot already find in *The New American Poetry*, *In the American Tree* or *The Art of Practice*."

Apropos Claim 1: I see plenty of evidence in both volumes of the *New Coast* to suggest that G2 meets the minimal definition of "social motivation" provided by Ron ("general dissatisfaction w/the present condition of things"). If anything, the failure of the New Left and the impasses of identity politics seem to have *increased* that dissatisfaction, while the fact that G1's claims for the social efficacy of its collective poetic project have only been partially borne out suggests the necessity of exploring alternate routes.

Apropos Claim 2: The ominous scenario in which the social is somehow "drained" away only makes sense if such devices as one finds in ITAT represent the exclusive means of criticizing existing social relations and evoking potentials for social transformation. Ron establishes a double bind for G2: continue to employ G1's devices (in which case you'll be labelled derivative and your motivation will be characterized as improper) or invent/adopt other devices (in which case you'll be accused of permitting the "social" to "drain" away). I've been seeing variants of this argument since the mid-80s, and I'd have thought it was clear by now that there is more than one way to compose/propose the social in poetry, and that the employment of devices associated with the lyric genre does not automatically entail the abandonment of an oppositional literary and social project.

Apropos Claim 3: Does it make sense to compare the *New Coast*, an emphatically "prospective" collection of 119 young writers, to such retrospective anthologies as the *New American Poetry* and ITAT? (I leave aside *The Art of Practice*, though the fact that 10 of the 45 writers presented there also appear in the NC makes the attempt to set them sharply at odds untenable). I think the question of what devices these young writers will develop in their careers is anything but settled at this point. The suggestion that G2 has "returned" to the lyric implies that the question has already been settled in favor of a modest conservatism: in which case it remains to be explained why no three poets in the *New Coast* could be inserted into the NAP or ITAT without substantially changing the texture of either preceding collection.

I think the summary judgement that G2 brings forward "no new devices" is a conveniently veiled way of discrediting work that mobilizes a host of "devices" and puts into play a range of "motivations" that haven't yet been codified (and, in response to the perceived "programmaticism" of G1, may not elect to use the strategies of codification favored by that previous generation).

There are other questions that could be posed here (why for instance the Apex of the M has been taken as the chief development requiring explanation in the past year or so, despite the fact that its version of repressive resublimation hardly accounts for the only instance of "collective unity"--as Ron phrases it in an earlier post--to be seen in that time; cf. "Chain" for instance, also "out of" Buffalo). But I have already gone on too long....

Regards to everyone out there!

Steve Evans

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G2

— Ron Silliman · 31 October 1994

Answering Evans, Silliman disowns any claim that Language poetry's devices are the "exclusive means" of social critique, then reasserts the diagnosis: it is the "increasingly modest forms" of G2's work — that very modesty — he means by a "draining of the social."

Steve Evans always has interesting and valuable points to make. I want to unpack a couple here.

Apropos Claim 2: The ominous scenario in which the social is somehow "drained" away only makes sense if such devices as one finds in ITAT represent the exclusive means of criticizing existing social relations and evoking potentials for social transformation.»

I didn't (don't) make any claim of exclusivity of devices for In the American Tree and the concept makes no sense to me. I could point to hundreds of alternative examples from my own generation alone that are equally social but well outside the positioned critique that separates out most of the Tree's poets from the broader (less differentiated) terrain.

Ron establishes a double bind for G2: continue to employ G1's devices (in which case you'll be labelled derivative and your motivation will be characterized as improper) or invent/adopt other devices (in which case you'll be accused of permitting the "social" to "drain" away).

What other devices? It is precisely the continuation of the same set of devices in increasingly modest forms that characterizes the broader poetics of G2, as Steve calls it in a curiously clinical abbreviation. It is that modesty, as such, that I was

getting at as a "draining of the social" -- and I accept the possibility that it may actually represent a much more complex ensemble of social phenomena, that may well include grave doubt over the possibilities of collective action (say), all of which would be well worth elaborating on at length

And I should note from the outset the obvious, that the choice of such forms need not limit any individual poet from achieving as much as anybody ever has. It seems clear to me that some of the writers in O-blek 12 -- Lee Ann Brown and Jessica Grim for example -- have already established themselves as major poets. On anybody's terms.

Apropos Claim 3: Does it make sense to compare the New Coast, an emphatically "prospective" collection of 119 young writers, to such retrospective anthologies as the New American Poetry and ITAT?

I for one don't buy the "prospective" nature of O-blek 12 as anything other than as a stance. And a troubling one. The average age of the poets in O-blek 12 may well be 5 years OLDER than the poets in the Allen anthology, for example. And the aggressive placement of the "spirit" section at the front of the "technique" (i.e. theory) volume shows an overall argumentative structure that is more aggressive even than the Tree. What "prospective" seems to mean here is a reluctance to acknowledge or own its own position. At least the Apex folks don't suffer from that.

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G2 -(G1xG7(d/t)+P)

— Kenneth Sherwood · 31 October 1994

A G2 poet left out of o•blék, Sherwood pushes back that the social has not been forsaken, citing Chain and quoting Joel Kuszai's Meow Press statement — founded to "reopen the anthologizing-closure process" that the New Coast festival set in motion.

Not to contentious, but as a demographic member of G2 (one not represented in Oblek) I would want to qualify the suggestions that the 'social' and the 'state' have been foresaken. A project like _Chain_ seems but one example of recent, socially engaged endeavors. I cannot bring to mind any equally extensive examination of the conditions of textual production, at least outside of LANGUAGE magazine.

It might be useful to recall just one of the editorial statements floated across POETICS@UBVM in recent weeks by Joel Kuszai:

Meow Press was established in August of 1993 as a response to the New Coast festival and also the rapid proliferation of electronic publishing. In the case of the former, there is the hope that by getting involved it might be possible to reopen the anthologizing-closure process set in motion by that fateful gathering; that it might be possible to exist in a state where the printing of a book of poems might be - in the tradition of printer-poets such as Lyn Hejinian - an extension of one's own activity of writing. In the case of the latter, the romance of making books by hand that utilized the hot carbon transfer process as ultimately temporal ephemera, yet palpable

physical without too much nostalgia for the Book. An obsessive typography startup kit.

Against the 'anthologizing-closure process' of generational typecasting (Buffalo, NY...home of the Wings, the Bills and 'spirit') might be laid the range of local (but nonetheless social) of Chain, Meow Press, Leave Books, Rif/t, Apex, Tailspin Press, Channel 500 poster-poems (and recent transplants) Poetic Briefs, and Situation.

As I survey this range of G2 products, spirit would seem to be suffering a decided trade deficit, even here in the home of the faithful fans. So while in the Generational Equation these variables are harder to quantify, I imagine each to be testing poems in discernable (I might even claim, 'experimental') if not immediately classifiable ways.

Ken Sherwood

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G-ology

— Steve Evans · 31 October 1994

Evans apologizes for inflicting "G2" on the list, then names his dread — that the case for new work must be made to the Social Formalists themselves: "say it ain't so!" He probes the leap from the "tyranny of the signifier" to anti-capitalist struggle.

First, my apologies for introducing such an absurd notation as "G2" into list usage. I only intended it as a tool for grasping what felt to me like the conventional/abstract nature of Ron's speculations on the work of emerging writers.

Having spent a significant portion of my fairly brief intellectual life trying to force discussions about the work Ron refers to as "Social Formalism" into a space not totally predecided by stereotype and phobic characterization, I get a little anxious when I think the whole labor of insisting on the specificity and value of a new body of work will have to be repeated (and to no less than the Social Formalists themselves). Ron & others: say it ain't so!

But on to specifics. Marjorie Perloff's remarks about the shifting tenor of political commitments among progressives in the U.S. make sense, but let's not forget that the "burning political concerns" of **In the American Tree** were/are by no means self-evident: to accept Bruce Andrews's "In Funnel" or David Melnick's **Pcoet** as doing political work, one has to have a sense of the political rather more elastic than most people on the left had in the 70s or for that matter have today. To abbreviate a much longer discussion: it takes a highly developed utopian imagination to get from linguistic to social activism; from the "tyranny of the signifier" (a phrase that is laughable today but which articulated aspirations for social change for some people in the 70s-80s) to anti-capitalist struggle.

What I don't understand is why this hard-won utopian intelligence (or say: set of reading practices) is not brought to bear on the *New Coast.* If you can read Rae Armantrout as "positioned critique" can't you do the same for Robert Kocik?

I suppose that at some point, Ron, names will have to be mentioned to go along with generalizations such as "the continuation of the same set of devices in increasingly modest forms...characterizes the broader poetics of G2." I'm honestly not sure what's at stake for you in such remarks.

On the question of "average ages" of *NC* and *NAP,* it seems clear to me that biological age doesn't equal "age" in terms of the poetic field.

To clarify one general point in closing: I am not under the impression that a collective re-definition of what poetry is and does has as yet been articulated by G2, which is perhaps all Ron means to be saying. Given the way literary fields work in capitalist social formations, the failure to achieve such a collective redefinition will lead to a lot of interesting poetry disappearing beneath the ready-made rubrics that persist from the last time such a struggle was won.

Gotta go...

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G-ology

— Ron Silliman · 1 November 1994

Silliman opens with "self-criticisms" — a Chain conflation corrected, Eli Siegel restored as author of Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana — then crowns Evans's o•blék intro "the most heroic attempt to date," while faulting Apex's manifesto for taking "L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poet" too literally.

First, two corrections, or, as we G1-ers are wont to say, self-criticisms:

Jena's right that I conflated Chain & A Poetics of Criticism. Mea culpa. Tho she doesn't mention that her co-editor also co-edited the Technique section of O-blek 12. I would love to have somebody FULLY elucidate the differences between the various publications with their overlapping editorships. I frankly could learn a lot from that.

Second correction: nobody seems to have caught my error in assigning authorship of Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana to "Eli Mandel." It was Eli Siegel (who still turned into a professional homophobe at the end of his life). WCW wrote the intro to Siegel's book. Anybody out there read it?

Steve Evans' intro to the Technique section of O-blek 12 seems to me the most heroic attempt to date to articulate a terrain for G2. I think that he's right in that intro about the motivating "hatred of identity" that runs through the work, although his reading of the phenomena in O-blek is more broad and generous than that espoused in Apex's "State of the Art" manifesto. I used those two pieces with my class at Naropa, which led to some lively, albeit inconclusive discussions. Certainly

nobody has ever done a more aggressive job misreading and stereotyping a community than Apex' broad swipes at G1 (& esp. LangPo): "an avant-garde dominated in its practices by a poetics espousing the priority of 'language itself' over all other relations." (p. 5)

Is that not a classic instance of labelling theory taking the misnomer "L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poet" just a wee bit literally? I've never once met a G1 who espoused that.

Or, later on the same page, "a participatory valorization of this disintegration...." Haven't both Gayatri Spivak & Bob Perelman completely answered that in response to Fred Jameson's only-slightly-more-in-depth reading of the poem "China"?

And, throughout State of the Art, an entire series of presumptions concerning the social functions of innovation, as though everyone from M. Bertrand thru G1 were an Italian futurist celebrating the potentiality of the submachine gun. Talk about "phobic characterization"!!

I think what makes the Apex group stand out so much, especially at a distance (where, for example, it's easier to forget [or ignore] that Alan Gilbert, Kristin Prevallet and Lew Daly, the editors whom I've actually met, are all lovely, charming, intelligent people, as full of complexity and caution as one might want), is precisely the directness of their address, which shoots right through even the "post"-iness of its convoluted syntax. While Steve wants me to "say it ain't so," the Apexers say openly that "a new understanding of our task as iconoclasts and not innovators will emerge." If I ignore for a moment how I feel at the lack of accuracy and generosity in their description of my cohorts in G1, that's still an interesting and difficult claim to make and I want to know more. What distinguishes them as a group phenomenon is their ambition--it's the most "out there" manifesto we've had in ages--even if their "ambition is to have no ambition" (as I think the British punk band The Gang of Four once put it, back in the swampy G1 days of 1982).

[...]

But on to specifics. (This is Steve "talking") Marjorie Perloff's remarks about the shifting tenor of political commitments among progressives in the U.S. make sense, but let's not forget that the "burning political concerns" of *In the American Tree* were/are by no means self-evident: to accept Bruce Andrews's "In Funnel" or David Melnick's *Pcoet* as doing political work, one has to have a sense of the political rather more elastic than most people on the left had in the 70s or for that matter have today.

At the point that David wrote Pcoet, he was either about to (or just had) abandoned his idea of ever finishing his dissertation (the one chapter he wrote appeared in the Maps special issue on Zukofsky), and came out of the closet to his students at Berkeley with a vengeance, platform shoes and glitter in his beard. There was absolutely no way that any one confronting either him or that text in those days

could not see the text's relation not just to the history of modernism but also to what was then known as "gender fuck" politics.

The argument for Bruce's work is not dissimilar. Tho his idea of gender fuck is a little different.

Besides, one of the major thrusts of one strain of G1 was to counter the various modes of vulgar left critical/aesthetic practice. Bruce Boone, Bob Gluck, Steve Benson, myself and Kathleen Fraser were all once in the same marxist study group, and we had some TERRIFIC arguments. In every sense of that word. And every single one of the G1s who were politically active (not just through our poetry) dealt with these issues repeatedly.

What I don't understand is why this hard-won utopian intelligence (or say: set of reading practices) is not brought to bear on the *New Coast.*

I disagree that this is what's goin' on. Here the claim in Apex about "iconoclasts and not innovators" rings much truer to my ear. What I want to know is what the social content of that might be.

If you can read Rae Armantrout as "positioned critique" can't you do the same for Robert Kocik?

Yes, absolutely. I'm interested in examining the nature of each position. I'm not especially making the argument for my g-g-g-generation. I suppose that at some point, Ron, names will have to be mentioned to go along with generalizations»

Oh, I still do believe in Lenin's idea that the move toward "abstraction" is toward the truer layer of the concrete.

I'm honestly not sure what's at stake for you in such remarks.

I thought (still do) that if I prod a little, I'd get some interesting feedback from poet(s) in G2 (maybe even G3) who would further articulate the landscape, so that the "prospective" (i.e. inchoate) nature posed by O-b 12 might give greater rise to a new shared vision of a broader terrain. Frankly, I'd like to see less reactive criticism and more manifestos a la Apex (and from a broad range of positions). I find it interesting (very ambiguous word here, and deliberately so) that the most detailed response has come from somebody who positions himself as a critic and not as a poet, as such.

On the question of "average ages" of *NC* and *NAP,* it seems clear to me that biological age doesn't equal "age" in terms of the poetic field.

Huh? Actually, the question of age is a complex one all on its own. One of the real values of The Art of Practice is its inclusion of a number of poets generationally part of G1 who did not begin publishing until later than most of those in Tree. (I'm reminded, say, how late both Jackson Mac Low and Hannah Weiner were to publish regularly. When Jackson was my age, 48, he had exactly 6 books in print.)

But I do think that there's a generational dynamic (different for each G) that focuses when poets are under still well under 35, and that to wait longer as a generation to

begin to stake out a space is itself a notable step, so that the hesitancy implicit there must itself be looked at as part of the process (Think of Olson's age in comparison to Creeley, Blackburn et al, or of Burroughs to Ginsberg & Kerouac, or of Williams to the Objectivists.)

To clarify one general point in closing: I am not under the impression that a collective re-definition of what poetry is and does has as yet been articulated by G2

Yep, except for Pam, Lew, Kristin & Alan have at least made one stab.

Given the way literary fields work in capitalist social formations, the failure to achieve such a collective redefinition will lead to a lot of interesting poetry disappearing

Absolutely! Several G1ers have noted in recent years how much the O-b 12 formation of G2 reminds them of the younger writers who found themselves active around certain modes of the NAP in the mid- to late-60s. David Schaff, Bill Deemer, Harold Dull, d alexander, Lowell Levant, Ed Van Aelstyn, John Gorham, Gail Dusenbery, Stan Persky, Seymour Faust, George Stanley, William Anderson, Wilbur Wood, etc etc etc. But failing to distinguish their terms from NAP1, NAP2 proved unable, unwilling to set up the institutions that might have insured their own communities' perpetuation into the future.

I am amazed and appalled that neither the Messerli nor the Hoover anthologies include the work of Lew Welch. In the 1960s, he would have come into almost any listing of the 24 or so most influential NAPpers. Such is history. You have to write it yourself.

"Bang. Snap. Crack. They never knew what hit them..."

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Re: "apex of the M" — essay excerpt

— Joel Kuszai · 3 November 1994

A backchannel note marked "please don't forward this" that reached the list anyway. Kuszai writes to "Trixy," who finds the list unbearable and wonders whether Ron is "cute"; he grants the Apex crowd are "really trying to do something" but can't find the point.

Subj: please don't forward this Dear Cookie, I thought I'd send you this, as otherwise you might not see it, receiving only a few of the missives fired at Fort Sumter since the Dresden incident. I think I'm done with the poetics list. Stop sending me stuff. I can't bear it any longer. Can you believe that shit? that endless chatter? the only thing worse would be having to get drunk with those people. but Ron, he's so funny--does he mean to be that way, and what does he look like anyway? he is cute? I don't understand what's up with the

Apex of the M--you showed me that essay but I didn't understand it. Trixy dont care. Trixy have better things to do.

HEY TRIXY!

thanks for your response. I've been working on some other stuff so it took me a while to respond. Hope that's cool. Yeah, I promise not to send what you write to anyone else. And if you are really serious I'll stop forwarding you stuff from the poetics list. I am eager to do other things too.

I think - despite the waves of chatter - that something could still be accomplished on the e-mail thing, although I have no idea as to what it would be. I mean it's not like we are going to get down to any level of praxis or meeting downtown some night to break windows or something...which is what I think the political leads to anyhow...

Yeah, I too thought Ron was quite generous with the M'ers. I mean it is true - he's quite right - they are really trying to do something, which isn't very normal these days. I don't get the point of it. And don't worry about the editorial, you should read Lew's book--talk about incomprehensible! it is great writing, if you don't mind things being muddled by the psycho-sexual--but the editorial - the "declaration of war" as Ron seems to think it is -- the self-appointment to the "government"! -- I love that. I think Ron's pretty funny too. The problem, for my two-dollars and eighty cents, with the Apex thing is that they are trying to be political but are insisting on the spiritual -- which for me is only political when grouped into assembly for power reasons (i.e. a church) otherwise the spiritual is like, well, you know, kind of acquiescent by default--I mean sure, Koresh was able to bring the ATF to his front door--if that's political then let me out now--the real politics worth examining there is the refusal of the social--the manipulation of people in the name of "faith" which always slams the door on the social--here the spirital gets for me kind of sticky and icky -- like the fear of identity within the new coasteries --hatcheries -- the fear of identity there is on identitarian grounds--the anti editorial mode is still an editorial - one of acquiescence and consent, however tacit. At least the M has some fire under their caps...and don't worry trixie, the next issue is due out soon, and word is that Prevallet wrote this one-- anybody who knows them knows that she has a mind of her own and that -- even with all the group editing in the world, I think, she is really into something different than Lew or Alan, or Pam for that matter--perhaps not hostile to them, but different enough to make the "group editorial" thing an unfortunate effacement. They will have to put their cards on the table soon enough. Poetry as Chillen of the Corn, or Jack-in-the Box will be gone of roadside ephemera soon enough. I mean the true "analysis" of our/any generation is to look at where the money comes from and how it is spent --anyone can buy a spot on the literary register, the who's who of who cares

been reading the situationists for Bernstein's class, wondering how people are going to react to it. I am afraid we'll get into a chapter & verse argument about Debord--maybe people will like him. Kind of hard to be in school and reading that stuff. Reminds me of when what's his face in Portland ore. changed all the street-

signs in downtown to "Malcolm X" - it had a pretty wild effect at the time even if it was simply consumed, just as that group's efforts during the gulf war were completely co-opted by the spectacular; I mean going into restaurants with gas-masks on trying to scare the eaters into some kind of political resistance, I mean come on, despite the disruption, I doubt anyone lost their appetite, and I'm sure there was hefty applause at the end. How yuppie (fake concerned) of them. The protest thing pretty much ended with them all "marching" around downtown portland with a police escort, I mean, led by the police escort. I remember sitting in my living room with John the night we started bombing there...we didn't have any lightbulbs that worked and no TV, just a clock radio, but that was enough. I felt completely incapacitated by the whole thing. All we could do was play music. There was only a bit of hope, word from seattle that some nut had opened fire on I-5 with some kinda automatic weapon. But that's not what the world heard. I don't know what the world heard.

But the situationists. Shit. I read ten pages of that stuff then start pacing in my cage. I love it in the anthology where its written that the goal of the movement was to "complete and displace poetry." --an aspiration not too difficult to like, although I wonder what the hell it means. Situationism, as debord points out in that first part of the "Veritable Split of the S.I. public circular" book that situationism becomes as much the understanding of the enemy, who need to know it in order to fight it (through using it??) and then Trix, who then, may I ask? are we?

The results of the poetics poll: What was it that Mean Joe Greene threw to that kid by the tunnel? Was it a jersey, a coca-cola T-Shirt, a flag of surrender? And if it was a flag of surrender, was Mean Joe Greene (and all he represents) surrenderring to that kid, or what he suggesting that the kid surrender to him. Is he here a "warrior" or a "servant"? Is there any thing at all different about that ad (give or take a few years very much G1) and the one featuring Shaquille O'Neal intimidating all the kids on the court except one little one who refuses to give his drink to Shaq.

look, joey, trixy dont get it. Trixy say "make your point" and get off the stage. Trixy wanna find you all alone in an advertisement and push you up against one of those new cars and violate you.

"I wanted to write a poem that would teach you to read."

I like that! did you write that or is it from a real writer?»

it's a joke

Did Ron Silliman really stand on a street corner reading his poetry to anybody who was passing by?

that's what I heard/read--perhaps one of us should write to him and find out. Kind of an embarrassing thing to ask, no?

Brathwaite reports that Mikey Smith was stoned to death in Kingston, Jamaica, presumably for his political activities. Smith was a "dub-poet" --quite

"popular" I guess, died about ten years ago ?? although I'm not sure. I got to Smith via Brathwaite but I don't know much. When the semester is over, and I can do what I want, I'm going to find out more about this.

Before her death in 1977, Danielle Collobert had been involved with the "Algerian situation".

why do Trixy feel such despair!》

oh Trixy, my friend, please don't feel such despair....

love in all evenings,

yo mama

p.s. Ron is cute, but the one you really wanna meet is Steve Evans

and about your age...

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The Advert-Garde

— Steve Evans · 1 December 1994

Facing incorporation — "how do I not become a commercial" — Evans reaches for Eagleton's The Ideology of the Aesthetic: appropriation "has to do with politics, not with culture; it is a question of who is winning." Punk's recuperation was his formative lesson.

I am not a terrific fan of Terry Eagleton's, but his answer to Eric's question ("how do I not become a commercial") is a compelling one. In **The Ideology of the Aesthetics,** Eagleton writes:

If they can place your revolutionary artefacts in their banks then that means only one thing: not that you were not iconoclastic or experimental enough, but that either your art was not deeply enough rooted in a revolutionary political movement, or it was, but that this mass movement failed. How idealist to imagine that *_art_*, all by itself, could resist incorporation! The question of appropriation has to do with politics, not with culture; it is a question of who is winning at any particular time. If *_they_* win, continue to govern, then it is no doubt true that there is nothing which they cannot in principle defuse and contain. If *_you_* win, they will not be able to appropriate a thing because you will have appropriated them. The one thing which the bourgeoisie cannot incorporate is its own political defeat. (372)

This of course recalls Benjamin's "and the enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (in "Theses")....

As it evidently was for Eric, the "recuperation" of punk was a formative event in my own intellectual trajectory-- a lesson learned. What I didn't know at 16 was the history of similar recuperations--including that of the avant-garde. But I can't think

of anyone in G2 who doesn't at this point have the lesson learned by heart: the question is what to do with the knowledge.

My thinking is that the indispensable element of the avant-garde project is not "experiment" so much as what that term presupposes: autonomy. The historical a-gs saw the bourgeoisie as the greatest threat to their autonomy; today's avant-garde recognizes the systemic nature of that threat--i.e. the fact that capitalism is more than the sum of "shockable" (concrete) members of the bourgeoisie. From the 50s to the 70s "the establishment" provided a homologous "other."

The avant-garde project (which, as I think Paul Hoover suggested in his recent post, is not to be abandoned but further radicalized) cannot honor its internal drive towards autonomy without running into capitalism as its fundamental obstacle. Anti-capitalism is partially inscribed in its history, and generally inscribed in its current conditions of possibility.

Anyway, some thoughts--obviously too bluntly, too hurriedly stated.

Steve

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apex of the m...

— Joe Amato · 19 January 1995

Amato weighs in as a self-described "outsider," all lowercase, turning autobiographical: he left engineering — a brewery, an aging pharmaceutical plant, hardhat and earplugs — for poetry. On the term "language poetry" he's done hedging: "it's here to stay."

i felt i just had to weigh in here (& apologies in advance for a *long* post)

with a sort of 'outsider's' response to marjorie's & tom's posts... it'll soon become apparent that my outside is another's inside & another's outside &

another's inside-outside... the phenomenology is necessarily blurred, as are the borders... there's much in what both marjorie & tom say with which i find myself in essential agreement... but i believe there's a number of things that have gone unsaid, specifically in these regions, re this issue of how to address the (as i take it, ongoing) phenomenon of poetry, language

poetry in particular (& i don't see the point any longer of hedging over that term --- it's here to stay)... & because i'm somewhat on the margins, if you will, of this particular discourse as far as *my* poetics/poetry is concerned, i need to wax a bit autobiographical in order to situate my remarks some...

1. i came to poetry, formally, a little over a decade ago, deciding to leave the engineering profession (& "deciding" is far too genteel a term) to pursue my desire to---as i understood it then & even to some extent now---SAY something... this is a terribly atheoretical way of putting it, i know, but

fact is, the alphabet just happened to be the technology through which my saying was to take place... by way of placing things further: during approx. the years charles b. was penning the items in his fascinating collection _content's dream_, i was busy running around a brand new brewery & an aging pharmaceutical plant with a hardhat, safety glasses & earplugs, trying to

resolve corrupt labor practices on the construction site & still 'get the job done,' so to speak... trial by ordeal for a young guy in his early 20s, as

male as it may sound to say so...

2. so i decided, like i say, at 29, to return to school, & under the able

guidance of don byrd & judith johnson at suny/albany, i picked up my doctor of arts (yep) & hit the job market, eventually ending up a decade later here in chicago, at illinois institute of technology, teaching technical & professional writing... i bet some of you could have seen this coming, but i couldn't... anyway... point is that i get questions from my tech. students, even now, that conjure up my former institutional self, & set my teeth on edge as to what it is makes a writer tick... i'm still not sure i know...

3. & fact is, over the past decade, the academic job scene has become, as we all know, miserable... & the politics of the past decade, well... i mean, i came out of the early 70s... as i progressed more & more in my saying activity as a poet, i became more & more aware of the language poets, thanks largely to the liberal learning atmosphere at albany... in any case, the work itself, the poetry, struck me as

incredibly difficult, strikingly different from what i had envisioned poetry to be... i never quite came to aesthetic terms with works such as, say, ron silliman's _lit_---& i take this to be a mark of my own poetic limitations, tastes, etc. (but i'll come back to this question of how to evaluate aesthetic practice)... at the same time, i found myself engrossed in the sorts of debates over poetic practice that (had & have) emerged from this collective enterprise, & although

i found the work, contextually speaking, a reaction in some ways to the political realities of the day (this is not a political assertion per se, but an aesthetic

assertion---& methinks one would be well-advised not to read political ethos too closely into aesthetic articulations), i nevertheless recognized that these folks were **serious** about what they were doing... & at the same time, it was clear to me that they were constructively self-conscious as to their respective institutional histories... they were, in all, i felt (& still feel) against the grain...

4. but the scene, the academic scene (as i've said) was getting tighter & tighter job-wise... & in fact that the language poets were, relatively speaking, fully theorized (if for some, theoretically overdetermined) played well in light of

the american academic tendency toward theory... at least, this is how

i read the situation, in broad strokes... hence folks like charles bernstein

[sorry for picking on you, charles!] thankfully found their way into 'the academy'... &, i might add, this development was long overdue...

5. but my 'initiation,' if you will, into the community of language poets---& i'll refrain from speaking in terms of 'generation' & the like, & by 'initiation' i mean simply acquaintance/friendship & the like---didn't really come until march 1993, at the new coast conference... my colleague & friend here

andrew levy had been invited to speak, so i decided (again!) to attend to promote my own little venue.... there i stood during the day, my kinko-green sheets in hand (as some of you may recall), trying to get participants interested in my electronic writing collective, *nous refuse* (juliana spahr & i had discussed the electronic stuff electronically prior to the conference)... i found the general tenor of the conference, at the time, extremely exclusive at times... that is, i felt my

place in the proceedings marginal at best, & i found the overarching discourse, what with presumptions as to a 'new coast,' downright presumptuous...

in retrospect, this was a somewhat hasty judgement, to the extent that many

folks at that conference knew each other, had shared histories, whereas i had no reason to expect these folks---strangers initially---to understand either me, say, or my electronic orientation ipso facto... but there was, i'll maintain, an (unintended) air at the conference, to one such as me, of self-importance---not perhaps

entirely without warrant, but perhaps a bit off-putting initially to other sorts of aesthetic orientations... i mean, one can't be all things to all people, but then, i thought, just who were these people? (many of whom were a good deal

younger than me, albeit no less equipped to discuss their craft)...

6. before i entirely alienate many of you out t/here, i wish to state as

clearly as possible that the thing that's really struck me since march '93 has been the *generosity* of the folks i met at buffalo, thereby invalidating my hasty evaluation as to 'exclusivity' & the like, at least in personal terms ... near everybody i met there, & have since met, who are linked in some way with that group (if i may) has been extremely interested in discussing & promoting poetic practice---alternative, mainstream, what have you... sometimes

the discussions are heated, yes---but this need not be a sign of agon, simply of

commitment... i've found the group in general to be among the most tolerant & supportive around when it comes to appreciating aesthetic diversity, whatever one's "taste" (& no, i don't wish to neutralize this latter category,

simply to bracket it for a moment)... in fact it might be argued that this (now somewhat academically centered) group is far more tolerant than most academic press poetry groupings... i'll leave this latter speculation to

this list's collective imagination...

7. but ysee, now that i've discussed Personalities-Writ-Large, as it were (hopefully in the process avoiding any unnecessary vitriole from whatever quarter, incl. mine) i need to come back to this issue of aesthetic practice---not 'vs. political practice,' not even 'as informed by political practice'---i wanna talk aesthetics as such for a moment, and bracket for a change---not the social, but the political per se... i can't hope to lay out parameters here---this is not what i'm about, in any case... & i'm with tom as to the necessity of practicing what (& mebbe AS) you preach... but at the meta-level, anyway: what i see the need for at the moment is less manifesto

(& this reverses my sentiments of a coupla years back) & more a discussion, in critical terms, of how to situate the artist/poet amid this increasingly academic environs... what is the purpose of poetry in shaping even, for example, the *poetic* part of one's world?... i'm a persistent promoter, on the one hand, of things electronic, & i might even be heard to drone on occasionally as to the more existential or pleasure-based or non-utilitarian value of the various pursuits in which i indulge myself... on the other hand, it's lost on me not for a nanosecond that this text, & those prompting it, come

to you-us courtesy of our postsecondary institutions (similar such entities being where *most* of you are no doubt currently locating your corporeal & ethereal

selves)... along these lines, i'm reminded of charles' superb piece in alh last year, "what's art got to do with it?" etc... we need *more* such work, motivated by such concerns...

8. perhaps we need more poetry too, a new poetry, as tom indicates, & despite whatever modernist misgivings i---we each---may have...

9. but perhaps, as well, situating the artist/poet as a member of a specific ecological or ontological or intellectual sect is somewhat less important than shaping new discourses---poetic-critical hybrids, creoles, what have you--- the point being that *all* forms of code-switching & mutating should be

explored... & explored with at least some consideration given as to why one would wish to so explore as well as where one is, institutionally speaking, while exploring (& as michael joyce from the hypertext world would be quick to point out, *constructing*)... what is the value of the alphabet in a world such as ours, such as ours is becoming?... & what do we do (if this is not too naive a question this late in the 20th. century) with the more oral basis for poetry, the idea of poetry 'readings'?... perhaps we need a better collective sense as to the history of readings of this latter variety, as opposed to the

currently more popular tendency to read critical reception as a writing enterprise (?)... is this a political issue, strictly speaking (& i have the debates over literacy fluttering around in my head as i write this, as well as talk of discursive hegemonies of one sort or another), or is recourse to politics here merely one way of avoiding

sustained discussion of the value of a specific aesthetic dimension? (& again, not that i wish to avoid either ideology or politics per se)...

10. & as to politics per se, & given the very real & recent concern evident in these regions as to the status of aesthetic practice in general in american society: perhaps we need to work harder to convince folks outside of our more individualistic aesthetic pursuits that, whatever this our contested site, it's not a luxury...

joe amato



(line breaks courtesy of elm)

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Meet the G that killed me

— Mark Scroggins · 1 June 1995

Scroggins glosses the G1/G2 shorthand — In the American Tree versus o•blék's "New Coast" issue — then watches it fray: where does a late bloomer like Cecil Giscombe fit? It reminds him of being told he's a Boomer, not a slacker.

Maria: G1 & G2 are generational handles _someone_ on the list dreamed up to designate "older" & "younger" generation poets on the innovative side of the equation: G1--Bernstein, Silliman, Hejinian, Scalapino, Watten, usw. G2--Liz Willis, Juliana Spahr, Andy Levy, Melanie Nielsen, Jessica Grim, usw. Shorthand wd. say _In the American Tree_=G1 and the O-blek "New Coast" issue = G2. Gets kind of complicated when you have not-so-young poets emerging late--is Cecil Giscombe (say) G1 or 2? He's about the same age as Ted Pearson, but has only really hit the fan in the last five years or so (after many moons in the vineyard of course). It all reminds me of the "Baby Boomer"/"Generation X" thing--Dad insists I'm a boomer, but is my only alternative to be a slacker?

Mark Scroggins

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Re: Meet the G that killed me

— Chris Stroffolino · 2 June 1995

Two lines, one barb: Stroffolino observes that Scroggins named as G2 "the most derivative poets of the g1 styles" in the New Coast anthology — then pretends it was "just an onservation (i mean observation)."

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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Re: Postmodern American Poetry: the Norton Anthology

— Ron Silliman · 14 January 1996

Silliman on the miseries of anthologizing, from experience: the reader's pleasure is cataloguing the omissions, the editor's agony is causing them. He tallies the Hoover Norton's blind spots — the wrong title for Zukofsky, twenty-eight New York School poets but no Ted Greenwald.

Peter,

Doing an anthology is simply an impossible task. I speak from experience. Whenever I read one, such as Jerry & Pierre's of late, I spend so much of my time thinking about the texts they should have included, the way I would have organized it better, etc., etc., etc.

In some sense, that may be one of the real pleasures of READING an anthology, but it is an EXCRUCIATING aspect of editing one.

The Hoover anthology (which Golding in his essay on anthologies in *From Outlaw to Classic* -- a brilliant book everyone should read --, notes is the only Norton to use the indefinite article "A Norton Anthology") certainly has its weaknesses and blind spots, even for the poets it includes. Getting the title of Zukofsky's long poem wrong is sort of typical. Including 28 NY School poets but not Ted Greenwald is another. I could go on (and your suggestions are all good ones). But I have no doubts about Paul's intentions and good will that went into the project.

What about the case of someone like Ted Pearson, whom I left out of *In the American Tree* from a sense that (like Scalapino or Dahlen, say) I felt his work was more a conscious critical take on the scene than implicated within it. He's not in the Ganick/Barone, nor either the Hoover or Messerli, nor even the New Coast. Yet he's clearly one of the significant poets of his (my) generation.

Just as the Paris Leary/Robert Kelly anthology, *A Controversy of Poets*, first exposed me many moons ago to the likes of Rochelle Owens, Jackson Mac Low, Gerrit Lansing and Kelly himself (none of whom were in the Allen), the Hoover will no doubt have an eye-opening impact for some folks. And that's what it's all about, no?

All best,

Ron

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dead horses, live theories

— Ron Silliman · 27 February 1996

Silliman salutes Scroggins's "white-hot intensity," then turns the younger critic's own question back on him: why does Apex of the M dominate list chatter while Borkhuis's essay and Evans's post-language criticism go unread? Does their "sensationalism simply make for more enjoyable e-talk"?

Mark,

Would that every post to this list had the passion and white-hot intensity of thought of yours so often have. However, this aside,

"But I've been on this list about 18 months, and I've not seen one mention of Charles Borkhuis' excellent article in ONTHEBUS which discusses possible relations between surrealism and language writing. I've not seen anyone engage with the incredible criticism Steve Evans has written on post-language writing in the Oblek anthology... But how many times has Apex been the subject of discussion on this poetics list? How many times have they even suddenly provided a name by which a whole generation of poets might be known? What's that about? Do they really offer the most significant post-language theories? Does their sensationalism simply make for more enjoyable e-talk? Do they provide a convenient way to avoid thinking about the complexities of influence?"

brings up a couple of thoughts. The first being that I recall specifically discussing Steve Evans wonderful work from The New Coast (I agree with you about its importance) here and elsewhere. The second being that I don't think people (me, anyway) generalize from the Apexers to "a whole generation" (not in your dreams, Lew), but that what they have done/are doing is nonetheless important simply for having a coherent shape to it, whatever the internal contradictions and problematics (I'll return to this below). Third, I've never even seen ONTHEBUS (nor, for that matter, do I recall seeing it even mentioned previously here or elsewhere -- is it a magazine, a book or what?), so I suspect that the lack of discussion re Borkhuis' article may follow not from lack of interest but distribution.

Leading, instant, to further thoughts: Certainly there's a powerful and problematic betwixt Lpoetry and surrealism (most carefully sketched out by B Watten in Total Syntax), both in terms of the work and as a model of social formation. Poets who took surrealism as a direct influence: Watten certainly, Davies certainly, Estrin certainly -- tho I think Jerry at first saw surrealism as a method of critiquing the program of the lpoets avant la lettre -- many others (Grenier might not acknowledge it, but it's clearest in the "scribble" texts how much of the back brain work is exactly what he's after)

Our friends the M poets, even by virtue of being wrong, have done more (and better) at providing a consistent shape to their argument than anyone else in what Steve Evans (I think it was he) christened "G2" [which, by the by, is where his work was

discussed, if you're checking the EPC archives] and there's an enormous power to that.

One of the interesting strains I've picked up from several "G2" or "later in the alphabet" poets has been a sense, especially re lpoetry and the Apexers, that to have a shape (it does not have to be so extensive as to qualify as a program) is to make a case for power as such and that power per se is not attractive and that they'd rather not. From my perspective, this echoes a lot of what I heard in nonprofit and other voluntary association groups in the early 1970s, in particular (remember affinity groups), all those folks still scarred then by the bad taste of internicine warfare within SDS and the atrocious sexual politics of the 60s antiwar movement. But as Foucault et al could have told them (could tell us now), power doesn't go away, it just reconstitutes itself Elsewhere (very much in the sense of that word as used as a theme for an issue of Poetics Journal). The Apexers are the only group who have, as a group, addressed power directly in their critical writings. More power to them.

Ron Silliman



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Re: avant-garde

— Jordan Davis · 12 March 1996

Davis answers the avant-garde question by performing it as a prose poem: "The first lines are the avant-garde of the poem." Yes, he grants, it is "egocentric to be writing at all" — but "what else is there to do."

is it conceited to be avant-garde? on the frontlines? front lines of what. First lines. The first lines are the avant-garde of the poem. Are we conceited to be talking about poetry. Poetry isn't talking about us, right? So why talk about ourselves as experimental. What's the hypothesis. Well we weren't talking about you... Is it egocentric to be writing at all? Yes. It is. It's egocentric to be writing it all, to be monumental, or to be called monumental. But what else is there to do. What else. What else. Is it mental to be conceited. It is conceited to say I'm in charge now (Alexander Haig). It is conceited to talk about ourselves. What do we talk about. Do we talk about poems. Whose poems. Aha. Well we do talk about poems sometimes, or something in a poem. We talk about how to put a poem over, or what is it at the beginning, the avant-garde of the poem. The poem is not avant-garde. The poem is ahead of us? How does a poem get from the avant-garde to the end. What is an end. ("What is the name of this poem.") Is the job of the discussion which is not one of us to become accurate. To describe truthfully. To be? The Job of discussion is why we are avant-garde. How many poets live in apartment 2-B. Is the poetry we're talking about more appropriately called anti-teleological. Or is it as Tony Door says the commutative function of the alphabet. What are we doing. If we have to talk about it by groups, if we have to talk about a group coming after an avant-garde group, then

what do we talk about. Paradigms? (Hi Gale!) What is different seems to be located around _what we want_. I don't think it's conceited to talk about what we want. Maybe it's conceited to speak for we. What we. Well it's important to talk about what is wanting. Very? Very wanting. Ambition has been defaced. What is the new ambition. What do they want these new writers we don't understand. The cover of Time magazine. To talk to improbable objects. To speak to them. Impossible?

the bouquet years

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Re: "Poets vs. Critics"

— Joel Kuszai · 7 September 1996

A brief, watchful note. Kuszai calls the poets-versus-critics debate "kind of silly," then wonders "if there aren't threads of things that need to be discussed that aren't being addressed."

I've not logged in a couple days--but have been watching the clouds circle in from the east and wanted to comment on something Marjorie Perloff said in her recent post. Personally I think the poet-critics debate is kind of silly, yet I wonder if there aren't threads of things that need to be discussed that aren't being addressed.

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Re: poetry "schools"

— Henry Gould · 7 February 1997

Gould answers earnest talk of poetic "schools" with a bookstore-shelving burlesque: a "Providence School" filed between Physics and Self-Help, himself on the "lower shelf — remainders," and a closing catalogue of hyphenated identities all made, somehow, Irish.

Dear Michael McCoffey, be sure to tell bksellers to reserve a wide range of shelving for the Providence School over there between Physics and Self-Help (Archaeology). Poets to include: High, Prevallet, Shvarts, Mandelstam, Villon, Wright (all 10 of them), Dickinson, Sappy (all 100 of them), Gould (lower shelf -remainders), Savage Reader (note: add poison warning - hold chapbook at least 2 ft from nose), Ashbery, Berrigan (all 4 of them), Berryman, Henry Pussycat, Florida Sweets (Valentine seasonal market), Louise Chan Littletree (has anyone read this poet yet? What is wrong with you people?). - Henry Gould

p.s. throw in a few NY School-bred Language epic beat-up New Coast Af-Am Brazilian elderly Swedish lesbian garbage-can-lid-challenged Hopi smartass adolescent mute performance slang nu-english poets just to make it interesting. & make sure they're all Irish. Best of luck! So much to choose from!

Disturb D/re Perloff

— Stephen Vincent · 14 March 1997

Vincent catches Perloff overstating. Her "simple fact" that minority poetics didn't exist before the 1980s is really, he counters, the critics' own obliviousness restated — and he names the record: Victor Hernández Cruz, Ntozake Shange, Sonia Sanchez, Etheridge Knight.

Marjorie Perloff writes in response to David Kellogg:

"Minority communities in the 80s: I didn't think this needed spelling out. I am referring to simple fact here: namely, check out any anthology or critical study of "contemporary poetry" prior to that time and you'll see that the issue of minority poets is simply ignored. (read, for example, Altieri, J. Breslin, P. Breslin, von Hallberg--you name it). The anthologies may have included, say, Baraka and one or two other black poets but the notion of "Chicano poetics" or "Asian-American poetics" did not yet exist. This isn't a value judgement, just a fact."

If I'm not misunderstanding Marjorie Perloff's point, I think a number of people would disagree with this assessment of minority writing prior to the eighties. What I think she is actually saying is that other anthologists and critics and she herself(?) were mostly unaware of "minority" writing that began to strongly emerge with the various "liberations" of the late sixties and early seventies (simultaneous with gay and feminist writing, as well) . An obliviousness to the work of Victor Hernandez Cruz, Ntozake Shange, Jessica Hagedorn, Sonia Sanchez, Etheridge Knight among many others who were consistently published in books and periodicals is possibly more a reflection of Town and Gown, "high and low" culture divisions-- unless there is an assumed separation between the poets who make poems, and the critics who create a "poetics" around the work - the latter sometimes not happening until much after the fact. On the other hand, it's still not clear to me, if Marjorie Perloff was familiar with any of the this writing, or whether or not she is dismissing these and other writers out of an aesthetic principle --which I find a perfectly acceptable thing to do, as long as it's not confused with an exclusive notion of "the one and only principle."

In response to another one of Kellogg's arguments, Perloff goes on to say:

"Therefore--and this is all I meant--the job of putting together an "avant-garde" anthology in the 90s is very different from putting one together in 1960. Don Allen could just choose those poets that satisfied what he took to be the New American Poetry. Today, the anthologist does not have that freedom because --witness what John Yau did to Eliot Weinberger--s/he is under pressure to include X number of poets from this or that grouping. I am optimistic enough to think this phenomenon will pass as there are increasing

numbers of, say, Mexican-American poets to choose from. But at the moment it's tricky and so inclusions are often somewhat cynical. So--as I said in the article--the picture is clouded and no anthologist can quite proceed freely as Don Allen could."

I'm again not sure of the point of view being expressed. Is her point that in order to make an ideal avant garde anthology -- one that is not burdened by a rhetoric of gender and ethno-identity issues -- we must wait another generation or so for people of color and women to learn to write in an acceptable experimental mode? If this is the view, I immediately want to know who is the "who" that is determining what is acceptable here? With all due respect to her reference to Charles Bernstein's criteria of substance and form, might the presence of writers and editors of color, for example, bring other criteria to the table that do not revolve around what Perloff sees limited to issues of "grievance" and "identity," or, to further the net here, what she and others have variously referred to and dismissed as "speech based poetics."

Frankly I have a tough time with the "tongue cutter" character of that phrase -- as if pure text is primary and that which is spoken is disposable, of no significance, or resonance. If I understand what is being stated, cultures that are orally based -- which are often minority ones -- no matter how rigorous the construction of their poems or songs, these groups or cultures are automatically contained in a "less than" category. Personally I don't understand why in a contemporary text that there is not room for voice(s) - I'm daily surrounded by them and they give me great delight! And I am often taken by voice as a textual component of a work. If I'm interpreting her correctly, I think my own discomfort with Perloff's argument stems partly from what appears to be this strict, exclusive notion of text. It seems to me that there is much more room on the playing field -- without implying a return to a "me, voice" centered poem.

But, finally what I find most troubling is Perloff's implied point of view that "we" must wait for minorities and others to catch up with what she values in the way of experiment. I'm much more curious as to what happens when the tables are turned. In particular, how have issues of "grievance" and "identity", for example, impacted on the work of white experimental writers. There has been much talk here of exp. writers not being able to find work on account of issues of race and gender - which well might be true. But I hear little of ways in which these issues --which are vigorously alive in most of the culture -- have impacted on the making of experimental work. To be quick and speculatively specific, what, by way of example, is the influence of Cecil Taylor on line and structure in the work of Barrett Watten? If so, how does he deal with issues of appropriation from Taylor or any "other" cultural zone. What's the difference between cultural robbery, reciprocation and respect? (This is not to suggest Barry's any one of them). In part I'm wondering to what degree "experimental writers" are compelled to acknowledge the larger cultural context - and what are the aesthetic issues and consequences of that inner-change? ((Has anyone on this list addressed this issue/process??). And, in a progressive English Department, shouldn't a "white male" candidate who has

engaged these issues in fresh way be considered of more value than one who has not?

I sometimes think "white" artists/writers feel it is an option to ignore this larger sphere. On the other hand this is not a position with which minorities can very often "privilege" themselves. For example, I was recently thinking, it's impossible to look at the photographs & texts of Carrie Mae Weems and not be totally taken by her awareness and interpretation of a history of both white and black worlds. For her, I don't believe one functions without the other, and this largeness of vision gives her work a major significance. In comparison, does the concept of "innovative poetics" (which is the basis of this list) make this awareness -- or is it a vulnerability to "the other(s)" and a willingness to acknowledge, wrestle and change? -- an implicit responsibility of its project?

I guess what I'm hearing in Perloff's view is a mono-centric critical vision of what constitutes a membership in an avant-garde. Dropping the relatively easy "grievance and identity" herrings, I believe we live in a much more polycentric environment in which the containment of poetic and critical work is a much more elusive task.

Cheers,
Stephen Vincent

I do think Perloff rightly points out that these two criteria for anthologies are cynically seized upon by probably "white" editors as marketable, acceptable criteria. I'm just curious -- in terms of an ideal, advanced anthology -- as to who she sees as the arbiters of what is appropriate. I assume Norton's way of "liberally" dealing with this potential impasse is to give every major group an anthology - including the current ones of Hoover for the experimental, Gates for the Afro-Americans and on and on. (A parallel to this phenomenon is all various Smithsonian museums that are planned up down the Washington Mall - American Indian, Afro-American etc. etc.) All this might look well on paper, but it avoids the issues and great works of art that have occurred because the various groups that constitute this country are so historically inter-webbed. Objectively -- especially in terms of making contemporary work -- I think it's silly for anyone to imagine autonomous grounds for any particular group - experimental, "minority" or otherwise. That said, given this country's history it's understandable why many groups will want to secede into their own anthology or museum.

> Now David perfectly proves my point by implying I'm somehow making a > racist statement. You are reading into (as opposed to "not reading") what I wrote. What I wrote was that the pluralism of your approach is in tension with the exclusivity of your actual critical practice. This seems to me a perfectly reasonable critique to make. Sure I find this disturbing; but not because I think you're a racist (I don't) -- rather, because of the slippage that comes into play in passages like the one that follows:

The "exclusivity of my actual critical practice"--I don't know what this means. I admire particular poets and those are the ones I write about--yes. If that's "exclusivity" --I plead guilty. I try, on the other hand, to include non U.S. poets so in that sense I believe I'm much more "inclusive" than others. There's only so much time. > What I meant, of course, is that the mainstream > anthologies today like the Norton will include a lot of, say Rita Dove, > because she's a black woman when the Norton doesn't even include Zukofsky, > Reznikoff etc. not to mention Harryette Mullen, Erica Hunt, Will > Alexander, or Charles Bernstein, Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian--well, the list > goes on and on, right? This is where identity politics does indeed cloud > the picture because if you object to these inclusions or exclusions you > are immediately branded. "Inclusions or exclusions." This is not a symmetrical complaint. The complaint about exclusions is well taken, and I'm wholly on your side in that struggle. The complaint about inclusions is where I think your pluralistic stance conflicts with your practice. Mullen, Hunt, et al. are not excluded because Rita Dove is included. (Nor do I think it fair to say that the Norton includes "a lot of . . . Dove, because she's a black woman," barring evidence to support that assertion.) Giving Dove less space will do not one damn bit of good in making more space for Zukofsky, Howe, or Bernstein.»

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THEY WANNA COVER US WITH MARGARINE(alization)

— Chris Stroffolino · 25 March 1997

Stroffolino reports back from the "MARGINALIZATION" event, wary of the "call" he's answering, and hangs the account on Mac Low's late question: he'd come expecting a talk on the marginalization of poetry, not on "a particular book called 'The Marginalization of Poetry.'"

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 digress 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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“*alternative*avant-garde”

— William Marsh · 6 August 1997

Marsh confesses his confusion at the reigning spatial metaphor: when did the avant-garde become a "zone or area" with borders to police rather than "a kind of momentum" that instigates change? "How can an edge have a border?"

At 09:14 AM 8/6/97 -0500, you wrote: okay all you sweet yukyus out there, i've got a question: why does "the avant garde" seem to need to police its borders so rigidly? how does some thing get defined or not as "avant garde?" i'm spozed to give a talk in November and i want to challenge what i see as some of the closedness of the avant garde tradition or at least the way it's construed by most of its critics.--md

there's been a lot of talk about this issue of late (here and elsewhere), and i'm wondering if anyone else feels the same confusion about it / the spatial analogy here, that the a-g is a particular zone or area of activity and therefore identifiable by its borders (and its potential policing of borders) is the main source of my confusion / when did the "avant garde" come to represent a group or subgroup or

"subfield in a larger field" as David Kellogg puts? -- the classificatory scheme strikes me as fundamentally at odds with what the a-g has always represented to me, namely a kind of momentum that infuses artistic activities and (sometimes) instigates change / if current notions of an avant-garde stipulate that it exists as a group among groups (and i agree with Charles Alexander that it is not a "unified thing"), then clearly there must be an **alternative** avant-garde which escapes such classification -- which makes it even more confusing / if the a-g is the **leading edge** of activity, then how can an edge have a "border"? not to mention a police force monitoring transgressions / i can't imagine (literally can't see) the avant-garde in such a context... / wouldn't any definition of the a-g as a group be a misappropriation of the term?

bill marsh

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Re: *"*alternative*avant-garde"*

— Maria Damon · 7 August 1997

Damon prefers "vanguardism" as a process, then names the gatekeeping: an anthology took her Bob Kaufman essay but passed on the bolder one — on poetry by teenage girls in a Boston housing project — as outside a "traditional understanding" of the avant-garde.

thank you all, david k, bill m, david i, charles a, etc. i share many of your beliefs, such as, that vanguardism (my preferred term) is a process rather than a coterie or school. however, in my professional life, i've encountered enough instances where the boundaries are tightly defined to lead me to believe there is some anxiety about borders. for instance, i was recently asked for permission to reprint my bob kaufman essay in an anthology of essays on "the avant garde." i said okay, but in my opinion my essay on poetry by some teenage girls in a boston housing project was much more interesting, more adventurous, less man-and-his-work formulaic. the answer was: well i do "cultural studies" myself, but in this project i'm working with a fairly traditional understanding of the "avant garde," so i'll stick w/ the kaufman piece. for another instance, when i proposed a paper for the conference i mentioned, on "the poetics of avant garde poetry," there was some hesitatiion over acceptiing my paper because its definition of "avant garde" was too broad (won't it render the term meaningless to broaden it? was the question.) again, i was advised by colleagues on the organizing side of things to stress that i was working with a "cultural studies model," i guess to provide reassurance that there was some recognized method to my intentions. also, my introduction to this list and participation, while in some ways broadening (in that i've learned about poets i didn't know about before) has also been a narrowing, as the list is quite explicitly intended for discussion of newer poetries (i can't recall exactly the wording of the bernstein welcome). i don't mean to wax victimy or snide in these personal anecdotes, i hope you all realize how much

i enjoy learning all this new stuff and getting to know y'all. these moments of feeling the barriers come up have been interesting because they foreground categorical, operative divisions that are sometimes disavowed at the more overt level. another line that gets drawn is that of aesthetic judgment, and the assumption that we all share certain judgments (hallmark card verse is embarrassingly bad, so is maya angelou's poetry; bpNichol is fabulous, etc --don't get me wrong, i love bpNichol and i don't buy hallmark cards but i do find angelou's poetry meaningful, esp when i see how deeply it touches my students). as i've said here before, aesthetic judgment has been the dividing line between me and some of the people i've worked with. in fact i tend to trust them cuz i don't trust myself, so i usually concede at the level of editorial revision, but at the metalevel i'm asking, why is it SO overwhelmingly important that there be some kind of consensus of aesthetic judgment? or, why is this consensus the basis of our community or commonality?

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Response to Maria's Question

— Gary Sullivan · 28 January 1998

Answering Maria's question, Sullivan replies with an inventory rather than a theory: the women he saw read in 1980s San Francisco — Dodie Bellamy, Lyn Hejinian, Carla Harryman, Beverly Dahlen, Kathy Acker "a couple times" — often more visible, to him, than the men.

Hello, Maria:

If I'm not mistaken, you went to Stanford in the 80s. At that time, an hour or so north of you, the women you mention (& more) were, to me anyway, more visible than their male counterparts: When I lived in San Francisco (1983-1991), the very first reading I went to was Dodie Bellamy (at SF State), I also saw Lyn read with Tom Raworth, and Lyn reading with Carla Harryman (from "The Wide Road"), Carla reading with someone else (can't remember who) and Leslie Scalapino at an AIDS benefit. Others I saw read were Norma Cole, gordon, Cole Swenson, Kathy Acker (a couple times), Beverly Dahlen, Colleen Lookingbill (she was in a reading/discussion group w/me & several others), Bernadette Mayer. I saw Perelman read with Creeley once, and Rodefer a couple of times, but never got the chance to see Ron read, nor Barry, nor Alan Davies, nor Bruce Andrews, nor Bernstein (saw him read in Minneapolis, much later). The Susan Howe reading, some months--maybe even a year or two--after I left town, was legendary, mainly for its attendance, apparently more people came to that than to Alice Notley (who I saw read a month or two before we left town). Lyn was pretty much the most visible of that general crowd, to my peers, largely because we were all collecting Tuumba Press books, and My Life won whatever the award is that S.F. State gives out or administers, so it was looked to as something "important" beyond what personal use we might make of it. Also, Scalapino, in good part due to her publishing O Books. We were aware of In the

American Tree, and the New Directions Language Poetries, but didn't bother with them much because we had most of those texts in chapbooks, magazines, perfect bounds & even manuscripts (great used bookstores, not to mention network of poets, in the bay area, as you'll recall), & being kind of snobby (I speak for myself alone here), wanted the "higher groove factor" items--the First Eds, bay-bay, if often slightly foxed. In Minneapolis, the readings I went to (or organized) were Acker/Baraka/Hentoff, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge/Myung Mi Kim, Kathleen Fraser, Charles Alexander/Spencer Selby, Charles Bernstein, George Albon, Cheri Hickman, Diane Glancy, Johanna Drucker, Michael Lally, Nico Vassilakis, Norma Cole, me, Erik Belgum, Jonathan Brannen, you (at an XCP post-pub reading), Elizabeth Burns (at same), Samuel Delany, Curt Anderson, Anselm Hollo--a few more men than women, but not really that many more.

My sense is that you didn't, at the time, venture up to San Francisco/Berkeley/Oakland much while at Stanford, where all of this activity was taking place. I remember that you told me you saw first not the actual cartoon-poets cover I did for SPD, but the thing projected on a screen during a lecture Watten was giving at some conference. So, your initial introduction to many poets, poetry & even ephemera (!), seems to have taken place through an academic filter--via conferences, panels, & so forth. I mean, you tell us in your post as much, and I mention all of the above to support what you're saying: the activity of the last 10, 20 years has not been inordinately "male": in fact, has increasingly shifted from male to female. But that word "filter"--I use it to foreground the idea I have that the quality of academic activity is, or has been, generally, that of filter, & so what's read through it is read through it. Living in San Francisco & experiencing poetry through readings & less formal gatherings is also a filter, the limit of being in a particular place at a particular time, though a less opaque filter, especially since many of the activities now in discussion at conferences etc. took place there. I mean the writing itself, & the interaction/experience/confluences that gave rise to the writing. So, in answer to your question, more questions: Do you find academia to be largely male-driven or -informed? Do you find women to be resistant to it, or hesitant to participate in its culture? I can't tell from here. My e-address is Columbia, but as you know, I'm merely an office worker, & don't participate much with anything/anyone here, save the friendly people at Butler Library. There are, though, I do notice, many more male history professors in the department than female. There are many more men posting to this list than women, & I assume that to mean more male access to e-mail, & a lot of that seems to be guys working in or attending universities. (Mostly w/more significant roles than mine ((office grunt)).)

Maria, you are that rare tenured academic whose energies are divided between the filter of the academy and the thing under the microscope--you've not only brought out poets to read at UMN, but have collaborated with Miekal And, & published creative as well as lit crit writings. My sense--and please tell me I'm wrong if I am--is that this hasn't always been the case, that your move to find some confluence between both has been tenuous, gradual. So that, a decade or so ago, while going to

Stanford, you didn't participate with the living activity taking place an hour or so north of you, but now, you seem very much involved in what's taking place among writers not only in Minneapolis, but elsewhere as well.

Just received Joel's post--& agree that younger women poets today do seem more actively involved in the filter than before: I don't have to reiterate the list of names of younger poets that pop up frequently on this list--but to say that some are grads of Brown, Buffalo, Bard & even a few "non-B" universities. (My sense, not having seen it yet, is that the forthcoming Talisman anthology of under-40 poets will draw much work from "B" university grad gals--& would add another semi-academic B, Boulder ((Naropa)). Certainly this was the case of the o.blek New Coast volumes. Talisman also has planned, I think, an anthology of women poets, probably concentrating on 40s & upwards--though I have no details on that one, either.) So, your movement toward some interaction between the two "worlds" seems to happen at a time when there is, in fact, a general movement, among women, toward establishing connections between them. I wonder if, over time, we'll see more women represented at conferences, sitting on panels, work by more women under discussion at same. & because of your position, your interest & your energy (which, okay, does tend to flag in Jan, Feb & March, given those often brutal winters!), you would seem a good person to begin to actively work toward your goal. So, another (not rhetorical) question: What more, at this point in time, might actively be done to help promote this (besides waiting for all the old white guys to fade off into Club Emeritus)?

Gary Sullivan



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Missing generation

— Kevin Killian · 30 January 1998

Lederer had blamed male Language poets for driving a generation out of San Francisco; Killian allows "OKAY I CAN THINK OF 1 or 2" but names the truer absence—the poets, now 35 to 45, who died of AIDS before the 1991 drugs arrived.

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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Re: Missing generation

— Chris Stroffolino · 30 January 1998

Against the missing-generation panic, Stroffolino counsels patience: Oppen went silent thirty years, Stevens published no first book until 44. Maybe a quiet poet is only resting—and maybe the real culprit is some "puritan ethic" of productivity masquerading as "poetic commitment."

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

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scene report — San Diego's Trip to LA

— Joel Kuszai · 16 November 1998

Wearing his moderator's hat, Kuszai scolds the list for its "collective angst" and for leaking private mail to the public group, then—under the mock header "PAID ADVERTISEMENT"—prints Jack Loudon's poem on community and life inside a "program."

The long day's pilgrimage from San Diego — the drive up to L.A., the welcome, a stop at Sun & Moon for Douglass Messerli's counsel to "keep it small" — arrives, at last, at the reading.

It was an engrossing reading and everyone behaved. Cydney read first. I had heard her once before, at the New Coast conferece. Everything was so new to me then. This was a good amount of work to hear her read. She read some very wryly humorous pieces, some of which were lost on us, I think. It seemed that Bill and Joe and Laura were making lots of giggling sounds, and I was embarrassed to be from San Diego! Seriously, I got the sense that in a perhaps less-intense audience, these pieces might cause uproarious hilarity. Reportage of other audience reactions to Cydney Chadwick would be greatly appreciated. She read with a very interesting -i dunno what to call it - "rhythmic lilt" or perhaps it has something to do with a unique pausing or "halting" at certain points. A series of "one-liners" in a linked narrative succession. The rhythm of this was very intersting and being new to her work, I would probably seek it out for further study. Elizabeth Treadwell read next and she also read some prose and parts of her long work "Eve Doe." She is the editor of Outlet and also has done chapbooks (I believe). While I am not familiar with her work, I will certainly do my homework ex post facto. Her prose pieces seemed to rework historical materials in often extreme schemes. Stella, Dorothy Wordsworth, and more. Of all of it, the first sections of "Eve Doe" were for me the most compelling. Again, any Bay Area reportage on these two writers would be much appreciated by this reader. Afterwards we went to what can only be described as Family Place in Santa Monica. Bill and I had potato rajas tacos (which looked like little coasters with happy food dancing on top)--- yum yum yum. It was great to spend a few moments with the gang before driving back to SD. I felt like a little boy, dancing around the streets. I had a really good time at the reading. I felt spoiled in Buffalo. I would miss readings frequently near the end of my time there. I was exhausted by it all. I felt that the experience of going to LA and the reading gave me a renewed sense of voluntarist community actions and a reading a is a good symbol of that. I was grateful to even know about it. We drove back to Iva Bittova and later Beck's One Foot in the Grave. When I got home Bubby and Moby were waiting

patiently, but clearly hungry. I fed them and they raced back and forth across the apt, doing their own happy dance.

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Re: The Hat / women writers

— Joel Kuszai · 12 December 1998

Told that two men edited an all-women issue of The Hat, Kuszai declines to be surprised: women have done "much more interesting writing... since the 70s." He recalls the 1993 New Coast claim that the real problem was women simply not sending in their work.

dale, hoa, & other editors:

thanks for the description of The Hat. You mention that Jordan and Chris (two boys) have edited an issue of a magazine with all women poets. Why is this a surprise? While it may be unusual, I think it is only as one famously male's male's male would say, "apropos." Women, generally, are doing much more interesting writing these days, and have been since the 70s. Not that there aren't useful boy-originated poets, but in my opinion, these last few decades have been really marked by this tendency. Representation of women by male editors is another issue, and leads people, for instance, to say that 'language poetry is male dominated,' when in fact if you look at the writing this isn't true. As far as all-women issues of magazines, whether edited by men or women: Are you suggesting that using some fairly restrictive criteria of editing that one would end up with anything but the same? Is it something that has to be set aside, like "this is our mission" or "no boys allowed" etc.?

this came up at the now historic New Coast conference in buffalo back in 93. When discussing this issue, the over representation of men by men in presses and magazines, one editor said that the problem was really that women didn't send in their work, while men are quick to submit work for consideration. Some people have said (sorry for lack of specifics, I don't mean to sound like Henry Hyde) that there aren't as many women writers so they get published much easier, become more sought after and therefore, somehow (and I find this one hilarious) more difficult to get to send work to mags and presses. The implication being here that women have more choices and that there is a "shortage" of women's writing...when in fact this simply couldn't be further from the truth.

In my experience as an editor, you can't wait for the writing you want to publish. So, with a few exceptions, unsolicited writings are generally male and generally not what I'm looking for. Dale, your description of Hoa's showing you the pilot submissions by men and the lone submission by a woman further strengthens what I like to call the "receptical theory of editing"--if you provide a trash can, it is likely to filled up. Which isn't to say that unsolicited work can't have a place in the development of a literary community, or a publishing sequence, whether a periodical or chapbook series. I'm only trying to say that such methods are limited.

I used to think that the gender-limit on such editing projects was problematic. As a form of editing, like my fantasy of a moderated listserv (which, if I get my way, will become a reality) such limit-oriented projects have their place. This was originally the focus of Chain and there are many projects out there that tend to focus on women's writers. I've stated that this doesn't need to be arbitrary, but it often is. I now kind of like that arbitrary restriction, and have toyed with that in planning future series of the meow press chapbooks. We all have these restrictions anyways, so why not extend them to fit a whole class of people: like white boys, or just boys in general. Where maybe once I would be offended by such editorial specificity, now such CENSORSHIP excites me, and I mean that honestly, sincerely (in case that was ever in question). Because I don't feel that it is censorship, but rather an editor's prerogative.

Anyhow, all that aside, I am currently reading manuscripts for books scheduled to be published next summer -- and while for me there are a few interesting male-dominated writers out there, I would like to invite the women on the poetics list to send either manuscripts or proposals for manuscripts (of poetry, prose, or for monograph critical pamphlets) to: po box 948568 la jolla ca 92037

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of Mothers & Daughters

— Joel Kuszai · 14 March 1999

Kuszai breaks his "recuperative lurking" to keep the Page Mothers Conference from vanishing from the record, wary of speaking as a "white male, etc.etc.—('whale' for short)" but unwilling to watch the list "devolve once again to a daily dose of chit-chat."

Because I am here at ground-zero, exactly seven days after the Page Mothers Conference wound down with one of the best group readings I have ever been party to witness, and it seems--once again--that the discourse surrounding this conference will forever be held to whispers and will not become part of the historical record, save for a useful notation of its proceedings by one Kevin Killian, and because some of my thinking was aided and advanced by the proceedings and the conversations surrounding them, I feel that it is time for me to emerge from my recuperative lurking to address the conference and a few other things that have been stewing inside me since we last snuggled up against the cold winds of December's scandal. I was tempted to hold my tongue on this, for it isn't really my place to comment--as a white male, etc.etc.--("whale" for short). On the other hand, I can't sit by in good conscience and watch this space devolve once again to a daily dose of chit-chat, which serve only to amuse the few people who bother to participate. The relative silence in this space--at the hands of those who otherwise know good and well that they should speak up--breaks what little of a heart I have left. Even the quiz presented in this forum by my new friend and true Page Daughter patriot, Kathy Lou Schultz, seemed only to add to the air of mystery and the strange shroud of silence

surrounding the events. So, all this is to say, watch out, for what follows here is a multiply-long post, only some of which is addressed to the conference, which as I said helped me begin to solve problems which I see in the current landscape of language arts and the "community" which its relatively small-scale industry evokes and encourages.

Kuszai turns to the list itself — a summons to lurkers to "rise up and take a stand," a memoir of his editing and his years championing Bay Area women's writing, and a bitter word for friends who "abandoned ship like so many Titanic 1st class-passengers."

Page Brothers in Drag: Wannabe Women or Can I borrow your identity to advance my career?

The conference here last weekend was too multiple to address in any complete manner. I hope that other views on this will be presented, here as well as elsewhere, as the more dialog about "what happened" I hope will go a long way towards developing an adequate picture of the events. Before I go into my very subjective perceptions of one aspect of the conference, let me try to address some of the larger pictures that come through for me.

It was great to see such a grouping of power brokers (mothers) and their attendant daughters, with a few of us boys scattered in for effect. The conference itself was caught in the poetry festival and academic conference dilemma, and like many of these mixed-project conferences, this was a useful bringing together. Perhaps it is a legacy of the theoretically-minded "language" school, which could be said to be one of the major literary preoccupations of many of the women at the conference (mother and daughters), that so many of the attendees (both presenters and audience members) would be so astute to the issues involved. So while it was academic on the one hand, many of the people present were not "academics" per se, something which made the conference so much more interesting than the typical academic conference, which usually has the air of a good natured sporting event, with everyone shaking hands and going home afterward. The fact that Marjorie Perloff's comments so angered Carla Harryman and others is testament to the fact that with this group the line between what constitutes theory and poetry has been nearly erased in some corners of the poetry world, and indeed, in some corners of the academic mainstream. And this is an issue that is worth developing further, but I will save it for another time.

What did anger Carla, I think, brings me closer to my "thesis" about the conference, or what it meant for me. The notion that the women language poets were somehow practioners of a theoretical orientation defined and packaged by the men of that generation (Silliman, Watten, Bernstein, etc.) is perhaps not the main issue as far as I can see it. Marjorie did try to stake out too much in her brief talk, which was excerpted from a longer talk to be presented at the Barnard Conference next month. And perhaps there rests some of the problem. I don't think she got to make all of the connections she put underway, and while her argument may have depended upon the suppositions raised by the recounting of the early days of "language" history

(told as male dominated in terms of theory production goes), her argument and presentation suffered because she was unable to tie it all up at the end (at least how I imagined how it might end). While she did admonish those present to more rigorously define what is meant by "innovative" and not use that word to define what I perceive to be largely social groupings of newer (emergent) poets, that proposal was made in the face of an angry group in the audience, led by Carla Harryman, who took issue with her historical portrayal of the women as not being theorists and the males being out front, etc. Unfortunately, Perloff's call for a more rigorous theorizing of the issues by women, especially younger women, was made before Jen Hofer and Summi Kaipa gave a brilliant reading / study / performace during the reading on Sunday, when Perloff was absent. Perhaps there is some deeper history to what could be seen as "academic vs. poet" arguing, as I saw an enraged member of the Harryman clan go chin-to-chin with Perloff a few years ago in the cash bar at the Orono Conference on the 1950s. As one astute ringside watcher remarked then, "at least Perloff shows up for the fight." And despite the contentious response her remarks elicited, there is perhaps another way of looking at all this which brings me closer, yet still (hang on, please), to the core of my argument.

It was inappropriate for Perloff to spend so long on a particularly male history at a conference devoted to the Page Mothers and especially since she was on the "future" panel, the conversation supposedly arranged to elicit views on where "we" might go next-- and the next wave, exemplified by Renee Gladman's and Pamela Liu's presentations, the highlight of the conference for me.

It was inappropriate, in my feeling, though I don't think it needed to be. Regardless whether you think Perloff's history was right or wrong (and I think we could debate this, though I would like to see a copy of the *whole* paper, since as I have said, I felt it was the subject matter alone which was inappropriate). Perloff's admonition to do theorizing more rigorously, to propose a project beyond the gratuitous fluff and name-dropping reviews so common in today's poetical discourse (a trend not limited by gender) was something I very much applaud. Someone here on this list asked recently what might be considered "new" and I think if one could take on that question, they might be setting themselves up for more criticism, as even the search for a "new thing" based on some kind of formal principle might be seen as another masculinist gesture, an attempt to prescriptively orientate our literary bearings based upon modes and criteria developed through Poundian economies, the very economies our Page Mothers and Fathers had sought to undo. It seems to me that to develop a sense of what constitutes "new" now would have to take under consideration such things as "place," "identity" and some of the other taboo issues that we are always so quick to dispense with when formulating our geneologies. And by "we" here, I am in part referring to my white brothers, who have demonized such practices as developing countercultural strategies as even those employed by Bernstein, Watten, Sherry, Silliman, and others, who sought to arrange a sub-cultural network for distribution, discussion, and more, around new poets and their publishing activities.

Kuszai breaks off into the history of his own press — Charles B.'s advice to "start small," a half-serious scheme to print books cheaply "on Finnish paper" in St. Petersburg.

Lesbian Disco, or why I can't dance

Listening to and watching Pamela Liu and Renee Gladman address the conference, it occurred to me that while they may have appeared on the "futures" panel almost as an after thought, an accusation I haven't seen supported, they were the greatest and truest representation of the future. Indeed, a bomb went off in my head, one which told me that I was irrelevant, outdated, uninteresting. I felt swept aside by the convincing nature of their presentations, their motivated commitment to what they are doing and their peers. And one of the great problems with this conference was that not everyone could make it. A very west coast phenomenon, the pre-eminence of Bay Area women (younger and older) should have been of interest to everyone--on this list and otherwise. The silence from Buffalo on this front has been very telling for me, the silence and seeming disinterest coming from New York. Not everyone could be paid and invited, but it seems to me that this conference was either something you are interested in or not--and that some of the disinterest was based on not being invited. One criticism I do have of some of the would-be attendees, is this almost universal sense of the need to be recognized, and the bitter whining that went on at least here on the west coast, regarding who would be or wouldn't be invited is perhaps a bigger epidemic than I can address here. But Pamela's and Renee's presence on the panel stood in for much wider happening, one they addressed in their talks with great generosity.

When Dodie and Kevin came to Buffalo in the Fall of 1997, they spoke of this range of younger writers, almost none of whom I had heard of. It was as if this incredible world had opened; so many things to learn about-- so much to read and discover. My world had been dominated by the New York scene, past and present, and by the historical Bay Area, from Jack London to the departure of Ben Friedlander, who was my primary source of Bay Area history and intrigue. And despite the fact that it is a literary community now run by "middle aged women" as someone put it at the end of the conference, the history of the Bay Area, with a few exceptions had been a primarily male history. So you can imagine how exciting it was to hear of this community in development.

What I learned from Pamela and Renee may not be so easily put into words, and hopefully I will continue to learn from them as their works reach a wider audience though the underground small press economy of which I have been a part. When I voiced my sense of being irrelevant to a friend after the conference, the response was sheer dismissal-- i.e. that my press was an important press of new work, within this subeconomy, etc. and that I shouldn't feel that way. But being relevant here isn't about being in a position of power, though my "power" is completely relative, and the use most people seem to have for me seems completely instrumental anyhow. I sensed that magazines such as Clamor, Outlet, Proliferation, and many others (including the glossy Lipstick 11) were involved in this community building

effort-- often through the use of materials gained by theft, recycle-bin diving, and creative misuse... an economy of production very close to my heart. The development of these editorial and publishing collectives, scene-building in the area of San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland-- this is the creation of the kind of literary community that will develop its own methods of extending their poetical discourses into the world at large. By that I mean that these women (and some men, as it doesn't seem to be exclusively one thing or another) will establish their own networks for the the development of the kind of poetics theorizing that both Silliman, Perloff and others (even myself) have called for at times. That theorizing is going on, but it will be excellent to watch them undertake this project as they begin to aquire power and authority (a dangerous trade-off, as I have discovered), as they age, as another group of upstarts seeks to establish themselves in the wake of this intensely interesting group of women writers. All of it is so new to me. During the conference I was suddenly blinded by the shock of their brilliant glow and I wished that more people of this community had made it down, as the Conference was one of those landmark historical events which will only grow in significance as the histories of it get written and rewritten.

Just as for me the New Coast Conference in 1993 was a formative experience, one which inspired me to do what I do now, I hope that they will have a similar sense of the Page Mothers. But it isn't for me to write that significance, and perhaps they will have cause to have a conference of their own, wherein such poetical exchanges can include more of their contemporaries.

As we reach the end of the decade (I am less interested in the millenial urge as I am 10-year clocks) such a re-thinking of how we do all this might be in order. For me, I feel myself in a great crisis, one which my brothers might not share. I felt a giant kick in the pants by the Page Mothers Conference. And not to be a reactionary, not to ask how might we white boys might best express our identity, or shore-up our hegemony, but instead, how might we rethink our very sense of place in a world which seems hell-bent at eradicating any real sense of difference as it attempts to co-opt the very communities it seeks to include. Not polarizing smallness, but how to proceed? For me, I am much more interested in education (and not pedagogy) than I am aesthetic issues these days, and that may be only the beginning of my dilemma. I live 15 minutes from Mexico and I know little about the poets there. The road to Tecate is lined with police-- border guards. And on this note, my page brothers here in San Diego will be the recipients of this questioning--and my brother Bill Marsh and I had a wonderfully exciting getting-nowhere-fast conversation about these issues-- and I know even my quick sunday morning portrayal of this question is complex, incomplete, and only beginning. But we (four boys from s.d.) are starting a magazine. Hopefully, some of you will see and feel the results of our talks about this.

Thanks for your time-

joel k
of the valley
Spring Valley, that is-

6 JANUARY 1995 / 24TH ST & GUERRERO

— Lynn Miller · 4 August 1999

Miller reads Moxley's "Invective Verse," from Writing from the New Coast, as a summons: "There is a specter haunting poetry." Put down the coffee, feel the rage. He lingers on her "benefactor economy" and her not-quite-rhetorical "Who the fuck are we anyway?"

"There is a specter haunting poetry"

Jennifer Moxley, *Invective Verse*
Writing from the New Coast, 1993

Finally someone has brought out the ghost and made it walk, and talk. Swift, light, airy--Jennifer probably wrote her poetics statement in less than an hour. When I found it in a book called "Technique," I laughed. It was a dash. It is hilarious and it is incisive. Here is a poet whose first thought about her poetics is the right-wing currently consolidating its power in the halls of that bad joke called Washington. Her advice is to put down that cup of coffee and feel the rage. Time is running out, poetry is a privilege, and screaming our radical politics from the rooftop doesn't mean a thing unless the voice belongs to millions. "Who the fuck are we anyway?" Jennifer wants to know, and it doesn't sound to me like a rhetorical question. Along with her friendly allusion to the Communist Manifesto, in the space of a single paragraph are plays on the sit-in tactic of the Civil Rights Movement and an assertion of the classical Marxist position that Socialism is merely a transitional stage, a tangible and immediate goal en route to the Pie in the Sky. Moxley calls the first phase a "benefactor economy" and she is not dreaming. I overheard the same demand Thursday from two bicycle messengers on their lunch break: "Every good writer should be guaranteed at least \$30,000 a year." The speaker's co-worker was nodding his head in emphatic agreement. I could live with that, at least "until after the revolution." Again, I'm quoting Moxley, because she says there's going to be a revolution, and you can wear whatever you want including your suede shoes. I've got mine on tonight for the occasion of hearing what else this poet might say, a poet who wants to recapture the "public domain for poetry" (and with an exclamation mark!) It's another one of her wild ideas, like THE CALL FOR POETS TO CHANGE THEIR NAMES AT THE END OF EVERY FISCAL QUARTER--Benjamin was thinking along the same lines when he called the author a producer, like a director or conductor--some BODY absorbing the current of the time in current times. Electricity in the air. That's what the specter is, and that's why I find Moxley's theoretical contribution to the New Coast symposium so exciting and valuable. She wants excess and abundance and she wants it now. Her call for recapturing the public domain reminds me of something Trotsky thought about. I can't remember anymore whether he was writing about the Russian Revolution or French

Surrealism when he very lucidly articulated the phenomenon of combined development. According to Trotsky, the avant garde is not a permanent achievement. It happens once and once only, out of great sacrifice and against incredible odds, and then it reaches a crossroads or the crossing of many roads, other levels of consciousness passing by, surging forward, BEARING THE STAMP OF THEIR NECESSITY, and if the vanguard foregoes dialogue in the fantasy of its own intellectual superiority or correctness of method, then it winds up reproducing itself in an increasing series of diluted gestures. It spins its wheels and the efforts of poets or professional revolutionaries that brought the avant garde onto the stage of history are wasted. If, on the other hand, the youth coming out of that vanguard choose to seek dialogue with so-called "backward" tendencies, combined development can occur—an unpredictable release of creative energy of vast proportions. That's about as far as I can get with that thought for the moment, but it strikes me as somehow in relation or congruent with Jennifer's anticipation of the possibility of a popular poetry. I can't wait to hear her poetry whose desiring is announced with such ease and aplomb. Let's welcome the author of "Invective Verse" to Small Press Traffic and to San Francisco.

Wherever Moxley is worn
all changed, changed utterly
a terrible Beauty is born

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cut-ups / "homosexualization of the New York avant-garde"

— Jeffrey Jullich · 14 August 1999

Jullich pursues a genealogy in which queerness is load-bearing for the cut-up—Burroughs, Cage, Ashbery, and, for Pop, Warhol and Johns—set beside Sontag's "Notes on Camp." Exactly why, he concedes, "may be thin ice to explain."

| Mark Prejsnar 08/10/99 07:13pm >>> wrote:

Jacques,

I would be interested to hear what you feel connects the "homosexualization of the New York avant-garde" with cut-up >technique.... (beyond the fact that some gay guys did it....) —Mark Prejsnar»

Mark,

Although I don't know what Jacques' answer would be to that question, . . . I would like to agree with him about "the dangers of historical decontextualization", and that, to name as he did only Burroughs, Cage, and Ashbery, "homosexualization" is significant for the invention of cut-ups. Personally, I've already had a similar impression concerning the "homosexualization" of Warhol's, Johns', and Rauschenberg's appropriations, in relation to the genesis of Pop. (Not to forget: the theoretics of cut-ups' historical period were also hothouse to "Notes on Camp,"

whose own "homosexualization" treated sexuality and art style as self-evident equivalents.) Why I feel that way, though, may be thin ice to explain.

I take it from your (supportive) tone that you mean your question to be ~in defense~ of those "gay guys", . . . as though Jacques' telescoping of the period into one "-ization" were presumption, like talking "Velvet Mafia" or shortchanging heterosexualized contemporaries. But at the same time I'd like to submit that your "beyond the fact that some gay guys did it" may have a trivializing casualness about it, . . . as though there were always "gay guys" around, as it seems nowadays, and no less than three all at once independently but coincidentally being instrumental in the creation of a new art form were at best some statistical fluke. As though the branding iron of idiosyncratic desire did not leave its stamp on art. Back to "historical decontextualization": those three were still of a generation which couldn't yet even be ~named~ as "gay", so their consensus in all engineering this same new art form into being is to the contrary rather remarkable. If a new genre were to emerge from a similarly exclusionary group of, say, Jews, ---or ~lesbians~ rather than "guys"! it might be more striking and appear instantly sensible for someone to begin one of those typical explorations of Jewish Mysticist antecedents, or such.

That said, let me get myself into more hot water by attempting to explain the parallel I find between the Warhol-Johns-Rauschenberg "homosexualization" and Pop, and between the Burroughs-Cage-Ashbery "homosexualization" and cut-ups. Proviso: I may be confusing psychology for ontology, and I'm almost definitely erring into what Jacques warns against as "analogical . . . significance." (However, given the metaphoric nature of "historical contextualization's" hidden similes themselves, some tropological thinking seems allowable.)

Heres the point:

The xerox-like image transfer methods (silk screening) of the Pop artists ~reproduced~ images without devising new ones; similarly, that graphic form has its literary equivalent in cut-ups, which also, if not per se reproducing, re~arrange~ a pre-existing text without introducing new matter.

The (perhaps heretically naive) link my mind draws is---to ~biological~ reproduction, or procreation. (There is some slippage of terms here, as we use the word "reproduction" for both productive biological parturition and the ~non-productive~ "mechanical reproduction" we know since Benjamin.) To blurt it out---the figure of the homosexual is, in biological terms, non-productive (non-reproducing), and the "homosexualization" artwork of those cut-up/Pop progenitors was also non-productive ("reproduction"). If we suspend disbelief and try to re-imagine from the perspective of those '50's art climate, "original" creation would have been seen as an indispensable criterion of ~a man's~ art.

The necessary absurdity that Im figuring into this logic is the cliché that "an artwork is like a child to the artist"; and I am of course assuming for the sake of this stereotyped argumentation the fallacy of the ~childless~ homosexual, a fallacy

which, however, in the case of these particular six artists named in the "homosexualization", happens to hold true (perhaps not accidentally).

Hence---I suppose another way of putting this (increasingly embarrassing) notion is that: the homosexual does not ~add~ to the world. (Although an unpalatable axiom, and patently objectionable on the level of the real, it seems fair to assert in the spirit of dogma such as "Ce sexe qui n'est pas un" or other post-modern metaphysics.) In these terms, the "gay guys" behind cut-ups and Pop reproduction, despite their incontestable contribution, did not ~add~ to the world or the bulk of existing imagery/text in the same way that a work of "original" production takes up space. (~Europe~ had "really" not added anything to ~Beryl of the Biplane;~ it's commutative, not additive.)

As far as cut-ups' earlier larval stage of ~collage,~ I believe Wayne Koestenbaum has commented on the sublimated male-male "bonding" that Picasso and Braque acted out in its invention and manufacture (Koestenbaum, ~Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration,~ which should perhaps be required reading in relation to "beyond the fact": same-sex literary collaboration may ~already~ be an a priori "homosexualization," regardless of the participants' actual sexual preference, according to Koestenbaum's thesis).

I hope this doesn't seem like Pound on Social Credit. I mean it as Queer Theory,--- which is always speculative.

Jeffrey Jullich

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Re: avant garde / mckenzie

— Geraldine McKenzie · 5 December 1999

McKenzie writes to cool an overheated post—she'd worked up to "full Celtic warrior/bush lawyer mode"—and to defend novelty: the avant-garde seeks new forms not from love of the new but "out of a sense of the inadequacies of orthodoxy."

I tried to keep this brief.

First - to John, I wasn't referring to you in my comments and am at a loss as to why you think so. I now have to say I'll admit I'm not good with email, it's too fast, like conversation, and in a certain mood I open my big mouth and get carried away, by the end of it I was working up to full Celtic warrior/bush lawyer mode (an hour later I was recalling all the ellisions and generalizations of my post). Re novelty: the usual sense of the term avant garde encompasses this quality and I thought (could be wrong) it was mentioned in the post on the Lehmann book. Avant garde poetries frequently cite the importance of new forms, new languages, new possibilities, not necessarily from a belief in the essential virtue of the new but out of a sense of the inadequacies of orthodoxy. As for the association with commodities, I appreciate it wasn't made in the fourteenth century but, in Australia at least, all words referring

to novelty or newness have become advertising staples to an extent that compromises their usage in any other area. (This doesn't even begin to address the issue of art as commodity, though I'd be interested to see what others have to say.)

Re: 'revolutionary' texts - Just to clarify my use of opposition - I'm thinking in terms of modes of thinking and writing rather than beliefs or 'attitudes'. Of course, each feeds the other but, to put it in the crudest terms, I don't see the avant garde functioning as propagandists or prophets (though some have sought such roles). In fact, I dislike any characterisation of the poet which romanticises the occupation or endows it with a questionable authority. '(Reader could be writer, writer reader. Listener could be teacher.)' (DuPlessis) * As for the intrinsic oppositional nature of the avant garde, I offer a quotation from a much more useful text than this posting - "Robert Stearns writes (in a configuration we would share with him): 'The avant garde might be characterised as those creators who do not take their environment & its traditions at face value. They separate & view its elements & realign them according to their own needs.' This description (while devoid as yet of social revolutionary purpose) is general enough to include the great range of strategies & stances in experimental poetry & art." - Rothenberg and Joris in the introduction to Vol. 1, Poems for the Millenium. In this context I mention, without exploring, Paul Fussell's analysis of an adversarial cast of mind which derives from the experiences of the Great War (The Great War and Modern Memory). What is most germane is not the combatants' sense of the Enemy, although this is profound, but the division between the troops and the General Staff/civilian society, and a developing sense of the fraudulence of authority, be it military, political or cultural.

Re: marketplace - what can I say - I didn't mean it quite literally, but avant garde poetry/writing is for sale, surely, unless you access it on the net. In addition, the poetic economy is a little more complex than the exchange of goods for money, income is more commonly generated by funding and/or teaching positions but these, of course, are in some measure dependant on publication. In any case, if you check my original post, I did double back on that clause. Bit it on the bum, as it were. Similiarly, with the reference to technique. Still, I'll admit this is one of the sections of my post which I felt had weaknesses, too many leaps, setting up of possibly artificial distinctions (and what distinctions aren't? Well, quite.), and yet raising issues that I'm interested in and would like to read other posts on. I don't mind admitting that I know very little and am trying to figure it all out. I'm not avant garde either but I am experimenting inasmuch as I try to see what I can do with language, and I'm not too keen on repeating myself (though it happens, it happens). Improvisation? Of course.

Re: technique. Questions. Collage has been described as a major innovation in poetic technique. Clearly, whilst it is a technique, it's also intimately connected with certain ideas about reality and poetics. However, the technique can be used by those who, for a variety of reasons, do not partake of the theoretic grounding from which collage derives. The appearance of being avant garde is there, but what else? - I'm thinking of a well-known scandal in the Australian literary scene (in the fifties, I think). Two established poets wrote a group of poems, ostensibly by an unknown experimental poet 'Ern Malley'. Their intention was to expose what they saw as the

pretensions of such poetry. Re: official verse culture - a matter of circumstance - most of the magazines here are dominated by it. As are readings, festivals, competitions etc. but I'm perhaps most keenly aware of it at work - I teach high school and, whilst university courses are more adventurous, the school curriculum is extremely limited. From memory, the most experimental writing a high school student is likely to encounter (and only if studying at the most advanced level) is A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and T.S. Eliot. No further comment. Except to say, I understand official verse culture to be a strand in official culture and, though one may evade some of its manifestations, it's impossible to evade them all. In conclusion, a beginning - please dispute some or all of the above - it just scratches the surface -

*(Digression - there's an account of Henry James meeting Ada Leverson and, after some discussion of his work prompted by her questions, he said - "Can it be - it must be - that you are that embodiment of the incorporeal, that elusive yet ineluctable being to whom through the generations novelists have so unfailingly made invocation; in short, the Gentle Reader?")

Regards, Geraldine McKenzie

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Re: success

— Tony Green · 8 February 2000

Green weighs nomination against use: naming may begin the artwork, but "the test wd be its use." A critic, he recalls, was stumped by what an audience does with Cage's silence; Duchamp, meanwhile, was "very choosy about his ready-mades."

It may be an act of nomination that begins the process of something becoming a work of art, but the test wd be its use. I read an article (published where?) by my Auckland colleague Stephen Davies, in which he was demonstrating that Cage's 4 mins 33 secs is not a piece of music. One stumbling block for him, I recall -- & this is some time ago & memory-approximate -- was that he could not imagine what an audience would do with the "silence" even when juxtaposed with the pianist gestures of proposing to perform a piece & ending one.

Maybe maybe maybe The Ready-Made exposes misrepresentation etc.

Do recall though that Marcel Duchamp was very choosy about his ready-mades.

There weren't many of them, not everything was appropriate for ready-made; that they are nearly always rotated or otherwise altered from their usual postures; that they did always go with a text (a title); that they were found serendipitously; in short that they are very particular & each is specific in its workings. A bicycle wheel inverted on a wooden stool, for instance is as different in its effect from a row of coat-hooks attached to a floor, as stilled rotation -- the effect of spokes seen in motion & spokes seen stilled -- as stumbling & stubbing one's toe on a small obstacle

on a gallery floor. I always make a point of setting the bicycle wheels in motion -- because the rotation & stillness is a factor in their being ready-mades. But this has to be done surreptitiously because of the "don't touch" rule in art galleries. I haven't been caught & ejected from a gallery yet.

I am not content to move to theoretical generalizations about Ready-Mades & the big question of Nomination, if they are to by-pass the simplest of critical attentions to -- in this case -- Duchamp's practice. It is not clear that painted pictures in galleries are not works of art by a process of nomination also. I am far more satisfied by noticing that there are paintings & writings, which are proposed, some of them as artworks, some of them not, & some but not all of those proposed are interesting & also that some that are not so proposed are.

Is it impossible to let the problem of definition: of whether something is an artwork or not, rest in its philosophical space? I am not convinced that the attempt to arrive at answers has been of much use. & to then make use of such answers as have been proposed in a would-be scientific sociology sounds to me just a little dubious as an operation.

best Tony Green

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Re: remap + other questions (Maine, P&W)

— Arielle Greenberg · 28 February 2000

New to the scene, Greenberg admits she's "a sucker for a hold-in-your-hand object"—experimental poetics into two camps, "the New Coast group and the Elliptical group."

I think this thread is very useful, in part because it is just informing me of new journals I want to look at and in part because it is bringing up the very relevant and vital issue of how to keep poetics mags surviving. I think that doing it online is, yes, probably very helpful and cheaper and more accessible, but I'm a sucker for a hold-in-your-hand object, especially if it is beautiful (good design -- beautiful in any sense). I therefore love Chain, the Germ (but when is it going to come out again?!), Rhizome, AL&C, Talisman, others.

On a related note, has anyone else read the Scharf columns in Poets & Writers? I am really still pretty new to this whole world myself, so maybe other people found the articles (which pretty much delineate the state of experimental poetics, sticking it into two groups, the New Coast group and the Elliptical group) rather lax or misguided or whatever, but for myself, I was very encouraged to see this stuff laid out so clearly and so pro-experiment in something like P&W, and with so much room given to names I don't usually see in there. I was kind of thrilled that the columns exist, but would love to hear other opinions.

I'd also like to hear who is going to be at NEMLA in Buffalo, at poetry of the 60s in Maine, at BoPo this summer. I hardly know any of you by face, and would love to meet up with fellow listers. Backchannel, certainly, if you like.

Thanks,
Arielle

"I thought numerous gorgeous sadists would write me plaintive appeals, but time has gone by me. They know where to get better looking boots than I describe." --Ray Johnson

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Re: edit, editors, editing

— Mark DuCharme · 8 August 2001

Into the perennial magazine quarrel—Behrle defending young editors against the charge that they "don't 'get it'"—DuCharme offers a moderate's creed: the best journals are "ecclectic enough to surprise me... focused enough" to hold a viewpoint. He names the Germ, Combo, Kenning.

Jim Behrle wrote, among other things:

I cannot name a publication that is slapped together thoughtlessly and haphazardly. Like them, like their choices or not, someone is making the calls, putting this poet next to that, etc.

...

THE NEW YORKER, POETRY, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY: these magazines all have aesthetics, narrow editorial policies. Should they be emulated by young editors?

...

What I react strongest to is Mr. Bolton's statements, and Mr. Silliman's. We young editors don't "get it." We don't know what the hell we're doing. We're lazy and we don't know good work. Well, that's the tone. I say we are fortunately bejeweled with enough smart, fantastic magazines to satisfy any poetic taste, and to reflect the exciting work being produced as we all, for whatever reason, are instead reading (or writing) this.

...

Now to add my two cents:

Personally, the magazines that mean the most to me are the ones that are eclectic enough to surprise me, open enough to include both younger & (neglected) older writers, & focused enough that the magazine, if not necessarily all work in it, seems to represent a kind of "aesthetic" or viewpoint. Probably the print magazines that most consistently satisfy me on these grounds right now are The Germ, Combo &

Kenning, though I'm probably forgetting a few others. (By the way, kudos to Andrew & Macgregor for the amazing & gorgeous French poetry issue, which I am still making my way through!)

I think that the best way to understand Ron Silliman's post (though I'm not sure that he himself would rephrase it like this) is that those magazines with a highly visible & provocative point of view stand a better chance of making it into literary history than those magazines which "only" publish excellent or challenging work. I'm sure he is right about this. However, I would point out that it is the latter which (often) are more influential. As proof of that, I have only to point out, as Ron did, that no one has attempted to take up where Apex of the M left off. Now, Apex of the M was a wonderful magazine; and if I single it out, it is only because there have not been any *other* magazines in the last 15 years (at least) to have combined such a concentration of good poetry with a polemically-charged editorial stance. However-- & despite its high profile-- NO ONE has attempted to carry on with that sort of project since that magazine folded. Maybe someone will: these things tend to go in cycles. But for now, this is where it stands. By comparison-- & to single out another magazine from roughly the same period-- I think o•blek has been relatively influential. I can think of a few magazines which strike me as having been partially modeled on o•blek's content & format-- though I wish to let those editors speak for themselves, if they want to, rather than indulge in what may be speculation. Also, o•blek's final, "New Coast" issue, I think, has had a lot more impact on U.S. poetry in the last several years than Apex of the M did. I'd also like to point out that, though roughly half of that issue was devoted to poetic "statements" or theory, the overall tone was not polemical, but rather, it had the eclectic feel of "a gathering."

So much for editorial viewpoint.

Mark DuCharme

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Re: inchoate / SEGUE [The Zombie Avant-Garde]

— Jeffrey Jullich · 27 April 2002

Jullich savors Paul Mann's Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde ("yum!"): the avant-garde dies by recuperation, absorbed into the capitalism it's symbiotic with, canonized and sold. He finds the diagnosis "envigorating! (yet at the same time bleak)."

On Sat, 27 Apr 2002 12:47:33 -0700, Heidi Peppermint wrote:

| Dying? <

Funny you should use that word: "death." The death of the avant-garde / the death of poetry.

Some people don't like to be called "dead," of course, but---

Following a footnote in Barrett Watten's ~Secret History~ essay, I've been awaiting the recall of my library's copy of Paul Mann's ~Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde~ (yum!) and, in the meantime, reading an on-line version of his ~Masocriticism~, which gives a summary of what the preceding theory-death meant. I'm finding the idea to be quite invigorating! (yet at the same time bleak) and to help cast almost everything of American avant-garde poetry into relief.

[I provide interesting sample quotes from the book at the bottom of this post.]

Here's my interpretation of what ~Masocriticism~ says about theory-death:

It takes as its starting point the old adage --- old but said from so many different corners that it starts to take on an insistent truth by consensus of its reiteration --- that the avant-garde is dead. And from there, it goes on to explain ~how~ the avant-garde is dead (and still continuing at the same time). As best I can make out, his idea is that, once avant-gardes are recuperated back into the over-all exchange system of the "capitalism" that they come out of, that is, by becoming "alternative tradition" canonical, in museums, or sold, ---the avant-garde and capitalism being symbiotic (capitalism having needed the avant-garde to fuel it with new, exploitable inventiveness),--- the avant-gardes are stripped of all their original ~ideological~ context and significance. Homogenized, kind of, so that basically all that remains of them are their structural or design differences, but with the politics and theory gone out of it. There's the theory-death.

(An applied example of this might be how surrealism and Dada and Futurism and Russian zaum, to name only a few, all stand leveled on the same plane now: the surrealism of Breton's "l'amour fou" where an almost crimes of passion but private berserk love was the revolutionary catalyst, the surrealism of the Communist Party surrealists or Breton with Trotsky, the fascism behind Italian Futurism, the Russian avant-gardes as agents of an implemented revolutionary government, etc., are all elided into exercises in style, with the pits removed. Without their ideological-theory components, all those avant-gardes and their artworks have lost an indispensable dimension of their significance,

. . . like preserving a national anthem or flags without knowing which country they belonged to.)

He sees the avant-garde as having existed from 1871 to May 1968, between the two French revolutions. (Again, dated very close to the other "the avant-garde is dead" proponents, who ground its disappearance, for example, in the economic absorption of the bourgeois class that gave rise to it by opposition, or even post-modernity dating its inception a decade or so later [with the demolition of that Modernist classic building, etc]) .

The paradox of a dead avant-garde still continuing and even proliferating: the very repetition ~is~ the death principle that's driving it post mortem. There's a Freudian equation between the death principle and repetition compulsion, where the

sameness or stasis that repetition compulsion pursues is a zero state of identity, and that zero is death.

He compares it to de Sade's repetitive, endlessly generating sentences. Kind of like a zombie avant-garde, where the very fact that it's still going is proof that it's ~really, really~ dead. If it weren't dead, it would've laid down or stopped by now. Of course, this notion of "dead" might be expressed with another term. (But which?)

This gratifying theory-death seems quite plausible if not self-evident to me. Death has never prevented literatures from continuing. Neo-Latin poetry, for instance, extended well beyond the Middle Ages, even into the early twentieth century among some Italian scholastics (the neo-Latin poet whom Saussure corresponded with, believing he'd found hypogrammes in his writing) and, for centuries, English poetry and neo-Latin poetry were produced in parallel, the latter usually coming first in a poet's career, so that half of the canon's poetry is sealed off to us (the Latin poetry of Milton, of Marvell, of Marlowe). See the morbidity of New Formalism's dry bones. Perhaps an even better example (since neo-Latin poetry was dead by virtue of its vocabulary being a dead language's whereas now the dead avant-garde still uses a living English) might be philosophy, which didn't listen to its Hegelian death knell, didn't even quite let Heideggerian twilight bury it, and which, regardless, as least by Wittgensteinian linguistic skepticism, was always operating, in metaphysics and ontology, without any real circulatory system, just sort of a haunted house of grammatically uprooted ghost words like "being" or "essence."

This theory-death seems a useful key to me in that it gives a unique standard of measurement for otherwise difficult-to-explain Deterioration-like profusions: the aforementioned Xerox Poetry, for example, is a sort of Shroud of Turin of the exterminated original. It allows it to be asked, of the possible means of sustenance, how much literary ~necrophilia~ is the driving force.

As in The Persistent Achaicism, something that deserves attention. To seize upon just the convenient example of the latest posted new e-journal as a test case, <http://www.wordforword.info> : among fourteen writers, we find ---in no way disparaging the very good, good poetry there: "medieval streets in context" (history as the preserved dead) or the dead spot of inherited lyrical sentimentality, "the melancholy voices of these green woods" [William Allegrezza]; haikus hundred of years after their vitality; the dead/archaic Elizabethan diction of "And the solution of contynuyte called ecchymosis in / greke commeth most often" [Braden]; Martin Corless-Smith, who has made dead book English his trademark style, and who, in the particular wordforword poem, reenacts the manifestation of dead zones by making overstruck cancelations (deletions) the whole trope of the piece; the robotic lifelessness of Jukka-Pekka Kervinen's computer-generated collages; the dead neo-classicism of "from Philomela to Procne" [McCollough] or "it is unlawful says Hypnos" [Mulrooney]; pure zero drive repetition compulsion in David Pavelich's rearranged lines (see Braden); an elegy of Shakespeare's in the title "Full Fathom Five" and perhaps the most thorough Final Days of all the poetry in Jon Thompson's extremely crepuscular poetry: "The Sense of Ending," "ghostly remnants of old

fables," etc. (Again: this autopsy analysis is in no way a condemnation of the poetry's commendable strengths: rigidity, petrification, fossilization, vampirism ^Å)

The avant-garde may have been dead so long now that it's finally beginning to show, in a myriad of ways. This flat-lining and absent pulse is good news, I think, because for the first time it allows other ~seeming~ growths to be seen for what they are: disintegration as dispersal . . .

Cheerfully,

Quotes from ~Masocriticism~:

:

Now this diagnosis suggests, first of all, that the avant-garde's death was not an event that occurred at the end of a long and healthy life: from the very outset everything it produced was its death; everything it produced delivered it into the arms of an economy in which death itself can be reproduced as a commodity.

....

Capital feeds off of the avant-garde; its perpetual death helps keep the monster of capital alive. That is why the death of the avant-garde must not be confused with any termination, any closure, which has not yet occurred and will never occur as long as the culture of capital persists. The death of the avant-garde is not its end but its repetition, indeed its compulsive repetition.

...

But at the same time, as the death of the avant-garde makes manifest, in this culture one can also die by speaking. One can also play into the hands of a generalized violence against secrecy.

...

It is here that one begins to imagine another monstrous order in which the equation of silence and death is not rejected but embraced, in which the deepest necessity is to seek this silence and death.

One imagines such a silence so that one's own writing will become untenable. Under the sign of silence and death, writing turns against itself with enormous fury; it becomes a kind of masocriticism, if you will, subjecting itself to the laws of the discursive economy it loathes in order to inflict upon itself an unprecedented suffering that will make writing, as long as it continues, impossible.

..

[de Sade] He would have no interest in the avant-garde attempt to dismantle bourgeois art only to reassemble its elements once more within the discursive economy, within Art and Culture, in the moribund form of the aesthetic commodity. It is because culture is, like Frankenstein, so adept at such reassemblies, at reproducing phantasms of life from the scattered limbs of the dead, that a second death must occur, an afterlife that is the first encounter with death, a death carried

out, in Sade's work, by the continuous production of sentences, sentences that are always punctuated as death sentences.

The death of the author? It has long been a critical cliché. But the lesson of Sade is that the only author whose death matters is the author of the text one writes.

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Re: inchoate / SEGUE [The Zombie Avant-Garde]

— Millie Niss · 28 April 2002

Niss shrugs off the death-of-the-avant-garde thread—"isn't the avant-garde always dead? and isn't that the point"—then goes hunting for Bök's Eunoia, whose author she can never quite name, and asks what poem is best to read in the rain.

isn't the avant-garde always dead? and isn't that the point. the avant-garde is always dead and being replaced by something which will later be called avant-garde...

What is the new poetry now like? I want to read that book Eunoia that seems quite popular only I can never remember the author's name :-) (easy enough to find though) but more seriously can't find even at bookstores like labyrinth (I think Jeffrey Jullich lives in my neighborhood so knows where I'm talking about) or St. Marks. I'm gonna try Gotham but it's not that great on new poetry books and you have to be awake 9-5 to go there....and it's raining) see how concrete I can be even though I read Language Poetry sometimes? hey what is the most appropriate poem to read in the rain? I have two candidtaes, both French but quiote different. One is Appolinaire's Caligramme "il pleut" and the Verlaine poem which may be nameless but is the third pooemin Romances sans Paroles:

Il pleure dans mon cœur
Comme il pleut sur la ville
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui penetre mon cœur?

O bruit doux de la pluie
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un cœur qui s'ennui
O le chant de la pluie!

Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce cœur qui s'ecœur
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Ce deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon cœur a tant de peine.

I think that's one of the best descriptions of (clinical) depression I've ever read and the beginning is terrific poetry,; it kind of lags after that, I mean it's still good but not brteathtaking like the first two lines.

Millie

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report on telling it slant

— Tom Orange · 21 May 2002

Orange files a thorough report from the Telling It Slant panel at NYC's Dactyl Foundation—begun, he notes, on "fairly standard poetry time i.e. 30-40 minutes late"—summarizing Wallace's aims and talks by Borkhuis, Brennan and Derksen.

a report on the telling it slant panel dactyl foundation, NYC friday may 19 2002

the proceedings began on fairly standard poetry time i.e. 30-40 minutes late. mark wallace made brief opening comments regarding 1) the goals and aspirations he and co-editor steven marks (who was unable to attend) had in putting the book together, i.e. to gather a representative sample of work from an even larger and ongoing dialogue, and 2) the idea behind the panel, which by eschewing the academic standard three twenty-minute presentations and limited Q&A in favor of more numerous short presentations and longer Q&A would hopefully encourage and extend dialogue among a variety of voices. he then introduced the panelists, who went in alphabetical order.

charles borkhuis described coming to poetry in the late eighties primarily through experimental theater and finding the poetry scene rather factionalized. recognizing and working at what he calls a nexus of late surrealism and textual poetry became a way of creating and observing a metaphysical car crash, a writing one's way out of factions in order to gain some breathing space.

sherry brennan cited the writing from the new coast conference of 1993 as her entry point into the field, particularly from pennsylvania where she otherwise did not have much access. she read a portion of an essay different from the one in the book, regarding a poetics of the body, language as the shape of things, and the avant garde not as a school or form but a life practice.

jeff derksen extended the critique of globalization and official multiculturalism made by his essay in the book to the new post-9/11 landscape, or rather the post-10/17 landscape (the intiation date, i think, of the FBI and justice department "interviews" of arab-american men). he questioned the role of the avant garde in the current culture of critical production.

jeff hansen spoke of what he calls the embodied poem, which revises the olsonian notion of the poem as a high-energy construct and applies it to a post-humanist, non (male) egocentric context. he read a few stanzas from heather fuller's poem "telegram" (from perhaps this is a rescue fantasy) to illustrate.

bill howe spoke to language poetry's attention to the word and phoneme as opening up a number of different directions for poetry to then pursue, literally in a pragmatic sense of what can i do with this. such directions include performative and verbovisual poetries as well as a renewed interest in the self or subject.

andrew levy discussed the work of michael amnasan, a bay-area poet whose book from krupskaya very much takes up issues of class in relation to avant garde poetry. andy read from steven farmer's review of the amnasan book that he published in his journal *_crayon_*, their (levy's and farmer's) claim being that the avant garde often fails to recognize let alone address social inequities.

eileen myles offered an historical, personal and cultural perspective, beginning with the odd feeling she had at being invited to address the poetry of the 1990s: even tho she had been writing for many years prior she felt that she really has come into her own as a poet in the 1990s. she described the avant garde as being a situation of friendship, a place where people can come together. poetry of the sixties: free love and drugs; of the seventies: formalized excess; of the eighties: a choice between rock star and performance poetry, no one really wanting the mantle of poetry let alone creating a discourse about it; of the nineties: poetry is needed again, as exemplified at a post-9/11 reading at the project where poets came together even tho many admitted to not writing anything since then.

leonard schwartz spoke of avant garde poetry building structures for survival. he discussed and read from an essay by andrew joron entitled "the emergency of poetry" that discusses the (in)efficacies of poetry especially post-9/11.

juliana spahr opted not to make a presentation.

brian kim stefans touched briefly on several different threads: the general uniformity of prose styles in telling it slant (with exceptions of course), the unusual (and belated) frequency with which theresa cha's work is discussed in telling it slant, the extent to which digital poetries still need greater practical and critical discourse, and the extent to which lively controversies like those that surrounded apex of the m and fence no longer seem to catch people's interest.

gary sullivan discussed the work of daniel davidson, whose collected poems he has just finished editing for krupskaya. davidson was a bay- area poet from the mid80s-mid90s who was plagued with health problems and living on a fixed income before he took his own life. gary discussed the difficulties of davidson's life as they were manifested in his friendships and found their way into his poetry.

lee ann brown read some haiku-like poems from a notebook she was keeping on her trip to japan from which she had literally just returned.

douglas rothschild began the Q&A by asking if he could light the room on fire, and mark replied that that was something he preferred douglas would do later. douglas then said he wanted to light the room on fire with a question, namely why, with a few notable exceptions, the book and the panel were so white. much discussion ensued, the basic tenor of which i think of as involving the fact that the avant garde like any

cultural production can hardly escape the conditions (i.e. disparities, inequities, injustices) of the culture in which it finds itself, by nature probably tends to replicate them, but at the very least can maintain and insist on an awareness of such conditions and perhaps offer a space for interrogating them. discussion then turned to the use of the term *avant garde*: the questioner felt that this was a term that in art circles at least was quite dead in the 1970s and yet here it turns up in poetry of the nineties. the difficulty of terms and their varied and problematic implications was taken up, as well as the difficulty in transferring terms between different arts and disciplines.

beyond the thirteen panelists i'd say there were about forty people in attendance. i hope readers will correct any omissions or inaccuracies i've inadvertantly made here.

allbests,
tom orange

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Re: Anthology of Poets Born After 1966

— **Haas Bianchi** · 19 July 2003

Bianchi's post is a grievance stripped to punctuation: he loves Bernstein's work but demands to know "where are new avant garde poets???"—the question mark multiplied into a wall.

I know but those of us in this category are not represented--- if I love Charles Bernstein's work and it is seminal for me but where are new avant garde poets??
 ???

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emma goldman woulda hated anthologies

— Gabriel Gudding · 19 July 2003

Gudding torches the anthology in Eisenhower's farewell cadences, warning against "the anthologico-critical complex" and "the disastrous rise of misplaced power"—"can't you see the vicious bicycle??"—and closing: "War is the health of the anthology."

aren't anthologies instruments entirely inefficient toward redressing literary disappearances and deficiencies, and they multiply rather than indemnify the losses? aren't anthologies are inherently rapacious and unjust? Where is the Emma Goldman of Literature? -- who iwll help us stand against them? The ideology of

anthologies is such that anthologies must be stood against --and that we must stand against them with a better anthology -- can't you see the vicious bicycle??

We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the anthologico-critical complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will continue to persist. -- The anthology by its nature breeds contention. Critical dispute is the health of the anthology. If an anthology could, it would bomb other books. War is the health of the anthology, especially anthologies that bomb other anthologies.

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Re: emma goldman woulda hated anthologies

— Gloria Frym · 20 July 2003

Frym seconds Gudding coolly: anthologies "indoctrinate" students, cost too much, and let instructors "go by the book," so she assigns single authors and xeroxed readers—then admits she still keeps her Norton Anthologies, which Ginsberg read from at Naropa.

Very clever Gabriel. Plus, they cost too much now that publishers see a perfect market for them in academia. They promote a certain canon, they indoctrinate literature and writing students, they make it too easy for instructors to simply "go by the book," as it were. It's a pain to have to make up a reader, and perhaps a certain violation of the writer's rights, but if a course is going to introduce a number of poets/writers to students (which is what anthologies do for the general public, aside from their shortcomings), the xeroxed reader works better and more personally reflects the aesthetics of the instructor. When I assign books, I assign ones written by single authors.

On the other hand, I still have my Norton Anthologies of English Literature after all these years. And at Naropa, during Ginsberg's last summers, he would read from them and discuss poets who interested him, having made extensive preparations for his seemingly informal lectures.

Best, Gloria Frym

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II

Machines & the Screen

1994-2011

Almost from the start the list kept a second quarrel going, quieter than the anthology wars but pressing the same question onto the device: is the machine itself the new thing? The machine here is two-faced. On one side the older machinery of composition — chance operation and constraint, Charles Bernstein's numbered catalogue of “experiments,” the cut-up, the pirated text, the manifesto that treats method as a program; on the other the literal machines — hypertext and “technopoetics,” the Buffalo E-Poetry festivals, code poetry and the unprintable poem. It is the book's most formally varied section, running from Bernstein's relay of a Jackson Mac Low letter to a forwarded Avant-Pop manifesto to whole reposted documents like a *Times* notice on UbuWeb's revival of *Aspen*.

The tenor is more curious than combative, and the doubt is built in. Donald Byrd takes Cage's devices seriously enough to wonder what disruption is left for them “now that the confident rational surface is already in tatters.” Patrick Herron pushes back on the web's transcendent claims — the internet “NEVER promised” to be nonlinear, rhizomic, postauthorial, and its boosters were “poorly informed.” Christopher Funkhouser defines technopoetics not as a movement but as collaboration “with other people as well as the machines.” And the machine gets the last word: Charles Baldwin's codework collection is judged “unprintable” — by a computer, no less — the machine that “doesn't like to be bothered” refusing to read itself. The dream that writing routed through a device escapes the settled forms runs all through the section; so does the suspicion that the screen has only re-lit very old ambitions under a newer light.

[technopoetics]

— Christopher Funkhouser · 10 April 1994

One of the list's earliest digital gestures. Funkhouser defines technopoetics not as a movement but as collaboration "with other people as well as the machines," one that unsettles what "author" and "publisher" mean, and nods toward Xerox PARC's coming "ubiquitous computing."

"Takes a lot of voices
to sing a millennial song."

The majority of poetry people are familiar with small, relatively intimate scenarios, and many truly like it that way. Nevertheless, with hi-tech communications capabilities, and various forms of electronic text processing, the potential topographies of our interactive communities and activities have widened substantially over the past few years. To begin to bring what is a fairly recent concept out in the open, it is important to stress our use of the idea of technopoetics

as a specific term, the concerns of which we would like to make very clear. Technopoetics proposed here is not a literary movement. It involves collaboration, with other people as well as the machines. This process itself is changing and dividing pervasive notions of what "author" and "publisher" are.

"The electronic age now enjoys this time of awkwardness before the age itself disappears along with its name into the day to day of what at Xerox Park they've taken to calling 'Ubicomp,' ubiquitous computing..."

We remember what was written in *_Convivio A Journal of Poetics_*: "Poetics is a labor and a threshold where we are working to make an actual thing...", which "is a continual reformation.... Above all it treats of inclusion, ...poetics, 'in the plural,' as Robert Duncan says." To echo these notions, as we move into time, and, as a culture, succumb to technology (television, automobiles and such, as well as computers and digital intermedia), the work, our actions must be pluralized in order to maximize the potentials of the technology and not let them contribute to social fragmentation. In no way would we want to speak purely of technopoetry or the technopoetic. "Poetry," "technopoetry" is now, in its potential, something more than a poem, or a book of poems, in its blending with other forms and other media. Will Alexander, introducing a segment of the *_We Magazine Issue 18_*, describes the work presented as "...a mix of the poetic and essayistic...like opening up an artery of twilight, and opening up and walking through this vast new expanse where one is neither one [i.e. poetic] or the other [i.e. essayistic] but something completely different." To state the apparent, this report comes from what considers itself a "first" world. As one writer has already pointed out, I am speaking from the perspective of an "unintentional elitism," of a "...live by the modem die by the modem future of poetry as an electronic medium." This is true, but needs to be contextualized within the reality of the newness of this technology. In many ways we are at the beginnings of new technological spaces, new electronic networks, which begin to enlarge their envelopes beyond the corporate, military, governmental, academic milieu which it has benefitted until now. My position is a result of the privilege of birth and guidance, of research and exploration, and is accepted as responsibility. Among the things revealed in the processes of technopoetics is a new kind of wear and fatigue of the body. We are in the age of a physical and mental/consciousness transformation caused by technological phenomena. In fact, sitting in front of video screens and computer monitors especially might be likened to what George Oppen once described as "the bright light of shipwreck" in the poem "Of Being Numerous." Clearly, the predominant scenario in this and future age is a movement towards "The absolute singular/The unearthly bonds/Of the singular", our own type of "Insanity in high places..." in our homes, with the beam of the computer's screen on our faces as well as those of the police helicopter searchlights above our cities and suburbs..."By the shipwreck/Of the singular." This points to one of the obvious advantages of collaboration: that the time spent by any one individual can be spread out over a collective. There is little chance that our civilization is ever going to be less reliant on computers. "Ours is a time in which ontological questions

of truth and falsehoods are less relevant than issues of control--control of meaning, control of context." We have been inspired to "seize the media." The alternative would be to leave it to the disposal of the military industrial complex. As managing editor for *Electronic Journal*, an on-line (Internet) academic magazine concerned with electronic communication between computer users and the implications thereof, as editor with We Press (where a group of editors conspire to "publish" poetry on compact disc, cassette, video and Internet as well as on paper), in addition to my role as a teacher, I am intimately involved with high-tech approaches to both poetry/poetics and the presentation of electronic text. In the spring of 1993, We Press used the Internet (harbinger of the so-called "Information Superhighway") to circulate a poetry journal. After this experiment I wrote an essay regarding the frontier of cyberspace, "We Maga/zine XVII: (A) Textual Experiment." The essay is a theoretical and practical investigation of the po(e)tentials of producing a magazine on an electronic network and the attempt to incite a global community instantaneously through network connections. The essay's simple conclusion is that there is not a doubt that any publisher with a computer connected to the Internet (or the digital--video and audio-- networks which are soon to come to many, many households in America, and the much of the rest of the "first" world) can exponentially increase the circulation and audience of their publication--and otherwise make connections which they would not normally make--by transmuting what they are already involved with to include cyberspace. Of course there are severe socio-ideological concerns with regards to access to the technologies now available, and any fully legitimized network system must make room and provide equal access for everyone. This is not nearly close to being a living reality, but with "UbiComp," and other systematic plans such as the Information Superhighway, it is likely that we will see millions more Americans become reliant on on-line services over the course of coming decades. It is important that we concern ourselves with equilateral space and learn to cooperatively communicate within the interactive electronic arena now. This, of course, is easier in theory than practice. Before going further, I wanted to briefly connect technopoetics with what Donna Haraway speaks of in "A Cyborg Manifesto." Haraway writes, "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation." What we find most liberating in Haraway's work, in addition to its pointed ideology ("...cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century"), is its recontextualization of our species as a whole. How anyone can feel they are a part of the same corpus and mindset as those of the pre-industrial world is rather mysterious, to say the least. Do you not often feel constrained by the "metaphysical tradition" which is rooted in what is a truly archaic mode of thought and action? How much do we actually have in common with the mind and body set of pre-electronic culture? Cyborgs, "the awful apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating

dominations of abstract individuation," are concerned with "the relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination," and are troublesome because "they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism...often exceedingly unfaithful to their origin." Haraway's cyborg myth "is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" in an age where "the need for unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination has never been more acute." Furthermore, as Don Byrd explains in *The Poetics of the Common Knowledge*, "Our fascination to ourselves as cyborgian creatures is that we combine in our beings the predictability of machines with the wreckless, independence of singular [?] creatures." As we are presented with both the predicament and the predictability of culture, as the computer and other forms of technology, ideological weapons all, begin to dominate our work places, and other places, we must familiarize ourselves with them and use them in a project of creating a better society. Purkinge is a technopoetics writing collective with whom I am currently working in Albany. Purkinge improvisationally rends and resews texts in printed and oral forms, producing a particularly angular "writing" "centered" from different perspectives. The group invents and promotes new modes of authorship and anti-authorship, fashioning melodic conversations in opposition to a system grown entropic. In our experimentations, enabled by technology (linked computers and multitrack recording equipment), we insist on the necessity of interactive, intercorporeal elements in our communication. The group's gatherings reflect a moment in the drift, theoretically and poetically fusing concept and action. Nathaniel Mackey, in an essay on Amiri Baraka, writes of the poet's "obliquity, the sliding away from the proposed we find in many of Baraka's poems." Baraka's method "complies with a fugitive, perhaps idealist impulse, as though 'the mind, moving' might if not outmaneuver such constraints [i.e. social 'conditions whose limits one cannot escape,' and, by extension, the poetry produced within such conditions], at least register the need to do so." The "Obliquity or angularity" of such writing and the lyric which rises from the implementation of such a poetics, which also typifies the type of work done by Purkinge, challenges the epistemic order whose constraints it implicitly brings to light." In Purkinge, a multiplicity of elements, textual modes, and personalities come together in an intertextual play between sound and voice, meaning and obliquity. We develop a tangential "writing" style pointed towards the creation of a new mode of authorship in the movement away from a non-existent center. It is a conversation, a collaboration, melodic in its ideal. We inhale as well as we exhale, hearts dilate as well as contract. The group wants poetry that shows similar signs of life--and we turn the machine on. In addition to expediting interpersonal communications, computer/digital technology has been used technopoetically in the form of hypertext, and through interactive textually based virtual reality spaces--known as MUDs and MOOs--on the Internet . According to George Landow,

"Hypertext, a term coined by Theodor H. Nelson in the 1960s, refers also to a form of electronic text, a radically new information technology, and a mode of publication.'By "hypertext," Nelson explains, ' I mean nonsequential writing-- text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen..." 23

MUD is an acronym for "Multiple User Dimension," which is an interactive textual-based virtual reality software being used in cyberspace. MOO stands for MUD Object Oriented, in which characters are created and whole electronic dimensions-- including a type of hypertexts-- are built. A writer is able to compose by themselves, or with others, in these spaces. We recently spent a few hours with hypertext writers Michael Joyce and Carolyn Guyer. Michael is a novelist, a cybernovelist, and one of the co- developers of Storyspace, "the premier hypertext program available today." Carolyn is coordinator of the woman's hypertext collective High Pitched Voices. Michael gave a talk, "(Re)Placing the Author: 'A Book in the Ruins'" in Albany. He reads the Czeslaw Milosz poem "A Book in the Ruins," drawing metaphors between it and what he perceives as the condition of literature today. He promotes hypertext as the frontier of literature, a re- writing of the process of reading and writing, where the reader, in a sense, is able to write and rewrite any given book. It is an extreme concept for most people, who have quite a linear and perpetualized relationship with literature of all sorts. Joyce reads from Milosz--and interprets: "The poet stands in the ruins...it's the modernist moment...but no...this is not what we see...the poet makes his way into the ruins of a dark building." The building we read metaphorically as technology, "in so doing the movement itself reads barrier as gate. What he reads, he writes." The screen is the barrier, a "gate"-- not passable by all. According to Joyce, "Electronic texts present themselves in the medium of their disolution. They are read where they are written and they are written where they are read." A mantra throughout his talk was "print text stays itself, electronic text replaces itself." We see hypertext as technopoetics in light of its process, which actively promotes the decentering of singular author, and hope the next phase in the development of hypertext software will allow for collaborative interaction in real-time. An article in the recent issue of *Poets & Writers Magazine* paraphrases Carolyn Guyer, noting the "text chunks," which "replace" themselves, are "called lexia, which may be images and sounds as well as paragraphs and their electronic links empower the reader either to submit to the writer's ordering of the story or to collaborate by manipulating the elements into an entirely new story." High Pitched Voices is working together in a collaborative manner on-line. They have a hypertext discussion set up (in the same manner as the Buffalo POETICS conference), and they work together to composing hypertext in a MOO. When one enters this particular electronic space, by issuing a few simple keyboard commands, they are greeted by the formation of an arch, a pair of mirrored, upper case "I"s as columnar bases. An inscription reads: "A roof over our heads, she said. Appropriate, I thought. Yonic symbol as protection and sign. And....there are two "I"s here. What more could we want?" A "reader" is invited to follow links, and, if interested, add to existing texts and create links between lexia. The group of women involved with

High Pitched Voices also holds real-time meetings in this space, open to anyone who is able to log in. We see tremendous poetentials in such an interactivity such as this. Technopoetics resists the exclusivity of the technology in general, and maintains a historical awareness that it is merely a forerunner to what will be customary activity to future generations of writers and artists in the post-electronic age. With due respect and admiration for the PRE-FACE of *_Technicians of the Sacred_*, which asserts PRIMITIVE MEANS COMPLEX, technopoetics enacts the reversal of that phrase, certain that complex can mean primitive. We are in age marked by the power of information, the dominance of technology, yet it is also important to note we're in the relatively early stages of what will become Ubicomp culture. It is a very complicated time. We must study and act upon what is happening now--& stake some grounds here. There are a few collectives and publications already in this realm, in addition to the aforementioned entities, there are a number of poetry oriented journals on the Internet (*_RIF/T_*, *_Grist_*, *_Core_*, *_Taproot_*, and *_Inter/face_* come to mind). Other publishing groups such as Xexoxial Endarchy and *_The Aerial_* are consistently producing poetry in formats other than the printed page, and Eastgate Systems has been pioneering in their dedication to the promotion of hypertext publications. In 1986, I asked Ed Sanders about his vision of the music of the future:

"It has to be, in electronics, the equivalent of the piano forte. That is, right around the time of Bach they were creating this new kind of piano, which was an outgrowth of the harpsichord, that allowed its player to be infinitely more expressive, using the pedals and playing softly and loud--it enabled the concept of the concerto to arise, where the piano was an actually powerful instrument that could act in concerto with other instruments.

"So what's going to happen now...is the electronic equivalent of the piano forte. That is, there is going to arise a musical instrument sufficient for a new Beethoven, and it will be an electronic instrument. It will have, obviously, many aspects of the modern electronic recording studio and modern high-end synthesizer. I envision it like a giant church organ only instead of stops it will have fifteen or twenty thousand little buttons or knobs & x-y pads & pressure sensitive areas & theramin-like devices where you approach these little knobs with your hands. The proximity of your fingers to these zones & tiny little surfaces will indicate parameters & programs, moods & sounds, or whatever....It will be a "touch" thing; I guess the feet will have to be involved...in other words you'll have to use both hands, both feet, & perhaps a group of assistants. In fact it may be a collaborative thing....It will be complicated...you can use your touch to modify all these parameters instantly...make these sounds, these different layers of sounds, different sounds & chords instantly, as you create it..."

As we find ourselves increasingly--and without much choice--having to making use of the synthetic strands provided by our civilization's penchant for technological living, we need to envision ways to weave the threads given by such an unusual but very real circumstance into a tightly meshed net which alternatively keeps us warm

and catches our breath. Among the questions raised by the possibilities implicit in our future immersions is the question of which we want to privilege, the production of artifacts or the actual engagement of people in a process of living and creating as an outgrowth of daily life. To draw an analogy between technopoetics and other technologies which have long predated the computer, I refer to a collection of essays called *_Radiotext(e)_*, the introduction of which reminds us "that radio existed long before its receiver did." Bertolt Brecht, in his essay "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" suggests we should "Change this apparatus [radio] over from distribution to communication," and that "Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction." These are among the ideas we would like to claim as a basis for a technopoetics in the current historical and technological moment.

--Chris Funkhouser

Footnotes Don Byrd, *_The Great Dimestore Centennial_* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1986), p. 109. The concept is echoed in other places in the poem (i.e. "Takes a lot of penny whistles to sing/a millennial song." p. 13, etc.). This is a term I've heard used in this context by Michael Joyce and others. Michael Joyce, "(Re)Placing the Author: 'A Book in the Ruins,'" SUNY- Albany, March 23, 1994. Louis Patler, "A WORD/AN INTRODUCTION," *_Convivio A Journal of Poetics % Number One_* (Bolinis: Tombouctou Books, 1983). Will Alexander, *_We Magazine Issue 18_* (Santa Cruz: We Press, 1993). Tony Door, *_The Poetry Project Newsletter_*, Fall 1993. George Oppen, "Of Being Numerous," *_Collected Poems_* (New York: New Directions Books, 1975), pp. 152-60. Gene Youngblood, "The New Renaissance: Art, Science, and the Universal Machine" p. 15. Advice and phrase Peter Lamborn Wilson, Naropa Institute, 1989. Among other previously unknown correspondents for *_We Magazine Issue 18_* were Arkadii Dragomoschenko and Armand Schwerner. While the POETICS list at SUNY-Buffalo was thriving for the first month I was a part of it, interaction has decreased substantially for another month now. There were some unusual and fiery interactions which may have contributed to the current status and general awkwardness of the list. In Albany, we hope to see POETICS revive itself. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," *_Simians, Cyborgs, and Women_* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 150. quotes are from Haraway, pp. 149-154. Don Byrd, *_The Poetics of the Common Knowledge_* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 16. Purkinge uses the Daedalus software program in its computer jams, and a four-track cassette system in its spoken/sound work. The group is an outgrowth of the Awopbop Collective, which was started by Don Byrd and Derek Owen in 1991 (see *_The Little Magazine Volume 20_*). These quotes are by Nathaniel Mackey, *_DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENT Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing_* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 43. George Landow, *_Hypertext The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology_* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 4. Ted Jennings, introducing Michael Joyce, University at Albany, 3/23/94. These quotations are taken from an audio recording of Michael Joyce's Sesquicentennial

Lecture, "(Re)Placing the Author: 'A Book in the Ruins,'" at University at Albany Uptown Campus, 3/23/94.

Poet's & Writers Magazine, March/April 1994, p. 25.

This project is based at Hotel MOO, Brown University (telnet duke.cs.brown.edu 8888).

Jerome Rothenberg, ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 1969).

Ed Sanders, excerpt from interview with Chris Funkhouser, _We Magazine Issue 3_ (Charlottesville, VA, 1987), p. 6-7.

Neil Strauss, _Radiotext(e)_ (New York: Semiotext(e), 1993), p. 9.

Brecht quotes from _Radiotext(e)_ (New York: Semiotext(e), 1993), p. 15-16.

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Experiments

— Charles Bernstein · 6 December 1994

The syllabus itself: Bernstein's numbered list of writing experiments — homolinguistic and homophonic translation, "Acrostic Chance," "Tzara's hat" — a procedural recipe book a later generation of Flarf and conceptual writers would cook from freely.

EXPERIMENTS

1. Homolinguistic translation: Take a poem (someone else's then your own) and translate it "English to English" by substituting word for word, phrase for phrase, line for line, "free" translation as response to each phrase or sentence. (Cf: Six Fillious by nichol, McCaffery, Fillious, Brecht, Higgins, Roth.)
2. Homophonic translation: Take a poem in a foreign language that you can pronounce but not necessarily understand and translate the sound of the poem into English (ie French "blanc" to blank or "toute" to toot). [Cf Louis and Celia Zukofsky's Cattulus]. (Rewrite to suit?)
3. Lexical translation: Take a poem in a foreign language that you can pronounce but not necessarily understand and translate it word for word with the help of a bilingual dictionary. (Rewrite to suit?)
4. Acrostic Chance. Pick a book at random and use title as acrostic key phrase. For each letter of key phrase go to page number in book that corresponds (a=1, z&) and copy as first line of poem from the first word that begins with that letter to end of line or sentence. Continue through all key letters, leaving stanza breaks to mark each new key word. [cf: Jackson Mac Low's Stanzas for Iris Lezak.] Variations include using author's name as code for reading through her or his work, using your own or friend's name, picking different kinds of books for this process, devising alternative acrostic procedures.

5. Tzara's hat. Everyone in a group writes down a word (alternative: phrase, line) and puts it in a hat. Poem is made according to order it is randomly pulled from hat. (Solo: pick a series of words or lines from book, newspapers, magazines to put in the hat.)
6. Burrough's Fold-in: Take two different pages from a newspaper or magazine article, or a book, and cut the pages in half vertically. Paste the mismatched pages together.
7. General cut-ups: Write a poem composed entirely of phrases lifted from other sources. Use one source for a poem and then many; try different types of sources: literary, historical, magazines, advertisements, manuals, dictionaries, instructions, travelogues, etc.
8. Cento: write a collage made up of full-line of selected source poems.
9. Substitution (1): "Mad libs". Take a poem (or other source text) and put blanks in place of three or four words in each line, noting the part of speech under each blank. Fill in the blanks being sure not to recall the original context.
10. Substitution (2): "7 up or down". Take a poem or other, possibly well-known, text and substitute another word for every noun, adjective, adverb, and verb; determine the substitute word by looking up the index work in the dictionary and going 7 up or down, or one more, until you get a syntactically suitable replacement. (Cf: Clark Coolidge and Larry Fagin, *On the Pumice of Morons*.)
11. Serial sentences: Select one sentence each from a variety of different books or other sources. Add sentences of your own composition. Combine into one paragraph, reordering to produce the most interesting results.
12. Alphabet poems: make up a poem of 26 words so that each word begins with the next letter of the alphabet. Write another alphabet poem but scramble the letter order.
13. Alliteration (assonance): write a poem in which all the words in each line begin with the same letter.
14. Doubling: Starting with one sentence, write a series of paragraphs each doubling the number of sentences in the previous paragraph and including all the words used previously. [cf: Silliman's *Ketjak*]
15. Collaboration: Write poems with one or more other people: alternating lines (chaining or renga), writing simultaneously and collaging, rewriting, editing, supplementing the previous version. This can be done in person, via e-mail, or through "snail" mail.
16. Group sonnet: 14 people each write one ten word line on an index card. Order to suit.
17. Write a poem trying to transcribe as accurately as you can your thoughts while you are writing. Don't edit anything out. Write as fast as you can without planning what you are going to say.

18. Dream work: Write down your dreams as the first thing you do every morning for 30 days. Apply translation and aleatoric processes to this material. Double the length of each dream. Weave them together into one poem, adding or changing or reordering material. Negate or reverse all statements (I went down the hill to I went up the hill, I didn't to I did). Borrow a friend's dreams and apply these techniques to them.
19. Write a poem made up entirely of neologism or nonsense words or fragments of words. [cf: Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky", Khlebnikov's Zaum, Peter Inman's Platin, David Melnick's Pcoet.]
20. Write a poem with each line filling in the blanks of "I used to be ---- but now I am -----". (I used to write poems, but now I just do experiments; I used to make sense, but now I just make poems.)
21. Write a poem consisting entirely of things you'd like to say, but never would, to parent, lover, sibling, child, teacher, roommate, best friend, etc. etc.
22. Write a poem consisting entirely of overheard conversation.
23. Nonliterary forms: Write a poem in the form of an index, a table of contents, a resume, an advertisement for an imaginary or real product, an instruction manual, a travel guide, a quiz or examination, etc.
24. Imitation: Write a poem in the style of each of a dozen poets who you like and dislike: try to make it as close to an forgery of a "unknown" poem of the author as possible.
25. Write a poem without mentioning any objects.
26. Backwards: Reverse or alter the line sequence of a poem of your own or someone else's. Reverse the word order. Rather than reverse, scramble.
27. Write an autobiographical poems without using any pronouns.
28. Attention: Write down everything you hear for one hour.
29. Brainard's Memory: Write a poem all of whose lines start "I remember ..." [Cf. Joe Brainard's I Remember.]
30. "Pits": Write the worst possible poem you can imagine.
31. Write a poem while listening to music; switch types of music.
32. Write a poem just when you are on the verge of falling asleep. Write a line a day as you are falling asleep or waking up. (Cf: Silliman's Circle-R.)
34. List poem: write a poem consisting of favorite words or phrases collected over a period of time; pick your favorite words from a particular book.
35. List poem 2: write a poem consisting entirely of a list of "things", either homogenous or heterogenous (common lists included shopping lists, things to do, lists of flowers or rocks, lists of colors, inventory lists, lists of events, lists of names, ...).

36. Chronology: made up a list of dates with associated events, real or imagined.
37. Transcription: Tape a phone or live conversation between yourself and a friend. Make a poem composed entirely of transcribed parts.
38. Canceling: Write a series of lines or rhymes such that every other one cancels the one before ("I come before you / to stand behind you").
39. Erasure: Take a poem of your own or someone else's and cross out most of the words on each poem, retype what remains as your poem. [cf: Ronald Johnson's RADIOS from Milton.]
40. Write a series of ten poems going from one to ten words in each poem. Reorder.
41. Write a poem composed entirely of questions.
42. Write a poem made up entirely of directions.
43. Write a poem consisting only of opening lines (improvise your own lines, then use source texts).
44. Write a poem consisting only of prepositions, then of prepositions and one other part of speech.
45. Write a series of eight-word lines consisting of one each of each part of speech.
46. Write a poems consisting of one-word lines; write a poems consisting of two-word lines; write a poems consisting of three- word lines.
47. Synchronicity: Write a poem in which all the events occur simultaneously.
48. Diachronicity: Write a poem in which all the events occur in different places and at different times.
49. Visual poetry: write poems with a strong visual or "concrete" element--including combination of lexical and nonlexical (pictorial) elements, play with alphabets and typography, placement of words on the page, etc.
50. Write a series of poems or stanzas while listening to music; change type of music for each stanza or poem.
51. Elimination: cut out the second half of sentences.
52. Excuses list: write a poem made up entirely of excuses (e.g. Terry Winch's "Excuses")
53. Sprung Diary: write a diary tracking and intercutting multiple levels of thoughts, exeriences, anticipations, expectations, from minute to major. (Cf. Hannah Weiner's Clairvoyant Journal.)
53. Make up more experiments

Remember: Poems can be in prose format!

Rewrite and recombine, collage, splice together the material generated from these experiments into one long ongoing poem!

-- Compiled by Charles Bernstein from Bernadette Mayer & workshop's Experiments list, and various other sources 1/90, 6/93. (C) 1994 by Poets' Ludicrously Aimless Yearning (PLAY). Dispense only as appropriate and under the supervision of an attending reader. Individual experiments are not liable for injury or failure resulting from improper use of appliance. Any profits accrued as a direct or indirect result of the use of these formulas shall be redistributed to the language at large. Management assumes no responsibility for damages that may result consequent to the use of this material in educational institutions or individual writing projects.

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Experiments

— Donald Byrd · 7 December 1994

Byrd takes the experiments seriously enough to doubt them. Cage's devices once served to "rend the placid, rational surface of smug and placid rationalism" — but, he asks, what work is left for that disruption now that the confident rational surface is already in tatters?

Dear Charles--

I suppose you in part posted the list of experiments as an homage to Bernadette, and of course I wish her well.... And it is also a tribute to Tzara, Cage, and Mac Low, all of whom I would likewise honor.

Although, as you know, I sometimes--perhaps often-- do not agree with you, I take your work very seriously. I find most of your moves in relation to the art generative--decisively so. And I have attempted to understand why you introduce these "experiments" in the context of your of your proposal of poetry as experimentation.

The use of that kind of experiment, when it was of use, was to rend the placid, rational surface of smug and placid rationalism. There was a powerful, even controlling assurance, that the world made sense. One half of Modernism was commitment to the revelation of precisely that sense-- Yeats, Pound, Joyce, Shoenberg, Anglo-American philosophy from Russell and Wittgenstein to Quine and the Cognitive Scientists. It is sadly reduced but the drivel that comes from most Creative Writing programs to this day still basks in that now grim assurance that because I saw a blue jay on a maple branch take a shit, it most have some true and important connection to my thought of mortality.

The irruption of the irrational and its disruption of that smug sense of the world--whether from the Dadaist/surrealist algorithms of non-sense or from the failure to make it cohere by the like of Pound-- was immensely satisfying and, of course, immensely productive.

The mode of production that had proven so successful in art was adapted in the 1950's also to commercial production. The rational machine of the capitalist

economy began exploiting its own material unconscious, thus, fueling unparalleled economic growth. The surface of the earth was increasingly covered with the chaotic residue of riotous production: the production of art, the production of consumer goods, the production of by-products that polluted the environment, the production of what Smithson called "the slurbs" a circular gulf between city and country. A place where buildings seem to sink away from one's vision. Buildings fall back into sprawling babels or limbos. Every site glides away toward absence. An immense negative entity of formlessness displaces the center which is the city and the swamps."

For the generation of artists born of the World War II-- "born dead," Smithson says of them, everything they'd learned was wrong. The techniques of the artists who had interested them in art in the first place, whom they had admired and thought to imitate, turned out to be inappropriate to this new condition. Dadaism lives: it is taught at in the Harvard M.B.A. program. Surrealism lives: it is taught to computer programmers at M.I.T. (some might say, mathematics has proven so strange, that it is taught even in the math department). Our architects, our lawyers are modernist purveyors of chaos (to say nothing, of course, of the faceless committees which generate what we call the media). After a certain point, chaos no longer needed the help of art. To recall wild nature in tranquility, to practice nihilistic techniques of art and thought, to do automatic writing, or to create chance generated art is a pointless gesture. The techniques that delivered fresh air in 1810 or 1910 contributed (though contributed insignificantly) by 1970 to a proliferation of incomprehensible energy. The Dadaists never managed to exhibit the degree of chaos that Smithson records in his snap shots of Passaic, New Jersey.

It seems to me that these experiments at this late date call us back to means that are as exhausted as the means of a poetry that still attempts to make "ordinary" sense of a world where one watch a blue jay crap and thinks of mortality or Aunt Minnie.

If we are going to experiment, let us experiment with all seriousness. Stephen Hawking concludes *A Brief History of Time* with these words:

"... if we do discover a complete theory, it should be understandable in broad outline by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason--for then we would know the mind of God."

To be sure, there is something very slippery in Hawking and those who make similar arguments (this guy Frank J. Tippet who has a very popular reading of physics right now is a real hoot) in that they confuse their representations for the world (as many writers make the opposite mistake). But I cannot help but notice the disparity between Hawking's hoped for result and the hoped for results in doing cut-ups of *Being and Time* and *The National Enquirer*.

It seems to me that if poetry is going to be taken seriously, it is going to have to ask more of itself. I would suggest that we take Parmenides, Lucretius, and Blake--Blake

the thinker-- as our models. It is going to be tough to teach the Workshop to do that, and we do not have much time, but we have time for nothing less. If no one writes a poem for fifty years that is okay. There was plenty of pass-times.

I do not mean that we can write like Parmenides, Lucretius, and Blake, but we might undertake the task of producing a world that offer the commodious possibilities for knowledge that theirs do.

The notion of avant-gardism and avant-garde experimentalism are profoundly progressivist. Even as the avant-guardists explored the most primitive recesses of culture and mythology, or the depths of dream and intoxication, systematic or random disorganization, the orientation was toward an expansion of consciousness into the unknown. The avant-guardists were the imperialists of the spirit, brothers and sisters to the colonists. The parallels between Walt Whitman's adventures into the soul and the United States adventures on its passage to India cannot be dismissed. Just as the modernists travelled along with the colonizing anthropologists. It is not for us now a matter of judgement. The time is long passed, and we can say only that that something, which had been lurking in human possibilities, hidden, made itself powerfully manifest: it was beautiful, unjust, vicious, and inevitable, and now complete. One cannot imagine the usefulness of such a concept in a world devoted to sustainable uses of resources.

The best assessments of the ecological damage are produced by different models and do not give consistent results. It would seem that after this extended period of cultural sacrifice for the sake of developing representational techniques that are accurate and complete it should be possible to model the world environment with considerable accuracy. The various representations, however, give a remarkable range of results, and we do not have a science for determining which representation is the best. We have theories and theories of theories, but in this most significant of matters, where the stakes are all or nothing, we do not know any thing for certain. It is generally clear, however, that the present industrial-environmental practices cannot be continued indefinitely without causing irreversible damage to the world ecosystem. In 1990, the well respected World Watch Foundation estimated that present trends would cause irreparable damage in forty years. Even if we have five times that long we are already in the crisis.

Certain aspects of desire were regimented (often at great personal cost) in the service of an organization devoted to greed. Communism proposes a greater justice in dividing up the booty, but it too is profoundly progressivist. What was repressed and is still effectively repressed is in fact obvious: the finitude of the earth.

For a very long time in the West we tried to base knowledge on the notion of infinitude. The critique of that notion has left art almost totally befuddled and trivial.

Let us begin with the finitude of the earth. This seems fairly secure knowledge, the grounds for a new epos. Over a century ago, John Ruskin wrote:

"The real science of political economy, which has yet to be distinguished from the bastard science, as medicine from witchcraft, and astronomy from astrology, is that which teaches nations to desire and labor for the things that lead to life, and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction."

How, Charles, do we get it all out of the poetry workshops?

Best,

Don Byrd

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Re: aleatoric composition (longish)

— **cris cheek** · 5 May 1995

cheek works through Mac Low's influences — Cage, Stein, and crucially Pound's under compositional pressure," not chance for its own sake. He defends Cage against charges of erasing subjectivity.

Noting what's been posted to this subject to date a first stumble into the thicket as requested:-

1. Among many influences MacLow identifies - in Vort 8 (Stein, Schwitters, Duchamp via Cage, Maciunas) 'equally important . . . were Pound's use of economic, historical, and other text materials in 'The Cantos'.' So, it's the choosing and the processing of materials under compositional pressure which is particularly cogent to his earlier work exploring the possibilities of 'chance'. Of course he doesn't always compose using chance. In fact he has probably constructed chance-like collocations into his overall linguistic desire to an extent sufficiently influencing all of his writing - much as Burroughs' experiences with cut-ups have altered his. (ooh ooh - these boiling waters here).

I would agree with Herb about the idiosyncratic (subjective) aspects of 'choosing one's ground' that mitigate against attributions of 'randomness' being used as a basis for criticism of chance-generated or chance-impacted or chance-controlled works. (one thing I felt on Cage's death was how utterly ludicrous the accusations were of his having denied or erased individuality / subjectivity - levelled at him through banal parrotic obituaries in the British press - quite the opposite, his work had tested the vacuousness of such a project and proved it false).

The careful choosing of ground is very important it would seem in minimising the possibilities of generating meaning that one really! did not 'want' - I'm thinking here of conversations I've had, for example with Allen Fisher, about the creation of unchallenged oppressive meanings and whether MacLow ever edits / rejects or intervenes in his works on such bases. In the Vort 8 issue he clearly says that some of his chance poems, as well as intuitive ones, are 'revisable'. And I realise, Ira, that this begins to touch onto your question of producing 'something more true, that

surprises and sobers her / him' - but with an extra twist. I've got to agree with Sheila, from my own limited experience in chance-compositional related matters, that the full range from mundane to utterly extraordinary (in relation to primary expectation / intention) can and does become present.

2. In conversation Jackson once gleefully told me of how his use of frequent instructions to the performers regarding tone and attitude and so on had enabled him to achieve 'indeterminacy through overdetermination'. This is a strand that is of particular interest to me. There might be some correlation to be explored with composers of the 'new complexity' such as Brian Ferneyhough.

3. Phrases that have come up in this discussion which I 'like' are Ryan's 'heightening of agency' - Tony's 'purposive character' in relation to positioning and Herb's question 'Can it be Random?' which seems worth asking once more before the onward wash of this list deletes it.

4. I would agree with John Cayley about the possibilities of composing using chance in real time being comparatively under-explored. I would certainly recommend John's hypertext book 'Unbound' in this respect. It's a terrific piece of work that put simply writes (adds) the reader's reading into itself as the reading progresses. And each reader can choose (opt for, in a hands on response) to create a more or less collocational versioning which is explored in dynamic tension alongside and inside the 'original' linear texts. His composition makes chance generation from the materials he provides available to every reader in a real time improvisatory engagement through the act of reading. An extension of the opportunities offered by every book? 'Unbound' is a fascinating multilogue, with the machine acting as exquisite interpreter. Huh? I can't believe I just wrote that! So I'll re-post John's own description:

Processes can also be open-ended, feeding back into themselves. I have a new piece that learns phrases selected from generated text by the reader. The reader's copy of the piece is changed irreversibly by adding selections. Since the generative process is based on frequencies of collocations (word juxtapositions) the piece will eventually be dominated by phrases selected by the reader. (It would probably also eventually choke on the amount of text generated and selected. BTW this is probably also properly 'chaotic' --literary turbulence slowly drawn towards a 'strange attractor', nudged into place by the reader.)

5. Ira, am I mis-reading you, deliberately? Isn't the often exhaustive documentation of procedures presented alongside the poems (the results of the implementation of the procedures) in MacLow's work in itself a research write-up? What other format do you envisage such taking?

expecting this topic to run far further - bamboozled for now love cris

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Re: Aleatory Poetry

— Maria Damon · 7 May 1995

Damon, dry, lets a lengthy tutorial on OuLiPo — Perec's e-less novel, Queneau, Mathews — pass, then asks the one question no one supplied: "what does OuLiPo stand for?" It has, she observes, "the air of an anagram of sorts."

“

In message UB Poetics discussion group writes: Message mainly for Maria Damon. The writers of OuLiPo were and are descendents of the great Raymond Roussel (also claimed by the Surrealists as a source) who challenged one another to perform literary acts of recombinant composition. You have perhaps heard of Italo Svevo's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. In recent times it has been the most popularly successful OuLiPo work. I recommend the feat of Georges Perec, who wrote an entire novel without using the letter e. It has recently been published in English, if you prefer that, in the U.S. A. Other prominent OuLiPo writers are Raymond Queneau and Harry Mathews. There has always been an association between poets of the New York so called school and the OuLiPo guys. Some of this association you can find in your old copies of *Locus Solus*, which was itself named after a great OuLiPo work.

”

by the way, what does OuLiPo stand for? when it's written thus, it has the air of an anagram of sorts.--md

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ebr special issue: visual narratives

— Joe Tabbi · 29 May 1996

A call for papers in the ordinary register of the CFP: Tabbi solicits essays and visual projects for electronic book review's issue on narrative and image, wanting above all work that "perform[s] the ideas they articulate" online.

Call for Papers

ebr, the electronic book review, is now soliciting essays, visual projects and reviews for its upcoming issue on the interaction of narrative and image in print and electronic media. We're open to essays in combination with online visual projects that deal with any aspect of narrative (narrative theory, cultural criticism, politics, etc.). We are especially interested in works that perform the ideas they articulate

and would most like to see submissions that could do so on-line. Specifics and possible starting points are given below. [...]

Part I, *Ars Fabula* (Narrative and Image) In this section of the issue, we hope to showcase essays in which the visual component of a narrative is germane to its interpretation. The emphasis should be on narrative; that is, we are not interested in the artist's book that is concerned with purely formal or material considerations: the book itself as art object. However, we are very interested in the artist's book that integrates materials and formal concerns in a narrative, especially as these may influence interpretation or structure specific, alternate "readings." The works under investigation can take a variety of forms, but some examples might be: works that use the grid of the page/screen and typography (in the tradition of Raymond Federman's *_Double or Nothing_*, Ron Sukenick's *_Out_*, Derrida's *_Glas_* or "The Double Session"); works that integrate images as part of the narration, such as William Gass's *_Willie Master's Lonesome Wife_*, Rem Koolhaas's *_S, M, L, XL_*, the Mexican photo-novella, or graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman's *_Maus_*; works that use images as glosses upon the text or conversely books that actually tell their stories through images' indirect commentary, e.g. Simon Schama's *_Dead Certainties_*, Carole Maso's *_The Art Lover_*, Julian Barnes's *_History of the World in 10-1/2 Chapters_*; signal works in the history of text/image collaboration, by Fluxus, for example, or the Futurists (Russian and Italian).

Essays should deal with some aspect of the interaction of word and image, i.e., not simply the interaction of two kinds of expression, but of two different modes of narration, two languages that are absorbed into a third: the metalanguage of the image/text. How is such work different from other types of narrative? What are its aesthetics? On what terms is it to be discussed, interpreted, critiqued? What are its ramifications? For example, if an analysis of point-of-view can reveal modernist epistemology, what do image-driven text narrations reveal about contemporary culture? Do our values, narrative theory, aesthetics, language, ideology inhere in Howard Stern's *_Miss America?_*

Part II, *Ars Electronica* (Narrative and Electronic Media) In this section we would like to examine text- and image-driven narration in the environment made possible by new technologies. The above criteria apply to submissions for this category. However, here we are particularly interested in stories that can only be told, and essays whose arguments can only be made, through electronic media. Thus, if the work under discussion could have been done in an older medium, it probably isn't right for this section.

More appropriate are issues of literary narration that might have been sublimated before, or might have been more applicable to the theater, opera, or film. Again, what do narrative elements such as character or plot or organization mean in works of multimedia? What are the poetics of hypertext? What is its rhetoric? What are we to make of the "found art" aesthetic that has entered into fiction? Of issues like indeterminacy and intertextuality? motion, space, time, interactivity? What, if anything, is narration that incorporates contemporary technology working against?

Should we reread Wayne Booth? J. Hillis Miller? If book technology placed constraints on narrative, what are the constraints of html or the CD-ROM? Of the computer monitor? How do these constraints manifest themselves in electronic narrative, and what difference does it make? How does all this affect our relationship with the material form.

Essays submitted to ebr should take up some aspect of "reading," but reading in a narrative that is also able to incorporate sound, images, video, hotlinks, interactivity. Emphasis should be on aesthetics or narratology or cultural context: the ramifications of a medium that forces us to rethink poetics. Of course, essays that contextualize or historicize media-driven narratives are also welcome.

[...]

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the future of an illusion

— Mark Wallace · 10 February 1997

Wallace resists the claim that poetry "MUST mutate" toward multimedia and performance to stay viable, even as he praises the work he admires — Miekal And's unforgettable New Coast turn. A defense of the page that declines to be nostalgic about it.

I know the original impetus for this is some time ago now, but I noticed some posts several weeks back were arguing that any truly effective poetry in the present moment would transcend the supposed "limits" of a poetry oriented to the page by 1) involving other media 2) becoming more performative, and thus more "entertaining" to an audience who is tired of watching poets flip pages and mumble through their readings. There's really crucial work being done in multi-media work and performance art, many by people on this list (Miekal And may not be in any language poetry anthology, but anyone at the Writing From The New Coast conference in Buffalo 1993 has never forgotten Miekal's performance/visual art/poetry, as just one for instance). But I do think, however, that statements to the effect that poetry somehow MUST mutate in some direction or other actually end up doing a disservice to the range of work that's actually happening.

It is, I suppose, a fantasy to imagine a circumstance in which poets might be taken by more than a small group of people as individuals who have GOOD REASONS FOR DOING THE THINGS THEY'RE DOING--but obviously, all sorts of poetry arises from intellectual and other kinds of notions that can be found suspect. Nonetheless, when I hear statements to the effect that "poetry must become this and that in order to remain viable in a culture of this or that kind, etc" I can't avoid thinking of the ways in which exploration in poetry both remains under the thumb of this kind of pronouncement, but also the ways in which poetry refutes such judgements, renders them often just so much table-pounding. I'm afraid that I think that all such statements as "only this kind of work will be legitimate in the future" simply CAN'T

be true--the value of making such statements seems often little more than the desire to assert that one's own questions are the ones that matter, unless you can imagine someone saying that poetry must move in a direction that they themselves are not practicing. The point I'm trying to make, I think, is that the creative mind can continue to work in all sorts of mediums, as long as self-awareness remains about the historical and material conditions of those mediums. Is there anyone who REALLY imagines that there will be a point in time when no creative poets think of the page as a usable medium. Is it not more likely that the moment a whole culture determined that a page had no value, one poet or maybe even more would begin using the page again?

Obviously, the performance/visual aspects of poetry enable much variety of artistic practice, and much opportunity for "hybrid" or other kinds of non-singular media forms. But I think it's important that this complexity should NOT be reduced to the idea that poetry somehow needs to be more ENTERTAINING. I find poetry entertaining often, sometimes even poetry I don't like that much, but THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF ENTERTAINMENT IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE, and the hegemony of the "entertainment industry" is playing a major role in the contemporary disenfranchisement of broad areas of human communities. Will the person going to a poetry reading looking to be entertained be DISAPPOINTED? In some cases I'd like to say "let's hope so--the poetry wasn't written to entertain." I don't mean that a poetry reading should be BORING--I mean that values other than entertainment are at stake, and the person at a poetry reading who's disappointed because they're not entertained is, perhaps unintentionally, imposing the values of capitalist entertainment hegemony on an art form that does not intend to be restrained by those values.

The idea that poetry "must move in this or that direction" certainly bears a great deal of responsibility for the modern notion of the poetry school, and "schools" of poetry are by no means a negative phenomena, since they can allow groups of similarly interested writers to form networks and communities that enable their writing to reach others in ways it otherwise wouldn't. The conviction that poetry "must" move a certain way can often be an incredibly generative basis for the creation of new work. "Schools" have their negative aspects also--the inevitable exclusion of certain "marginal" figures, however determined, being one of the most obvious, as well as the tendency to dismiss other "schools" of work without a full examination of their concerns. My own sense is that some "schools" do need to be at least critiqued, if not dismissed--I DO have a problem with neo-formalism in a way that Steven Marks perhaps does not. I agree with Joe Amato, though, that the writer who claims to be a "free player" (I'm not a member of anything but my own authentic practice!) probably is not recognizing the way group interaction has helped form his or her aesthetic. But the problem, again, of telling poets what they MUST do, or of dictating what poetry MUST be, is that poets seldom do what others tell them they must, and almost always what their own sense of their work tells them they "must," if one could put it that way.

mark wallace

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Letter from Jackson Mac Low

— Charles Bernstein · 26 June 1997

Bernstein relays a letter in which Mac Low separates his procedures from Cage's: there isn't "such an overwhelming emphasis on nonegoity." Where Cage wants each performer self-centered and apart, Mac Low asks them to relate — to each other and to "environmental sounds."

Presented here is a letter by Jackson Mac Low to Nick Piombino, revised for the Poetics List by Mac Low. Mac Low is commenting on Piombino's response to Dean Taciuch, that was posted on the list: "I wonder if it might help to approach Cage and Mac Low's writing to students with difficulties like this by introducing them to their music as a parallel effort at dealing with meaning in more oblique ways than is usually expected. I would like to suggest, in particular, Jackson Mac Low's amazing relatively new cd 'Open Secrets' (1993 Experimental Intermedia Foundation 224 Centre Street, New York, N.Y. 10013)."

“

Your recommendation to let the students hear the pieces on *_Open Secrets_* is a good idea. What I do is a great deal different from what John [Cage] did. There isn't such an overwhelming emphasis on nonegoity in mine. In Anne & my performances (and in other performances of our pieces) there is a great deal of choice for performers (in Lucas 1-29 the performers compose their own parts in accordance with certain structural rules (based on a kind of number sequence called the Lucas sequence: 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 18, 29 . . . , which determines both lengths of time slots and the number of different tones in the slots, the larger numbers being made practical by regarding notes in different tones or by using microtones).

”

Also, in John's pieces he wants each performer to be her/his own center and not relate with the others. In mine I encourage them both to be their own centers and to relate with everything they can hear--each other and environmental sounds.

I was much influenced by John's work and theories (as well as by himself--a wise and remarkable person), but, as he often remarked, "It's nice that we don't tread on each other's heels."

My "purely" chance-operational poetry (mainly Dec 1954 to Spring 1960) (see examples in *_Representative Works: 1938-1985_*, 16-70) and my "deterministic" or

"algorithmic" nonintentional poetry--made by acrostic reading-through text-selection procedures (mainly from 1960-1963--see *Ibid.*, 71-127, *_Stanzas for Itis Lezak_* [Barton, VT: Something Else, 1971], and *_Asymmetries 1-260_* [New York: Printed Editions, 1980]) and diastic reading-through text-selection methods (see, for instance, *_The Pronouns--40 Dances--For the Dancers_* [New York: Mac Low, 1964; 2nd ed. London: Tetrad Press, 1971; 3rd ed., Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1979], *_The Virginia Woolf Poems_* [Providence: Burning Decl, 1985}, and *_Words and Ends from Ez_* {Bolin, CA: Avenue B, 1989] into the 80s and sometimes later--was made by methods quite different from John's. His mesostic poems--made by reading-through procedures that entailed certain choices (mainly of how many of the "wing words"--those on each side of the mesostic word, which was determined by his method), were begun in about 1968 or 69, and had some relation to my earlier reading-through methods, but were different in certain crucial ways.

Also, from 1955 intermittently on, I employed "translation" methods--ones through which the notes of musical notations were "translated" into words from source texts, e.g., my poem "Machault" (*_Representative Works: 1938-1985_* [New York: Roof Books, 1986], 35-40) or vice-versa, i.e., the words of source texts were translated into music (e.g., my *_Milarepa Quartet for Four Like Instruments_* [unpublished]).

The work I did from about 1981 on was sometimes not systematic at all, but most often was composed freely, though mostly from the liminal zone between the conscious and the unconscious, which the British psychologist W.W. Winnicott called "the transitional space" and Silvano Arieti named "the tertiary process," since it is the area of intersection between the primary and secondary processes. [I owe knowledge of these terms to the revised and expanded version of Austin Clarkson's fine paper for the November 1995 Mills conference on Cage, "Divining the Intent of the Moment : John Cage and Transpersonal Aesthetics," which will be published with the other papers from the conference, edited by David Bernstein, by the University of Chicago Press.] Examples of this kind of work are the poems in *_From Pearl Harbor Day to FDR's Birthday_* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon, 1982; 2nd ed., 1995), the first 2/3 or 3/4 of *_Bloomsday_* (Barrytown, NY, Station Hill, 1984---the last part is made up of nointentionally composed work--poetry, "stories," and music), and the "poems in prose" in *_Pieces o' Six_* (Los Angeles, Sun & Moon, 1992)--with a few diastic exceptions.

All of these--and other works of mine of other kinds that I haven't space to mention here--was quite different from any poetry or prose John ever wrote, but so was my "nonintentional poetry." For instance, even though we both made long poems by reading through [Ezra Pound's] *_Cantos_*, we did so in quite different ways. (John liked mine--made by nonintentional consecutive diastic selection of words & ends of words regulated by Pound's name) better than his own mesostic poem.)

Twenties: 100 Poems (New York: Roof Books, 1991) & *_154 Forties_* (work in progress since 1990) are different again, adhering to certain "fuzzy verse forms" [giving the secondary process a bone to gnaw on], and gathering into them--mainly by liminal-zone processes--materials from what I heard, saw, and spontaneously

thought of while writing their first drafts. Poems in both series, but especially the Forties poems are subject to later revision. This is a very complex way of working, mainly in the liminal (or tertiary) area, even though there is a certain amount of deliberate choice involved. The choices, however, do not come from an attempt to "say" something definite, but from intuitions in relation to local sound & meaning rather than to a global meaning of the whole poem. Both those collections are sometimes used as sources of chance-operationally made mixes which I run through computer-automations (by Charles O. Hartman) of my diastic methods.

The thing is that there is too much pairing of John's and my work, despite our strong mutual regard. We're both concerned with intentionality and nonintentionality and started doing this sort of work from understandings of Buddhism, especially Zen & Kego as taught by Daisetz Suzuki at Columbia University in the 40s and 50s. But I seldom used "pure" chance operations after 1960. My algorithmic work is often mistakenly thought to be chance-generated, as they say, and I too used to think it was "chance-generated" work, but I realized sometime in the 80s that the only chance involved is in the making of mistakes (and after a certain point--especially book publication--the mistakes must be accepted as integral to the works). Otherwise, whatever gets into the poetry is determined by the generative method & lies there waiting in the source texts.

I might add that I have been working with many other kinds, and sometimes mixtures, of intentionality and intentionality since 1954. In addition to the methods and processes I've mentioned, some works, e.g., my over 65 Light Poems, e.g., *_22 Light Poems_* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1968), "The Presidents of the United States of America" (*_Representative Works_*, 152-67), and the "From Nuclei" poems (*Ibid*, 128-31) involve "nucleus" words--systematically determined by chance or other means--between which I wrote freely. And the performance works are realized by a complex mix of "deliberate choice" and "intuitive (tertiary-process) choice, though many were composed by strict chance operations.

Let me add that in my recent *_42 Merzgedichte in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters_* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1994), the first poem --which is also in *_Pieces o' Six_* (168-75)-- was written by impulse-chance-selection from sources about and by Schwitters, the 2nd through the 30th by computer-aided chance operations, and the 31st through the 42nd by computer-automated diastic methods, which in some of the last Merzgedichte were supplemented by use of Hugh Kenner and Joseph O'Rourke's program TRAVESTY, which produces what Kenner calls "pseudo-texts," determined by letter-group frequencies in English.

Thus I never "abandon" earlier ways of working, certainly never repudiate them. It is to be noted that before late 1954 and from time to time from 1954 to the present, I have written poems by something like the "ordinary" methods--so-called direct writing. However, many of my pre-late-1954 poems were written from the liminal area of the mind (see examples in *_Representative Works_*, 3-13). Thus my recent poetry has certain resemblances with some of work written in the 30s and 40s.

Jackson Mac Low, June, 1997

***** Shortly we will be putting this letter up at Mac Low's home page at the EPC.)

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Chain / 4 now available

— Juliana Spahr · 4 September 1997

Spahr announces Chain 4, "process and procedures," whose editors' note doubles as a manifesto — work that "exposes the procedures, the processes, and the constraints" of creation — and closes with an assignment: "Please make new pieces, new procedures, new experiences."

NOW AVAILABLE

C H A I N / 4 process and procedures

From "Editors' Notes":

This issue explores how things get made. It collects work that exposes the procedures, the processes, and the constraints that accompany creation. Procedural work is important because it requires a consciousness of language and form that resonates with the way we experience the world. It offers a necessary understanding of those experiences as it allows us to approach them from different angles and through new analogies. Please consider these examples invitations for writing as well as reading. Please make new pieces, new procedures, new experiences.

The issue includes Kui Dong's and Denise Newman's "Cess (after Turandot)," an opera; Dan Featherston's "She Had Some Horsecworms" and Cliff Fyman's "My Job to Throw Out Dead Mouse," oulipian language replacements; Peter Gizzi's "Ode: Salute to the New York School 1950-1970 (A Libretto)"; Robert Kelly's "Path Moss," a homophonic translation of Holderlin's "Patmos"; Carl Lehmann-Haupt's "The Poetry of Design/The Design of Poetry," visual definitions of poetic terms; Clarinda Mac Low's "Sabotage," a transcript of a performance; Miranda Maher's "Difficult Books," manipulations of books; Margaret Morton's "Pepe Otero: Architect of Shantytown," photographs that document the building and destruction of a house over time; Catherine Schieve's "Catahoula Benefete, Southwest Louisiana, November 1995," a minute of film of a dance; Saturo Takahashi's "Dumping Sight: Landscape/Landscape," photographs of a big device made of a record, record player, water, and glass that manipulates sight.

Full list of participants: Michael Basinski Guy R. Beining Dodie Bellamy Caroline Bergvall Jeremy Caplan Janet Cohen Cynthia Conrad Maria Damon Tina Darragh Jean Day Alan Devenish Kui Dong Dan Featherston Joel Felix Keith Frank William Fuller Cliff Fyman Peter Gizzi Dale Going Jessica Grim Lauren Gudath Jorge Guitart Dick Higgins John High Jennifer Hoff P. Inman Jon Ippolito David Kellogg Robert Kelly Kevin Killian Wendy Kramer Carl Lehmann-Haupt Tan Lin Lori Lubeski Brigid

McLeer Clarinda Mac Low Jackson Mac Low Miranda Maher Lizbeth Marano William Marsh John Mason E.A. Miller Laura Moriarty Margaret Morton Harryette Mullen Laura Mullen Edward Mycue John Newman Sianne Ngai Denise Newman Patricia Pruitt Joan Retallack William van Roden Lisa Samuels Leslie Scalapino Catherine Schieve Ilana Simons Mary Margaret Sloan Satoru Takahashi Chris Tysh Chris Vitiello Keith Waldrop Rosmarie Waldrop Hannah Weiner Susan Wheeler Janet Zweig.

This is a plea.

We want to encourage you to subscribe to Chain.

Chain is broke. We have \$.58 in our bank account right now.

Word is that one can not run a journal using subscribers as the primary source of funding. (I just had two people tell me that this week alone.)

But there doesn't seem to be any other way to do it. Grants are disappearing. We've unfortunately learned that we can not rely on bookstore sales in any way. With the exception of SPD, our distributors barely pay us what little they do owe us (they tend to be going out of business right now any way; the returns from large corporate bookstores are killing them as much as they are killing us).

Help us prove this word wrong by subscribing or making a donation.

We need around 350 subscribers per issue to stay solvent. While 350 subscribers doesn't seem impossible, getting people to subscribe has been difficult. We have less than 100 right now.

If for whatever reason you don't want to subscribe to Chain, then please subscribe to some other journal. Our situation is not unique right now. Basically the middle man heavy system of book distribution is no longer working. And in this anti-independent publication era we need grassroots organizing and cottage industries more than ever.

[...]

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Distributed Image of the Internet in - r* and similar commands:

— Alan Sondheim · 8 June 1998

A brief gloss reading the network itself as poetics: "Nikuko" and "Alan" are "merely symptoms carried in datagrams and packets," broken up and reassembled downstream. Sondheim points to old shell commands as, "literally, apropos."

[This might be of interest to anyone concerned with the poetics of the Net itself, the relationships among nodes and protocols. For "Nikuko" or "Alan" for example are merely symptoms carried in datagrams and packets across the wires, often broken up along the way, only to be reassembled later.

The early Net was one of comparative transparency, and a number of shell commands are, literally, apropos. Alan]

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Re: Anarchy

— Joel Kuszai · 9 June 1998

Kuszai corrects the room: don't confuse "chance" with "compositional anarchy." Mac Low's procedures are "more 'deterministic' than anything else"—"algorithmic," Jackson called them—and the anarchism they'd invoke is the individualist strain, not the Bakunin-Goldman lineage most poets actually claim.

I have to take issue with some of what's sprung up here surrounding both JML and Cage. Beware of associating "chance" with "compositional anarchy" -- as I'm sure that JML at least would be troubled by that connection. And as has been pointed out all too often, the term "chance" doesn't really describe the procedures used by JML (or, for that matter Cage). As Mordecai-Mark Mac Low (an astrophysicist at the Max Plank (sp?) institute in Heidelberg) pointed out to his father some years ago, these "chance" procedures are really more "deterministic" than anything else. Jackson called them "algorithmic" in a recent letter. And while there might be a connection between such a proceduralism and an anarchist politics, I think that most anarchists would freak out at the idea of having their politics reduced to a philosophical anarchism of the aesthetic variety. But we could talk about that. JML has at turns denied such a connection between his politics and at others said that the performance pieces were "analogies" for intentional communities. Personally, it seems to me that making that connection stresses the "individualist" anarchism of Tucker, etc., and the american anarchists of the 19th century, which lead in no uncertain terms to the anti-statism of the anti-govt paranoids on the right, while the majority of "anarchists" with whom we'd know about come from the anarcho-communist heritage of Bakunin, Emma Goldman, etc. (and that's the lineage of most poets who were involved in that movement). So, it seems to me that the question has to come from another angle.

Also, I don't get how either Cage or JML are "minimalist" In fact, both Cage and Mac Low seem much more maximalist, where the signifying capacity of words is overburdened, rather than emptied out. There are plenty of examples. Maybe some of the work like "Barnesbook" would be minimalist, but then that comes from a particular use of that program "Diastext" which also seems a long way from "anarchy" and even Barnesbook isn't minimalist in the way that say, I dunno, errr, Cid Corman or someone might be considered minimalist. Any thoughts?

Also- I got the sense also that Manuel meant something different. Please explain what you mean.

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proximate.org

— Patrick Herron · 26 January 2000

Herron announces proximate.org and, with it, a doubt: "proximate" speech carries body language that "remote" text cannot, so the internet's transcendent hopes "deserve serious skepticism." The name also puns on "a proxy mate" for a medium busily selling intimacy.

Hi there.

in the end will be the flesh and the flesh will be made word

I have authored a web site, called "p r o x i m a t e . o r g" that you may find of interest. Please take a stroll down the gallery path. The site is a home for my internet-related poetry and graphic design.

<http://proximate.org/>

WHAT THE NAME

The site is named 'proximate' as a nod to the concept of proxemics in human communication. Proximate communications, specifically oral communications, contain extralinguistic information, _e.g._, body language & context, that remote communications such as recordings or textual communications do not have, cannot have. The hope of the internet as some sort of transcendent medium deserves serious skepticism when placed in such a light. Such a light also gives us opportunity for discovering the positive. There's always the tension, the conflict.

The name "proximate" is also a pun on intimacy on the internet, as in a proxy mate. We all know sex sells, _especially_ on the internet. The internet seems to be used as a proxy for human contact and proximal communication, which gives me pause. Such an intuition adds to what I sense as a sort of growing desperation for real, physical human contact, particularly in America, with everyone working on him- or herself, never time for affection, only time for status, career, a new car. Such use of energy may be at odds with a more positive force in life. The world has some strange dynamic property to it; there's something beyond our knowledge, yet within, around; perhaps such a thing helps explain the necessity for contact. The internet is often used as a substitute for that contact, but it can't do that well. There is NO substitute. The "i" that the pun pivots on is relevant to a constant concern throughout the site regarding identity. "I"? Y?

WHY THE SITE

I have authored this site as a byproduct of discussions I have had regarding the internet, interface design and human gesture, the pretensions of proximity in web pages and the actual distances constructed by them, and some resulting poetry. Most of the discussions were this past summer and autumn through subsubpoetics (an e-mail list started by Jordan Davis) with Alan Sondheim and two close friends, one a writer, the other a designer. (Some material from these dialogues can be found at another web site: <http://gesture.org/text.html> .) I am interested precisely in

the type of relationships that web pages build between people. I have observed that this internet aesthetic, this relater, is a duplicitous one (getting back to the original definition of art?) -- that the writing styles typical of e-talk and the "personalization" of web pages add up to make a user feel close, proximate, A SOMEBODY, while all along the relationship is constructed at an incalculably great distance. Such a great distance, that it allows the person or persons constructing the content, who is trying to get your attention or most likely your money, to completely disregard those at the receiving end of the communication. Like the power of a bomb; you can destroy people and not even have to suffer through witnessing it.

This web site appears in lieu of a book. Besides, such material would make little or no sense _only_ in print. Of course, publishing the work on the internet pretty much guaranteed the publication. Makes it easier to work from outside the system as well.

p r o x i m a t e tries to imitate this confrontational, faux-personal aspect of the internet in ludicrous ways, in some poems ("Come Closer!," "Simon Says," etc.) . Other poems engage a more sincere aspect, such as the relation between nature and the binary of computing, or my creeping suspicion that web pages are multiplying in the fashion of A.M. country stations, albeit at a greater rate, thus undermining this "personalized" bright future the internet is supposed to provide. All web pages seem the same after a while. I am primarily interested here in confrontation and the language unit of the sentence and the chord structures of poems (as I mis/read Ashbery), as opposed to the syllable, the notes of poems.

I have a strong interest in interface design, as interfaces on the internet (or in all technologies, even writing?) are the starting points for my discussion, as interfaces are the most immediate contact we have with others, though letters and graphics and hypertext links.

HOW THE SITE

p r o x i m a t e is linear, as I wanted the site to feel less like a "Choose your own Adventure" book and more like a neglected side hallway in an old art gallery space. The site contains several poems, including 2 kinetic poems, a few RealAudio recordings of readings with some background processing in some cases, some original graphics, and some groundwork for new interfaces (which are now static). Perhaps the structure is a gesture of my sincerity, as the face of much of the material is one of sarcasm and duplicity (multiplicity?). I felt I could point out internet-style duplicity by exaggerating it.

Of course, without the internet, this work would be meaningless. The internet has afforded me the opportunity to publish in such a fashion. As much as I criticize the Internet, I cannot imagine a time or place in the past where a maturing writer could develop in a fashion that is at once independent and public. Proximal and distal. For this I am not only fortunate but grateful.

With this site I have something at stake, both as a poet and as a professional web designer & developer. The job pays my bills, the poetry inflates my lungs, but I

wanted something devoid of such a feeble opposition, a place where the two could meet. The result is `p r o x i m a t e . o r g`.

WHO THE SITE

All work on `p r o x i m a t e . o r g` is Copyleft. Copyright © 1999, 2000, Patrick Herron (with some minor exceptions). Verbatim copying and distribution of any part of or all of the `p r o x i m a t e` web site is permitted in any medium, provided this notice is preserved. For more information on Copyleft, go to <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/nonsoftware-copyleft.html>.

Submissions are encouraged, however, no submissions will be solicited in a fashion other than this general notice.

WHAT THE SITE: A COMPLETE GUIDE

The site proceeds linearly in the following fashion, though you can also start at the home page and click through it (as of 20 January 2000):

<http://proximate.org/> -- main page. Simple GIF animation. The hand (also see below) is known as, "La Mano Poderosa," or the All-Powerful Hand. It is a Caban-style sculpture from 19th C. Puerto Rico. Is the hand all-powerful? The hand has become a focal point for gesture, as communication with all its powerful extralinguistic content is trying to get through the hands, the fingers, through the keyboard.

To this page I just added a flash piece called "Hello," which is properly reached from a link below the main graphic on this page. The image of the abbot is Saint Benedict, who allegedly could read minds and dispense a large set of rules. He helped change Western European languages while proselytizing across the continent in the 6th century. He is the patron saint in effigy and he is dying to shake your hand. Like agents of the lord, people are milling about proselytizing about the internet and its divine glories in almost religious fervor. And certainly language is changing as a result. Remember, 01 is me and I am 01. Dust & ash serve as analog counterpoint. The music is a short composition of mine. The flash animation requires Flash 4.

<http://proximate.org/closer.htm> & <http://proximate.org/closer2.htm> - "Come Closer!," a kinetic poem about getting close to a web page. GIF animation.

<http://proximate.org/hands.htm> -- hands (future interface groundwork). The hand and the eye are the human part of the interface of the internet. But each finger has its own spiritual power, and together . . .

<http://proximate.org/01d3c0d3.htm> -- "01 d3c0d3," a poem. (I decode). This poem is about interface, whether it be a keyboard or a language or a literary device or a counting system. Something gets filtered out, yet something else gets added. the impoverished signal gets a boost somewhere. I try to add to that filter, by means of adding subliminal (nonliminal?) suggestions to the noise, as an attempt to develop unconscious coloring constituents for meaning, as if meaning were not a point but a field, a cloud. But when pushed for something better, all means of communication break down, becoming noisy yet reductive, insular. Where does something go when

it is expressed? Where do we go when we express ourselves? Poetry seems to be cryptic sometimes, and in the crypt, is something lost, or is something gained, or both? We live in an age of cryptography, seemingly disparate subjects suddenly thrust upon each other. Can anything be expressed in language or any other code? Hence my reason for changing the "I" to "01," seemingly appropriate for a binary age.

<http://proximate.org/catching.htm> -- graphics with a tribute to Vito Acconci, perhaps the most important influence on this site, at least from an ideological / aesthetic standpoint. the picture is of Vito Acconci trying to catch balls thrown at him while he is blindfolded. It's funny and yet it's not. It's other-sensory, synecdochal (to coin a word), and oddly harrowing. Like understanding art itself. The Chinese text is from a "Reelect Willie Brown" web page. I thought it was ironic without translation and even more ironic if the text is understood.

<http://proximate.org/image.htm> -- "image," a poem for Alan Sondheim. This poem is about the technology of writing and its relation to orality. And the internet and its magnification of aspects of the technology of the written word. Echoes of Plato, Walter Ong, Julian Jaynes, Coleridge, _Max und Moritz_. T.S. Eliot, interface, the augury underlying not only science but _intent_ altogether. With accompanying RealAudio voice morphing at <http://proximate.org/ra/image.ram> .

<http://proximate.org/morph.htm> - "Friends Forever!!!" A web page getting friendly, but it just _might_ be insincere.

<http://proximate.org/simon.htm> - "Simon Says!", a confrontational poem _a la_ Acconci's way of forcing an audience's involvement by using the second person. the graphics are a reflection of reflections and dissected sexuality. Typography tries to merge the sense of language with mathematics, providing its own means for alienation. A poem originally composed for subsubpoetics.

<http://proximate.org/confluent.htm> - A well-known poet told me last year that I needed to write a nature poem. I do not think this is what he had in mind. I attempt to express timelessness with a most deliberate conflation of distant origins and the commonplace results of today, machines spitting numbers. And this conflation came out somewhat like Glossolalia, like speaking in tongues, only more clear, like Tourette's, but not abusive. My fascination with cosmology and astronomy bubbles through the lines but always at the strain of admitting such things as black holes, the strain of admitting the reality of anything, or the construction of anything for that matter. With a RealMedia recording, morphed voice and risset tones: <http://proximate.org/ra/confluent.rmm> .

<http://proximate.org/asabove.htm> - "As Above, So Below." GIF image. Another interface precursor. Overly simple perhaps, but it is also a joke on interface and even perhaps the sortilege of sexuality, like knowing which way to go at the appearance of a subway sign that says "Street (up arrow), subways (down arrow)." You always know which way to go just by merit of where you are. The sign is unnecessary. The image, to add to the entendre, is an altered detail from a large

public works mural done by the fantastic brilliant realist artist, Jack Beal. I believe the mural is the mosaic in the 42nd Street Subway Station in NYC. Jack is a dear friend of a dear friend, and this mutual dear friend is the stepfather of my best friend who died three years ago. The experience of his son's death is a large part of why I'm doing ANYTHING creative today. To bring this in line with the image, the detail from this mosaic is of my friend's stepfather, who Beal actually pictured as a welder in the mosaic. Perhaps the internet is a subway, and to make navigating it simple, know where you are and have a pretty good idea of where you'd like to go. And what if you don't know where you are?

<http://proximate.org/subterra.htm> - A poem entitled, "Subterranean Homesick Filament," with original graphics. The poem originally appeared on subsubpoetics and was written by replacing every 'a' with a 4, every 'e' with a 3, every 'i' with a 1, every 'o' with a 0, every 'g' with a 9, and some other textual substitutions as well. This poem is perhaps more sincere than the other content, perhaps more mundane and commonplace, but all such things should have a home. The empty feeling from working too much, being too deeply immersed in the mercantile world, and the effect of such feelings of emptiness on one particular personal relationship, my most important relationship.

<http://www.proximate.org/paradigm.htm> - "Paradigm Shift." A poem about web pages as miscellaneous and vapid as country stations in a violent cowboy world soldiered by people in briefcases. The distance of web pages, the desperate need of people for touch, and the outlandish appeals for subjugation and abuse all over the internet -- all such things play a part. Perhaps because all of that time on the internet we are sitting in front of a lifeless monitor. Human contact is so hard to find, and just a little more difficult on the internet. It's as if making a bigger noise on the internet will finally bring the touch, but at that point you're already sucked in. And you are more easily commodified at that point. I guess I'm pretty much an vitalist, by way of Wilhelm Reich or Bergson, so my concerns with the technology of text, of internet, or ideas without flesh, distant media like big brothers, are all in conflict with the great deal of fondness I have for both writing and the internet. And I'm curious here about the rise and fall of the sentence, how syntax is like the chord structure of a song. Hence the unresolved sentence to introduce, and its repetition as an opportunity for resolution. A RealMedia recording accompanies the poem at <http://proximate.org/ra/paradigm.rmm> .

<http://proximate.org/lockandkey.htm> - "Lock and Key." Poem with original graphics. Keys, encryption, gestures of openness and penetration/interface, the divisiveness of objectification, the gestures of body language blown apart, and the age-old philosophical riddle of other minds.

<http://www.proximate.org/syntax.htm> - "Syntax Round." Poem with original graphics. What does a page when designed for a print layout, look like on the web? Again, another poem that plays on syntax and its relation to resolution via the avoidance of resolution and repetition. Free jazz is a big influence on much of my writing, not just here, and it has led me to some level of insight on the sentence and

its music. An insight perhaps or an opportunity for an invented intellection. A sentence in language is used here in a way equivalent to a phrase of music in a song. And on the graphical design side of things, here's an attempt to see what a page spread layout designed for print would look like on a web page, and the art work, again, indulging in the compulsion of most literal interface, the display of genitalia. We humans have more in common with chimps than we like to kid ourselves. Commercial internet enterprises take advantage of our primate nature as well as our seeming ignorance of such a nature, all over the place. Sex sites in particular.

<http://www.proximate.org/bookends.htm> - "Bookends Person Absurdities." This poem was the result of a Sunday trip to the library. The opening section is composed of the first and last sentences of books I picked up at the library, but when I rewrote them I stripped of any people. And then I incorporated the credits for each book as part of the work. The measure of the line here is in words, not syllables. The unit of the sentence takes primacy here. The "notes" section is a more personal accounting of some things that I was rubbing up against. I guess I read Walt Whitman poems now as if John Giorno were trying to read them, not allowing a breath until the line is completed. Allen Ginsburg haunts this, perhaps even my reading of it (RealMedia) at <http://proximate.org/ra/bookends.rmm> . Yes, this is my voice unretouched. At some point the authentic must appear, no matter how futile in theory.

<http://proximate.org/blackbox.htm> - "The Black Box is Empty." A villanelle, with artwork. Unfortunately I cannot remember the source of the photograph. So someone is going uncredited here. Are poems part of signs? What's that monkey doing there?

<http://proximate.org/creation.htm> - A visual allusion to Linda Nochlin's "The Origin without an Original"* and Gustave Courbet's "L'origine du Monde" and to the collapse of the end into the origin in the great cosmological cycle of things. Authenticity and a lack thereof. A return to the beginning, if you touch it, baby, c'mon. This woman, unlike Courbet's subject, is not an object but an activity, an explosion, a channeling, an interfacing. Orgasm as interface, transformation, both familiar and other-worldly.

Starting with an end and ending with an origin.

THANKS

Enjoy. I would love your feedback, especially if you have made it this far along. Most of this material was posted to the domain server during the week beginning 16 January 2000, and is still in development. There is much more to come, both poetry and interface design.

My thanks go to Alan Sondheim, Giles Hendrix, and Suzie Sisoler for their valuable insights and comments generously given to me during the development of the p r o x i m a t e site. And to Janet, for not just tolerating but appreciating my absences from working too much.

Thank you.

Warmest regards,
Patrick Herron

* - Nochlin, Linda. "Courbet's L'Origine du monde: The Origin without an original." In *Spectacles of Realism*, eds. Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 339-347

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Angel of Soliloquy

— Patrick Herron · 22 February 2001

Herron pushes back on Barrett Watten: the Web didn't invent a medium, only made an existing text-network easier (physicists already had SGML), and the internet "NEVER promised" to be nonlinear, rhizomic, postauthorial. The literary community, he says, was "poorly informed."

Hi -

Just want to say that yours was a very relevant and thought-provoking post, Barrett.

At the dawn of the internet age, there was a significant amount of advance publicity for new forms of authorship and literariness that would be enabled by the technology.

hmm. if you're talking about when the www specifically came to popular culture in the early 90s (as opposed to the early days of the internet at DARPA over a decade before that), a lot of people believed they could define this "hot new medium." at that time many people did not understand that the medium was in fact already in place, and primarily a medium for text. for example, the physics community was already familiar with SGML and so HTML was very much the same thing, albeit easier. But the literary community was poorly informed as to the background and nature of the internet. I believe that this is still painfully true of the literary community when it comes to the majority of poetic work I see on the internet.

"demon of analogy": the relation between the turn to theory and celebrations of the World Wide Web's implications for literature.

The Internet promised a mode of literary experience that is, all at once: nonlinear, rhizomic, postauthorial, intertextual, multivocal, nomadic, nonhierarchical, networking, and feminist (a list of words taken from an opening paragraph in an early anthology of "hypertext theory").»

The internet NEVER promised that. As a medium the WWW specifically promised a quick way to share documents, images, etc., (emphasis on speed and wide distribution) and it offered a way to easily surveil not only the distributions but some aspects of their usage. Frankly stated, uninformed or poorly informed people invented these promises you name out of thin air without heed to the medium and its ontogeny.

Yet at the same time many of the kinds of literariness that were being predicted had long since been developed by experimental writers.

What was the actual promise then? The WWW wasn't promising anything innovative, then, at all if the innovations had already happened elsewhere, right? Perhaps that is your point, and it is a point that I certainly agree with. One large exception (there's always an exception) is the animated poem, a fine example is Brian Kim Stefans' Dreamlife of Letters (<http://www.ubu.com/contemp/stefans/dream/index.html>). Animated poetry makes a naive promise in light of what I am describing, but one that actually becomes more and more fulfilled and attainable, and it ceases to be so naive, as it insists upon and invents its own reality. Much kudos to Brian for taking this reasonable possibility to a place very close to perfection. Internet technologies actually made it easier for people who didn't have much \$\$\$ to easily animate text, and make animations of all kinds of course. But as you may be implying, people were already writing, and already able to draw, well before the internet, and were innovating outside of it.

I believe the particular promises you describe was shallow, naive, and did not look for expression in light of the potentiality of the internet. The potentiality of a thing is crucial; the acorn becomes the tree, but not the squirrel. Such promises were naive when promised and, I believe, were bound to be unfulfilled. I still believe that most literary works on the internet seem to be unwitting aleatory practices. But like Brian's design linked above, and some others below, it can actually be deliberate, well-crafted, and make some radical formal departures from the poetics of the before-internet age. Mostly, though, the success of these poetries are really either evolutionary or critical, but not revolutionary.

So the question: what is currently the relationship between radical form and the structure of web sites and listserv discussions?

How do the implications of radical form translate into the ways that sites are constructed and/or the ways that participants in listservs engage the literature in the ways that the technological analogy would predict?»

What is "radical form"? I think I know what you mean. Regardless, multiple links between pages was already innovated in the children's book series "Choose Your Own Adventure," and in text games like Zork in the 80s. Again, the internet promised and still promises mainly to allow people to disseminate and track information rapidly, quietly, without paper. What content is placed on the internet is largely independent of its means for delivery. Radical form, since it is a product of text and **not** a product of the **dissemination** of text, would and still will be innovated **regardless** of the existence of the internet. OK, the internet makes multiple choice narratives easy to complete, but it could also be easily done in a book before the days of the WWW "revolution."

As far as listserv discussions, most of us had word processors before listserv access. Again, there's no radical break there; it's just faster. The parameters of plain ASCII text create some radical forms. Alan Sondheim is quite good at this particular

"radical form," though again I do believe ASCII illustrations have been around since at least the 70s. Their introduction into poetry, as far as I can see, happens with some of Alan's work. Alan would know the veracity of what I say here, and I am sure I will stand corrected as to the introduction of ASCII forms into poetry.

Your questions are good ones, Barrett.

A simpler way of putting this might be: what internet sites reflect the influence of radical forms, and how do they do it?

I believe the real radical idea of form on the internet is the one least expected...that the internet is still at best a serial enterprise. Simple designs are the most radical, since they express the most difficult aspects of the internet: namely information architecture.

Some websites are out there that try to fulfill such naive promises, and though they might not innovate or clarify, they are expressions of radical forms. for example: <http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/newmedia/lexia/index.htm>

I mentioned Brian's Dreamlife of Letters above.

Heavy Industries is a site that crisply articulates the positive side of what I am saying, that the web is at its best and most radical when being used as a means of enhancing speed of delivery combined with animated text, while not requiring or making the web out to be some privileged radicalizer of formal innovation:

Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries <http://www.yhchang.com>

A statement about the Heavy Industries site: "It's essential to break rules and do things "wrong" in art. But it's seemingly necessary to follow rules and do things "right" in making Web art. This is the big problem confronting the Web artist, for the technique --and not the art -- of making Web art necessitates obeying strict rules the flouting of which is punished by absolute failure to create image and sound. One HTML misstep, and nothing works, nothing happens on the screen. With this in mind our Web art tries to break as many rules as possible. In our work there is: no interactivity; no graphics or graphic design; no photos; no illustrations; no banners; no millions-of-colors; no playful fonts; no fireworks. We have a special dislike for interactivity. To us it's a paltry, laughable thing, like getting a kick out of pulling the trigger of a gun: click: bang. We don't get it. When we click on interactive art, we get the feeling we're the rat in the Skinner box, except there's only the miserable reward, not the shock. Art isn't reward, it's shock, or something approaching it, something we would call beauty. Our Web art tries to express the essence of the Internet: information and disinformation. Strip away the interactivity, the graphics, the design, the photos, the illustrations, the banners, the colors, the fonts and the rest, and what's left? The text."

I would also include my <http://proximate.org> as a site that has similar aims as Heavy Industries. My "radical form" in many ways is really a fake radicalism, since the code-stuff is extraneous, a joke on the viewer. (E.g., <http://proximate.org/01d3c0d3.htm>). I also treat a side-effect of the internet:

personalization and the way the internet tries to suck a person in. I try to illustrate the silliness of that side-effect as a consequence of language through confrontational, second-person language, shifting around the person-position of the viewer. I also try to show that there are more direct ways to "get personal," hence all of the faces, a pun on interface.

But all of these ruses are still in part about text, or rather, text's shortcomings. Such limitations of text (and transitively, limitations of the internet) challenge us to either try new ways of delivering gestural, extralinguistic information to readers/viewers or just to drop the use of text altogether. There's your radical form for you. How to get gestural extralinguistic information about text across to a viewer, a project that requires use of formal properties. Stefans succeeds in his text animation to codify gestural information in giving words actions that reflect their meanings, though i don't know if getting gesture onto the net was one of his explicit aims. Heavy Industries succeeds at this as well. again, i do not know that it was deliberately explored.

Postauthorialism, of which proximate is heavily concerned, is taken a bit farther. The roles of the audience and the teller are constantly changed, and the site has no "cover" with an author's name on it. It's very anonymous. But is this a radical break that cannot be done without the internet? No. It's an evolutionary step from langpo.

i also went a step further with proximate into the sociopolitical domain, and tried to show that such efforts to capture gesture on the internet (like when people insist on using exclamation points! in talking to you, yes only you!) can be manipulative, projective, a part of an ugly power struggle & that those efforts at manipulation are what langpo was fighting against, namely, the ugly hegemony of the author-hero. But even for that I have prior innovators to thank, like vito acconci and his confrontational art, or ron silliman and his writing. The cause is evolutionary, not revolutionary, and really then nothing radical. My effort remains more evolutionary than revolutionary even if i go about the hegemony problem of narrative in a somewhat different way than langpo. I think perhaps being quasi-subliminal in text was (01d3c0d3, come closer) the only radical form I innovated. Even then, I wonder if someone else had already tried writing subliminal poetry before.

The internet seems best when used to create books or galleries. Such things are best treated linearly.

If you want radical writing, radical form, such writing can be captured without the internet in every case. on pencil and paper. or even with a flipbook of stapled paper. Perhaps the speed of production will be compromised if the pieces are put in a book, but that should not matter to a discussion of innovating radical forms.

Here are some other sites that express radical form at the intersection of internet and poetry, and do so in a somewhat realistic, mature, and well-constructed fashion:

<http://www.buffnet.net/~joecow/polysyndeton.html>

<http://www.net22.com/qazingulaza/cybele/telepresence.swf>

http://www.ubu.com/contemp/bb/log_01.html
<http://www.ubu.com/contemp/poundstone/poundstone02.html>
<http://www.rtmark.com/exhibit>
http://beehive.temporalimage.com/content_apps25/skyscratchez/00.html
<http://www.suffocate.org/s3/shock/>

Enjoy,
Patrick

Patrick Herron



<http://proximate.org/>
getting close is what
we're all about here!

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E-Poetry 2001: A Digital Poetry Festival April 18-21

— Charles Bernstein · 15 April 2001

Bernstein forwards the program for E-Poetry 2001, Loss Pequeño Glazier's four-day digital-poetry festival at SUNY-Buffalo, bringing "50 new media artists from 13 countries" for work that in most cases "cannot exist in the codex medium."

E-Poetry 2001: A Digital Poetry Festival starts this Wednesday, April 18, at SUNY-Buffalo continuing on through Saturday night.

Loss Pequeño Glazier has been working around the clock to coordinate all the details, large and small. The program is extraordinary.

The Festival is an Electronic Poetry Center production sponsored by the Poetics Program of the Department of English, SUNY-Buffalo, and the Just Buffalo Literary Society.

I paste below part of the Festival announcement.

Go to <http://epc.buffalo.edu/e-poetry/2001/> to get full information and a complete schedule of events and participants

The four-day program follows in full — fifty new-media artists from thirteen countries, panels on procedure and JavaScript and "Electronic Pies in the Poetry Sky," readings from Goldsmith to Cayley's "RiverIsland."

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E-Poetry Conference: correspondence

— Brian Stefans · 2 May 2001

Stefans relays the E-Poetry aftermath through John Cayley, who credits Glazier with "a miracle of Lossless compression" of live datastreams and dates the "wider emergence" of historically grounded work in "networked and programmable media." Insider talk, Stefans warns, but easy to hum along.

I know some of you are interested in what happened in Buffalo a week ago at the E-Poetry conference. I haven't read any real summaries, but John Cayley posted the following on the E-poetry chat list that runs through a lot of it, and I had a fairly lengthy response to it, which follows. Some of this might seem a little technical or just insider talk, but it's easy to hum along... if anything else comes down the pipe I'll try to post it.

Forwarded — John Cayley:

“

apologies for crossposting

”

briefest ? of remarks offered as a personal attempt to outline what I consider particularly significant about this important and truly delightful festival.

first again high praise and deep gratitude to Loss Pequeo Glazier without whom. Note that proper-paradoxically, by single-tracking a huge confluence of live datastreams he achieved a miracle of Lossless compression, distinctly in contrast to more the more Lossy codecs of most conferences, including the subsequent DAC (digital arts and culture) conference the following weekend in Brown University (more on that later). Anyway

history: at last, in the field of what I call literal art in networked and programmable media (phew: henceforth NPM, but there is as yet no easier way to say it), we are beginning to see the wider emergence of historically grounded contexts informing what have hitherto -- all too often -- had the character of detached, naive-autonomous essays in the so-called new. The presence of Philippe Bootz representing the configuration of poets and programmers around *aLire*, the earliest all-electronic publication devoted to writing in NPM (1989-) was crucial. *aLire* has a tradition, related to but distinct from the ALAMO (computer assisted offshoot of the OuLiPo, most prominent practitioner perhaps, Jean-Pierre Balpe). And I suspect this group is also the earliest to have a developed sense and theory of 'poesie anime' which now plays as Concrete-inflected webbed-up textual Flash movies. And although there are many others of us throughout the world working in Flash (or Director or Flash-like things), doing so with a background in, amongst

others, Concrete, Dada, Constructivist graphics, Lettrism, etc. etc. (Flash animators who have read and practiced some part of what Johanna Drucker's read and practiced) we still don't have a history of animated text written by a poet or critic of poetry. (Or do we? Please let me know.) This would discover -- beyond the flipbook -- cinematic titling and proto-cinematic titling as the originator of the mode and would trace it into and relate it to animated text in advertising. The only book I've used on this is (the impossibly over-designed so as to be almost unreadable) Bellantoni and Woolman **Type in Motion: Innovations in Digital Graphics** London: Thames and Hudson, 1999. (Saul Bass!!; Pablo Ferro); but maybe -- in a 'Digital Culture' context -- Lev Manovich's **The Language of New Media** (MIT Press, just out and I've just bought it) will have something to say on this or provide leads Generally, we still have a long and necessary way to go in relating our practice to media history. So on to ...

practice: here, for me, the most exciting development which I believe we are currently witnessing is the transition to writing in NPM which is practitioner-led rather than formal-experimenter or media-experimenter-led. The already-poets and already-writers have tooled up and developed a sense of what they can do, what they desire to do, what they do not desire to do. Of course this actually began to happen some time ago, but efforts in this direction have been -- perhaps with the exception of Kenny Goldsmith and cohort's invaluable ubuweb (eUbu for the contemporary genuinely NPM stuff?) which has been visible since its inception -- somewhat obscured by eFluff. Brian Stefan's 'The Dream Life of Letters' (performed at the conference and much-appreciated) is on ubuweb -- a tour de force; even a little depressing, since its going to be hard to think of 2D text-and-graphic figures which Brian hasn't done. Perhaps that's the point. We begin to stop trying to think of new things to do and start trying to sort out which of the figures might be regularly useful for our own practices and projects. (Maybe Brian could suggest some that he particularly likes and maybe even give them names?)

I probably should have sited the strong Brazilian contingent at ePoetry before Brian since they are likely to be his 'anticipatory plagiarists' (I'm not being rude, its an jocund OuLiPian term -- look it up; you'll have fun doing so). Great stuff from Wilton Azevedo, who also read for the late Philadelpho Menezes, and from Lucio Agra. Hot tip of an iceberg which seems to me also to be better contextualized than animated poetry in the English-speaking world.

Separate practice thread: I was also encouraged to see and hear that there is new engagement with what I refer to as programmatological work; writing in which the programmability of the writing media is a necessity. Amongst the poets, and outside the chance-fearing OuLiPo, there are programmers who can distinguish trivial manipulations of language from investigative and generative procedures which address its structure and the abyss. Neil Hennessey and Jabber; Darren Wershler-Henry & Bill Kennedy and their apostrophe engine; Glazier's early-in-the-way Jonathan Minton; Glazier himself. But all of them (Glazier except since he's written the history) are somewhat decontextualize and we are still far from having these

facilities built into our word processors (whereas graphic and sound artists do have the equivalent filters and modulators built into their tools).

In his **Open Letter** article 'Reflections on Cyberpoetry' (Number 9, Fall 2000, pp. 22-33), Brian Stefans opens with a quotation from Roger Pellet: "The greatest cyberpoem would be an online application that provided you with an interesting text and a robust interface with which to manipulate it. In other words, a word-processor." Well yes, we can see where this is going and the requisite perspective which it lends to the discussion, but MS Word has never provided me with an interesting text or a robust interface (cf. BBEdit) or any interesting tools to manipulate whatever text **I've** provided for it (or plagiarized by anticipation). Maybe Photoshop or Flash are a vizPo cyberpoems?

Under this thread, its also necessary to mention one of the best critical contributions to the conference, by Katherine Parrish, who provided excellent materials for and analysis of precisely the history and contextualization of writing in NPM, while heading for the further textonomic quadrant of live collaborative writing (mixed with programmatological intervention by e.g. MooLiBots) in MOOSpace.

Inevitably, I dwell on practices which, while not the same, are closely related to certain of my own, but I also have to signal quite distinct threads in ...

social literal art and literal art as gaming and (later I'll come to) literal art as playable/performable instruments: ... not only because they are, like, 'happening'. In gaming, in intercourse, 'rule modification is inherently social' (based on the speaker's remarks during a paper by Jesper Juul at the later DAC conference). This is one of those brilliant but obvious statements which has important consequences, for any notion of the avant-garde for one thing. It's hard to make a playable, configurable avant-garde game or social intertext because the avant-gardist tends to change the rules without telling anyone, or only telling 'his' (invidiously/historically) friends, or with the intention of concealing the rule changes (so that they are more disruptive!?) or in the hope that later (after-the-avant) critics will work out the clever changes that 'he' (invidiously/historically) has made so that said avant-gardist gets to retire to Olympus or the Academy. This is, perhaps, a good personal strategy, but in this media it ain't going nowhere, since, it seems, in practice, many aspects of the media are inherently social. For me, this raises the happy prospect of no-compromise poetics which play out in the social and therefore escape the seductions of avant-garde elistism. Ububoy beware. You are great forces, and the Torontonians amongst you also come from an important contextualized and localized tradition, but you've got to go open-source and join the f***ing community. On the other hand, I'm going to resist and exclude myself also for as long as possible, but others out there: M&M And & Damon; Alan Sondheim; the Albany configuration (which might perhaps check out audience-response protocols when high art keeps calling after time); but especially the general sense that work is nearly always being made **in collaboration**. Reiner Strasser's turnaround times seem to be particularly impressive and productive.

net/web art connections: Another major Brazilian contribution came from Giselle Beiguelman, linking from the practices I've already mentioned, this work was - with that of Alan Sondheim - also 'our' chief connection to the world of 'net art' or 'web art'. These practices are widespread but hard (for me anyway) to characterize or pin down, except to observe that they seem to ally more with visual and performance art than with literal or literary art. Nonetheless, they are often text-based, but in a manner which is strangely willfully? autonomous from traditions (including avant-garde traditions) of poetic practice. We definitely need more cross-over here, and Giselle was our link at this festival. Follow it.

performance: (Excuse errors please. I'm racing to scribble this and get it off before having to go back to my saltmine.) Finally a word on performance. We will not be able to get away from the issue of performance in this type of work. Off the page, the time-based aspects of literal art are more difficult to bracket in both actual performance and actual criticism. Text as space; as an instantiation of a spatial engagement with language (even as time passes) is one thing (and perhaps an inalienable aspect of the literal), but as consumed or performed, literal objects in networked and proprogrammable media move and morph and translate and transliterate and interrelate and change in time. As such, practice and theory necessarily extend beyond 'configuration for the sake of interpretation' (art-making) to 'interpretation for the sake of configuration' (gaming). These formulations are based on an excellent paper at the later DAC conference by Markku Eskelinen on the theory of games (in the context of literal art). We are used to understanding that there are (literal) art objects and that there are also games and social/intertextual spaces which may have literary qualities, but we now also need to develop a 'vocabulary' of a range of transitional objects which display and modulated time-based media and which, perhaps, are more like (musical) instruments: they may have an art built-in and are interpretable as such, but this interpretation is done so that they can be configured or 'played'. For some practitioners the playing, the playing-well will be the goal of engagement with such objects. For these people the instrumental practice becomes more like a game. For others the playing, the configuration will be done for the sake of achieving an interpretable moment or series of moments. The play or configuration will resolve a time-based performance to a literal object of critical interpretation.

(That last bit was written really quickly. Sorry.) Anyways, there are many other dear performers at Loss's festival which I have not mentioned, but please, you-all, don't take this wrongly. I have only been trying to set out super-quick the tendencies and themes which I personally believe are important for us to recognize and engage)

.... and I share in this sense of missing you all, since despite this everywhere we seem to find ourselves in email networks (chiefly), you are not here when I am ...

Great post, John. Quick responses (apologies if the main parts of this are directed toward my own work, but it's what I know best).

> we still don't have a history of animated text written by a poet or critic of poetry.

The use of "history" here is a bit troubling -- I'm happy to pretend for a moment that there is none, though as you know I'm kind of obsessed with the idea of a "tradition" that sort of hinders or troubles any sort of easy engagement with the medium, not to mention provides a more incoherent "history of forms" against which to play. These wouldn't be agreed-upon standards, but would give those of us interested in such practices as Debordian detournement (though we are short of "masterpieces," we still have some pieties) some sort of wall against which to bounce things -- hence my occupation of Brazilian concrete for Dreamlife, not to mention occupation of Flash to bring Brazilian concrete into the art historical vocabulary in the States. (I think the style of Brazilian concrete is still closely linked with their own sense of style in things like advertisements; here, I think that style is somewhat alien.) This history of forms would include, as you mention, cinematic titling (I used Godard in my essay, also because of his use of music and sound, which I find troubling in digital art because I think of it as a difficult to do well, hence the silence in my pieces rather than the easy ambient drone), but also the way any sort of text is used in a public space, such as on the sides of buses, banners or on post offices. I would also include the history of abstract movement such as in dance; I think it was from looking at a lot of dance and thinking of collaborating with people such as Sally Silvers -- we may work on a project soon -- that influenced some of the fluidity of Dreamlife (I hadn't seen the Merce Cunningham "Bipeds" at the time but had it described to me -- I was a bit disappointed when I saw it, but amazed at parts).

Debord et. al.'s essay: <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/3> -- how can we create an art with any sort of socially transformative possibilities without having a set of social pieties to corrupt -- how do you let them know that this sort of action is occurring without a set of forms (read: values) operating in the same dynamic field?

I guess my fear in a "history" of this work so far is that there hasn't been so much done that has been completely successful as art, and that we risk merely fetishizing our own little corner of the world and elevating it before others when there are plenty of other things to look at. A timeline would have to include several minor moments -- interesting moments, of course, in the way that the Vic 20 was interesting in the history of computing -- but in the end a matter for specialists, and I don't think this should be a field for specialists. Who needs a canon? But on the other hand, I'm all for a very significant discourse on the subject, and I'm more excited about what has been done in this field than in most of what's out there in painting, sculpture, etc -- my bias. I think the first step, in fact, might be a comprehensive bibliography -- my experience at the conference was discovering that there was so much interesting work out there, such as yours and Wilton's (I missed Lucio's presentation) and some of the stuff on Alire that I wouldn't have experienced had I stayed on the web. (I do think, however, that I prefer the web since, like Debord again, my hope that is that my poems would be viewed during the 9-5 drudgery of the workplace, and contaminate it -- it's supposed to operate against what's on the web as we know it.)

> a tour de force; even a little depressing, since its going to be hard to think of 2D text-and-graphic figures which Brian hasn't done. Perhaps that's the point. We begin to stop trying to think of new things to do and start trying to sort out which of the figures might be regularly useful for our own practices and projects. (Maybe Brian could suggest some that he particularly likes and maybe even give them names?)

That's interesting -- don't know if I'd come up with vocabularies for the individual moments, but certain techniques I've somewhat theorized to myself and will probably re-use, hoping to flesh-out their implications. The recent discussions on this list about Plato and the use of light, for example, or obviously germane to the use of letters that blur and fade as you are reading them, which I found, after several bleary-eyed months of programming the thing, to be somewhat emotional.

What you are suggesting reminds me of what Kenner wrote about T.S. Eliot and the Waste Land -- that he wrote the Four Quartets to sort of justify the Waste Land as a reusable "form." I showed the piece on Monday to some people in NY, and one of them happened to have been a student of Mary Ellen Solt's and spotted the allusion to her work right away (the flower like structures coming out of the word "enterprise") -- my point being, perhaps, that some of the stuff in Dreamlife is already reused material. The circles, for instance, almost all allude to Finlay's circus poster.

> we are still far from having these facilities built into our word processors (whereas graphic and sound artists do have the equivalent filters and modulators built into their tools).

It does seem pretty true that graphic and music programs have a series of "filters" with which to manipulate their "materials," but there is a small range of interesting tools in Word, such as sorting, tables, a range of typefaces and -sizes, and the invaluable macros -- the action scripts of Word, I guess -- that encourage the sort of play the graphics programs use. I've written poems in Word where I determine the line breaks by resetting the margins -- it usually started as a prose poem, and then I put hard returns where the line broke on the screen. It's also worth mentioning that the range of tools offered in a program like Flash -- such as morphing, tweening, etc. -- are often quite lame when used "out of the box," which is to say straight, with no tweaking -- ditto for such tools in Photoshop such as "gaussian blur," which you end up getting weary seeing on so many bad web pages. My guess is that art historian's of the future will begin to discuss "Photoshop technique" in the way they discuss brush handling now -- John, you would know if they are already doing this.

> a quotation from Roger Pellet: "The greatest cyberpoem would be an online application that provided you with an interesting text and a robust interface with which to manipulate it. In other words, a word-processor."

Roger was joking, of course. And BBEdit is superior, I and Roger agree.

> Under this thread, its also necessary to mention one of the best critical contributions to the conference, by Katherine Parrish, who provided excellent

materials for and analysis of precisely the history and contextualization of writing in NPM, while heading for the further textonomic quadrant of live collaborative writing (mixed with programmatological intervention by e.g. MooLiBots) in MOOSpace.

I've taken a little tour of Moolipo but nobody was there to talk to me... perhaps we can throw a party sometime soon. I agree Katherine' paper was very interesting to me -- I've not pursued (after a few years of C++ programming, much lower grade than anything Neil's doing) any experiments in the sort of Markov-inspired programming such that of Neil's since I haven't found a way to link it to the "social" except as a sort of pure sphere that is obviously tied to the formulations that could be derived from the gene-pool of the social world -- i.e. the generator is dependent on the likelihood of certain word combinations in language as it is constructed in "daily life" and hence is both recognizable but completely alien (except when words like "king" appear, as I noticed once during Neil's paper). This is a form of the negative that is also an advancement on pure Dadaism because of its reverence for scientific technique -- it's scary in that way, asking that we both value statistical likelihood as not only a vehicle for making the future more predictable, but also as a sort of "wisdom literature" that one carries around in case of troubling emergent situations -- and I've grown to think the projects very beautiful, so I guess I'm congratulating Neil for finding light in what I thought was darkness. Katherine's Moolipo space develops in a different fashion; in the collaborative space she described -- in which you might, for some reason, want to convey something of emotional or other-sort of import -- to have the Oulipo tactics subvert or pervert this meaning is interesting to me, perhaps even as a model of how the "game" can break into normal social relations (again, Debord). I'm just sure how much meaningful language can be channeled into such a place -- I don't plan on falling in love over the internet -- and so how much attachment could I possibly have to anything that goes into the thing unless it be from a purely clinical standpoint -- i.e. what would happen if I plugged in "F*ck you, you little sh*t" into the thing, how would people respond? which strikes me as psychopathic (this has been written about, in fact, in that anthology "Flame Wars" a number of years back). For some reason these types of interventions -- which is the equivalent of driving a loud motorcyle through a small-town midwestern town to scare the elderly -- continues to be of interest to people, as if there were a normative web space to corrupt with "situations" -- no, it is more interesting to do that in the mall, at least that's where I am now.

Kisses to you too, Wilton (just got that...)

How dangerous can the sort of hypertextual space be -- is exposure possible there?

> 'rule modification is inherently social' (based on the speaker's remarks during a paper by Jesper Juul at the later DAC conference).

>It's hard to make a playable, configurable avant-garde game or social intertext because the avant-gardist tends to change the rules without telling anyone, or only telling 'his' (invidiously/historically) friends, or with the intention of concealing the

rule changes (so that they are more disruptive?!?) or in the hope that later (after-the-avant) critics will work out the clever changes that 'he' (invidiously/historically) has made so that said avant-gardist gets to retire to Olympus or the Academy.)

This seems a little unclear to me, only in the sense that I don't know what you mean by "rules" in your response to Juul's statement. Do you mean the rules of a particular piece of digital art -- how the interface works, the sort of "contract" with the user that the programmer creates -- or do you mean the "rules" of normative engagement with a piece of "art" -- i.e. Duchamp's urinal was not a piece of art until he changed the rules. I think it's quite possible to change the rules in the first fashion and not be "avant-garde," though as it's not often enough done it seems rather avant-garde, but needn't leave anyone in the dust. The first rule of internet art -- as Kenny G will tell you -- is that it's got to be interesting right away, pretty much within the first minute or so of viewing -- otherwise the viewer/browser will beam off to another location. One way to do this is to present the rules of the interface rather quickly, without too much grief, and yet I think it is the most troubling interfaces that provide the most pleasure. (It's been amusing to me lately that I've received emails about two of my more recent internet pieces that included the phrase "Marjorie [Perloff] said she couldn't..." etc., meaning she didn't understand the interface -- is it possible she didn't understand the rules? Is it possible I didn't intend her to understand the rules?) I'd like this rule to change myself -- slowness and quietness should be cherished on the web -- but how?

Also: how does one conceal the rule changes so that they are more disruptive -- I think it is the changing of the rules themselves that are disruptive, which is how detournement works (pardon the lack of accents, etc.) One can make up one's own rules -- suggest a contract -- and then pervert it, introducing the viewer to the concept of the variable contract, the transformation through time of types of engagement -- hence avoiding the Olympus complex, where truths are considered of quasi-eternal import.

This is, perhaps, a good personal strategy, but in this media it ain't going nowhere, since, it seems, in practice, many aspects of the media are inherently social. For me, this raises the happy prospect of no-compromise poetics which play out in the social and therefore escape the seductions of avant-garde elitism. Ububoy beware. You are great forces, and the Torontonians amongst you also come from an important contextualized and localized tradition, but you've got to go open-source and join the f***ing community.

Does this mean I have to wear my panties on the outside (just joking). I would note, though, that nearly everything the uboids presented was collaborative -- Darren's and Bill's piece, for instance, was a collaboration and relied entirely on texts written by the netizens of the world; Neils' Frogger piece as inspired by a conversation with Darren (though I didn't mention it), while Jabber was hardly "individual expression" -- it relied on the collaborative efforts of English speakers world-wide (another piece that Neil was working on, a hypercube Java rendering of a Rubik's cube piece that

Christian Bok created, was also collaborative but I think it's not ready yet); Christian's Eunoia is not collaborative yet relies on reading through the dictionary several times, word for word (the author of that dictionary determined the limits of his vocabulary, in a way, though he added the French, etc.) and of course I presented my digital rendering of it; my Dreamlife uses text that I lifted from Rachel Blau Duplessis, and it purposely attempted to assimilate itself in a culture that was, in a sense, pre-net or anti-net (concretism and lettrism) [by the way, I read Kenny's "Day" piece during my performance of Dreamlife); and most of Kenny G's work -- for example Fidget -- has been manifested in a variety of different collaborative forms, such as a Java applet and a performance at the Whitney Phillip Morris museum.

My own sense, actually, is that the "no compromise" aspect of what the uboids were doing (not including myself, who prefer a certain fuzziness to my theory) is that they are very conceptually clear about what they are doing, not to mention determined to follow-through on a concept until it either dies on the table or results in an art work. While I agree entirely that digital art, especially web-art, is inherently social -- I think Darren, for one, would also agree -- I think it's also inherently conceptual. There probably wasn't a person who presented there who couldn't reel off a series of theses about what they thought their work was "doing" -- which accounts, I think, for the "non-retinal" and even "non-semiotic" aspect of some the more interesting work -- and it's the only field of "visual art" perhaps where a good-looking piece of work could fall under the criticism of being too "slick" perhaps because of its (partly conceptual) relationship to the net economy. So I agree with Christian, in a sense, when he says that literary critics of the future will admire a poet for his/her programming techniques over the actual text produced, though I wouldn't say they would all do that (I'm a moderate, and a "humanist," as the Torontonians like to remind me). My point being: in this type of art that is inherently conceptual, the concepts really have to be interesting -- not entirely theoretical or clinical, or if so, a linkage of theoretical enterprises that produce a sort of giddy laughter in the end -- always trying to mate a fish with a swan. I'd like to write about this sometime. Laughter...

net/web art connections: Another major Brazilian contribution came from Giselle Beiguelman, linking from the practices I've already mentioned, this work was - with that of Alan Sondheim - also 'our' chief connection to the world of 'net art' or 'web art'. [...] We definitely need more cross-over here, and Giselle was our link at this festival. Follow it.

Nothing to add here -- I agree. The kinds of things that jodi.org or that appear at Rhizome (not even worth starting a list of names), or whatever, are a huge rich field to steal ideas from.

This raises the issue of the possibility of the coherence of a field that could be called "e-poetry" -- will this term just seem ridiculous 2 years from now, when the next great leap is supposed to happen? It seems a lot of the more interesting work presented there, such as the hypercube poem, were not coming out of strictly literary concerns at all, but I could see a great programmer or artists with an excellent skill

at words (Kenny G, not a programmer, never studied literature, and was a graduate of RISDY; another example is Tom Phillips, author of the Humument) simply stumbling (I use this as a term of praise) into types of language production/presentation that are simply more interesting than what us hand-cuffed, self-styled "poets" would ever dream of. Though I have to say a lot of the art I see coming out of designers -- yes, those slick Flash folks -- has some of the drippiest language I'd ever hope to not read.

It is for this reason I propose that we not join the EU. I like our currency. Let's stick to our small island off the coast of the net continent.

For some practitioners the playing, the playing-well will be the goal of engagement with such objects. For these people the instrumental practice becomes more like a game. For others the playing, the configuration will be done for the sake of achieving an interpretable moment or series of moments. The play or configuration will resolve a time-based performance to a literal object of critical interpretation.

I'd like to see this paper on gaming, actually -- this last paragraph of yours was rich but I'd like to refrain from comment until later. Of course, I've suggested my own vocabulary for the "game" which is the "contract" -- I think teasing out the social implications of time-based art in which the rules of engagement are variable depending on user interaction would take a little while. I also have this idea of beautiful movement, which is tied somewhat with the idea of "drift," which is to say, how to turn the motion of the mouse into more than just a practical exigency -- can one be invited to partake in beautiful movements without necessarily having any skill? Can this movement have semiotic, rather than purely visual, meaning [e.i. my "electric_wall" piece -- does this piece suggest a more readerly interaction, along the lines of post-semiotic poems, rather than painting/viewer type interaction]? I've always been a crappy dancer, but I somehow think that net art could be created to make anyone a legitimate painter, poet, dancer, etc. -- perhaps all at the same time. Well, don't know what I mean here...

Of course John, being more modest than most of us (or at least _me_) didn't write about himself in his post, but I wanted to note my appreciation of his presence and work at the conference. In terms of discourse, he was the model of engagement (though he didn't take up my question about Moos, shucks).

I think the work he presented on the last evening suggested most strongly -- in a line with Barrett's paper -- the issue of cultural specificity and translation as it operates in digital arts (which I won't say is synonymous with web art but in a way cuts close) in this world of increased globalization and "equivalence", the sort of entropic reduction of the local to the bitstreamed, infinite cross-platform interpretability that digital processing seems to promote. His provocative statement -- this is not "concrete" in any way -- prefacing the piece was interesting to me -- why not "concrete"? I agree that the work wasn't concrete, but I'd be interesting in knowing exactly what he meant.

I also think there's an interesting component to his work in terms of 1) how the "material world" relates to the digital world, in the sense that he introduced sounds of running water, and calligraphic images (ink) etc. in a way that struck me as nostalgic or longing for, say, a zen stone garden (one I'm thinking of, very famous, but can't find it -- funny that typing in "zen stone garden" in a search engine brings up tons of dot com stores that actually sell them). I don't consider this "nostalgia" in a pejorative sense -- John's obviously quite devoted to digital art, and other work of his has nothing to do with Chinese calligraphy, etc. -- but more trying to skirt in some sort of between-place, between digital art and that that which relies on material. I tend to think his relationship to hypercard as a programming language suggests this sort of closeness to material (I've decided, for myself, to take on as many new technologies as possible with the hope of never getting too "close" to a particular digital medium as it all changes so quickly, but Cayley and folks like Jim Rosenberg make good arguments for the opposite tact). His clock-poem piece, which constructs poems based on the time, date, year, etc., also suggests a relationship of digital technology to the seasons, etc. -- it reminds me a bit of Robert Smithson's work that figures itself in a geographical timeline rather than a human-historical one, not to mention Finlay's work (again) which just isn't "there" until spring.

And 2) is the relationship of digital imagery to the work of the hand, which is mostly in the careful morphs involving the calligraphic images, which alluded to work done by Xu Bing. I think the slowness of the work suggested the sort of thinking that one occupies when performing some sort of meditative act, usually a repetitive act that is nonetheless meaningful and requires concentration. This ties in with his sense of poetry itself -- the texts, when they were legible, seemed to be of the late projective, somewhat zen Phillip Whalen school of work, which is to say it relied on the line-by-breath a bit, so obviously again a relationship to the body, in this case the lungs. This seems counter to the natural tendency in digital poetics toward texts that are language-inspired, or formalistic and/or programmatic and counter to any use of the body as a vehicle for determining the measure of a piece.

I don't have much time to tease out the implications of all of this, but I thought it quite interesting and as far as I can tell no one's doing work like this.

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Sci-fi, Darren Wershler-Henry, Notes

— Christopher Alexander · 6 April 2002

Asked where sci-fi and poetry meet, Alexander offers Wershler-Henry's Klingon rewriting of bpNichol's "Translating Translating Apollinaire"—"grammatically correct Klingon" in which, there being no word for car, the text reads "primitive shuttlecraft."

One of the reasons I like the poem is because of the (well-handled) sci fi element. I like sci fi and I like poetry, but these are usually two separate enthusiasms. Anyone know of other places/poems where they come together successfully?

1. The Short Answer

In his book Nicholodeon, Darren Wershler-Henry produces a version of bpNichol's "Translating Translating Apollinaire" using the Klingon language, "Translating[n] Apollinaire 10: Klingon." I think that Nicholodeon is out of print now, but you can see an online version of the book at the Coach House Books website . I've never been so fortunate as to see him read the poem, though I know that he does so periodically, e.g. at the first Boston Alternative Poetry Conference back in '98.

From DWH's Surplus Explanations: "This poem is written in grammatically correct Klingon, the most successful artificial language in history. There are some allowances here for poetic usage; since Klingon contains no equivalent for the word 'car,' for example, this text reads 'primitive shuttlecraft.' The characters themselves are not conventional Klingon, but those of a small splinter colony, the Klinzhai; they bear a striking resemblance to Hebrew script."

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Re: Manifestoes

— Geoffrey Gatza · 1 May 2002

Gatza passes along Mark Amerika's "Avant-Pop Manifesto": Postmodernism is "dead and we're in the process of finally burying it," and its heirs are "the Children of Mass Media." A manifesto forwarded admiringly, the form itself back in style.

A great manifesto is the avant pop manifesto by Mark Amerika (see below) it is also located on the web at <http://www.altx.com/manifestos/avant.pop.manifesto.html>

“

AVANT-POP MANIFESTO: THREAD BARING ITSELF IN TEN QUICK POSTS

”

By Mark Amerika

Now that Postmodernism is dead and we're in the process of finally burying it, something else is starting to take hold in the cultural imagination and I propose that we call this new phenomenon Avant-Pop.

Whereas it's true that certain strains of Postmodernism, Modernism, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Futurism, Capitalism and even Marxism pervade the new sensibility, the major difference is that the artists who create Avant-Pop art are the Children of Mass Media (even more than being the children of their parents who have much less influence over them). Most of the early practitioners of Postmodernism, who came into active adult consciousness in the fifties, sixties and early seventies, tried desperately to keep themselves away from the forefront of the newly powerful Mediagenic Reality that was rapidly becoming the place where most of our social exchange was taking place. Despite its early insistence on remaining caught up in the academic and elitist art world's presuppositions of self-institutionalization and incestuality, Postmodernism found itself overtaken by the popular media engine that eventually killed it and from its remains Avant-Pop is now born.

Avant-Pop artists have had to resist the avant-garde sensibility that stubbornly denies the existence of a popular media culture and its dominant influence over the way we use our imaginations to process experience. At the same time, A-P artists have had to work hard at not becoming so enamored of the false consciousness of the Mass Media itself that they lose sight of their creative directives. The single most important creative directive of the new wave of Avant-Pop artists is to enter the mainstream culture as a parasite would sucking out all the bad blood that lies between the mainstream and the margin. By sucking on the contaminated bosom of mainstream culture, Avant-Pop artists are turning into Mutant Fictioneers, it's true, but our goal is and always has been to face up to our monster deformation and to find wild and adventurous ways to love it for what it is. The latter strains of Postmodernism attempted to do this too but were unable to find the secret key that led right into the mainstream cell so as to facilitate and accelerate the rapid decomposition of the host's body. This is all changing as the emerging youth culture, with its deep-rooted cynicism and nomadic movement within the "dance of biz", now has the power to make or break the economic future of decrepit late-capitalism. Avant-Pop artists themselves have acquired immunity from the Terminal Death dysfunctionism of a Pop Culture gone awry and are now ready to offer their own weirdly concocted elixirs to cure us from this dreadful disease ("information sickness") that infects the core of our collective life.

Now whereas Avant-Pop artists are fully aware of their need to maintain a crucial Avant-sensibility as it drives the creative processing of their work and attaches itself to the avant-garde lineage they spring from, they are also quick to acknowledge the need to develop more openminded strategies that will allow them to attract attention within the popularized forms of representation that fill up the contemporary Mediascape. Our collective mission is to radically alter the Pop

Culture's focus by channeling a more popularized kind of dark, sexy, surreal, and subtly ironic gesturing that grows out of the work of many 20th century artists like Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Lenny Bruce, Raymond Federman, William Burroughs, William Gibson, Ronald Sukenick, Kathy Acker, the two Davids (Cronenberg and Lynch), art movements like Fluxus, Situationism, Lettrism and Neo-Hoodooism, and scores of rock bands including the Sex Pistols, Pere Ubu, Bongwater, Tackhead, The Breeders, Pussy Galore, Frank Zappa, Sonic Youth, Ministry, Jane's Addiction, Tuxedo Moon and The Residents. The emerging wave of Avant-Pop artists now arriving on the scene find themselves caught in this struggle to rapidly transform our sick, commodity-infested workaday culture into a more sensual, trippy, exotic and networked Avant-Pop experience. One way to achieve this would be by creating and expanding niche communities. Niche communities, many of which already exist through the zine scene, will become, by virtue of the convergent electronic environments, virtual communities. By actively engaging themselves in the continuous exchange and proliferation of collectively-generated electronic publications, individually- designed creative works, manifestos, live on-line readings, multi- media interactive hypertexts, conferences, etc., Avant-Pop artists and the alternative networks they are part of will eat away at the conventional relics of a bygone era where the individual artist- author creates their beautifully-crafted, original works of art to be consumed primarily by the elitist art-world and their business- cronies who pass judgement on what is appropriate and what is not.

Literary establishment? Art establishment? Forget it. Avant-Pop artists wear each other's experiential data like waves of chaotic energy colliding and mixing in the textual-blood while the ever-changing flow of creative projects that ripple from their collective work floods the electronic cult-terrain with a subtle anti-establishment energy that will forever change the way we disseminate and interact with writing.

Avant-Pop artists welcome the new Electronic Age with open arms because we know that this will vastly increase our chances of finding an audience of like-minded individuals who we can communicate and collaborate with. The future of writing is moving away from the lone writer sitting behind a keyboard cranking out verse so that one day he or she may find an editor or agent or publisher who will hype their work to those interested in commercial literary culture. Instead, the future of writing will feature more multi-media collaborative authoring that will make itself available to hundreds if not thousands of potential associates around the world who will be actively internetworking in their own niche communities. Value will depend more on the ability of the different groups of artist-associates to develop a reputation for delivering easily accessible hits of the Special Information Tonic to the informationally-sick correspondent wherever he or she may be (one of the other great things about to make Avant- Pop the most exciting movement-chemistry of the 20th century and into the 21st Century is that our audience will be both immediate and global, all in one breath). Writers who continue to support an outmoded concept of the lone writer dissociated from the various niche communities at their disposal

will eventually lose touch with the nanosecond speed at which the movement-chemistry wanders and will find their own work and its individually-isolated movement decelerating into turtle-like oblivion.

Can you imagine what The Futurists would have done with an Information Superhighway?

Antonin Artaud, founder of The Theater of Cruelty, once said that "I am the enemy of the theater. I have always been. As much as I love the theater, I am, for this very reason, equally its enemy." Avant-Pop artists are the enemy of pop culture and the avant-garde, both domains seemingly so far-fetched in a world that celebrates itself with live TV wars, rampant economic disenfranchisement and nanosecond identity changes. Our lineage, the bloodbath of cultural history we swim in, includes Artaud, Lautreamont, Jarry, Rimbaud, Futurism, Situationism, Fluxus, Abstract Expressionism, Henry Miller, Gertrude Stein, William Burroughs, Terry Southern, Surfiction, Metafiction, Postmodernism in all its gruesome details, Laugh-In, Saturday Night Live, Beavis and Butthead, SLACKER, Coltrane Miles Dizzy Don Cherry, feminist deconstruction, the list goes on. We will sample from anything we need. We will rip-off your mother if she has something we find appropriate for our compost-heap creations.

We don't give a shit about your phony social reality either. "Once upon a time" doesn't interest us whether your setting is the past (historical fiction), the present (contemporary classics) or the future (cyberhype). We prefer to lose ourselves in the exquisite realms of spacy sex and timeless narrative disaster, the thrill of breaking down syntax and deregulating the field of composition so that you no longer have to feel chained to the bed of commercial standardization. The emerging youth culture's ability to align itself with intuitive intelligence and non-linear narrative surfing is just one sign of where the Avant-Pop artist's audience is situated. Soon the Data Superhighway will finally once and for all do away with the high-priced middlemen, and artists will reap the benefits of their own hard-earned labor. The distribution formula will radically change from Author - Agent - Publisher - Printer - Distributor - Retailer - Consumer to a more simplified and direct Author (Sender) - Interactive Participant (Receiver) Avant-Pop artists and their pirate signals promoting wild station identifications are ready to expand into your home right now, just log on, click around and find them. It's all up to YOU, the interactive Avant-Pop artist/participant.

Postmodernism changed the way we read texts. The main tenet of Postmodernism was: I, whoever that is, will put together these bits of data and form a Text while you, whoever that is, will produce your own meaning based off what you bring to the Text. The future of Avant-Pop writing will take this even one step further. The main tenet that will evolve for the Avant-Pop movement is: I, whoever that is, am always interacting with data created by the Collective You, whoever that is, and by interacting with and supplementing the Collective You, will find meaning. In an Information Age where we all suffer from Information Sickness and Overload, the only cure is a highly-potent, creatively-filtered tonic of (yes) textual residue spilled

from the depths of our spiritual unconscious. Creating a work of art will depend more and more on the ability of the artist to select, organize and present the bits of raw data we have at our disposal. We all know originality is dead and that our contaminated virtual realities are always already readymade and ready for consumption! In a nod to Duchamp's Armory Show scandal, the questions we need to ask ourselves are

who are we sharing the cultural-toilet with and what are we filling it up with?

Avant-Pop artists are already doing a lot of this stuff already. It's impossible to name them all but a random sampling would include Mark Leyner, Ricardo Cortez Cruz, William Gibson, William Vollmann, Larry McCaffery, Ronald Sukenick, Kim Gordon, Doug Rice, Derek Pell, Kim Deal, Darius James, Lauren Fairbanks, Jello Biafra, Lisa Suckdog, Eurudice, Nile Southern, Takayuki Tatsumi, John Bergin, John Shirley, Bruce Sterling, Richard Linklater, Don Webb, The Brothers Quay, Lance Olsen, Curt White, Eugene Chadbourne, King Missile, David Blair, and many, many others.

Without even knowing it, the Avant-Pop movement has been secretly generating interest and support for a few years now but has recently become more exposed with the successful breakthrough of the sub-pop alternative music scene, the publication of alternative trade paperbacks like Black Ice Books, and the release of low-budget alternative media projects like **Wax, Or The Discovery of Television Among the Bees**. The future of fiction is **now** as we, its most active practitioners, automatically unwrite it. Boulder, Colorado [...]]

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Ubu.com/aspen in NYT

— Anastasios Kozaitis · 9 December 2002

Kozaitis flags a Times notice on UbuWeb's revival of Aspen, the 1960s "first three-dimensional magazine" that arrived as a box of records and posters from Barthes, Warhol, Lennon and McLuhan—now digitized "with remarkable verve."

December 9, 2002 Three-Dimensional Magazine Lives Again in Two Dimensions By
MATTHEW MIRAPPAUL

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/09/arts/design/09ARTS.html>

“

Published 10 times between 1965 and 1971, Aspen billed itself as the first three-dimensional magazine. Most issues arrived in a notebook-size box stuffed with articles that had been printed individually rather than stapled together. But it was the nature of its contents that made Aspen magazine stand out like a ski lift in a cornfield. Each issue was as likely to hold postcards, posters and phonograph records as essays. And among the magazine's 235 contributors were many prominent figures on the 60's

cultural landscape, including Roland Barthes, John Lennon, Marshall McLuhan, Lou Reed and Andy Warhol.



Thirty years after Aspen ceased publication, copies of the actual magazines are rarely found outside museum libraries and dusty flea-market bins. Now, though, Aspen can be viewed on the Internet, where the three-dimensional magazine has been digitally reproduced for the two-dimensional computer screen with remarkable verve. The material was put online last month at Ubu.com/aspen.

Aspen provided a vivid snapshot of its era. The Pop Art issue came in a Warhol-designed soapbox. Another issue described works by denizens of the Judson Memorial Church gallery, a mecca of early performance art in New York. The Fluxus issue had conceptual scores by Philip Glass and Steve Reich and a LaMonte Young recording. Deborah Wye, chief curator of prints and illustrated books at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, said, "The accuracy of the moment is something that hits you between the eyes when you open one of the boxes."

Given Aspen's historical importance, one might assume that a digital re-creation of the magazine would become the work of a museum. Instead, the online version is a labor of love by Andrew Stafford, 48, a San Francisco bookseller who gradually amassed a set of the magazines during the 1990's. He wanted to share his collection.

"As an example of creative publishing, Aspen is just stunning," he said. Mr. Stafford's project provides a primer in the pleasures and pitfalls of putting real-world materials on the Internet. But there is no denying that Aspen is an ideal candidate for online presentation. At a time when magazines are routinely accompanied by compact disks with music or computer software, it is easy to overlook how progressive Aspen was in packing its issues with the thin plastic records called flexidiscs and, in one instance, a reel of 8-millimeter film: a truly multimedia magazine. Adapting the magazine for the Web's multimedia capabilities became irresistible to Mr. Stafford. In 1999 he started digitizing some of the magazine's printed pages. He converted the flexidisc recordings into sound files that could be played on a computer and also asked a friend with a movie projector to transfer a reel of short abstract films by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Robert Rauschenberg and two other artists into video files. Happily, Mr. Stafford did not stop there. He learned Web-animation techniques so that he could create interactive versions of some exhibits. For instance online visitors can flip through the digitized pages of Lennon's 1969 diary, playfully created in 1968 (sample entry: "got up. went to work. came home. watched telly"), or rotate the lines and dots on a page of John Cage's score for "Fontana Mix."

Mr. Stafford completed his digitizing effort in 2000, just as lawsuits over copyright violations involving online song files were reaching the courts. He said, "I became

totally intimidated by the prospect of breaking about 150 copyrights." Deterred by the amount of work that would be needed to acquire permission to republish all the Aspen materials online, he put the project in a drawer. Instead he created a free tutorial about Marcel Duchamp, which he put online last August at UnderstandingDuchamp.com. He was soon contacted by the artist's vigilant and unhappy rights administrators. So far, he said, he is dodging their demand for several thousand dollars. While researching the problem, he approached Kenneth Goldsmith, a New York poet who has operated UbuWeb, an Internet-based archive of experimental poetry and avant-garde works, since 1996. The site is at Ubu.com.

Mr. Goldsmith volunteered to put the Aspen project on his site, which he did last month. Despite Mr. Stafford's experience with the Duchamp tutorial, Mr. Goldsmith said: "Over the years I've found that people only come after you for rights when you're making money. Since UbuWeb is completely free, nobody has ever really bothered us about rights." He said he removes entries when living artists complain, but that rarely happens. "Most artists who find their stuff on UbuWeb are thrilled," he said. Avant-garde artists rarely expect royalties. "They want an audience." He may be right. The editors of several Aspen issues said they were pleased that the material was available again. Jon Hendricks, who edited the performance-art issue, said, "The idea was to get the information out rather than to think of it as property." Nor did Jeffrey H. James, executive director of the Cunningham Dance Foundation, object to audio recordings of the choreographer Merce Cunningham on the Aspen site. Mr. James said, "The educational value of having Merce's thoughts out there on the Web outweighs our motives of ownership." Still, Mr. Stafford worried that individual contributors would force him to remove select entries. He said, "Losing just 10 percent of the contributors would reduce its usefulness by at least half, so I'm hoping all will cooperate."

The ultimate arbiter would probably be Phyllis Johnson, a former intimate-apparel editor of *Women's Wear Daily* who created Aspen. But her contributors have lost touch with her, and she could not be reached for comment.

Ms. Wye of the Museum of Modern Art was enthusiastic about Mr. Stafford's Web site, saying that it achieved the same goal as the original magazine: making art available to a larger public. (The magazine's circulation was 15,000 to 20,000.) She also appreciated having the audio and video entries online, noting that even an institution like the Modern does not always have turntables and movie projectors around. On the other hand, the Web site does not convey the tactile qualities of the real magazines. "You can't imagine how beautiful these flexidisks are in person," Mr. Goldsmith said. "An audio file is no substitute for the sensuality of vinyl." And Mr. Stafford's straightforward site design encourages online visitors to go through each issue in a linear fashion, losing the treasure-chest element.

There is one gap in Mr. Stafford's collection, the last of Aspen's 10 issues. Recently a book dealer with a complete set (asking price: \$10,000) offered to mail him color copies of its pages. Mr. Stafford said the issue should be online by Christmas.

Mr. Stafford said he understood that he would never recover a dime from his preservation project. Aspen magazine "was a folly," he said, "as is my Web site, I guess."

He continued: "Aspen the magazine never made a penny, I'm sure. So Phyllis Johnson and I share that across all these years."»

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Disquiet on the Electronic Front

— Brian Stefans · 4 April 2003

Stefans's Poetry Project Newsletter column (director's cut) on the poetry blog boom —"Blogaholism continues to claim victims"—with a long roll call of poets' weblogs and a mock-medical warning about carpal tunnel and John Merrick postures.

[My latest column for the Poetry Project Newsletter... it was edited quite a bit for print, so this is the director's cut. The full graphic version can be found here <http://www.arras.net/weblog/>.]

Blogaholism continues to claim victims among the unwitting poetry community, with the roster - international, avant-garde, new formalist, new vineyardist, skanky, Spanish and English - ever growing for the fashionable poetaster's blogroll. Keep one eye on your prose as you dawdle among: Chaxblog (Charles Alexander), For the Health of It (Tom Bell), Equanimity and Million Poems (Jordan Davis), Overlap (Drew Gardner), Ululate (Nada Gordon), HG Poetics (Henry Gould), Lester's Flogspot (Patrick Herron), Pantaloons (Jack Kimball), Ineluctable Maps (Anastasios Kozaitis), Jonathan Mayhew's Blog, Ich Bin Ein Iraqi (Camille Roy), Possum Pouch (Dale Smith), Mike Snider's Formal Blog, Elsewhere (Gary Sullivan), WinePoetics (Eileen Tabios), Laurable Dot Com, The Tijuana Bible of Poetics (Heriberto Yopez), SpokenWORD (Komninos Zervos).

A few of these predated Silliman's Blog, one or two even Katherine "the blog queen" Parrish's squish, but several are mere pups. I will spare you the URLs, but a clickable, up-to-date list can be found at Kasey's limetree (limetree.blogspot.com). Soon, no poet will be able to read holding a piece of paper because of the stealthily deleterious effects of carpal tunnel syndrome, a brand of disease leading to crooked, John Merrick-esque postures that - like a model's slumped shoulders in the more swish NYC bars or Orson Welles' citizen's paunch that seems to have taken hold of the UK's sound poetry community - will be imitated by any sensible poseur desirous of seeming of the crowd that "took down Language writing" (Vendler).

Like shrooms after April's swich licour, metablogs - blogs that respond to the phenomenon of blogs like Spinal Tap to heavy metal - are beginning to sprout. Contact the folks at mainstreampoetry.blogspot.com to partake in the literary sensation that's sweeping the world: Mainstream Poetry. (So that Fence thing was smoke and mirrors?) Be one of the grant-funded freshwater bass who write: "Once,

on a gusty day, they fell in quatrains, / as unbelievable as dandelion seed's cosmic pendulum." On a different front is the mischievous (= Canadian) web program that's taken on a life, and a bit of cultural capital, of its own, called the "Sillibot." Using the Tjanting author's daily posts as seeds, this artificial intelligence generates Flarfish text based on a markov chain algorithm (look it up) which it posts, with nonchalant hysteria, to its blog. Unfortunately, the Sillibot's creator does not want to publicize the URL just yet as it's still being tweaked - the paradigm shift awaits -- but in the meantime, you can mess yourself creating automatic sestinas, sonnets pantoums and canzones at Finnish Leevi Lehto's de rigueur "Google Poem" (www.leevilehto.net/google/patterns.asp).

With some trepidation I hope to further the trend with the introduction of another multi-author blog Circulars (arras.net/circulars), which has a mandate to register in persuasive but concise prose the poetry community's opposition to the US government's war policy. As the propaganda states:

"CIRCULARS intends to focus some of the disparate energy by poets and literary critics to enunciate a response to U.S. foreign policy, most significantly the move to war with Iraq. CIRCULARS intends to critique and/or augment some conventional modes of expressing political views that are either entirely analytical, ironic or humanistic. These are all valuable approaches, of course, and not unwelcome on CIRCULARS, but our hope is to create a dynamic, persuasive idiom that can work in a public sphere, mingling elements of rhetoric and stylistics associated with the aforementioned modes -- analytical, ironic or humanistic. CIRCULARS is, in this sense, a workshop -- a place to explore strategies."

By the time you read this, the war may be several weeks old, and my guess is that the site - the joint creation of several authors acting both as editors and writers -will reflect, for now and for the record, changes in the poetry community's political priorities, sentiments and activities as they occur.

Beehive (beehive.temporalimage.com), edited by Talan Memmott, has just put up their fifth issue, featuring work by Bill Marsh, Juliet Ann Martin, Marianne Shaneen, Millie Niss, Alan Sondheim and others. Good to see names not previously associated with digipo in the mix - Marianne was lugging around a gaffer-taped Bolex on Roebling St. when last I saw her -- but I'm also pleased to see Juliet Ann-Martin, whose "ooxxxooo" (julietmartin.com) was revelatory for its time, grabbing some spotlight.

The Iowa Review Web (www.uiowa.edu/~iareview/mainpages/tirwebhome.htm) also has a new issue, featuring a new piece by William Poundstone, "3 Proposals for Bottle Imps," an interview with Motomichi Nakamura by Yang-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, and my interview with John Cayley, suggestively titled "From Byte to Inscription" (kind of a like a James Bond film, or maybe Justin Bond).

Free stuff? Well, you can try the new /ubu ("slash ubu," found at ubu.com/ubu) series of e-books, featuring titles by Kevin Davies, Deanna Ferguson, Richard Foreman, Madeline Gins, Jessica Grim, Peter Manson, Michael Scharf, Ron Sillman, Juliana

Spahr, Hannah Weiner, Mac Wellman, and Darren Wershler-Henry (sorry, a touch of Lisztmania there...). Go to the recently revamped Duration Press (durationpress.com) for even more free e-books by the likes of Patrick Durgin, Rachel Levitsky, Brian Strang, Elizabeth Treadwell, Rick Snyder and Marcella Durand - really just the tip of the rapidly deepening iceberg (er...), countering the forces of ecological entropy that's rendering even Antarctica's historical Borchgrevink's hut a pile of stinking guano. Kudos to Jerrold Shiroma for putting together such an amazing site.

For those who don't go much for reading, there are the digital anti-war bumper stickers at Masturbate for Peace (masturbateforpeace.com), with minimalist offerings such as "Touch Your Sack, Not Iraq," and "My Bush Doesn't Declare War!" And if that's too much for your impoverished lexicalism, then it doesn't get much lighter than this page of Japanese Emoticons (club.pep.ne.jp/~hiroette/en/facemarks/index.html), including such classics of the industry as:

[see site for graphic: <http://www.arras.net/weblog/>]

"Here you are, the tea."

and

[ditto...]

"He sends you a kiss with a sound effect."

Ok, it's not the Cantos, or even Eisenstein's Film Sense, but it's an easy in for those of you who are responding to Eliot Weinberger's call (arras.net/circulars/archives/000130.html) to learn the names of more Asian poets - I think this one's called Hiroette.

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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Re: What the #@*% _is_ Electronic Writing?!?

— furniture press · 27 January 2006

Casamassima works toward a definition of electronic writing—not the printout but the text "as it's being processed on the screen," or "something that can be manipulated electronically in real time"—replying to Stefans and mIEKAL's skepticism about the term.

When I think of electronic writing I think of hypertext (html) and news tickers on building and what appears in those old word processor windows that shows the text before it's actually printed. I think there's more but my conception of electronic writing is anything (words) that appear on an electronic surface. I don't think printing a document from a Word file should be considered electronic writing, but the word document "as it's being processed on the screen" is electronic writing.

How about: something that can be manipulated electronically in real time?

christophe casamassima

“

----- Original Message ----- Brian (I first typed Brain): _What is NOT Electronic Writing?_ I'm attempting to decide if I find this term "electronic writing", useful in anyway. It's not one that I've ever used, & really, I'm not one to get hung up on terminology, but these concepts which are known to be as old as Vannevar Bush (say late 1930s), keep getting reinvented endlessly, & given a new spin to tout what might be fashionable for the time, or favorite. ~mIEKAL On Jan 25, 2006, at 4:33 PM, Brian Stefans wrote: > A fully linked version of this post appears at: > > - Classic hypertext fiction, > > - Animated poems > > - Conceptual blogs and websites > > - Non-electronic conceptual writing > > - Parody and hactivist websites > > - Wordtoys > > - Interactive Fiction and literary gamesdvocate of this type of writing. > > - Cave Writing and installation texts > > - Email and collaborative art > > - Computer generated texts > > Practical websites - ~~~~~ s a m s a r a c o n g e r i e s ~~~~~ "the last 20th century epic about to happen" http://xexoxial.org/samsara_congeries

”

Christophe Casamassima, ed.
Furniture Press
Baltimore, MD

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Re: Dead

— Alan Sondheim · 17 November 2006

Sondheim declines both the Flarf and code-poetry labels, insisting his practice is "codework," ungenerated and unrelated to scraping, and concerned instead with "the politics of body/sex/language, the drive towards extinction."

This is true; on one hand the defuge of distribution systems, their decathecting, internments; on the other, corrosive flesh and its resonant nightmares. The net is always already excessive.

Re: Code poetry btw - at least as I know it - what I'm working with is somewhat different, codework; in any case, the text wasn't generated, nor is there any relation to flarf or google/X/scraping that I can think of. I'm more interested in the politics of body/sex/language, the drive towards extinction, the problematic of transgression.

- Alan

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Re: on code poetry

— Jim Andrews · 19 January 2008

Andrews, conceding a point to David, dwells on the economics beneath code poetry: access is defined "when the bill for the cable arrives," and the quality of one's machines and permitted programs shapes "who and what we are."

actually Murat thanked me twice for making this observation, distinction, about power and control you mention, as just about all my letters are about this issue of power and control-In the last letter re electricity,electricity itself is a "splitting" of two aspects of control and power within its own history: on the one hand the "good" D/C current of Edison is associated with the "safe" uses of Holzer's "Projections" and the "Death," hooded Electric Chair uses are "plugged into" A/C.

Sorry, David. You're right.

You note that "an engagement with code 'and' language seems like a particularly apt way into both an engagement with questions of who and what we are" A fundamental of the engagement with code is when the bill for the cable arrives, as well as the electricity bill, without which there is no cable. Even when using a public access or job-provided hook-up you have invested in it somewhere along the line. The forms of access or the non-access of codes already begin to define who and what we are. And, within access, the types of programs available, the types of machines, the types of and ranges of codes one is allowed to use--these further determine who and what we are within this digital code determination of who and what we are.

Very true.

A person with access to a lot of highly developed state of the art equipment and programs and machines may appear in code as a much more complex and "refined" and "avant-garde" being than a person restricted to an hour at an old and slow computer in a public library in a run down central city neighborhood. The latter person may do great street art, but is always running the risk of jail for doing so. As an artist, they may be afr better than than the code being--but--"no access."

Yes, that's true also.

I met a scholar this summer, Claudia Kozak from Buenos Aires, who has written a book on grafitti in Buenos Aires. She only included illegal material. If it wasn't illegal, it didn't get in the book. Though of course there was undoubtedly a lot that was illegal that also wasn't in the book. She has turned her attention now to writing about digital writing.

Which made me think about the similarities. For the most part, people who do code poetry do not appear to be particularly well-off. Like most artists and poets. They want to be poets, not financiers. They're not on the street, usually, but they are way not fancy, for the most part. They do what they need to do to keep it together to do their art and live an artistically active life exploring the work of others, also--and the rest of the world, as they may.

What I do is not illegal, for the most part. But it does share some similarities with the grafitti artists. I do it because it's what I love doing. No one pays me to do it. I'm broke. My work is not winning any awards. No jobs. No press. No local interest. No interest from business or big media. It is for an electronic interzone. I always wanted to be a poet. And I always liked things like math and music and visual art. Lately programming. Now I try to combine them all with programming for the net.

The grafitti is here today gone tomorrow. So too will be my stuff, probably. I don't know. I don't do it to be immortal. I do it for people now for them to think about people of tomorrow. Poetry of tomorrow. And today, and previously. I try to make interesting things happen on a computer screen.

I don't spend huge sums on it. The cable. The hosting for my site. The computer. Usually my software is hot. Though I do buy some of it, like Director, which isn't cheap. But well worth it.

I am lucky to have had beautiful parents who let me go to university and study many things. Including computer science. So I don't need much help with anything to do with computers. I know how to learn on my own what I don't know. Though I'm slow at it and getting slower. Technical stuff still comes hard, but I can do it.

Another aspect of code is the ways in which it plays on persons being impressed by it, believing in it, taking it as "real" and "true." For example, at one point in the arguments over the use of the materials provided by "Curveball," one agent finally screams--"we have evidence that backs him

up!." Her opponent demands--"yeah, from where?" "From the web," triumphantly replies the first agent. "Where do you think HE got them!" shrieks her opponent. Interestingly, Jenny Holzer got her images of Rumsfeld's memos for the "Projections" show from the web. Does this mean she's also just peddling public domain images as "top secret" "avant-garde" Curveballs for the benefit of an appreciatively wowed audience?

I would like to see the Holzer piece. It sounds like you saw it?

One of the things to think about with the digital is that the electricity is supplied by powerful corporations and the grids are subject to the approval of political powers. The "avant-garde" in its military sense is to be in advance--and in this case, in order to create the new web libraries, texts, code collections, there has been a great deal of attendant destruction of actual libraries, archives, archeologies, artifacts. architectures. (As the Electronic Poetry Center and Ubu Web grow, the Iraq Libraries, Museums and sites almost completely vanish; the USA and Britain never signed the 1955 International treaty having to do with respecting the treatment of these in occupied countries.) The digital and code are not so much the avant-garde at all as already the dominant--(the 443, 000 listings for "code poetry" for example)

Well, if you google code poetry you get stuff for code poetry, stuff for code, and stuff for poetry. if you google +"code poetry" then you get 116,000 and although all those supposedly have "code poetry" somewhere in the page, you get a lot of extraneous matter.

if you google flarf, you get 34,000.

--already the controlling interests so to speak of free market globalization and disaster capitalism. Digitalization and codes still participate in the 19th century myth of "Progress" which Rimbaud was bitterly attacking. It creates new forms of colonization and destructions of cultures, replacing them with new codes designed by engineers and code artists from around the world in the employ of corporations, academic institutions, the military, etc.

Yes there are lots of default values. Designed by corps and so on, as you say. I think part of the idea of being serious about digital media is trying to question the assumptions, not accept the default values, as it were, as you say, and try to make of this media something less claw-like.

Code poetry will exist and be widely disseminated as long as it remains within acceptable areas, which seems most likely that it will, since the purveyors are embracers of code itself, code as "progress" itself, towards the "mystery of being" and "conquest of the world."

Well, David, you get many types. The Internet is pretty widespread these days.

Traditional publishing just wasn't working for me. Never did. I can respect the little magazines and the print publishers, but publishing in the mags and publishing books of poetry was just not what i wanted to do, though i wanted to be a poet.

So when the Web came around, it was like Gawd's little toenail had dropped in my lap. Poet. Programmer. Audio guy. Tries hard at visual art. You can try to put it all together and publish it for the world to see, if they can find it and give a rat's behind about it.

Progress? Conquest of the world? Well.

I think it's more about trying to grow artistically and personally as an artist and, if it helps people acquire a sense of progressive possibility for doing stuff with the Internet and with computers, that is hopefully beneficial. Computers aren't going away. Unless we destroy the environment and civilization collapses and we run with the dogs once again. Which of course is a possibility. And nuclear war. Or a worsening of the rich/poor gap. Now is bad enough. And it's even worse in many countries.

In Melanie Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*, the CIA sponsored 1950's shock therapy treatments are linked with Milton Friedman's Economic Shock Theories, first realized in the CIA engineered coup in Chile on 9/11 1973. The idea is that these Shock economics will bring with time Democracy--but in every case, they have been so unpopular that they have had to be enforced--not only brute force, but by the electric shocks of torture. The "electric current" so to speak runs through the world and now "back" to the USA, via Katrina and today one of the biggest transfers of wealth in the history of the USA. The number of people who can afford electricity or access to the web shrinks, the number of people controlling the electric power shrinks, and the amount of military and economic power involved in the control of the electric grows, becomes more concentrated in a few, and ever more fewer number of persons. At the same time, of course, the idea that the web, the digital, the electronic, the code is where it is happening is ever more encouraged, as this becomes the place more restricted to the more easily observed and obedient trained persons of the society.

It's true the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer.

But in places like China, the net is quite restricted. Open communications and information gathering is important to any possib of anything worth calling freedom. And the Internet has an important place in that.

By far one of the boomingest businesses in the world is that of of security and surveillance, led by the Israelis, who use Gaza literally as a showroom. Others are trying hard to catch up. The construction of Walls in Iraq, Green Zones, the world's largest US embassy in Baghdad, the Border Fence with Mexico, gated communities the world over, the enclaves for corporate headquarters and embassies, for Sheik and Kings, General,s Movie Stars, Pop Idols,

Billionaires--privatized security forces of all kinds-- equipped with the latest in electronically controlled weaponry and surveillance equipment, this is an immense business growing at an immense pace, and requiring plenty of good code workers.

Yes, lots of good code workers, as you say. But it's not all for the corps, David. You're on the net too. And writing well to make some contribution to a different type of net. And you're not the only one.

I visited Brazil last year and saw some of the poverty in Sao Paulo and Rio. Brazil is amazing. But the gatedness of it, the divide between not only rich and poor but even middle class and poor. My friend's apartment building had an electric fence and a guard. And he's certainly not rich.

Due to wars and the policies of the Shock Doctrine and globalization, ever more people daily are not on the digital and electric grids. A child dies every five minutes in Iraq. In Milwaukee now over a third of the children live in poverty and go to school without breakfast. The loss of homes is sky rocketing, loss of electricity and heat, the code access vanishing. Already in many areas of the world private armies and walls, electronic grids, are constructed in order to keep out the immense masses of what Mike Davis calls the "Planet of Slums." Gaza the world's largest prison, is but a crude model for the lockups of the coming codes, complete with "avant-garde" installations of Light Projections doubling as Surveillance Lights sweeping the slums and alleys and giant code poems by "poet laureates" dominating the landscapes on huge billboards and code poetry figure largely at the new academic conventions. . In the annals of the New Extreme Experimental American Poetry it will be realized that one of the first truly great poems of an electrical merging of the D'/C current of Whitman's "I sing the body electric" and the "A'/C" current of the hooded figure in the electric chair is that of the hooded figure in Abu Ghraib, wired and standing on a crate, arms outstretched, as though crucified, hooded--awaiting the moment of shock which will force him to speak the new poetry-- those raw sounds to be translated by radical experimental innovative poetry means into american digital codes and become the further dehumanization of the masked "enemy combatant" "non-poet" for the triumphant glorification and triumph of the "Projections" of "our codes"-- yes, codes do indeed have the capability of being an engagement with questions of who and what we are-- of what we may or may not be allowed to be--be restricted to be--can pay to be--

You spend a lot of time composing these thoughtful, moving pieces, David. I am very grateful for that. I wish my response was as good.

Hopefully digital poetry is not a repeat of Italian Futurism. Perhaps we have progressed beyond it. Or perhaps time is skewed. The past and the present and the future intermingled in an odd way. So that Italian Futurists are still alive. Darwinism

heretical, here and there. Right is might here and there. Corporate feudal medievalism growing.

Yet you try to do what you can in a more progressive direction.

I try to sing the songs that are in me to sing, such as they are, strange code pieces. It isn't enough but it's what I do.

ja

<http://vispo.com>

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unprintability (part 2)

— Charles Baldwin · 19 August 2011

Baldwin reports that his codework collection Lurid Numbers was judged "unprintable" — by a computer, no less — and prints his email exchange with Alan Sondheim on "The Unprintable," the machine that "doesn't like to be bothered" refusing to read itself.

[I posted before about my book Lurid Numbers, a collection of codework texts scheduled to be printed by BlaxeVox, publisher of weird little books, but judged unprintable, despite the best efforts of the publisher to negotiate with the printer, etc. This is fascinating - among other reasons - because it involves a judgment by a computer on the printability of the book (again, see the earlier post for details). Following this, Alan Sondheim and I engaged in a brief email exchange on the topic. It is copied below in full.]

The Unprintable (August 8-16, 2011)

Alan Sondheim: "A lur is a long natural blowing horn [...] The word lur is still very much alive in the Swedish language, indicating any funnel-shaped implement used for producing or receiving sound. [...]" (Wikipedia). So blowing might be a kind of scattering or a calling, might be a kind of signal. And I think of Lurid Numbers as a kind of calling, calling-forth both readerly and writerly textuality, but also an interpenetrating and entangled intermediary, the catatonic machine which might or might not open itself to the distending of symbols, graphemes. The machine reads itself; it doesn't like to be bothered. It doesn't like to read Lurid Numbers, because what is lurid, sleazy, is a bone in the works, can't be read. And apparently the publishing machine of Blaze-Vox, Blaze-Lur, couldn't read, broke down over, returned to catatonia (for what bureaucracy likes to be bothered), over what should have been a simple reproduction from code to paper - which did not, could not, occur? What do you say to this, to the insertion, beyond the readerly and writerly text, of the text which breaks the machine, which refuses purity?

Sandy Baldwin:

Yes, I agree. You provoke me to think and respond. I see the lur as producing a signal, one that problematizes signaling behaviors. I see this in the phrase "very much alive in the Swedish language": the word as "alive" is the problematization of signaling behaviors, where such behaviors as part of our modern understanding of communications that necessarily contain / are contained by systematization and closure. For modernity, to signal is to invoke an institutional culture that handles the call. (The lur problematizes any final response to your provocation as well, and instead leads me to a more "funnel-shaped" answer.) The blowing lur, the funnel-shaped implement (I read it as impediment, which already is the bone in the throat, the marrow in the grapheme), is a problematic signal. Lur also makes me hear a broken lure. Lure is a decoy, but also allurement and enticement. The lure is camouflaged and does not yet reveal the spoilage of the lurid. The breakage from lure to lur is the object escaping, the rotting out of the object. The kernel of matter that presupposes a machine - there is a machine threshing every "grain" of the real; the machine that makes everything itself, that ensures all is systematic and well-formed (machined) - is lost, leaving only an echo. In all this, the orphic song, the stirring of animal spirits, the original poem, the return from the dead. It is here that the where the machinic is not machinic. You lead me to think that Lurid Numbers can't be read or printed because the writing did not occur -which would require the iterability of closed world of the machine - it is not authored. I admit to be radically uncertain of the "author-function" of this text with my name on it. I recall that I did not intend for it to be unprintable or unreadable, at least not in any straightforward sense, though I do think I intended it to be undigestable. It remains in a lurid- or sleaze-world, so thin, flimsy, barely lit. I wonder, in terms of the end of your provocation, is such a text still a text? I think of text as requiring reading and writing as advanced, modern processes; machinic processes, I suppose. I do not know if I can claim this for myself - not to have written a text - but I do wonder how far "text" can bear a lack of purity. I think more in terms such as "wryting" (which you coined), which suggests to me a kind of intensive, non-textual investment ...

Alan:

Wryting is of and in the midst of the body; Lurid Numbers skitters across the body, but drags, scrapes the escarpment of the body as well. "Text" is like "nice" -it can bear anything, it is not that smooth, but the family of usages containing it are smoothed out - in the case of Lurid Numbers, perhaps dilapidated as well. I'd think of you as an author for the simple reason - the text wouldn't otherwise exist. This might be the result of a crisis. To paraphrase L. Apostel, **The Justification of Set Theories** (in Logic, Methodology, and the Philosophy of Science, 1965), substituting texts for classes (the original is based on the comprehension axiom), "At the beginning of a textual procedure, when nothing whatever is known about sources or filters, complete freedom is given as to the construction of texts (1). When the textual procedure is already established, and when the results of earlier operations are stable, the construction proceeds without rearrangement: texts now are embedded in a formal and canonic history, which is taken for granted and is

machine-decomposable; the roots are there, in a very classical sense (2). However, when a crisis is reached and the procedures hitherto followed must be altered, textuality returns to the original sources, accompanied by new procedures and filters (3). When the procedures operate without crisis, but when it is imperative that procedures at one level should be strongly distinguished from and yet completely determined by the procedures applied on the earlier level, we have (4)." Let's think of (4) as conservation, and the third as permanent crisis, under the signs of capital and the fast-forward simulacra of signs. Then we're in the skitters and jitters, aren't we? Sufficient crisis, and the market breaks down, the machine breaks down, your self-identification as author breaks down. And that's when things get interesting, when the machine reaches a state of indigestion. What causes the crisis? On one hand the formal condition that upper and lower ASCII don't exhaust the pixel-by-pixel gridwork of inscriptions; there's always the glitch, the fury beyond acceptable bandwidth. Most of our lives - in fact the phenomenology of our being-in-the-world - is conditioned by filtering-out, not only so the clean and proper body of the signifier may make itself felt against our skin, but also because anything else creates an ontological shift where the matrix of communication, community, disappears altogether. The crisis is of course the implosion. It's that. It's those. It's when "a" replaces "the" down to the rootlessness. Lurid Numbers unroots numbers, signs, and symbols, replacing "a" itself with an unknowable little-object-a beyond the spectrum, smothering the spectrum. It rests, remains, sleeps there. So you do a pdf!

Sandy:

Yes, I agree. It would be possible - maybe? I think? - to map the text as crossing thresholds or crisis points. Can we think of all texts in relation to their procedure and whether or not there is a crisis, an alteration? The quote from Apostel also situates crisis in a relation to origins, or pathology of the text, keeping in mind that these are inscriptive origins and symptoms, origins in the topography of transcriptions. I was speaking to the poet and critic Chris Funkhouser about the problem of printing *Lurid Numbers*. He brought up the possibility of an unpublishable book. He saw this as the future of increasing information interlinking, where all possible sentences are linked into the net already; all possible texts already generated in some way; no "new" text possible without being plagiarism from the first. This is, of course, a version of Borges' "Library of Babel," and also the nightmare aspect of Ted Nelson's Xanadu, where the density of hypertextual transclusion shuts down any new utterance. In practice, it is already being implemented with plagiarism detection systems such as Turnitin (my university purchased this software and wants it to be used on student papers). I found myself agreeing with Chris that this is a potential both for contemporary forms of writing, flarf being the example he used, and for the inseparability of the practice of writing from the apparatus of word processing software, in the largest sense. However, *Lurid Numbers* is unprintable rather than unpublishable. We could say that these are two forms of crisis. Unpublishability is a problem with the institution of

authorship, and the confusion between economies of creativity and capital. Unprintability is a problem with the technical production of scriptive materialities, and a confusion between the conceptual potential of digital simulations and the institution that anchors these to a machinery of materialization, or more precisely, to a machine of printing out and handling. The confusion is already there in the simulation: MS Word and other software continue to simulate a page, while at the same time offering something else entirely. *Lurid Numbers* does have its own unpublishable pretexts, and unpublishability does relate to a materialization of the text - it is reasonable to see the legal institution of authorship in this way - but, whereas publishing involves a materiality of expression - creative expression capitalized through the author's name - we could see the unprintability as a materiality of phenomena and the body. Is this the crisis and implosion (or explosion)? Of the book as object, as in my hand and before me, as technical product ... The crisis of unprintability is worth studying on its own, and in relation to other crisis taking place in institutions of the book. Finally, thinking of what you say of the cause of the crisis: you set the glit(s)ch as the "fury beyond acceptable bandwidth." Perhaps "fury" is the correlate of crisis? A passion, a vehemence, beyond any law - and therefore in relation to the laws and institution of print and authorship - a fury that seeks the work, and - why not - seeks justice for the writer. Why justice? If unpublishability and unprintability involve the writer as name and capital (the writer's head), then the fury of writing unpublishes and unwrites, leaving nothing but the body and the roiling of its interior. The work, the writing, the scriptive organs - all these come from and go to this fury.

Alan:

Just a couple of points here. No matter how much interlinking occurs, statistically, fantasy notwithstanding, all possible sentences etc. really constitute such an inaccessibly high number, that all the processing power of the universe would never complete the task, even given the 13+ billion years we've been around, even given incredibly high-speed processing. As you know, n-furcations quickly spin out of control. The second point relates to pain, and the inexpressibility of severe pain, and I want to end my contribution here, in relation to what might be foregone, the McGill Pain Questionnaire notwithstanding. So a few brief words left behind in lieu of an other text. Inexpressibility occurs because of the difficulty of expressing interior states that might not have a clearcut symptomology (as thirst does, for example) - and also because severe pain derails speech and language and thought, as the internalized horizon of the flesh is muted or screams in abeyance. All of this touches on the pain of the signifier and its inexpressible relation to death - and all of this touches, as well, on the unprintable. The unprintable then is returned, as if by media mail, to the body that produced it. And from this moment, your text, as pdf, opens up and opens, as pain disperses, is dispersed, as the symbolic ultimately collapses, as is its wont...

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III

Flarf

2002-2010

Gary Sullivan names an inside joke, and within a few years it is a collective, a method — mine the internet with odd search terms, distill the results — and a small public scandal. The section is mostly jokes and actual flarf poems: spam-poems, fake wire headlines (“CHIMPANZEES DISSECT FROG, FIND KOAN RUBBLE”), festival flyers promising “giant blocks of frozen urine falling out of the sky.” The tone arrives well before the theory, and the manifesto, when it comes, refuses to be one — Sullivan's whole “FlarF Manifesto” is ASCII decoration around a single slogan, “pUcKer UP FoR mORE PATCHOULI.” Kasey Mohammad's method poems define Language poetry out of scraped, contradictory sentences and land on the truest one: it “resists the dreams of pure communication.”

But the movement argues about itself as hard as anyone argues against it, and the section darkens where the joke stops. Millie Niss's claim that the parody is simply “funner than the original langpo” names the nerve; a crude aside about her from a listmate turns the game cold — “I'm really kind of offended about the sex thing.” Gabriel Gudding presses the charge that the fetish of the “new” works to “disappear” women from literary scenes, and is met with head counts and question-begging in return. Even the merchandise curdles — Patrick Herron's “Fralf” self-parody pushes toward “genuine ugliness.” By the end the movement has done what avant-gardes do, staging a “FLARF VERSUS CONCEPTUAL WRITING” bill at the Whitney and itemizing the toolkit it shares with its rival: “appropriation, falsification, insincerity, and plagiarism.”

Aww Yeah God!

— Gary Sullivan · 12 February 2002

Sullivan's flyer for the "FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL" is the method performing itself—"giant blocks of frozen urine falling out of the sky," an economy risen "into a goat's ass," blurbed by "Chimpy!" The tone arrives well before the theory.

Nada requests the pleasure of your company Flying Saucer Cafe 494 Atlantic Avenue (btwn 3rd & Nevins), Brooklyn Tuesday March 5 at 8 pm

*****FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL*****

Fluffy buBBLes | pCoet!y | &phglem | Chaskopee's | diET CHaskopee's

"ggGGggrRRRoooAOOOARR!!" --Michael McClure, www.HippieSauce.com

"Mmm-hmm" --Chimpy!

Are you incredibly angry beyond any restraints to conceal this rage, so you may function as a milk fed person, tired, with giant blocks of frozen urine falling out of the sky?

The hard facts show that our economy has moved from the industrial age into the INFORMATION AGE and up into a goat's ass. We were deer hunting and I jumped a nice Blacktail and it had trouble finding the target-- here is a tip. Wrong Way: Put the rifle up to your employer's golf orgasm ...

*** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL *** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL ***

READERS & LIVE ACTS INCLUDE:

BOOTY COW * MOOSY MOOSE * FLUFFY 'n' MENACHIM * MERYL RIVER KING
HOUDANGO * ALL NEW YORK OFFICE EMPLOYeES FRUTIIY TOIRTISE PORCE *
CHASKOPEE's * UNIVERSITY DIAPER HEATERS DIET CHASKOPEE'S * THE
PEOPLE VS. GERTRUDE STEIN

*** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL *** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL ***

QuiZ (Circol one)

Someone has insulted your pet. You:

- (a) Slime your way up to the top of the Postal hierarchy, and get your pet's face put on a stamp, then lord it over the insulting party
- (b) Have satisfying sex with your pet and laugh about the "insult" later
- (c) Overfeed your pet and yourself and listen to a lot of talk radio
- (d) Develop a "waste elimination system" for your pet which resembles a commode for human use, then encourage your pet to eliminate waste with you to develop a strong sense of solidarity, and once a solid "connection" has been made, discuss the "insult" with your pet, answering all questions you pet may have, explaining the intricacies of human interaction

*** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL *** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL ***

HOW TO GET THERE: 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or D or Q to the Atlantic Subway stop and walk underground to the Pacific Street exit (at the N or R or M Pacific Street Stop) or take the B or N or R or M - in any case, go out the Pacific Street Exit (right exit), take a right - at the end of the block you will be on Atlantic Ave. Take a left on Atlantic, and about two and a half blocks down, between Third and Nevins, you will find the Flying Saucer Cafe.

*** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL *** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL ***

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Got Spork?

— Gary Sullivan · 13 February 2002

More Sullivan, the aesthetic delivered as fake wire headlines: "CHIMPANZEES DISSECT FROG, FIND KOAN RUBBLE," "WAHID REPLACES ECONOMIC TEAM WITH GODZILLA," Broadway's "MUPPET PANTIES." Another festival ad that argues by sheer accumulation.

CHIMPANZEES DISSECT FROG, FIND KOAN RUBBLE
WAHID REPLACES ECONOMIC TEAM WITH GODZILLA
JAPAN MOURNS FLUFFY SPARKS
SNAKE EGG GHOST-WRITES HUMAN GENOME PROJECT GRANT
CALIFORNIA PASSES GAS
GOD REJECTS TREATY IN BLOW TO PUPPY EXPANSION
REV. JESSE JACKSON MODERATES SAME-SEX HARASSMENT OF CUTE BIRDS
MINNESOTA TEEN WINS ALLEGED GERBIL
CRAP AND DIARRHEA VOUCHERS
FAMILY, FANS PAY TRIBUTE TO BROADWAY'S "MUPPET PANTIES"
WIMBLETON SEEDING MAY NOT STOP FLUFFYNESS
OHIO MAN TEARS FACE OFF AFTER FALLING ON "OWN BOTTOM," SAYS
EMBARRASMENT WORSE THAN PAIN

*****FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL*****

Featuring: Mr. ?The-Pleasure-Is-All-Mine? | Piltdown Pal | Time to Re-read Siddhartha | -----> SPORK <-----

Flying Saucer Cafe 494 Atlantic Avenue (btwn 3rd & Nevins), Brooklyn Tuesday March 5 at 8 pm

HOW TO GET THERE: 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or D or Q to the Atlantic Subway stop and walk underground to the Pacific Street exit (at the N or R or M Pacific Street Stop) or take the B or N or R or M - in any case, go out the Pacific Street Exit (right exit), take a right - at the end of the block you will be on Atlantic Ave. Take a left on Atlantic, and about two and a half blocks down, between Third and Nevins, you will find the Flying Saucer Cafe.

THIS IS NOT A GET-RICH-QUICK SCHEME! Remember: you can sleep with Ostriches made of remote-controlled sailboats to get to the top if this doesn't pan out!

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DWORKIN' BJORK

— Gary Sullivan · 14 February 2002

A mock dictionary entry defining "spork" as a blend of "spank + Bjork," padded with bogus patent citations and etymology; Sullivan deadpans that the utensil is "a perfect metaphor for human existence," since none of us can use it for its stated purpose.

Spork: Blend of sp(ank + Bj)ork. A proprietary name for a piece of spankery shaped to cup former Sugar Cube, Björk Gudmundsdottir's buttock. (At the age of fifteen, Bjork formed the group Tappi Tíkarass, a post-punk outfit influenced strongly by Siouxsie and the Banshees. "Tappi Tíkarass" is Icelandic for "Tap her cute [lit. "tiki-time"] buttock").

Patent Information: 1993 Official Gaz. (U.S. Patent Office) 11 Aug. tm 65 Vaughn Bode Milling Co., Inc., Clinton, MO. Spork for spanking Iceland's most famous singer.

A spork is a perfect metaphor for human existence. It suggests that anyone "has access to" Bjork's ass. It makes one painfully, depressingly aware just how far from Bjork's ass any one of us actually are: it shows us how we each have failed miserably at our lives. You cannot use the spork to do the one thing the spork is intended to be used for: to spank Bjork.

Babe Bagheera Baloo Bambi Barney Bashful Basia Batman Beavis Beelzebub Beetlejuice Bert Blondie Bluto Bono BooBoo Brand Brandy Broomhilda Brutus Butthead

Uses for the spork?

Invert the spork (place it curve side down on a table) and call it a foön (fo'on = foison).

Sporks from around the world:

fodient - of or relating to digging foehn - dry wind that blows down from mountaintops foeticide - one fetus killing another fetus (?)

foliform - shaped like a leaf fontinal - growing near springs footle - to waste time; to act foolishly

Spork, oh how I adore thee,

beautiful piece of art.

I sit alone in my bed,

no thoughts in my head,

except for those of my spork.

BOY WITH THE SPORK IN HIS HAND: Satan, how come there is so much suffering in the world?

SATAN: God hates humans. He wants you all to suffer.

BOY WITH THE SPORK IN HIS HAND: Thanks, Satan!

There was once an old woman,
she died a happy woman,
her spork in her hand.

DWORKIN' BJORK: Mind and thought have their origin in an abstract plane of conscious intelligence, which comes into manifest form through the symbols of language. The brain is not the source of the mind, but merely the physical instrument of the mind. When name is attached to an individual, certain specific forces of conscious intelligence are combined. They constitute the nucleus of the mind. The conscious forces combined by the name can be represented by a numerical formula in much the same way as the basic chemical elements combined in a chemical compound can be represented by a chemical formula. The mental characteristics of an individual can be read from the numerical formula representing the person's name, just as the characteristics of a chemical compound can be read from its chemical formula.

B = ----->FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL<-----

J = ~~~o{ Flying Saucer Cafe

O = ~~~o{ 494 Atlantic Avenue (btwn 3rd & Nevins), Brooklyn

R = ~~~o{ Tuesday March 5 at 8 pm

K = HOW TO GET THERE: 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or D or Q to the Atlantic Subway stop and walk underground to the Pacific Street exit (at the N or R or M Pacific Street Stop) or take the B or N or R or M - in any case, go out the Pacific Street Exit (right exit), take a right - at the end of the block you will be on Atlantic Ave. Take a left on Atlantic, and about two and a half blocks down, between Third and Nevins, you will find the Flying Saucer Cafe.

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OLSON STUDIES

— Gary Sullivan · 28 February 2002

A three-scene speech-therapy skit that tortures Olson's dicta—"Form is never more than an extension of content," "One perception must immediately and directly"—into stammering pronunciation drills, then tacks on the announcement for the First Annual Flarf Festival, Brooklyn, March 2002.

OLSON STUDIES

Scene One

A: "I return to the geography ..." B: "Ah detuhn to the geogahphy" A: No. "GeogRAPHy." Rrrr. B: Geogaphy. A: Gee-awh B: Gee-awwwh A: Good: "RAPH-ee." B: Waphy. A: No. Rrrrrr. RAPH-ee. B: GAHphy.

[Curtain.]

Scene Two

A: Form is never more than an extension of content.

M: Foahm is nevah moah than an extension of content.

A: No. Forrrrm ...

M: Foamm ...

A: No. *Listen*. FORRRRRRRM. "Form."

M: FUHHHHH -?

A: FORRRRRRRR -?

M: FOAHHHHHH -- A: FORRRRRRRRRRRRRR, Arrrrrrrrrr -?

M: FEWWWWW?

[Curtain.]

Scene Three

A: One perception -- Y: Wan pahsepshin -- A: Perrr, PERception -? Y: Pawww A: PERRRRR. Like "purr." PURRception. Y: Poahhh -? A: One PERception must Y: One PAWception must A: Immediately and directly Y: Immediately and diyectly A: DiRECT?RECT. Y: Dect. Didect ...?

[Curtain.]

*** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL *** FIRST ANNUAL FLARF FESTIVAL ***

Tuesday, March 5, 8:00 PM Flying Saucer Cafe 494 Atlantic Avenue (btwn 3rd & Nevins), Brooklyn

HOW TO GET THERE: 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or D or Q to the Atlantic Subway stop and walk underground to the Pacific Street exit (at the N or R or M Pacific Street Stop) or take the B or N or R or M - in any case, go out the Pacific Street Exit (right exit), take a right - at the end of the block you will be on Atlantic Ave. Take a left on Atlantic, and about two and a half blocks down, between Third and Nevins, you will find the Flying Saucer Cafe.

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WHAT IS LAMGuagE POETRY?

— K. Silem Mohammad · 20 April 2002

Mohammad collages contradictory "Language poetry is—" sentences scraped from the web—by turns "convincing authority," "twenty years old," and finally "artistic noise: it resists the dreams of pure communication." Definition by accumulated disagreement.

WHAT IS LAMGuagE POETRY?

Language poetry is a movement of convincing authority in contemporary poetics.

Language poetry is held out to be one of the poetic modes of the present moment.
Language poetry is the biggest trend I see, experimental writing.

Language poetry is about memory and shared experiences.

Language poetry is a technology for memory and speed.

Language poetry is the cutting edge of a sphere.

Language poetry is here, alive and blooming, but with a pop-culture injection of speed.

Language poetry is in its heyday. The galvanizing force has been the regularly scheduled poetry.

Language poetry is one of the most ancient and widespread of the arts.

Language poetry is older than prose, and abstract speech more difficult.

Language poetry is twenty years old.

Language poetry is neither genre nor movement.

Language poetry is there as a backdrop.

Language poetry is seen as political act in the deepest sense. This poetry is accessible to an American audience.

Language poetry is a particularly American phenomenon that borrows from European traditions and theories.

Language poetry is an American phenomenon, not an Australian one. Explore its possibilities.

Language poetry is being explored and we are looking at the many techniques.

Language poetry is about going beyond the boundaries of traditional / conventional language usage.

Language poetry is the refusal to take for granted the tyranny of meaning.

Language poetry is not designed basically to communicate information.

Language poetry is artistic noise: it resists the dreams of pure communication.

Language poetry is the highest form of language.

Language poetry is one in which there is a number of established poets operating in diverse ways.

Language poetry is diverse, including a selection of poems by women.

Language poetry is constructed as a niche market.

Language poetry is academy-ready. The founders of the Language movement were interested in ideas.

Language poetry is a special type of language that attempts to express the inexpressible. It is not the pragmatic.

Language poetry is highly personal, intellectual and stylistically radical.

Language poetry is influenced by theory.

Language poetry is also often seen as elitist because it never dealt adequately with issues.

Language poetry is concerned, then, with what it is to be radical in theory.

Language poetry is a way to make sense of the world. I never really know what I think.

Language poetry is first of all speaking with listening? a peculiar state that is somehow self.

Language poetry is more than this. Language poetry also takes the form of statement and declaration.

Language poetry is no harder to "get" than Cubism.

Language poetry is blessed by Rosmarie Waldrop.

Language poetry is impressive.

Language poetry is vibrant.

Language poetry is a way of expression open to anyone who chooses to use it.

Language poetry is central to existence, to the real lives of real people.

Language poetry is the passion of language and children enjoy that as well.

Language poetry is the language for expressing emotions, as we know.

Language poetry is about making language happen.

Language poetry is redemptive.

Language poetry is what gets lost in translation.

Language poetry is not an attempt to obscure meaning through ambiguity.

Language poetry is, as Stevens put it, the difference between the and an.

Language poetry is Jacob's ladder for me: a place where earth and spirit connect.

Language poetry is our basic connection between our sense of self and the cosmos.

Language poetry is in for one helluva ride, I would think!

Language poetry is by no means a toy in the hands of foreign rulers.

Language poetry is more visual in Chinese and Japanese than it is oral.

Language poetry is available in English, for example, but it doesn't have the same value.

Language poetry is often intended to be read on the page, but there are many poems.

Language poetry is undoubtedly the most self-critical--in the sense of self promotion.

Language poetry is both concise and precise, two of the most important elements.

Language poetry is also better than prose at shaping small subjects to create intimate feeling.

Language poetry is much more philosophically-based, and I think my poems are still strongly rooted.

Language poetry is best served when it attacks not language itself (give me a good clause).

Language poetry is wordplay, without the play.

Language poetry is built of nothing but words, and must use what it finds to hand.

Language poetry is normally recited.

Language poetry is a perfect way to describe the blurred understanding of dreams.

Language poetry is how we word ourselves across rivers we never crossed before.

Language poetry is an echo asking a shadow dancer to be a partner.

Language poetry is in 839.8137 and a Norwegian-language novel is in 839.82.

Language poetry is shit or that it is the shit--and no doubt that will be educational.

Language poetry is tae hae its first owersettin intae Chinese.

Language poetry is uniquely accessible to the speakers of that language.

Language poetry is what survives translation, not what's lost in it.

Language poetry is especially powerful. I think the best way to understand Language poetry is to meet some actual examples of it.

Language poetry, as you probably know, is....

Language poetry is, what would you say? W: I don't think I would be able to explain it.

Language poetry is a recuperation by "literature" of something that was questioning the poetic.

Language poetry is ordered by production rather than reproduction. The reader no longer reflects.

Language poetry is a certain kind or quality of intellectuality, or seeming intellectuality.

Language poetry is an experience of referral in the place of transparent signification.

Language poetry is also fundamental because it speaks to the right content through language. What....

Language poetry is really thinking about a lot of the poetry that one has probably read.

Language poetry is a performance art form involving signing rhythm and movement.

Language poetry is about moving an audience with sound and image.

Language poetry is the painting of the blind, while painting is the poetry of the deaf.

Language poetry is a form of expression that allows our deepest soul to be portrayed to others.

Language poetry is a way to say something in a way that shows love and elevates that.

Language poetry is always the one you can feel more intensively.

Language poetry is a very high form of linguistic intelligence.

Language poetry is considered centripetal because the author tries to infuse every word.

Language poetry is a type of speech. Second, song lyrics are poetry stolen back from the dull.

Language poetry is a message ... a language of the old and the young. The language of the weak and the strong. The language of patriots.

Language poetry is written in verse; that is, the language which makes up the poem.

Language poetry is an art form that places a very high value on rhythm, rhyme, alliteration.

Language poetry is language. A sharp distinction in theory between rhyme and meter.

Language poetry is usually presented in lines. Often poets express a great deal.

Language poetry is structured in short lines and verses. Most appealing types of poetry are.

Language poetry is essentially rhythmic and usually metrical, and it is frequently structured in stanzas.

Language poetry is written mostly in iambic meters.

Language poetry is written in iambic pentameters.

Language poetry is iambic pentameter, in which unaccented and accented syllables alternate in lines.

Language poetry is the syllable. Most poetry in the English language is based on accentual-syllabic meter.

Language poetry is subtly being replaced by the emotional difficulties of the ambiguous and confrontational.

Language poetry is an art, and it is common for artists to disagree.

Language poetry is a particularly regular and effective tool for learning. Topics are rich.

Language poetry is one way in which our pupils see words coming to life.

Language poetry is quoted from other sources, the Writer gives new contexts to material.

Language poetry is special language.

Language poetry is not just a catch phrase to describe the words used in making poems.

Language poetry is more like a group.

Language poetry is understood to be an art of imitation: imitation with new inflections.

Language poetry is poetry. Actually, poets can't do it, either. Unless you believe Language poetry is poetry.

Language poetry is correlative to no object, including its own notion.

Language poetry is not the entire solution to keeping the nation's language clear and honest.

Language poetry is a term I prefer not to use.

Language poetry is not "literature" and is not worth wasting parchment and ink on.

Language poetry is odious, is hurtful; it hijacks the word language, which belongs to all.

Language poetry is misleading.

Language poetry is a self-defeating fiction.

Language poetry is autobiographical at its fundament, even if an attempt to purge self.

Language poetry is also provided.

Language poetry is also included. According to Dr Puru Sharma, it is difficult to write poems.

Language poetry is waka.

Language poetry is a transcendence of logical confinement. A wonderful wine poured into a bottle.

Language poetry is at once deep and humorous--deeply, often darkly, humorous.

Language poetry is not for everyone. They place Language poetry as a gender and class.

Language poetry is not as explicitly multi-authored as web networks are, the expressive power of multiple context remains one of its main concerns.

Language poetry is here understood as simply one of the functions that can be.

Language poetry is not a secondary phenomenon: it has a special relation to being and truth.

Language poetry is release (Gelassenheit).

Language poetry is good for you--a bit like eating healthy food. Recap points to consider....

Language poetry is a puppet-show, where riders of skyrockets and divers of sea fathoms....

Language poetry is flowing. A philosopher is talking to you and yet you just can not....

Language poetry is filled with this type language, but so is regular language. The dog loved....

Language poetry is lost, but meaning may become more accessible. Her luminous watercolors, as ever....

Language poetry is above all a concentration of the power of language.

Language poetry is the only poetry that is language, but the term has long been used.

Language poetry is the essence and the power of language. I think all of us are poets.

Language poetry is the best I've found anywhere on the web. Know it, use it, love it.

~~~~~

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## NEW WORK ON LANGUAGE POETRY

— K. Silem Mohammad · 22 April 2002

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*The companion piece, tuned to "has been": web-scraped sentences that indict the movement in its own words—"Language poetry has been unable to move beyond TS Eliot"—while name-checking a Perloff essay and quoting Unamuno's "thought feels, feeling thinks."*

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NEW WORK ON LANGUAGE POETRY

Here is what we have been working on and what is to come: Language poetry has been our main focus for the past several weeks and we will continue to work.

Language poetry has been around for twenty years, we can see that. Language poetry "has been repeatedly and favorably singled out in prestigious scholarly journals" and "routinely discussed." Language poetry has been unable to move beyond TS Eliot. Language poetry would be just as outstanding, and it is nowhere nearly so. The call for the description: an essay by Marjorie Perloff.

Language poetry has succeeded in showing us how impossible of a mission it is. It might be. Language poetry, for example, being sensuous and metaphoric, is connected with the age of heroism.

Language poetry can be defined as the work of an associated network of writers who share in the main. Language poetry can be by making it easier for a wider readership to "enter here, to sit."

Language poetry can be seen as a way of converting the world to human categories. Language poetry can consequently be called another kind of theology (*altera quae quondam Theologia fuit*).

Language poetry can operate a change of level or plane. Unamuno wrote: "thought feels, feeling thinks." Language poetry has the ability to delight the ear and the power to stir our emotions. Language poetry can be beautiful. Of course, there are those for whom flowery language blooms not.

Language poetry can only, and only undertakes to, 'liberate' what is already there. Language poetry has succeeded as enactment and is not reducible to formal representation. Language poetry needs no justification, it isn't an argument that can be refuted. Language poetry CANNOT be dictated. It evolves on its own. Lastly, there is only one Shayar.

Language poetry would have to grapple with the classic avant-garde dilemma. Language poetry doesn't contain a single poem appropriate for the predicament of telling someone you love. Far from being cosmetic language, it is intestinal.

Throughout the seventies Language poetry would interest me. Language poetry would require a book, wouldn't it? Or several volumes, at the least....

"Language poetry" would not have entered literary history.

Language poetry has been the poetics of negation. Those who have given up. Language poetry would feature the importance of negation (my second premise). From negation, critique....

Language poetry would be the most useful, since the meter is always lost in translation. Good choices.... Language poetry gives an example of language that is difficult to translate. Fairy tales, myths.... Language poetry always seems to be written in an alien language.

Language poetry has moved off into the realm of broken syntax, shards of sentences.... Language poetry would be tremendously difficult. Language poetry can be quite complex in its simplicity. Think about it literally as well.

Language poetry has come into its own. Peter Gizzi and Elizabeth Willis, for example, studied.

Language poetry is this kind of poetry but the term "Language poetry" has been too abused for use here.

Language poetry has been a guerrilla poetry, persecuted by the establishment but running freely.

Language poetry can be got with a reading of, say, two or three of the major books. Language poetry to me is just unendurably boring. But I talk to some of these people who write it. Language poetry would make it much easier to ignore them as marginal.

Language poetry has been important in shaking things up and moving the scene along; whatever....

Language poetry has infested and drugged the minds of young post-Language poets and turned them, oddly, into the scalpels. Language poetry has been institutionalized. Whether he likes it or not, Steve has played a part.

Language poetry has 165 footnotes not 150,000. 165 were enough. You demean the profession.

Language poetry has its own way of saying things, often with figures of speech that operate at both the symbolic and rhetorical level.

Language poetry made its gradual entrance into poetic tradition in the 14th century. Language poetry (not Latin church poetry) was pretty sketchy in the 12th century. What exists....

Language poetry has been taking place in Italy over the last few decades. Throughout Italy. Language poetry can be found deeper into France with Magma, born in the early 70's, recently. Language poetry remains, as it has been throughout the ages, a major part of Irish culture.

Language poetry does not present a same interest than prose. Chinese language works in prose.

Language poetry has, for the most part, given up on fullness of representation. Language poetry has shifted the interest away from the person. But it's how you do it. Language poetry has no physical presence . Yet who in this world has not seen it? We have. Language poetry came from our original ingestion of fermented beverages.

Language poetry has lost to the poetry of ethnic identity.

Language poetry makes room for its reader. As Perelman notes here, "Language writing is best."

Language poetry makes sense to me because it highlights the crucial significance of problems. Language poetry does this, of course. Language poetry does, despite Michael Palmer's claim not to be a Language poet.

Language poetry can aid in the development of children's language. If we adults model enjoyment. Language poetry makes you a better writer by realizing how difficult poetry can be and how much. Language poetry makes an unveiled challenge to logic-driven composition, muscling in on us with the coherence. Language poetry makes things more transparent and clearer and teaches us to respect--understand--this is serious stuff, language.

Language poetry has no metre, but then you might want to argue that that is not true. Language poetry requires skill in many things such as symbolism, allegory, verse, meter.... Language poetry, then, is an art form of this possibility, registered in the sense of verse. Language poetry, for example, is language with rhythm (and sometimes rhyme). Poetry with steady pitches is song. Language poetry, for example, is just language with rhythm (and sometimes rhyme, etc.). Language poetry has its own preferred diction and word order is a servant to meter. Language poetry has to have its rhythms and its lyricism built in. You don't.

Language poetry has become more and more popular and I cannot begin to describe it.

Language poetry presents a channel from which we can tune out the external world. Language poetry needs Shockwave plugin and RealAudio player.

~~~~~

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FlarF Manifesto

— Gary Sullivan · 1 May 2002

Sullivan's whole manifesto is ASCII decoration framing a single slogan, "pUcKER UP FoR mORE PATCHOULI"—no doctrine, no paraphrasable claim, just the patchouli.

\ ||| /

-- "pUcKER UP FoR mORE PATCHOULI" --

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Should flarf ignore macadamia nuts?

— Gary Sullivan · 9 May 2002

Answering its own mock-grave title with pictures: an ASCII American chestnut "now a table," annotated with leftover "Macadamia nuts (from an earlier party)."

Once a proud and lofty symbol of America's cultural heritage, this American Chestnut tree is now a table:

```

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      / \
      ( )
\ / .           \ /
-- .           --
.
  O
o O
  O <---Macadamia** nuts (from an earlier party)
  *
```

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The Pressing Question of Fun

— David Hess · 25 May 2002

Hess names the real nerve under the "fakelangpo" jokes: not that the parody threatens anyone, but Millie Niss's claim that it's "funner than the original langpo." He traces the grievance to Steve Evans on Rebecca Wolff's Fence Manifesto and its reduction of poetry to "fun."

(hope this isn't out-of-date when it finally gets posted. (make me happy, tim.))

I haven't spent much more than a few seconds on the fakelangpo site, except to make that duck explode (again and again!). You gotta wonder what it is about it that's getting under the real language poets' skin, since as Barrett pointed out, it doesn't pose that much of a threat (i.e. intellectual or institutional rival to the current avant-garde), and, as Nick stated, it's actually kind of boring and maybe not that fun at all. But this question of fun will not go back into the genie bottle. It's Millie's insistence that fakelangpo is the kind of linguistically experimental work that is funner than the original langpo that has to be annoying as hell. It harkens

back to Steve Evans' essay on Rebecca Wolff's Fence Manifesto ('97) and her apparent reduction of all poetical values into one word: fun. The kids, it seems, want to have fun, and the adults, it seems, want to have.... reputations maybe? intellectual companionship? a page in literary history with their name on it? ideology critique? job security? the high road of art? respect?

It can't help but be annoying because some language poetry actually was fun. Stephen Rodefer's *_Four Lectures_* is very fun, edgy, smart, funny and nasty, too. Bob Perelman's work is kind of fun if not funny. Some Alan Davies is fun as I recall. Some will say Charles Bernstein's work is fun, entertaining. And everyone loves Ron Silliman's puns. Barrett's work, however, is not fun at all. And if it were fun or tried to be so, it would ruin it (see CNN joke at bottom of "fake response" post). In fact, it's not even not fun. It's not anti-fun or against fun. It's a-fun, which is a higher form of fun if you think about it.

What's my point? My point is that what a lot of language poetry, the kind Millie is probably reacting to (in addition to its tedious pedagogy, mostly likely that, yes), lacks as well as fakelangpo (or any poetry based on fun as sole goal, except for FLARF!, which is in a class of its own) is DEEP FUN. Something more fun than fun. The total package.

For instance, if Millie and I were to have sex, as she said she wanted to, we could go out and have fun. Ride a rollercoaster, eat ice cream, roll over dumpsters. We could tease and joke, like they do on that stupid MTV 'Dismissed' show, engage in flirtatious banter ("I'm so hungry, I could eat you," etc). I could drop an ice cube down her blouse (surprises are always a turn-on) and she could make me an Easter basket with an Easter egg that had the words 'Big Ben' painted on it (for no reason). This would all be fun foreplay but it's nothing compared to the deep fun to come. The deep fun I can't speak of here because I don't want to ruin it for you, Millie.

Or anyone else who wants to join us.

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Re: The Pressing Question of Fun

— Millie Niss · 28 May 2002

Replying to David Hess — who, in the thick of the "fun" debate, had written that "if Millie and I were to have sex, as she said she wanted to, we could go out and have fun" — Niss stops the game cold: "I'm really kind of offended about the sex thing," noting she has never once emailed the man and so "could hardly have expressed a desire" for him.

I'm really kind of offended about the sex thingf. I have never written you any email or responded to any of your posts so I could hardly have expressed a desire for you.

Millie

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Re: A Question of Scope

— K. Silem Mohammad · 3 September 2002

Prompted by Murphy's puzzlement, Mohammad wonders why so few will discuss how they conceive their own work; the question is embarrassing, he admits, because the "uncritical mental blur" of composition is "one of the guilty rewards of writing poetry in the first place."

I would be interested in hearing about how various individuals on this list perceive their own work, with reference to scope and definition (of projects, processes and the like). As is evident from the most recent twenty or perhaps even forty years, many writers conceive of their work as "one big thing," process-based, and so forth. At the same time, this is likely not to be true for everyone assembled here. Despite what may be a disinclination for some to consider writing to be product-oriented, I am interested in how various people would describe their concept of the work that they are doing.

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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Re: A Question of Scope

— Chris Stroffolino · 3 September 2002

Stroffolino picks up Kasey's terms and quotes them back approvingly—the shift from "intuitive, transrational lyricism" to "heavily rule-based assemblage" that works collage backward to simulate the lyric it left. Warm, jargon-happy agreement, with a personal preference for the older mode.

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-aesthetics 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 relentlessly, 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

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THE GARY SULLIVAN FILES

— K. Silem Mohammad · 10 January 2003

Mohammad's Google-collage portrait of a friend: Gary Sullivan reassembled from search hits into a handyman radio host ("At Home with Gary Sullivan"), a Dallas patent lawyer, and a firefighter, posted because "everyone really should know more about Gary Sullivan."

Ron's Googlism results for "Bill Kennedy" brought to my mind a Flarf piece on Gary Sullivan I did a little over a year ago (using just plain Google). I thought it was worth posting because--well, just because everyone really should know more about Gary Sullivan.

The Gary Sullivan Files

At present, Gary Sullivan is making loud banging noises between Clark Coolidge and Gertrude Stein, and much more. Jordan Davis suggests Gary Sullivan "should quit his day job and become the Lester Bangs of poetry." Gary Sullivan will be moving on to new endeavors.

11:30am: "At Home with Gary Sullivan." From leaky faucets to refinishing your deck, Gary Sullivan is the home handy man on the radio! No matter how big or small the job, Gary's expertise and knowledge promises an emotional experience from "innocence to heaven" (this after Gary Sullivan has spotted the problem).

Gary Sullivan is a partner in the International Section of Haynes and Boone's Dallas office. Mr. Sullivan focuses his practice on foreign investment and motion vector resolution, filter-tap number and profiles/levels as well as the direct versus subsequent filtering issue. With a focus on using the NT Performance Monitor (Perfmon) tool, Gary Sullivan has organized his "White Paper" into three major sections: Television in Ireland, Sex Education, Mental Health. Currently Gary Sullivan is the President and Rick Suder is the Executive Vice President. Clifton is Assistant Chief of the department, and Bruce's son, Jimmy, is Chief. Bruce's son-in-law, Gary Sullivan, is a firefighter for the department, too. Three volunteer firefighters were promoted earlier this month. Gary Sullivan was made a Captain and David Williams Jr. and James Madden are now Lieutenants. When he became Chairman of the Board, Gary Sullivan then became President, replacing Anderson with plumbing pipes overhead to a unisex rest room. Gary Sullivan is chairing the group.

Gary Sullivan is a solo-practitioner located in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is alcoholic and beats his wife. Philomena Rostovich is a single mother; Gary Sullivan is gay.

Scene: back room at Sullivan's saloon where Gary inserts Jesse's key and Eleanor is forcing her to have sex with him ... find a guy hu will kiss me an' want a sex life, i want sum1 hu cares 4 me! Sum1, any1.... Gary bursts.

OKALOOSA--On Tuesday afternoon, the submarine-armed freshman Gary Sullivan was playing it right on the ragged edge of disaster.

"I have liked one shining star and that is Judge Gary Sullivan. In his last election he gave money back to the unions and police, now sex offender experts."

Gary Sullivan is the Male Sessional Worker and work 6 hours per week. Cooperating attorney Gary Sullivan is also investigating what appears to be a pattern of police abuse against gay men in live two-hour show with excellent local sales potential. South Wales Police Detective Inspector Gary Sullivan said his team were already refinishing your deck. Gary Sullivan is the home handy man.

12pm: "At Home with Gary Sullivan" is a direct compliment to "Better Lawns and Gardens." "At Home" features 20-year veteran contractor Gary Sullivan. Gary has income of \$6,500 and maximum expenses of \$5,000.

10:00pm-Midnight: Gary Sullivan was on hand to see that everyone was fed ... all week long. Gary (Sullivan) talented drummer/graphics guy has ... thunder! My too small helmet! Fuck rock man--just lemme loop.... Guitar solo was HOT, as performed by the crazy guitarman, FLASH!! Lige held the bottom down with some mo' funky bass as Gary Sullivan did some tight drumming!! Mark Hunkeberry managed to arrange for the Minorcan Delight and added that Gary Sullivan was the main recipient of the sheepshead attention, and it was sheepshead that caught George Zajewski's eyes.

ST. PETERSBURG — Gary Sullivan has a dream. "Why not have a publicly financed skate park," asked Sullivan, owner of the city's only downtown skateboard shop. Kelly Edwards asked if Gary Sullivan could put up a cell tower. He said he would be opposed to a cell tower. "Just tearing it up," said Gary Sullivan. The skateboard "stoke," Sullivan said, did not discriminate. Age, sex, race or creed ... it got a Japanese sex magazine into trouble by putting 29-year-old housemate Gary Sullivan into a \$44,000-per-year job. Charles Heinonen said Gary Sullivan has obtained his building permit and cannot have his house and a tower at the same time.

Gary Sullivan is the Male Sessional Worker and work 6 hours per week. Gary is currently in his show, is written by and stars Gary Sullivan. It is described as "innocent by force of nature ... free range sex is absolutely taboo." Road bikes are sexy again. In a big way. Work centers around Gary Sullivan and his merry kiwi band ... again is verrry appealing.

As Gary Sullivan's radio and TV exposure has expanded, Al Dickson (a Bellevue man accused of having sex with two teen-age girls) becomes a free agent. Miguel Sagmoen has been released. Rudy Gainer has been released. Gary Sullivan has been released. Jacob Daniels, Harry Trent, and Gary Sullivan went into the Florida woods for a camping trip two weeks ago. Their bodies were found two days ago.

Gary Sullivan is the Male Sessional Worker and work 6 hours per week. Gary covers one afternoon during the week plus the Saturday sessions. Gary is currently in his building ... best-managed in the company. Is yours? Even a communicator can love Gary Sullivan.

Gary Sullivan is a Sessional Worker and work 6 hours per week. Check out this Tomb Raider! Too sexy! You can trust Gary's advice, and can call him for answers to your questions. The author helps you....

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Googlism Kills Flarf Dead

— Gary Sullivan · 10 January 2003

Sullivan runs Googlism on the movement's own name and lets the results deliver the verdict: "flarf is officially over for this year," "flarf is over." The method cheerfully announces its own death.

Googlism for: flarf

flarf is come festival in florida flarf is officially over for this year flarf is the faery cast
flarf is held at quiet waters park flarf is over

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Baghdad, Flarf etc

— Michael Magee · 16 April 2003

Magee pairs a grim Jon Lee Anderson detail from occupied Baghdad—a Marine "reading a copy of Playboy as he defecated into a milk crate"—with news that Flarf has been "fully outed" on Mohammad's and Sullivan's blogs, and promises a defense to come.

Hi all, a couple unrelated (I think) things:

1. from the "you can't make this stuff up" file: "A Marine officer was reading a copy of Playboy as he defecated into a milk crate." That's from Jon Lee Anderson's story in NYer this week on the "liberation" of Baghdad. Yup, the Shiites are really gonna love having 20,000 American service men in what is now *their* country (60%) for the next ten years.

2. For anyone interested in the poetry formerly known as Flarf, there are some interesting comments and history on Kasey Mohammad's and Gary Sullivan's blogs right now. garysullivan.blogspot.com and limetree.blogspot.com

When I have a bit more time perhaps I'll say something in defense of Flarf, as it now seems to have been fully outed.

Peace, -m.

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my first flarf!

— Jeffrey Jullich · 23 April 2003

Jullich builds his "first flarf" from the Google residue Mohammad left unused for "Merit"—same search, different selections, full URLs disclosed—then asks the list, in caps, whether he should publish the result.

The following "poem" (Google-based collage) is drawn from the Google search source material left unused in K. Silem Mohammed's poem, "Merit", which appears at

<http://listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0304&L=poetics&D=1&PQ307>

The Google Advanced Search instructions: Find Results With All of the Words "poem" and with the Exact Phrase "I am a traitor", yielding 55 citations:

http://www.google.com/search?as_q=poem&num0&hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1&btnG=Google+Search&as_epq=%22I+am+a+traitor%22&as_oq=&as_eq=&lr=&as_ft=i&as_filetype=&as_qdr=all&as_occt=any&as_dt=i&as_sitesearch=&safe=images

Whereas Mohammed incorporated the original search key words into his poem, I do not, and I do not use any of the quotes he did; but, otherwise, our sources are identical, just different selections.

My poem's title also comes from the source material. The poem was composed last night, my first flarf.

WRITE ME BACK AND TELL ME IF I SHOULD PUBLISH IT OR NOT

My brain is aching from breaking my promise, indulging in this wicked activity
---steps out onto the stage alongside "The Living." He said his lines. "Dark Journey Home" begins to play. He was alone, bucky boy you are implying.

When I want to stop/recover I won't be told that you'd never betray the light and the sparks and Firebird falls as the sun began to lower in the west.

On the pale face of a shower scattered over possibly a useless generation, he barely whispered. He avoided all eye contact. After several minutes he finally spoke.

Taking the gloves off the next morning, you set off, with sword. Innocent girl, she dropped whilst she dares not speak nor has the words for what she wants to say. She says, very softly, "And I was very wedding morn.

Hidden emperor flavor be somewhat the weaker."

I received yesterday fifty emails saying
there is a carefully written tragic legend.
Now how can that be.

The infamies that exist today in capitalistic society are fast becoming a species that has progressed beyond the bounds of history, written on the back of God's palm.

It may be part of the formulaic style of every single soul at the bottom beyond infinity, or it may be a concession to a twelfth-century audience familiar with awakening

in the same way that one recites in class without any thought to the words.

Intricate tissue of myth and reality once was fed even some of the so-called shadows of the pines, now starves.

She wants those concerning herself
to blossom forth!

Sadly, she turned around and left the store.

I cried after reading it, entitled "Saint Antichrist,"
without comment or signature

He hit himself saying, "Fie on me!" Task is done. Boo as hard as you can.

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heraldsun.com (Maria, Ron, Kirby, Mark)

— Patrick Herron · 6 July 2003

Herron narrates his hoax: he won a Carrboro poet-laureate prize with a fake "Southern Poet(TM)" poem, "laughed and laughed" on learning he'd won, then "learned that the joke was on me." His lesson: "Be careful who you even pretend to want to be."

Thanks Ron, thanks Maria. Very kind of you. Very very kind.

Ron, I honestly haven't seen Lester in a long time. He was traveling and was lost in luggage for a while. I occasionally hear from him but he seems to be laying low. He's depressed about Bush and doesn't want to come back to the US.

It's weird to suddenly exist here in my own town, and it is very funny too, and it is also nice. Tomorrow AM I do a radio show. Another article appeared today (link below) and another will appear in two weeks. I had fun writing that fake fake poem (it also can be considered a fake flarf poem, as I had flarf in mind when writing it), playing with Southern Poet(TM) clichés, and I laughed and laughed and laughed when I learned that I won.

Then I learned that the joke was on me. Funny how that works out. Now I am honestly embarrassed of the poem even in its correct form for a large number of reasons though I am repeatedly told not to be. Be careful who you even pretend to want to be I think is the lesson....

The poem is here in its "correct" form:
<http://www.carrboro.com/poetlaureate2003poem.html>

The new article:
<http://www.triangle.com/triangle.com/communities/chapelhill/story/2671548p-2>

477085c.html or go to chapelhillnews.com, then under the news section on the right, select the first story....

(There are numerous inaccuracies in each article...I didn't want to point them out so I wouldn't be complaining. The poem in the heraldsun.com article was mutilated beyond recognition...The Iowa Review Web, not The Iowa Review, never went to London for a reading but an invite to Nottingham, etc.)

Kirby!

The Carrboro Poet Laureateship pays \$0.00. Zip. And you already have to be a resident; and my rent still costs the same.

Mark!

Our Mayor is out of the closet. That eliminates the gentleman of the mayor's closet, since he has no closet & already has a steady beau, and ladies in waiting wouldn't help much.

Laureates in every town would be madness! Thinking about it, there are not many towns like Carrboro where the residents would not collectively freak out if they heard their elected officials create a Poet Laureate position. And there aren't many towns or cities where a poet laureate would fit. I'll try to name where it might fit: Arcata CA, Iowa City IA, Madison WI, and maybe Ithaca NY or Providence RI or Gloucester MA or Ann Arbor MI. Portland ME? Berea KY? Berkeley CA? Athens OH or Athens GA? Minneapolis-St.Paul MN? Lawrence KS? Flagstaff AZ (where Pluto was discovered)? I'm running out of places quickly.

Patrick

kudos patrick, and thanks ron. this is charming; made my day. one friend has taken to calling july 4 interdependence day and making a point of celebrating planetary interbeing.

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Kasey on the Beeb

— Rachel Loden · 25 August 2003

Loden marvels at hearing Kasey Mohammad explain flarf on BBC radio—"I almost flipped my cookies!"—and notes Silliman was interviewed too. The in-joke goes global.

Hey, did anybody else hear K. Silem (Kasey) Mohammad on the BBC, talking about flarf? I almost flipped my cookies!

According to his blog Ron S. was interviewed too, so maybe I missed the beginning.

Must write poems to fill the huge demand for them --Catherine Wagner

Rachel Loden

<http://www.thepomegranate.com/loden/>



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Re: BBC & Flarf

— K. Silem Mohammad · 25 August 2003

Mohammad deflates the BBC excitement: what aired was a few lines of "Stupidity Owns Me" from COMBO 12, his gloss on Flarf as intentionally bad Google poetry, the interviewer's "yes, but is it art," his "why yes." Best part, her Irish "Flarrruf."

A couple of people asked whether my Flarf interview Saturday the 24th on BBC World Service radio was or will be archived. I don't know. I sent an e-mail to the person who originally contacted me, so maybe I'll hear something soon. Or maybe not.

Lest anyone build it up too much, the excerpts from the original 5 minutes or so of conversation that finally made it onto the air basically consist of me reading the last 4 or 5 lines of "Stupidity Owns Me" from COMBO 12, and then explaining that Flarf is intentionally bad poetry that involves Google search text results, and the interviewer saying, yes, but is it art, and me saying, why yes, it is art, and her saying, prove it, then me saying something about the collaborative process etc. etc.

The best part was the interviewer's Irish accent. "Flarrruf."

Kasey

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Re: BBC & Flarf

— Maria Damon · 26 August 2003

Damon plays herald, dubbing Mohammad "sir flarfalot" and demanding public access: "the people want access. the people demand their flarf." Mock-courtly needling over where the interview is archived.

modesty becomes you, sir flarfalot, but the people want access. the people demand their flarf. do let us know if you find out where it's archived and how to access the archive. xo, md

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Rouge State blurb

— K. Silem Mohammad · 19 November 2003

Back from digest mode, Mohammad addresses the controversy over his blurb for Rodney Koenek's Rouge State, reprinting his apology for the "destabilized status of unified identity" line and conceding, "I am an impure vessel. I will not try to disown my blemishes."

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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Re: Rouge State blurb response..

— kari edwards · 19 November 2003

edwards answers with careful anger—insensitive, not malicious—and corrects the premise: invoking Sandy Stone's "The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto," they argue sex-change history is about the medical "stabilization of gender," not anyone's floating destabilized identity.

My Dearest Kasey..

thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule with such a wonderful thoughtful responses.

first to answer a few questions...

I am not ANGggery>..."at" you.. I find it insensitive.. but I know you... and I know it was not a malicious act.... insensitive . . . yes . . . uninformed... yes... . what I am AnngggRRRY with is the general lack of sensitivity on the list.. as if it should be alright.. well. it is not..

to reiterate... one..

as you stated... "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.

that is fine.. but using the idea, concept or image of sex-change has little to do with destabilization of identity... and trust me I have worked with this for a long time (please read: Stone, Sandy. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto.).. the entire history of sex-change is not based on the destabilization of gender but the stabilization of gender through the medical establishment..... please read your history books about the gender clinics of the 20-90s..even today.

if you were to you ask the majority of individuals what it means to have a "sex change", you will inevitably hear... it is to make one into the other gender (man to woman or woman to man/). . . . I know I have given over 60 lectures to business and schools around the country... the key words here is "into the other".. not a floating undefined signifiers. one gender to the next.. as if there is such a thing.... As Joan of arch said: I know not of a or b..

so by saying robert bowning after a sex change, implies robert becomes a woman-.. and so what is being said about women....?. there is little destabilization... now.. if robert browning became a top in a rotaional affair with viewfinder from a different planet , now you are talking destabilization.. not some of the old same stuff.. lets be real.. using the masters tongue gets nowhere . . . now sex-change of a dog to a cat..meow!!!

so that being said.. one of the two main reason I am not going to the reading.. and lets not turn it into a boycott..!!!! heavy.. way to dramatic.... ... I boycott nike..... is it is obvious no one is aware of the internal shame of being queer.. why would you, if you are not.. queer.. it is easier to not be at a reading and have to deal with any of the implications-. even hints. but why would any one get gay shame... if your STRAIGHT!!!!... listen.. last week I read in oakland.. two transflocks have been murdered there in the last few months... did I feel safe there.. no... I am tried of not feeling safe.. so I will sit this one out.. thank you

the other reason. all my professional life as a therapist and writer, has been as an activist against the narrative read on gender (read: http://www.sfsu.edu/~poetry/narrativity/issue_three/edwards.html)..I have worked against this gender assumption of sex-reassignment surgery (or SRS - the correct medical term..by the way.. not sex-change.). and truly it is a shame... we live in a nation where.. a pepe and clit are still considered the true the markers of gender.. so someone having a "sex-change" means something... I change my gender 20-30 times a day.. doesn't everyone or is everyone out there so so so solid..

and no matter what . . . Dearhead nation does.. (which I love and promoted in st. louis to a book store owner)..as an important and funnnnyyy book... the blurb is not stated in the same way... and so out of principle.. so I will sit this one out.. thank you

and to answer some other questions.. who am I blaming.. this is not a blame game... to do that the list would way to long and would go back to the phallocentric behavior of the greeks.. and before... but I digress... I think there are levels of responsibility.. I just read at Spt...and I have communicated with SPT..how I felt... I just wanted to opportunity.. to voice an opinion.. which did not seem to bring questions, as much as disssing.. oh well... the work is never over ... I am uncomfortable with what is stated... I am raising the question... I am not comfortablegoing to the reading, there.. and I not going to boyvcot Rodenys work or other readings... I would like to have and will have a discussion with Rodeny later ..

and like you Kasey.. I am full of blemishes-.. and this one issue I have a certain vulnerability that I choose not to open up,.. having.

being beaten up numerous times is enough thank you..

I do not hold grudges.. I hold boxing matches-.. no not really.. I appreciate you Kasey taking the time, I appreciate, Elizabeth from SPT taking to the time.....

this is about a discussion... no once did anyone say so .. why would that be upsetting-.. ./... so .. what ever.. I am used to it.. it is just a reflection of amerika...

again.. thank you Kasey and Elizabeth for taking the time.... kari

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Re: Rouge State blurb

— Michael Magee · 20 November 2003

Magee opens with a joke about the Operation board game, then argues against a boycott of the reading: Rodney didn't write the blurb, and punishing him needlessly punishes Mytili Jagannathan. He also asks whether the blurb's "complex sentence" has been read too reductively.

Well, golly, -- I've been deleting this "operation" thread thinking it was about that game where you lift organs off the board with a pair of tweezers!

I see the value in the discussion that's materialized over Kasey's blurb.

Kevin's intial comments were obviously well intentioned and informative.

Kari's last post was precisely the kind of well-informed response that I'm quite sure Kasey appreciates.

On the other hand, it seems positively absurd for anyone, kari included, to boycott a reading (whether one calls it a boycott or not) based on this blurb. There is the obvious point that Rodney didn't write the blurb. And the even more obvious point that in boycotting Rodney one is needlessly, senselessly boycotting Mytili Jagannathan, one of our great young writers, a progressive writer, and, for what it's worth, a gay writer who is herself tirelessly attentive to questions of gender. This, to me, smacks of the kind of meticulous squabble that so often derails valuable liberal projects. "Hey, Kasey, you exoticized 'sex-change' in a somewhat insensitive, ahistorical way in your blurb." Wouldn't this have sufficed?

And, one last thing. Has the sentence in Kasey's blurb been read a bit reductively by its critics? I mean, it is a rather complex sentence:

"Cannily an(a)esthet(ic)izing the misogynist and orientalist phantasms that are projected on the digital plateaux of its own prosodic bravado, this is how Naked Lunch might have turned out if it had been written by Robert Browning having a sex-change operation."

To take the logic of the sentence at its word, *if* Browning were having a sex-change operation, would he not be subject to all the violent, nefarious historical forces kari mentioned in her last post - the attempt by the medical community to rigidly enforce gender butting up against the mind's tendency to think of gender as a fluid category,

for instance? And, being Browning, a fucking great poet, would he not, at least symbolically, resist such rigidity in the form of the poem? And if "Naked Lunch" happened to be the thing he was writing, might it not look like Rodney's poetry? And if it did, then why, for Pete's sake, would this be the least bit misogynist?? Because its subject is misogyny??? Likewise with the claim that there HAS to be insensitivity regarding sex-change operations here. It seems to me that one can make just as good a case that its precisely the opposite. At the very least, being a rather poetic sentence on the back of a poetry book, it demands to be read poetically rather than for the red flag spiked to its surface.

I don't begrudge kari her personal stand here, which she seems dead set on. But I do feel compelled to say that it would be a terrible mistake and a damn shame for anyone else to miss Mytili's and Rodney's reading over this.

-m.

Quoting "K. Silem Mohammad" :

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Re: A patent for writing poetry

— Jeffrey Jullich · 24 November 2003

Prompted by Silliman on Kurzweil's poetry software, Jullich confesses to owning the Cybernetic Poet and using it to Blake-ify and Keats-ify text—"I have sinned; I have automated"—and to a failed attempt to "channel" Laura Riding Jackson into posthumous poems.

Re: Ron ('s article) on the Kurzweil poetry software,---

I bought that software about two years ago (on New Year's Eve), and found it disappointing and have used it very minimally ever since.

The best thing about it is that it'll automatically give you Blake or Keats vocabulary (or other fun pre-set classics: Shelley, Tennyson, Virgil [the Virgil/Vergil poem I posted to the List at around that time was done using Cybernetic Poet as a quasi-flarf-ifier, . . . so, I ~have~ sinned; I have automated]), their rhymes, alliterations, and next-word-used for words you input, . . . if you're into that sort of Masterpiece Theater anachronism.

My hope was to use Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet to "re-create" an unprogrammed poet from his/her own vocabulary ---in specific, that was when I was trying to "channel" Laura Riding Jackson into as-yet-unwritten posthumous poems,--- but I found that it leaves clumps of the original syntax intact in a way that I found unacceptably cut-&-paste. (A finicky consumer.) Wendy Dennis, whom the article refers to and who was their tech support person, told me there was no way around that and that the smallest "bites" it'd take from the poets' vocabularies was, like, 4 words or so.

I want a software/~dea ex machina~ that'll ~parse~ a poet's vocabulary into its parts of speech and then deploy that into the poet's own idiolectal deep grammar. In her final book of poetry, for example (the half-French, woodcut-illustrated one was the one that interested me), Laura Riding Jackson rarely used a noun except in an adjective-noun combination; and it was statistical idiosyncracies of grammar+vocabulary like those that I felt (feel) make up the essence of what a "poet"/"author" is (the titular unifying code behind an agglomeration of texts).

The software might work better for someone with less targeted intentions than what I wanted from it.

Happy Thanksgiving.

J.J.

http://lm.va.com.au/pipermail/_arc.hive_/2002-January/003570.html

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American Poetry

— Daniel Bouchard · 1 June 2004

Bouchard rewrites Ginsberg's "America" as a poetry-world jeremiad: "American poetry ten bucks per book," the "avant-garde vs mainstream war," "Go fuck yourself with your perfect bound," and a wish to "export your writing software to China."

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.

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Found Poetry origins and theories

— Philip Metres · 30 January 2005

Metres asks the scholar's question: what theory grounds "found" poetry—from Duchamp's fountain forward—now that googling procedures like Flarf have revived it? He solicits criticism on the readymade and wonders how Bern Porter fits in.

Folks,

I'm thinking about the origins of so-called "Found" Poetry in order to consider recent googling procedures like "Flarf"; clearly the modernists were conceptualizing "found" objects (collagists, Duchamps' fountain, etc.), and the mod poets were using "found" materials.

Has any good criticism or theory been written on the poetics and problematics of "found" art/lit?

And how does Bern Porter figure into these things? He seems to have collected a few volumes on the subject.

On or offlist as appropriate. Thanks in advance for your insights,

Philip Metres Assistant Professor Department of English John Carroll University
20700 N. Park Blvd University Heights, OH 44118 (216) 397-4528 (work)
<http://www.philipmetres.com>

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some thoughts on Creeley

— Michael Magee · 31 March 2005

Magee's elegy for Robert Creeley remembers a "total fucking mensch" who engaged the "crazy flarf poems" instead of "protecting HIS thing," championed the Providence reading series, and left everyone disabused of the awe he never asked for.

Creeley had been a huge supporter of the Downcity Poetry Series here in Providence -- finding funding for us at Brown, always attending when he was in town, and cheerleading in the slow early going. He was insistent about bringing poetry to the community, rather than keeping it up on the hill. In my experience he was a total fucking mensch -- when he and Mike Gizzi and I met for coffee etc he'd mostly be interested in what we were doing; he was restlessly curious. When he heard me read some crazy "flarf" poems he found a way to engage it. NOT one of those old guys protecting HIS thing, -- again, in my experience.

Once, at his place in Providence w/ Mike G and Mairead Byrne and Tom Raworth and Pen, soaking up all the casual talk when phone rings and who is it but Bob Grenier and I think to myself, as Creely talks to Grenier on the phone, "It is simply impossible that I'm in this room right now." It was more or less impossible for me to lose the kid in the candy store feeling, you know. Because really it was on par with hanging out with Frank O'Hara, or WC Williams or Stein. I was in awe of Creeley but he never asked for awe and in fact everything about him (especially his halting, circular, occasionally self-parodic speech, like the poems) seemed designed to disabuse you of that awe.

As for the work, he changed the way I think about poetry completely, and more than once. The writings in The Collected Essays (not the Prose, although that's great too) are as good as any poet's criticism, Olson, Williams, Pound, Stein, you name it.

And the poetry, he was in it, in it, in it. Living it. Living in it. Right there. Right here.

Mike Magee

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Silliman's Blog: Uncreative Writing

— Ron Silliman · 27 February 2006

Silliman's blog roundup slips the Goldsmith question into the feed almost casually: "Flarf versus Uncreative Writing versus Canadian Neo-Oulipo" and "The project of Kenny Goldsmith is Kenny Goldsmith," filed between figure skating and Project

<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>

RECENT POSTS

The project of Kenny Goldsmith
is Kenny Goldsmith

A portrait with blue eyes
& a note on Naropa

800 literary blogs

World Jelly
by Tony Tost

Flarf versus Uncreative Writing
versus Canadian Neo-Oulipo

The flarf debate

Dancing without a focus -
Sean Curran Company

The most neglected of the New Americans? Madeline Gleason

Project Runway: Color, texture and the human form

Leaving it all on the ice -
Figure skating and poetry

Barbara Guest - changing the world through poetry
Color and modernism -
Wystan Curnow and Modern Colours

Lyric Poetry after Auschwitz - Kent Johnson and the politics of mischief

What is anti-war poetry
(a note for the 40th anniversary
of "æWichita Vortex Sutra II")

<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>

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Fralf Roolez! Merchandise

— Patrick Herron · 1 March 2006

Herron's CafePress "Fralf" merchandise—Team Fralf tees, a "My Little Fralf-Poke" thong, "Gacy-fralfer" bibs—pushes the self-parody toward genuine ugliness, with a small-penis gag aimed at the women and a serial-killer mascot that isn't quite a joke.

Fralf Roolez! I'm just jealous about Fralf! <http://cafePress.com/fralf/>

Boys, become a member of Team Fralf USA(TM) and get your "Team Fralf USA"(TM) t-shirt.

<http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49430505>

Girls, have you ever wanted to know what it feels like to have a small penis but not have it get in the way? Get yourself a "My Little Fralf-Poke"(TM) thong! <http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49371129> Or when you feel like you wish you could just switch him on and off like a light switch, here's the "My Life-sized Flarf Love Switch"(TM) light switch plate: <http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49429753>

For those of you who think the Jimmy Wayne Gacy Fralf-mascot is cute with that little pedo-smile of his, you can get your kids a "Gacy-fralfer Bib"(TM) or an "Official Team Fralfy Bear Mascot"(TM) with little Jimmy Wayne Gacy pedo-smiling at you. Bib: <http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49429415> Fralf Mascot Bear: <http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49371132>

Do you write Fralf? I write Fralf too! Open your heart and pour it into your very own "My Very Own FRALF(TM) Journal"(TM): <http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49371131>

Lester says, "*I* invented Flarf." You can commemorate this proud moment with the "'*I* invented Fralf' Commemorative Framed Tile'(TM): <http://www.cafePress.com/fralf.49371130>

Happy Tuesday!

And remember kids, "*I* invented Fralf"(TM)!

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Re: Fralf Roolez! Merchandise

— Stephen Vincent · 1 March 2006

Vincent quotes a florid would-be MLA panel title—"Flirting with Flarfs: Regenerative Modes of Textual Production in an Age of Virtual Anxiety"—and asks, half-incredulous, whether it and the merch are real. Signed, "Flarfing to know."

"Flirting with Flarfs: Regenerative Modes of Textual Production in an Age of Virtual Anxiety or, Nowhere Else to Go."

Is this really going to be a title of an MLA Panel in December? Who's leading it, who are the panelists? Will these items really be for sale in the Exhibit Hall?

Flarfing to know.

Stephen V

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Re: Fralf Roolez! Merchandise

— Patrick Herron · 1 March 2006

Herron replies in deadpan corporate voice as "The Fralf Collective," claiming he invented Fralf, inviting his skeptic to "Team Fralf USA," and signing off with a cafepress storefront and the trademarked slogan "Snarky see, snarky doo-doo"(TM).

Dear Mr. Vincent:

I am authorized only to speak on the subject of Fralf.

Did you know, by the way, that *I* invented Fralf?

You are hereby cordially invited to become a member of Team Fralf USA.

See you at the December MLA panel.

Sincerely,

The Fralf Collective

<http://cafepress.com/fralf/>

"Snarky see, snarky doo-doo"(TM)

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FLARF: INAPPROPRIATE EXPLORATION IN 21st CENTURY ART

— Gary Sullivan · 27 March 2006

The official festival press release for three nights of Flarf at Medicine Show, NYSCA-funded, defining the Collective's mission as exploring "the inappropriate" by mining the Internet with odd search terms, and quoting Joyelle McSweeney on its "corrosive, cute, or cloying awfulness."

FLARF: INAPPROPRIATE EXPLORATION IN 21st CENTURY ART

Film, poetry, music and theater by members of the Flarflist Collective in collaboration with Abigail Child, Theresa Buchheister, The Drew Gardner Poetics Orchestra, and members of Medicine Show, The Ontological-Hysteric Theater, and The Upright Citizens Brigade.

Award-winning experimental ensemble Medicine Show hosts the celebrated and controversial Flarflist Collective for three nights as part of its ongoing Word/Play series, partially funded by NYSCA.

Launched in May of 2001 by six poets, the Flarflist Collective is dedicated to the exploration of "the inappropriate" in all of its guises. Poets mine the Internet with

odd search terms then distill the results into often hilarious and disturbing poems, plays, and other subversive texts.

The Festival runs April 20-22, 2006, at Medicine Show (549 W 52nd St), and will be emceed by Jordan Davis, host of the Bowery Poetry Club's popular "Million Poems Show."

THE PUBLIC RECEPTION OF FLARF Discussion about Flarf has been broadcast by the BBC and published in magazines such as The Village Voice, The Nation, Constant Critic, Jacket, and Rain Taxi. Further discussion has taken place on dozens of blogs and listservs across the United States, and in Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Holland, Mexico, and elsewhere.

Joyelle McSweeney on Flarf in Constant Critic: "Jangly, cut-up textures, speediness, and bizarre trajectories ... I love a movement that's willing to describe its texts as 'a kind of corrosive, cute, or cloying awfulness.' This is utterly tonic in a poetry field crowded by would-be sincerists unwilling to own up to their poems' self-aggrandizing, sentimental, bloviating, or sexist tendencies."

EVENT SPECIFICS

Thursday April 20 at 8:00 pm: Three Bollywood-related films (by Abigail Child & Gary Sullivan, Brandon Downing, and Rodney Koeneké) and performance by The Drew Gardner Poetics Orchestra with Anne Boyer, Katie Degentesh, Rod Smith, K. Silem Mohammad & others TBA.

Friday April 21 at 8:00 pm: Flarf marathon reading. Performance by more than a dozen flarf & related poets, including Stan Apps, Jim Behrle, Anne Boyer, Katie Degentesh, Benjamin Friedlander, Drew Gardner, Mitch Highfill, Rodney Koeneké, Nada Gordon, Michael Magee, Sharon Mesmer, K. Silem Mohammad, Mel Nichols, Tim Peterson, Rod Smith, Gary Sullivan & others TBA.

Saturday April 22 at 8:00 pm: Flarf theater. Radio plays by Sharon Mesmer and Edwin Torres. Plays by Stan Apps, Rodney Koeneké, Michael Magee, Sharon Mesmer, K. Silem Mohammad, and Gary Sullivan (performed by members of The Flarflist Collective, Medicine Show, The Ontological-Hysteric Theater, and The Upright Citizens Brigade).

LOCATION 549 West 52nd Street, btwn 10th and 11th Aves, New York, NY 10019. Subway: C, E to 50th Street. Walk north on 8th Ave to West 52nd, then west to the theatre. Take elevator to 3rd floor.

PRICE \$8.00: Per evening, general admission. \$20.00: Three evening pass.

BOX OFFICE [REDACTED], leave message to reserve tickets.

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ON BECOMING FLARF: sixteen accidents in Ron Silliman's blog

— Jeffrey Jullich · 19 May 2006

Jullich collects sixteen dated instances of Ron Silliman insisting something is "no accident" or "not an accident" on his blog, stacked chronologically so a recurring critical tic becomes, in effect, found poetry.

19 May 2006: Its not an accident that American poetry in my lifetime has made the transition ...

16 May 2006: Its no accident that on the 50th anniversary of the publication of Howl ...

31 Mar 2006: ... Jarnots insertion of a word favored by Ezra Pound the two final words of Canto I are So that hardly can be an accident.

10 May 2006: Similarly, I take it as no accident that the collection ends with Kathleen Frasers work ...

9 May 2006: ... (and no accident here that Remington, major manufacturer of rifles, was likewise one of the first ...

19 Apr 2006: But its not an accident that the first thing we did when we got to the museum was sit ...

3 Mar 2006: Its not an accident that in Jordan Davis' "nameless history" ...

13 Mar 2006:

The cover is not an accident.

3 Feb 2006:

Its not an accident that Larry Fagin listed Mayakovsky ...

26 Dec 2005:

But its no accident that so many of his students ended up as serious ...

6 Dec 2005 : Its hardly any accident that the great younger musicians opt ...

15 Jul 2005:

... the Olson allusion is no accident ...

4 May 2005: Nor in much of the School of the Q. Thats not an accident that is what theyre after.

26 Apr 2005: ... he may be the best living oral presenter of poetry we have, which is not an accident since he is the man ...

7 Sep 2005:

... the lack of development on the part of the others is not an accident.

11 Jul 2005: By means of no accident, Fitterman traces 80 Flowers origins ...

<http://www.ronsilliman.blogspot.com/>

Ring'em or ping'em. Make PC-to-phone calls as low as 1/min with Yahoo! Messenger with Voice.

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Magee's MAINSTREAM now available...

— Michael Magee · 1 June 2006

Magee announces MAINSTREAM (BlazeVox), poems written on the Flarf listserv 2002-2005, flagging the "hotly debated" piece "Their Guys, Their Asian Glittering Guys, Are Gay" and a Drew Gardner blurb praising work that "bristles with the spirit of improvisation."

Hi everyone,

Just wanted to let you know that my book MAINSTREAM -- poems written on and to the Flarf Collective listserv from 2002-2005 -- is now out from BlazeVox books. You can buy it off the BlazeVox website here:

<http://www.blazevox.org>

or you can buy a version with a somewhat higher production quality (matte cover and nicer paper stock etc) from Small Press Distribution:

<http://www.spdbooks.org>

The book includes the poem "Mainstream Poetry" which you can see me reading live at the Flarf Festival here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euwlsZT53go&search=flarf>

as well as the controversial poem "Their Guys, Their Asian Glittering Guys, Are Gay," which has been hotly debated for the last two weeks around the blogosphere.

Drew Gardner, author of "Chicks Dig War" says of the books, "Right from the start, Magee's work bristles with the spirit of improvisation. Everything about it pops: classic poetry chops, a serious sense of humor, unabashed rawness. Mainstream is thrilling because it can turn in any direction at any time, moving effortlessly from wacked units of thought turning inside out to tender moments of highly focused nonsense and song that get, paradoxically, straight to the point. The frames we bring to these poems can't remain intact stanza to stanza -- and in this instability there are great poetic pleasures and possibilities."

Anyway, hope this interests...

Michael Magee

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hocus ... process

— Jack Kimball · 23 July 2006

Kimball links to "Hocus Fracas: Attitude in Process," a short poetics piece that reels off the period's worn-out terms — "googled, fake, 9/11 ... procedural, creepy, quietude" — as words it avoids, then admits it "contains them."

A short poetics piece that avoids following terms.

Appropriation, freaky, trans-whatnot, googled, fake, 9/11, trepidation, flarfing, procedural, creepy, quietude, collective, performance, har har, post-whatever, powerpoint, or blur.

Yet it *contains* them. Hocus Fracas: Attitude in Process

Accessible here -- <http://jackkimball.com/res/hocus.pdf>

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Re: A Small Catalog of Cultural Scripts for Poets

— Jason Quackenbush · 1 September 2006

Quackenbush, taking the cultural-scripts idea at face value, asks the blunt practical question — "what does one have to do to get credentialed" to use the scripts — and wonders where self-styled "revitalizers" like Jorie Graham and Dana Gioia fit.

that's really interesting. as you're describing it, it sounds like this is an unavoidable aspect of social formation. so therefore: if i am a young poet (28 is still young, right?) then i want to be credentialed. what does one have to do to get credentialed in order to begin using these scripts. also, what's the "revolution" script you mentioned but didn't describe. and where do people like Jorie Graham or Dana Gioia, who very much like to think of themselves as "revitalizers of poetry," but who so obviously are not?

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A Small Catalog of Cultural Scripts

— Mark Wallace · 2 September 2006

Wallace notes the catch in cataloguing how poets sneeringly "type" each other: you cannot describe the game without playing it. He proposes naming it the "H.L. Mencken" or "Ambrose Bierce," and calls the whole mode "good fun but bad criticism."

Interesting! What's the term for the game in which the poet types and judges every other poet's behavior from a position of moral superiority with pseudo-sociological trappings? The "H.L. Mencken," maybe? The "Ambrose Bierce"?

I mean, on the level of humor I actually quite like some of these sneering satirical descriptions below, but this sort of response to the often troubling behavior of other poets is a common feature of poet behavior as well, and related to the concept of the "Maverick" in ways too obvious to need much stating.

Turns out you can't describe this particular game without already being one of the players, eh?

And since I must be playing too, what's the term for the game in which the poet suggests that typing the behavior of other poets in a dismissive manner is good fun but bad criticism?

Mark

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ANNOUNCEMENTS: Degentesh's The Anger Scale & Combo Magazine

— **Michael Magee** · 29 September 2006

Magee's blurb-drunk announcement for Katie Degentesh's The Anger Scale, winner of the Pulitzer and more "the minute George W. Bush realizes the error of his ways," with real endorsements from Spahr and Harryman on its MMPI-sourced procedure.

Hi everyone,

I have two major announcements to make as Director of the non-profit literary arts organization, Combo Arts. The first is the publication of Katie Degentesh's much anticipated first collection, The Anger Scale. If you haven't heard, this is the best poetry book of the year, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, The National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award the minute George W. Bush realizes the error of his ways. American poetry's most unorthodox daughter is BLOWING UP and you don't even realize it! But don't take my word for it, take the word of my betters:

The psychiatric industry's tests are essentially a database of all that our society wants to expel under the rubric of mental instability. Katie Degentesh's The Anger Scale uses the MMPI as its source and from that writes a series of poems that take as normal all that the MMPI would like to pathologize. This is a scary book with a complicated politics. It is an uneasy and thus all the more crucial read.

--Juliana Spahr

Don't be fooled by the bawdy surfaces of THE ANGER SCALE. Katie Degentesh's joyous, meta-ballistic poems will guide any reader daring enough to read them in a realm where everything is turning out just like the prophets of the Bible said it would. you will be shamed by your elders and peers for not possessing this book.

--Anselm Berrigan.

Dengentesh's Google conceptualism results in a comic and provocative scan of the unease of American culture as we now fashion and live it.

--Carla Harryman

In this secondsh coming of information Katie Degentesh is a very good Muslim who wants to give Juan Valdez a serious beating.

--Michael Gizzi

You can listen to Katie read from her book at the 2006 Flarf Festival here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zadjY-TUkw>

BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY YOU CAN BUY HER BOOK BY GOING TO

<http://www.comboarts.org> and clicking on The Anger Scale.

The book is also available at Small Press Distribution.

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

At long last, we have published the Combo Magazine 14/15 Double issue. It includes poetry by

Stan Apps, Christopher Barnes, Tyler Carter, Ryan Daley, Kristen Gallagher, Drew Gardner, Laura Goldstein, George Kalamaras, Jake Kennedy, Sueyeun Juliette Lee, Kristy Odelius, David Trinidad, Alli Warren, Tyrone Williams

Plus interviews with Michael Gizzi and Jackson MacLow.

100 pages, perfect bound; glossy cover with original artwork.

Subscription information is available on our website.

Go, go go!

Michael Magee

Combo Arts

<http://www.comboarts.org>

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Publishers Weekly digs Degentesh's THE ANGER SCALE

— Michael Magee · 14 November 2006

A one-line follow-up: Magee, having performed the hype himself, now has an actual

Hi everyone,

Publisher's Weekly just had this to say about Katie Degentesh's mind-bending, climate-changing, flarftasticating book, THE ANGER SCALE:

“

Starred Review- PublishersWeekly October 16, 2006



The Anger Scale Katie Degentesh, Combo (SPD dist.), \$12 paper (80 p) ISBN 0-9728880-2-0

Degentesh's debut draws on Google by importing content from Internet searches into her poems to fill in the blanks of the MMPI. That's psych shorthand for the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, sample statements from which -"I Feel Uneasy Indoors"; "I Am Not Afraid to Handle Money" — serve as titles for these 35 beautifully conflicted poems. Degentesh inhabits the poems' weirdly pathologizing psychic space with a deep love of overheard speech that's charged with unconscious (and sometimes not so unconscious) violence, longing and misunderstanding: "it was sloppy and bloody and all fucked up,/ when I try and translate it back into English/ it sounds like the Christian notion that we are born// to read stories of free, unhindered UnaBirths." Degentesh is a member of the Flarfist collective, a loose gathering of Google-obsessed poets who cast their poems in an ironic, deliberately "not ok" mold: "I loved my mother, and she did nothing/ as my father repeatedly beat me." The Weird genius of these poems is that Degentesh encodes a sliver of identification within her deadpan sendups of cliché and banality surrounding real feelings, such that when one speaker says, "at the same time some poor wanker necro in half undress/ was kissing, fingering and licking Shelene's pussy," the reader feels a kind of celebration rather than censure.

The book is available at SPD or at our website where you can also read all the delicious new posts at Combo Blog:

<http://www.comboarts.org>

Yrs truly,

Michael Magee



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Re: Publishers Weekly digs Degentesh's THE ANGER SCALE

— Stephen Vincent · 14 November 2006

Vincent takes the review's phrase "a loose gathering of Google-obsessed poets" and turns it around — who surveils whom? — reframing Flarf as counter-surveillance while conceding Google "endlessly re-consum[es] everything, no matter the counter-attack."

Wonderful review! Hope it helps bring in the sales,too.

"a loose gathering of Google-obsessed poets"

As an aside, it makes me instantly want to ask, who, or which entity is more "obsessed" with who? That is, every sentence that anyone of us puts up on our blogs, for example, is almost instantaneously searchable by Google - without query or request for permission to reveal - right down to the satellite map visual revelations of our very houses.

If to flarf, in part, is to counter-surveil and rework Google's blanket web oversight into whatever maybe one's poetic or others terms, I can see the seduction.

Obviously, the skill - to make a 'real' poem or not - is in the hands of the players. Whoops - good, bad or indifferent - here comes Google to take the poems right back, endlessly re-consuming everything, no matter the counter-attack des poets. (Isn't ironic to hear Google tell publishers that - if they have copyright concerns - you should contact their offices to correct the situation. Shoot first, apologize later.

Oh well, who ever said language of any sort was not public property, i.e., nobody owns it, except those Corps with those brands, and branding devices, and lawyers to bring in the outlaw kill! Will the MPPI folks be after Katie now? Or after Google?

Hmmm,

Stephen V

<http://stephenvincent.net/blog/>

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Flarf goes to College on YouTube!

— Michael Magee · 29 November 2006

Magee reports that clips of the Flarf Collective's "barnstorming trip to Dickinson College" are "mysteriously appearing" on the Mainstream Poetry site — the wink being that Flarf's self-promotion was never especially mysterious.

YouTube video clips of the Flarf Collective's barnstorming trip to Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA are now mysteriously appearing at the Mainstream Poetry website:

<http://www.mainstreampoetry.com>

Have a look, more to follow...

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Re: masculine "new"???

— David Harrison Horton · 3 February 2008

Horton presses Gudding for consistency: if self-declaring avant is a masculine move, how does that square with Mina Loy's Feminist Manifesto (1914) and Valerie Solanas's SCUM Manifesto (1968)? "Did I read you completely wrong?"

Gabriel,

How are you differentiating the "masculine" drive to self-declare avant with the obvious parallel activities of women such as Mina Loy (Feminist Manifesto, 1914) and Valerie Solanas (Scum Manifesto, 1968)? Are their declarations different? Perhaps more valid? What about women who self-declare avant or L=A=N=G or whatever? Or is this an assumption/assertion that avant status necessarily equals male privilege?

I don't mean to be quippy here, but I would like you to expand your discussion on the subject. In your list of examples of "masculine" avants:

New FormalismLangpo PostmodernPost Avant / AVAnd More Recent and Ephemeral VariantsFlaff (flarf?)New Brutalism

It seems that you are conveniently ignoring scores of women who are not only affiliated with said poetic stances/social relationships, but who are also key figures in said.

Did I read you completely wrong?

PS. Yes, Flarf has an R. No, I am not affiliated.

Best, David Harrison Horton unionherald.blogspot.com

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Re: masculine "new"???

— Tom W. Lewis · 4 February 2008

Lewis sidesteps the entire "masculine new" quarrel by pasting the Urban Dictionary entry for "flaff" — "footloose and fancy-free" — a shrug offered in place of an argument.

1.flaff

footloose and fancy-free

"I have no work or school today, i'm so flaff!"

2. flaff a person or object you can't live without

X: "What's a flaff?" Y: "Look in the mirror."

Your best friend; the person you love the most in the whole world; your penguin.

(<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=flaff>)

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masculinity and the fetish of newness

— Gabriel Gudding · 4 February 2008

Gudding clarifies his thesis: the fetish of the "new" works to "disappear" women from literary scenes, and the few who broke through had to "contend in a masculinized way"; he quotes Davidson — "Citing masculinity ... is to cite zones of power."

David,

Yes, you did misread me.

My post is in part precisely about the so-called masculine dynamics around the fetish of the /new/, a set of dynamics which work to "disappear" women from a variety of literary scenes. As it happens few women do peek through from the earlier era you mention 80-90 years ago: Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney, Gertrude Stein, Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson, H. D., and, as you mention, Mina Loy. Others more knowledgeable than I have argued that even to be legible as women, these writers had to contend in a masculinized way.

Given the relatively few number of women there are *to* mention in a vast field of men, even (and some might argue) especially in the AG fields, I think it might not be very untoward to suggest that the "new" is an instrument that functions in part to police the feminine. I think principally here of the more recent writings of Diane di Prima and Rachel Blau DuPlessis re these issues. And as both of them read this list from time to time, I'll not go to speaking for them. I would only repeat again that within the AG fields (fields that especially fetishize the new) there seems to be a *worse* track record regarding women.

Both Ed Brunner and Michael Davidson have cast a pretty cold eye on masculinity in cold war poetics -- Brunner on more bourgeois writers, Davidson more AG. I like what Davidson says to sum up how the field functions: "Citing masculinity...is to cite zones of power. A corollary proposition might be that citing female masculinity cites fissures in zones of power." (Guys Like Us, 195).

You mention Solanas. Her SCUM Manifesto is precisely about masculinity. Its purpose is less to create a rupture in masculinity than to frame an already bankrupt and ruptured mode. Either way, Davidson seems to be right. My point is that you don't get a lot of guys talking about the /new/ while also talking about how it's inflected by masculinity. And if one tries to yoke the fetish of the /new/ as something operating with peculiarly strong masculine dynamics, well, watch out.

Closest one gets in v recent days to a /new/-affiliated manifesto that tries to make legible its own gendered nature is the *New Sincerity* movement and manifesto from a few yrs ago -- which was promptly derided precisely in hyper-masculinized terms as not being "rigorous" and intellectual enough.

I am aware that flaff has an R in it.

Finally, I would add that the fetish of the "new" is homologous with masculinity in general and no political aesthetics in particular: it's something given to both right and left poles of the field of cultural production -- and it almost always appears with the mythos of the "badboy genius shaman" lurking not too far away.

My point is that it seems finally necessary perhaps to cease thinking via the nominally supplied terms that a whole tradition encourages -- that of, in this case, the idea of the "first or fresh beginning," a myth associated with some, usually male, "creator shaman badboy" types. All of which is so very very high school. High school and harmful.

It's shocking to me how faithful poets (both male and female) remain to such a thoroughly unexamined and weirdly heinous series of myths about production. My sense is that it is only through ceasing to reinvest in these gendered ideas and tactics that poets will actually wake up from what amounts to a pretty thorough alienation from their own work and lives -- alienation both from the material realities inherent in the field of production, not to mention the world around them.

Best,
Gabriel

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Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness

— **Mark Weiss** · 4 February 2008

Weiss pushes back with a head count: women's marginalization is "far more a phenomenon of the 'avant' than otherwise," and Untermeyer's 1930s-40s Modern

The relative marginalization of women poets is far more a phenomenon of the "avant" than otherwise, at least in English. There's an odd, persistent idea that it was more general. I'd suggest doing a head count of the dominant anthology of the 30s and 40s, John Untermeyer's *Modern American/Modern British Poets*, to get an idea of how close to parity the numbers were. In that period there were a fair number even of avantish type women, very much in sympathy with the idea of the new, though they tended to produce fewer manifestos.

Mark

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Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness

— Jason Quackenbush · 4 February 2008

Quackenbush accuses Gudding of question-begging — stipulate avant-gardism as masculine and successful women can only read as converts — and doubts the "shamanic badboy genius" is any timeless archetype, dating it no earlier than Caravaggio.

I'm sorry Gabriel, I'm really trying to understand where you're coming from, but this position doesn't seem to hold together very well to me. If you're going to first stipulate avant-gardism as masculine in its aims, then how does the argument that successful female avant-gardists are only successful avant-gardists through the adoption of masculine modes avoid question-begging inchoerence?

as a secondary concern, the thing about the shamanic badboy genius, I'm not sure I buy that as a forever and alltime thing in our culture. frankly, I'm a bit hard-pressed to think of someone who lived that sort of lifestyle prior to maybe Caravaggio, and it's certainly not the only archetype we have for innovative artists. It's certainly the most romantic, and I think what it says about our culture that we make heroes out of rule-breakers in all of our various modes of mythmaking is interesting and worth exploring. But I don't think our attraction to rulebreakers has to do with their masculinity. We like bad girls just as much as we like bad boys. and still we idolize rulebreakers not as anarchists, but lawgivers of a new sort. these heroes are not egoistic sociopaths. The most successful are all Übermenschen that are there not to tell us to do whatever we like, they're there to tell us to follow different rules and to show us the benefits for doing so. to an extent the byronic hero and the vamp-seductress both use their sexuality as a tool to get what they want. Whatever else they do is foregrounded by that one particular rules-violation, the taboo against human sexuality. I don't see that that has all that much to do with male and female, oddly enough. Rather, it seems to me to be a unity that prudes and teetotalers always trot out to stifle the activities of the sexually precocious.

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Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 4 February 2008

Nemet-Nejat widens the frame: alienation runs through class and geopolitics too, and to name gender THE cause erases others — "a father in Iraq who ... loses a child ... is as alienated as the mother who lost the child."

Gabe,

The alienation you are referring to goes far beyond specific sexual distinctions and has its roots in the relationships of power in general. It may have to do with class, with international real politics, as well as sexual dynamics. In each case, one side

imposes its values, its epistemology, its standards of excellence and achievement on others, making the other side more or less invisible or quartered, in other words, alienated from itself. To focus only on a sexual dynamic, making it THE cause, alienates the others whose alienation derives from other factors. For instance, a father in Iraq who can not get a job or loses a child (boy or girl) to a bomb is as alienated as the mother who lost the child. Alienation is caused by a lack of access to means of communication (an enforced silence), as much as a lack of access to the means of production.

I agree with you, for instance, that Picasso's art will be seen from a very different angle if its misogyny -turning a number of his "great" paintings into sadistic erections- were not underplayed under the rubric of art. On the other hand, the distinctions between The School of Quietitude and Avant and further between Avant and Post Avant began to shape the discussions of poetry basically through Ron Silliman's Blog. I think Ron would intensely resent, and I assume rightly so, to be called misogynous. Having come to The United States more than forty years ago, I have always been intensely conscious of the cultural, stylistic, philosophical differences alienating me from the place I had entered. It was assumed all I had to do was "to educate" myself into it. (Had I not come to Amherst to get an education?) I refused to do so. The rest of my life has been to use American English to heal this alienation. But is this not what all poets, particularly in The United States, do? To see this essential process only as a struggle between masculinity and femininity forces is I think to deny visibility to many other energies shaping the poetic process.

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness

— **Gabriel Gudding** · 5 February 2008

*Gudding concedes the broader field but holds his ground on scope, praising Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* as brilliant yet faulting its "glaring error": it does not focus "one little tiny bit on gender relations" in consecration.*

Murat,

I basically agree with you that these issues involve issues of power beyond just gender. But what I'm focusing on here is gender. Its relations to power dynamics in the literary community need to be underscored. So, that's the scope of my few posts thus far on my blog.

Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* provides precisely the kind of analysis you suggest. And he does it brilliantly. But he does not -- and I think this is the glaring error in PB's brilliant book -- focus one little tiny bit on gender relations in the field of cultural production -- and these to me are almost *total.* We need

more work about how gender inflects, refracts and reshapes power in literary culture. Gender and power in literary culture is probably the most basic issue, hands down, to any responsible understand of consecration dynamics. Hands down.

Gabe

Then Murat said:

The alienation you are referring to goes far beyond specific sexual distinctions and has its roots in the relationships of power in general. It may have to do with class, with international real politics, as well as sexual dynamics. In each case, one side imposes its values, its epistemology, its standards of excellence and achievement on others, making the other side more or less invisible or quartered, in other words, alienated from itself. To focus only on a sexual dynamic, making it THE cause, alienates the others whose alienation derives from other factors. For instance, a father in Iraq who can not get a job or loses a child (boy or girl) to a bomb is as alienated as the mother who lost the child. Alienation is caused by a lack of access to means of communication (an enforced silence), as much as a lack of access to the means of production.

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Ciao,

Murat

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Re: URGENT — Copyright Infringement or Collage?

— Douglas Manson · 4 September 2008

Manson dismisses the copyright anxiety — "as if poetry isn't already composed as an infringement" — and offers his own found-line works, including his Tagore rewritings, the "Mutilations and Addled Beauty," as evidence that the weave matters more than the sourcing.

First Question: did you just quote Coolidge, or your poem?

& some brief, quick responses to the idea of "infringement"

as if poetry isn't already composed as an infringement on all kinds and species of norms, proprieties and complacencies, your work is collage, the "originality" found in processes of relation from line to line most readers, I would bet, won't know your sourcing enough to be provoked

three works of my own have used, almost entirely, lines or poems from other works: a poem in Ecopoetics 4/5 "The Natural World", the entirety of "A Book of Birthdays" (composed by using lines from books published in the birth-year of the friend or relation to whom the poem was dedicated) and a re-writing of Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali

*there are hundreds of examples of this from fine writers & artists such as Schwitters, Ernst, the master of uncreative writing Kenneth Goldsmith or the project of Flarf: the idea is "collage" which was discussed in this forum recently (see the Poetics List archives)

judgement is less likely to fall on your appropriation than on the quality and durability of the weave

but my work on Tagore's poems leaves me with my own questions, is it a modernization? or an interpretation? certainly not ironic tribute as in Geoff Ward's "Duino Elegies" so these Gitanjali I call "Mutilations and Addled Beauty" based on Tagore's statements in his _Selected Letters_ about Robert Bridges rewriting one of his poems.

Flarf poets are very articulate about their projects & they may help by raising the needed questions about the meaning of poetry in general, and the values of appropriation, distances and distancing (temporal/social) from source to destination

I think it depends on why you are using these texts and what you want your text to demonstrate

my Tagore rationale is flowery & idiosyncratic: "his genius gives us a song that, once begun, cannot but find instruments in the world to continue it" & I don't feel compelled to publish my versions, I want simply to "take a share" in them or send them to Tagore fans by mail.

Send yours to Coolidge. To cop from OPP may be a good way to fail beautifully.

& free speech seems to be an infringement, too as I read about/see & am appalled by the behaviors of the police & corporate media at the RNC.

best,
dm

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At the Whitney: Flarf Versus Conceptual Writing

— Sharon Mesmer · 17 March 2009

Mesmer's Whitney announcement stages "FLARF VERSUS CONCEPTUAL WRITING," eight poets across both camps, itemizing their shared toolkit — "appropriation, falsification, insincerity, and plagiarism" — for an event Kenneth Goldsmith organized around the Jenny Holzer show.

AT THE WHITNEY: FLARF VERSUS CONCEPTUAL WRITING

On Friday, April 17 the Whitney Museum of American Art presents eight poets associated with two cutting-edge movements in contemporary poetry: the Flarf Collective and Conceptual Writing. The followers of both movements employ technology to create their works, often using strategies familiar to the visual arts: appropriation, falsification, insincerity, and plagiarism. Fusing the avant-garde impulses of the last century with the technologies of the present, these strategies propose an expanded field for twenty-first century poetry. This new writing is not bound exclusively between pages of a book; it continually morphs from printed page to webpage, from gallery space to science lab, from social spaces of poetry readings to social spaces of blogs. It is a poetics of flux, celebrating instability and uncertainty.

Featured poets are Christian Bök, Nada Gordon, Kenneth Goldsmith, Sharon Mesmer, K. Silem Mohammad, Kim Rosenfield, Gary Sullivan and Darren Wershler.

This event was conceived and organized by poet Kenneth Goldsmith on the occasion of the Jenny Holzer exhibition PROTECT PROTECT.

Reading begins at 7, and is free with Museum Admission, which is pay-what-you-wish during Whitney After Hours on Fridays from 6-9 pm.

Advance reservations are recommended. Tickets may be reserved at the Museum Admissions desk or online at <http://www.whitney.org>.

Inquiries: (212) 570-7715 or [REDACTED]/

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VAUDEVILLE FOLLIES: flarf performance

— Konrad Steiner · 21 May 2009

A San Francisco bill for Gordon and Sullivan, fresh from the Whitney, promising neo-benshi film narration and "mangled imagery" from founders of the Flarf Collective who "have been committed. To hilarious and unsettling entertainment."

kino21's last show for a spell:

Sunday, May 24th, 8pm
VAUDEVILLE FOLLIES
Artists Television Access
992 Valencia
San Francisco, CA

From Brooklyn, New York, poets Nada Gordon and Gary Sullivan lead an evening of multiple media San Francisco premieres: poly-vocal poetics, neo-benshi film narration, and mangled imagery.

Visiting the Bay Area live for one night only, the latter-day vaudeville team of Gordon and Sullivan will present their most recent poetry, performance and video work showcased last month (fresh!) at The Whitney Museum and Dixon Place in New York. Gordon and Sullivan are founding members of the notorious and irreverent Flarf Collective. They have been committed. To hilarious and unsettling entertainment. Throughout this millenium. They will premiere two live film narration pieces, and read from their recent work.

Oakland poet-provocateur Erika Staiti will perform her live film renarration of a short scene from "Woman Under the Influence," which premiered last month in the Los Angeles underground venue, Machine Project.

From Queens, New York visual artist, montagist and poet Brandon Downing will sends us several disturbingly funny new video collages. Using a hilarious form of homophonic translation of song lyrics as subtitles from Bollywood movies, Downing dispaces the musical numbers into new registers of meaning with both bawdy and poignant overtones.

<http://www.kino21.org/>

* * *

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Re: Two Requests

— Mathias Svalina · 2 November 2009

Svalina raises an eyebrow at a loose attribution in two lines: "Kimberly Lyons is a Flarf poet? Does she know this?"

Anthony Hawley's Forget Reading is an interesting book-length series of sonnets, from last year Counterpath Books.

Kimberly Lyons is a Flarf poet? Does she know this?

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Re: Two Requests

— Amy King · 2 November 2009

King plays the label question as Fight Club: Flarf runs through a private, invitation-only listserv, and "first rule of Flarf Club, no one discusses actual admissions criteria."

Don't you need to be invited to the private Flarf listserv to be one? I mean, and accept, of course. But first rule of Flarf Club, no one discusses actual admissions criteria ...

--- On Mon, 11/2/09, Mathias Svalina wrote: Kimberly Lyons is a Flarf poet? Does she know this?

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Re: Two Requests

— George Bowering · 2 November 2009

Bowering deflates the whole taxonomy with a two-line joke: "My Uncle Llew was a Flarf poet / back in the day."

My Uncle Llew was a Flarf poet
back in the day.

gb

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Re: Art is theft

— John Cunningham · 19 April 2010

Cunningham, host of the radio show Speaking of Poets, surveys sampling and found poetry across guests from Karen Solie to Erin Moure and Lisa Robertson, then asks the practical questions Flarf raises: "When does one have to cite?"

You have raised a question that I've been pondering for some time although perhaps in a different context. This past Sunday, I had Steven Smith, formerly of the sound poetry group Owen Sound as well as director of Sage Hill Writing who is now director of Literary Arts at the Banff Centre, on my radio show 'Speaking of Poets' heard every Sunday from 4:30 to 5:00 p.m. CST on CKUW 95.9 FM (and available for streaming or download from the CKUW website). We talked about the concepts of sampling and found poetry. I've had poets as diverse as Karen Solie and Jan Conn to the experimental such as Erin Moure, Lisa Robertson and Angela Carr on the show who have used these techniques. I have also had discussion with poets who are aghast at this plagiarism. What are the parameters in these days of FLARF poetic techniques for the legitimacy of 'borrowings'? When does one have to cite? I've heard others who, if wanting to use a phrase, line or brief passage from another writer's work actually indicate that they would send a request to that writer for permission to use that material. Is this necessary? John Herbert Cunningham

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Re: Art is theft

— Douglas Manson · 19 April 2010

Manson recasts appropriation as the artist's predicament under capital: a carrot dangled, labor expropriated, the only reward an "unvalued value." "Art is theft," he writes, because everything is already articulated — "Steal that. Mix it up a little. Sell it under your name."

A carrot is dangled in front of the artist (if a poetics is art).

The artist wants the carrot (sound of empty stomach).

The condition of art amidst capitals excesses, paroxysms, death grimaces on a Halloween mask--the condition IS theft of the artists work, mode of existence.

The theft is all around you.

The artist doesn't care about creativity, originality, authority, the artist wants the carrot. What else is pushing her to produce? The artist, except for weird anomalous individuals amongst millions who work in the arts, is never paid/given according to their contribution, unless that reciprocation appear outside the system entirely, with none of its inherent values. The only value to be gained by the artist must be an unvalued value.

The artists capacity and capabilities are enormous, while her needs are presumed to be few.

Analysts couch.

Language of shipping offices.

Art is theft: because the work envisaged needs no form, there is an unlimited number of previously constituted examples of the very form that so excited her. Why write? Only mix. Art is appropriation because there is no compelling reason to write from ones head or heart anymore. There are nothing but examples of the conception already out there, one click away, already amply and fully articulated. Steal that. Mix it up a little. Sell it under your name. Theft? No, it's market. Moving units. One who can shift an icon most effectively onto their person, an affiliated name.

The artist steals back the thing the culture demanded of her, and damned her for, or pays a heavy price.

The operative condition IS theft. The work is stolen from the artist, reframed, engineered and mass produced, and then she must pay to consume it.

The EXPERIENCE of a work of art is pure gratuity.

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Re: Art is theft

— Jacquilyn Weeks · 20 April 2010

Weeks answers the theft thread in its own currency, splicing its lines into a collage-reply: "theft + disguise = metaphor?", "By definition originality is impossible," "I already own all of it." The argument performed rather than stated.

theft + disguise = metaphor?

off the cuff.

By definition originality is impossible.

Such an act is clearly larcenous and its perpetrators mere criminals trafficking in contraband.

I already own all of it

You have raised a question that I've been pondering for some time although perhaps in a different context.

What else is pushing her to produce?

I'll keep it open

The first lines of a boring poem

[are] an invitation to attention?

Change without exchange.

an example of begging the question.

My thoughts exactly.

I've heard that before.
linguistic play, an
anarchistic spree
tee hee.
-J.

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NOTES ON WHY CONCEPTUALISM IS BETTER THAN FLARF

— derek beaulieu · 13 May 2010

beaulieu announces, from No press, Vanessa Place's pamphlet NOTES ON WHY sale at five dollars — a movement rivalry turned into a small, sellable object.

No press is proud to announce the publication of
NOTES ON WHY CONCEPTUALISM IS BETTER THAN FLARF by Vanessa Place
published in an edition of 60 hand-sewn copies (of which 30 are for sale) \$5 each
(including shipping)
for more information, or to order copies, email [REDACTED]
derek beaulieu 2 - 733 2nd avenue nw calgary alberta canada T2N 0E4 [REDACTED]
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/beaulieu/>

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IV

Conceptual Writing

1998-2013

Kenneth Goldsmith's vocabulary — uncreative writing, unoriginal genius, appropriation, boredom, valuelessness — gives the older appropriative impulse a new and deliberately provocative frame; the poet names his own charges before anyone else can, forwarding his own keyword list: “unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft... valuelessness, nutritionlessness and boredom in writing.” The section gathers essays and anthology announcements, machine-poems and reposted documents — a Critical Art Ensemble treatise on plagiarism, the UbuWeb anthology, *Against Expression* — around one long, many-sided quarrel.

That quarrel is the parody of Goldsmith's *Day*: Kent Johnson's 836-page *Day*, blurbed as a work of its own but, as Jeffrey Side spells out, “an exact reproduction of Goldsmith's” — a copy of a copy, asking who could possibly own the gesture. It runs for dozens of posts and never resolves, because the terms won't hold still. Jonathan Ball breaks with the movement's central tenet that “the charge is in the concept,” insisting execution still counts — “Kenny Goldsmith's books are WORTH READING,” capitals his — while Troy Camplin ends the whole distinction in four words, “Words are concepts, so all poetry is conceptual,” and Barry Schwabsky asks the plain question no one quite answers: “what distinguishes ‘conceptual poetry’ from just ‘poetry’?” Johnson, posting by proxy, professes himself “bemused” that so “trifling” a book breeds such indignation — the triviality, he insists, is the point, his *Day* “a dialectical advance in the concept of boredom.” Around the edges the section keeps its wit and its conscience both:

Geoffrey Gatza turns the parody into product, with a price list and a *Rite of Spring* score, and Jennifer Karmin answers the movement's boys'-club reputation with *I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women*, “sixty-four women from ten countries.”

Postmodern Piracy Festival / Call for Participants

— Doug Rice (fwd) · 19 June 1998

A call for papers from the high-theory 1990s: Kent State-Salem's 1999 "Festival of Postmodern Piracy" solicits abstracts on "Piracy of Words, Bodies, Subjectivities," with panels on Kathy Acker and Burroughs—appropriation staged as festivity years before Flarf drinks from the same water.

forwarded from Doug Rice at [REDACTED]

“

NOBODADDIES: An Independent Press of Pirated Textual and Sexual Identities Presents: A Festival of Postmodern Piracy April 14-16, 1999 Kent State University-Salem (Ohio) Kent State University-Salem (Ohio)

”

You are invited to submit theoretical and critical abstracts (100-500 words) addressing any aspect or interpretation of the festival's theme Piracy of Words, Bodies, Subjectivities, Cultures, Identities, or Representations. Panel proposals are also encouraged and should include the panel's title, participant's names, and abstracts. All approaches in the humanities (particularly literary, cinematic, musical, or philosophical) are welcomed. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

* History and Practice of Plagiarism, Appropriation, or Piracy * Theoretical approaches to Plagiarism, Appropriation, or Piracy * Performances of Plagiarism, Appropriation, or Piracy * Explorations of Contemporary Rewriting of Older Tales * Aesthetic Outlaws, Migrant Tongues * Schizo-Flesh or Infected Texts * Gender Blurring/Blending/Cutting/Erasing * Nomadic Skinshows * Viral Languages, Theories, Images, Bodies * Transgender Issues of Bodies and Languages * The Politics and Poetics of Transgression * Special Panels and Sessions on the works of Kathy Acker, William S. Burroughs, Ray Federman, Gilles Deleuze, David Cronenberg. * A Colloquium on the NEA and Censorship.

We are interested in a variety of approaches, including works that confuse boundaries of genre, discourse, and discipline; works that analyze primary texts; creative works that perform any of these issues. Selected work will be published in a festschrift celebrating the festival.

Please Address submissions to: Doug Rice Kent State University-Salem 2491 State Route 45 South Salem OH 44460 For further information, please contact Doug Rice at [REDACTED]

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Re: The Meaninglessness of Meaninglessness

— parrishka · 22 August 2002

Disavowing rigor because "it's august," parrishka defends chance procedures via Retallack's "TAKING CHANCES": chance "merely foregrounds what is at work in all that we do," the stars "before we herd them into constellations."

this isn't particularly new, but i can think of no better apology for the use of randomness, or chance based procedures (and i'm just going to conflate them here, willy nilly, with no care for precision or real or pseudo-randomness, cause what we're really talking about is the deliberate disavowal of authorial control over the

production of the text, by any means, yes? pretty sure it comes down to control in the end. and it's august, and i just don't feel like being rigorous.) than joan retallack's SECNÀHC GNIKÀT : TAKING CHANCES. The full text can be found here: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/retallack/taking-chances.html>

some choice snippets follow:

I, along with everyone else, work at the intersection of chance and intention. The selective use of chance procedures merely foregrounds what is at work in all that we do and experience, whether or not we wish to turn our attention to it. The results of "chance operations," as Cage liked to call them, are just that, nothing more, nothing less than a turning of attention toward the silences that lie beyond the habits, desires, fears of our intentionally directed eyes and ears. What results from the use of chance procedures may shock or delight. The light in delight is that of the sheer given. Nature's processes operating independently of our opinions about them. The stars before we herd them into constellations. Ah, but don't worry, one needn't forego the pleasures of constellations to invite chance into the conversation.

The selective foregrounding of chance makes it possible to bring to light and sound things that are otherwise potentially absent or ominous. Perhaps because we've tended to be uncomfortable with things outside what we take to be the realm of control, we miss/ignore/deny the circumstantial evidence that chance is all around us. Hence the silences--feminine, phobic, phallic--wherein lie unmined energies of chance. Is it primarily fear (biological conservatism) that has so firmly tied our attention to simple periodicities and regularities, that has led us hear harmony only in simple color-coordinated chords? Probably, improbably enough. (It is after all the characteristically chaotic rhythms of the normal brain that neurophysiologists credit with all our abilities for complex innovative thought and action.) But it's our ability to operate outside regularities, that takes us toward the discoveries and enactments of imagination, the play and invention that we like to identify as the characteristically human contribution to the fractal intricacies of our universe. Every now and then an artist gives us the breath-filled resonances of more complex chords.

and i was just looking over some of my students' own writings on their own poetic processes, and i found a couple of interesting statements. 17 year olds are pretty focussed on meaning and intentionality, as a rule, but some of them really groove on random procedures in composition. like this fellow here:

".. Other than that, the words chosen were completely random. I liked that idea because my life often seems random and chaotic, and every now and then some sense of order and meaning presents itself. I felt that forming some meaning and order to almost completely random word selections would possibly help me gather insight into life itself. Or, if you entertain a more mathematical mindset, there is no such thing as complete randomness, only infinitely complex systems, or algorithms. Since poetry to me either seeks meaning or randomness, I felt that a fairly random selection of words was legitimate."

katherine parrish

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Utopian Plagiarism, Hypertextuality

— Lewis LaCook · 13 October 2002

LaCook reposts the Critical Art Ensemble's "Utopian Plagiarism": theft recast as cultural enrichment, the norm before the Enlightenment—Chaucer and Shakespeare "plagiarists" still in the canon—and newly crucial in "the age of the recombinant."

“

Utopian Plagiarism, Hypertextuality, and Electronic Cultural Production

”

The Critical Art Ensemble

Plagiarism has long been considered an evil in the cultural world. Typically it has been viewed as the theft of language, ideas, and images by the less than talented, often for the enhancement of personal fortune or prestige. Yet, like most mythologies, the myth of plagiarism is easily inverted. Perhaps it is those who support the legislation of representation and the privatization of language that are suspect; perhaps the plagiarist's actions, given a specific set of social conditions, are the ones contributing most to cultural enrichment. Prior to the Enlightenment, plagiarism was useful in aiding the distribution of ideas. An English poet could appropriate and translate a sonnet from Petrarch and call it his own. In accordance with the classical aesthetic of art as imitation, this was a perfectly acceptable practice. The real value of this activity rested less in the reinforcement of classical aesthetics than in the distribution of work to areas where otherwise it probably would not have appeared. The works of English plagiarists, such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Sterne, Coleridge, and De Quincey, are still a vital part of the English heritage, and remain in the literary canon to this day.

At present, new conditions have emerged that once again make plagiarism an acceptable, even crucial strategy for textual production. This is the age of the recombinant: recombinant bodies, recombinant gender, recombinant texts, recombinant culture. Looking back through the privileged frame of hindsight, one can argue that the recombinant has always been key in the development of meaning and invention; recent extraordinary advances in electronic technology have called attention to the recombinant both in theory and in practice (for example, the use of morphing in video and film). The primary value of all electronic technology, especially computers and imaging systems, is the startling speed at which they can transmit information in both raw and refined forms. As information flows at a high

velocity through the electronic networks, disparate and sometimes incommensurable systems of meaning intersect, with both enlightening and inventive consequences. In a society dominated by a "knowledge" explosion, exploring the possibilities of meaning in that which already exists is more pressing than adding redundant information (even if it is produced using the methodology and metaphysics of the "original"). In the past, arguments in favor of plagiarism were limited to showing its use in resisting the privatization of culture that serves the needs and desires of the power elite. Today one can argue that plagiarism is acceptable, even inevitable, given the nature of postmodern existence with its techno-infrastructure. In a recombinant culture, plagiarism is productive, although we need not abandon the romantic model of cultural production which privileges a model of *ex nihilo* creation. Certainly in a general sense the latter model is somewhat anachronistic. There are still specific situations where such thinking is useful, and one can never be sure when it could become appropriate again. What is called for is an end to its tyranny and to its institutionalized cultural bigotry. This is a call to open the cultural data base, to let everyone use the technology of textual production to its maximum potential.

"Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates in the improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It embraces an author's phrase, makes use of his expressions, erases a false idea, and replaces it with the right idea."(1) Plagiarism often carries a weight of negative connotations (particularly in the bureaucratic class); while the need for its use has increased over the century, plagiarism itself has been camouflaged in a new lexicon by those desiring to explore the practice as method and as a legitimized form of cultural discourse. Readymades, collage, found art or found text, intertexts, combines, detournment, and appropriation - all these terms represent explorations in plagiarism. Indeed, these terms are not perfectly synonymous, but they all intersect a set of meanings primary to the philosophy and activity of plagiarism.

Philosophically, they all stand in opposition to essentialist doctrines of the text: They all assume that no structure within a given text provides a universal and necessary meaning. No work of art or philosophy exhausts itself in itself alone, in its being-in-itself. Such works have always stood in relation to the actual life-process of society from which they have distinguished themselves.

Enlightenment essentialism failed to provide a unit of analysis that could act as a basis of meaning. Just as the connection between a signifier and its referent is arbitrary, the unit of meaning used for any given textual analysis is also arbitrary. Roland Barthes' notion of the *lexia* primarily indicates surrender in the search for a basic unit of meaning. Since language was the only tool available for the development of metalanguage, such a project was doomed from its inception. It was much like trying to eat soup with soup. The text itself is fluid - although the language game of ideology can provide the illusion of stability, creating blockage by manipulating the unacknowledged assumptions of everyday life.

Consequently, one of the main goals of the plagiarist is to restore the dynamic and unstable drift of meaning, by appropriating and recombining fragments of culture. In this way, meanings can be produced that were not previously associated with an object or a given set of objects.

Marcel Duchamp, one of the first to understand the power of recombination, presented an early incarnation of this new aesthetic with his readymade series. Duchamp took objects to which he was "visually indifferent," and recontextualized them in a manner that shifted their meaning. For example, by taking a urinal out of the rest room, signing it, and placing it on a pedestal in an art gallery, meaning slid away from the apparently exhaustive functional interpretation of the object. Although this meaning did not completely disappear, it was placed in harsh juxtaposition to another possibility - meaning as an art object. This problem of instability increased when problems of origin were raised: The object was not made by an artist, but by a machine. Whether or not the viewer chose to accept other possibilities for interpreting the function of the artist and the authenticity of the art object, the urinal in a gallery instigated a moment of uncertainty and reassessment. This conceptual game has been replayed numerous times over the 20th century, at times for very narrow purposes, as with Rauschenberg's combines - done for the sake of attacking the critical hegemony of Clement Greenberg - while at other times it has been done to promote large-scale political and cultural restructuring, as in the case of the Situationists. In each case, the plagiarist works to open meaning through the injection of scepticism into the culturetext. Here one also sees the failure of Romantic essentialism. Even the alleged transcendental object cannot escape the sceptics' critique. Duchamp's notion of the inverted readymade (turning a Rembrandt painting into an ironing board) suggested that the distinguished art object draws its power from a historical legitimation process firmly rooted in the institutions of western culture, and not from being an unalterable conduit to transcendental realms. This is not to deny the possibility of transcendental experience, but only to say that if it does exist, it is prelinguistic, and thereby relegated to the privacy of an individual's subjectivity. A society with a complex division of labor requires a rationalization of institutional processes, a situation which in turn robs the individual of a way to share nonrational experience. Unlike societies with a simple division of labor, in which the experience of one member closely resembles the experience of another (minimal alienation), under a complex division of labor, the life experience of the individual turned specialist holds little in common with other specialists. Consequently, communication exists primarily as an instrumental function. Plagiarism has historically stood against the privileging of any text through spiritual, scientific, or other legitimizing myths. The plagiarist sees all objects as equal, and thereby horizontalizes the plane of phenomena. All texts become potentially usable and reusable. Herein lies an epistemology of anarchy, according to which the plagiarist argues that if science, religion, or any other social institution precludes certainty beyond the realm of the private, then it is best to endow consciousness with as many categories of interpretation as possible. The tyranny of paradigms may have some useful consequences (such as greater

efficiency within the paradigm), but the repressive costs to the individual (excluding other modes of thinking and reducing the possibility of invention) are too high. Rather than being led by sequences of signs, one should instead drift through them, choosing the interpretation best suited to the social conditions of a given situation.

"It is a matter of throwing together various cut-up techniques in order to respond to the omnipresence of transmitters feeding us with their dead discourses (mass media, publicity, etc.). It is a question of unchaining the codes - not the subject anymore - so that something will burst out, will escape; words beneath words, personal obsessions. Another kind of word is born which escapes from the totalitarianism of the media but retains their power, and turns it against their old masters."

Cultural production, literary or otherwise, has traditionally been a slow, labor-intensive process. In painting, sculpture, or written work, the technology has always been primitive by contemporary standards. Paintbrushes, hammers and chisels, quills and paper, and even the printing press do not lend themselves well to rapid production and broad-range distribution. The time lapse between production and distribution can seem unbearably long. Book arts and traditional visual arts still suffer tremendously from this problem, when compared to the electronic arts. Before electronic technology became dominant, cultural perspectives developed in a manner that more clearly defined texts as individual works. Cultural fragments appeared in their own right as discrete units, since their influence moved slowly enough to allow the orderly evolution of an argument or an aesthetic. Boundaries could be maintained between disciplines and schools of thought. Knowledge was considered finite, and was therefore easier to control. In the 19th century this traditional order began to collapse as new technology began to increase the velocity of cultural development. The first strong indicators began to appear that speed was becoming a crucial issue. Knowledge was shifting away from certitude, and transforming itself into information. During the American Civil War, Lincoln sat impatiently by his telegraph line, awaiting reports from his generals at the front. He had no patience with the long-winded rhetoric of the past, and demanded from his generals an efficient economy of language. There was no time for the traditional trappings of the elegant essayist. Cultural velocity and information have continued to increase at a geometric rate since then, resulting in an information panic. Production and distribution of information (or any other product) must be immediate; there can be no lag time between the two. Techno-culture has met this demand with data bases and electronic networks that rapidly move any type of information. Under such conditions, plagiarism fulfills the requirements of economy of representation, without stifling invention. If invention occurs when a new perception or idea is brought out - by intersecting two or more formally disparate systems - then recombinant methodologies are desirable. This is where plagiarism progresses beyond nihilism. It does not simply inject scepticism to help destroy totalitarian systems that stop invention; it participates in invention, and is thereby also productive. The genius of an inventor like Leonardo da Vinci lay in his ability to

recombine the then separate systems of biology, mathematics, engineering, and art. He was not so much an originator as a synthesizer. There have been few people like him over the centuries, because the ability to hold that much data in one's own biological memory is rare.

Now, however, the technology of recombination is available in the computer. The problem now for would-be cultural producers is to gain access to this technology and information. After all, access is the most precious of all privileges, and is therefore strictly guarded, which in turn makes one wonder whether to be a successful plagiarist, one must also be a successful hacker. "Most serious writers refuse to make themselves available to the things that technology is doing. I have never been able to understand this sort of fear. Many are afraid of using tape recorders, and the idea of using any electronic means for literary or artistic purposes seems to them some sort of sacrilege."

To some degree, a small portion of technology has fallen through the cracks into the hands of the lucky few. Personal computers and video cameras are the best examples. To accompany these consumer items and make their use more versatile, hypertextual and image sampling programs have also been developed - programs designed to facilitate recombination. It is the plagiarist's dream to be able to call up, move, and recombine text with simple user-friendly commands.

Perhaps plagiarism rightfully belongs to post-book culture, since only in that society can it be made explicit what book culture, with its geniuses and auteurs, tends to hide - that information is most useful when it interacts with other information, rather than when it is deified and presented in a vacuum.

Thinking about a new means for recombining information has always been on 20th-century minds, although this search has been left to a few until recently. In 1945 Vannevar Bush, a former science advisor to Franklin D. Roosevelt, proposed a new way of organizing information in an *Atlantic Monthly* article. At that time, computer technology was in its earliest stages of development and its full potential was not really understood. Bush, however, had the foresight to imagine a device he called the Memex. In his view it would be based around storage of information on microfilm, integrated with some means to allow the user to select and display any section at will, thus enabling one to move freely among previously unrelated increments of information.

At the time, Bush's Memex could not be built, but as computer technology evolved, his idea eventually gained practicality. Around 1960 Theodor Nelson made this realization when he began studying computer programming in college: "Over a period of months, I came to realize that, although programmers structured their data hierarchically, they didn't have to. I began to see the computer as the ideal place for making interconnections among things accessible to people. I realized that writing did not have to be sequential and that not only would tomorrow's books and magazines be on [cathode ray terminal] screens, they could all tie to one another in every direction. At once I began working on a program (written in 7090 assembler

language) to carry out these ideas." Nelson's idea, which he called hypertext, failed to attract any supporters at first, although by 1968 its usefulness became obvious to some in the government and in defense industries. A prototype of hypertext was developed by another computer innovator, Douglas Englebart, who is often credited with many breakthroughs in the use of computers (such as the development of the Macintosh interface, Windows). Englebart's system, called Augment, was applied to organizing the government's research network, ARPAnet, and was also used by McDonnell Douglas, the defense contractor, to aid technical work groups in coordinating projects such as aircraft design: "All communications are automatically added to the Augment information base and linked, when appropriate, to other documents. An engineer could, for example, use Augment to write and deliver electronically a work plan to others in the work group. The other members could then review the document and have their comments linked to the original, eventually creating a "group memory" of the decisions made. Augment's powerful linking features allow users to find even old information quickly, without getting lost or being overwhelmed by detail."

Computer technology continued to be refined, and eventually - as with so many other technological breakthroughs in this country - once it had been thoroughly exploited by military and intelligence agencies, the technology was released for commercial exploitation. Of course, the development of microcomputers and consumer-grade technology for personal computers led immediately to the need for software which would help one cope with the exponential increase in information, especially textual information. Probably the first humanistic application of hypertext was in the field of education. Currently, hypertext and hypermedia (which adds graphic images to the network of features which can be interconnected) continue to be fixtures in instructional design and educational technology. An interesting experiment in this regard was instigated in 1975 by Robert Scholes and Andries Van Dam at Brown University. Scholes, a professor of English, was contacted by Van Dam, a professor of computer science, who wanted to know if there were any courses in the humanities that might benefit from using what at the time was called a text-editing system (now known as a word processor) with hypertext capabilities built in. Scholes and two teaching assistants, who formed a research group, were particularly impressed by one aspect of hypertext. Using this program would make it possible to peruse in a nonlinear fashion all the interrelated materials in a text. A hypertext is thus best seen as a web of interconnected materials. This description suggested that there is a definite parallel between the conception of culture-text and that of hypertext: "One of the most important facets of literature (and one which also leads to difficulties in interpretation) is its reflexive nature. Individual poems constantly develop their meanings - often through such means as direct allusion or the reworking of traditional motifs and conventions, at other times through subtler means, such as genre development and expansion or biographical reference - by referring to that total body of poetic material of which the particular poems comprise a small segment."

Although it was not difficult to accumulate a hypertextually-linked data base consisting of poetic materials, Scholes and his group were more concerned with making it interactive - that is, they wanted to construct a "communal text" including not only the poetry, but also incorporating the comments and interpretations offered by individual students. In this way, each student in turn could read a work and attach "notes" to it about his or her observations. The resulting "expanded text" would be read and augmented at a terminal on which the screen was divided into four areas. The student could call up the poem in one of the areas (referred to as windows) and call up related materials in the other three windows, in any sequence he or she desired. This would powerfully reinforce the tendency to read in a nonlinear sequence. By this means, each student would learn how to read a work as it truly exists, not in "a vacuum" but rather as the central point of a progressively-revealed body of documents and ideas.

Hypertext is analogous to other forms of literary discourse besides poetry. From the very beginning of its manifestation as a computer program, hypertext was popularly described as a multidimensional text roughly analogous to the standard scholarly article in the humanities or social sciences, because it uses the same conceptual devices, such as footnotes, annotations, allusions to other works, quotations from other works, etc. Unfortunately, the convention of linear reading and writing, as well as the physical fact of two-dimensional pages and the necessity of binding them in only one possible sequence, have always limited the true potential of this type of text. One problem is that the reader is often forced to search through the text (or forced to leave the book and search elsewhere) for related information. This is a time-consuming and distracting process; instead of being able to move easily and instantly among physically remote or inaccessible areas of information storage, the reader must cope with cumbersome physical impediments to his or her research or creative work. With the advent of hypertext, it has become possible to move among related areas of information with a speed and flexibility that at least approach finally accommodating the workings of human intellect, to a degree that books and sequential reading cannot possibly allow. "The recombinant text in hypertextual form signifies the emergence of the perception of textual constellations that have always/already gone nova. It is in this uncanny luminosity that the authorial biomorph has been consumed."⁽²⁾ Barthes and Foucault may be lauded for theorizing the death of the author; the absent author is more a matter of everyday life, however, for the technocrat recombining and augmenting information at the computer or at a video editing console. S/he is living the dream of capitalism that is still being refined in the area of manufacture. The Japanese notion of "just in time delivery," in which the units of assembly are delivered to the assembly line just as they are called for, was a first step in streamlining the tasks of assembly. In such a system, there is no sedentary capital, but a constant flow of raw commodities. The assembled commodity is delivered to the distributor precisely at the moment of consumer need. This nomadic system eliminates stockpiles of goods. (There still is some dead time; however, the Japanese have cut it to a matter of hours, and are working on reducing it to a matter of minutes). In this way, production, distribution,

and consumption are imploded into a single act, with no beginning or end, just unbroken circulation. In the same manner, the online text flows in an unbroken stream through the electronic network. There can be no place for gaps that mark discrete units in the society of speed. Consequently, notions of origin have no place in electronic reality. The production of the text presupposes its immediate distribution, consumption, and revision. All who participate in the network also participate in the interpretation and mutation of the textual stream. The concept of the author did not so much die as it simply ceased to function. The author has become an abstract aggregate that cannot be reduced to biology or to the psychology of personality. Indeed, such a development has apocalyptic connotations - the fear that humanity will be lost in the textual stream. Perhaps humans are not capable of participating in hypervelocity. One must answer that never has there been a time when humans were able, one and all, to participate in cultural production. Now, at least the potential for cultural democracy is greater. The single bio-genius need not act as a stand-in for all humanity. The real concern is just the same as it has always been: the need for access to cultural resources.

"The discoveries of postmodern art and criticism regarding the analogical structures of images demonstrate that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their contexts may be, a relationship is formed. Restricting oneself to a personal relationship of words is mere convention. The bringing together of two independent expressions supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater possibility."⁽³⁾ The book has by no means disappeared. The publishing industry continues to resist the emergence of the recombinant text, and opposes increases in cultural speed. It has set itself in the gap between production and consumption of texts, which for purposes of survival it is bound to maintain. If speed is allowed to increase, the book is doomed to perish, along with its renaissance companions painting and sculpture. This is why the industry is so afraid of the recombinant text. Such a work closes the gap between production and consumption, and opens the industry to those other than the literary celebrity. If the industry is unable to differentiate its product through the spectacle of originality and uniqueness, its profitability collapses. Consequently, the industry plods along, taking years to publish information needed immediately. Yet there is a peculiar irony to this situation. In order to reduce speed, it must also participate in velocity in its most intense form, that of spectacle. It must claim to defend "quality and standards," and it must invent celebrities. Such endeavors require the immediacy of advertising - that is, full participation in the simulacra that will be the industry's own destruction.

Hence for the bureaucrat, from an everyday life perspective, the author is alive and well. S/he can be seen and touched and traces of h/is existence are on the covers of books and magazines everywhere in the form of the signature. To such evidence, theory can only respond with the maxim that the meaning of a given text derives exclusively from its relation to other texts. Such texts are contingent upon what came before them, the context in which they are placed, and the interpretive ability

of the reader. This argument is of course unconvincing to the social segments caught in cultural lag. So long as this is the case, no recognized historical legitimation will support the producers of recombinant texts, who will always be suspect to the keepers of "high" culture.

"Take your own words or the words said to be 'the very own words' of anyone else living or dead. You will soon see that words do not belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own. Poets are supposed to liberate the words - not to chain them in phrases. Poets have no words 'of their very own.' Writers do not own their words. Since when do words belong to anybody? 'Your very own words' indeed! and who are 'you'?" The invention of the video portapak in the late 1960s and early 70s led to considerable speculation among radical media artists that in the near future, everyone would have access to such equipment, causing a revolution in the television industry. Many hoped that video would become the ultimate tool for distributable democratic art. Each home would become its own production center, and the reliance on network television for electronic information would be only one of many options. Unfortunately this prophecy never came to pass. In the democratic sense, video did little more than super 8 film to redistribute the possibility for image production, and it has had little or no effect on image distribution. Any video besides home movies has remained in the hands of an elite technocratic class, although (as with any class) there are marginalized segments which resist the media industry, and maintain a program of decentralization.

The video revolution failed for two reasons - a lack of access and an absence of desire. Gaining access to the hardware, particularly post-production equipment, has remained as difficult as ever, nor are there any regular distribution points beyond the local public access offered by some cable TV franchises. It has also been hard to convince those outside of the technocratic class why they should want to do something with video, even if they had access to equipment. This is quite understandable when one considers that media images are provided in such an overwhelming quantity that the thought of producing more is empty. The contemporary plagiarist faces precisely the same discouragement. The potential for generating recombinant texts at present is just that, potential. It does at least have a wider base, since the computer technology for making recombinant texts has escaped the technocratic class and spread to the bureaucratic class; however, electronic cultural production has by no means become the democratic form that utopian plagiarists hope it will be.

The immediate problems are obvious. The cost of technology for productive plagiarism is still too high. Even if one chooses to use the less efficient form of a hand-written plagiarist manuscript, desktop publishing technology is required to distribute it, since no publishing house will accept it. Further, the population in the US is generally skilled only as receivers of information, not as producers. With this exclusive structure solidified, technology and the desire and ability to use it remain centered in utilitarian economy, and hence not much time is given to the technology's aesthetic or resistant possibilities. In addition to these obvious

barriers, there is a more insidious problem that emerges from the social schizophrenia of the US. While its political system is theoretically based on democratic principles of inclusion, its economic system is based on the principle of exclusion. Consequently, as a luxury itself, the cultural superstructure tends towards exclusion as well. This economic principle determined the invention of copyright, which originally developed not in order to protect writers, but to reduce competition among publishers. In 17th-century England, where copyright first appeared, the goal was to reserve for publishers themselves, in perpetuity, the exclusive right to print certain books. The justification, of course, was that when formed into a literary work, language has the author's personality imposed upon it, thereby marking it as private property. Under this mythology, copyright has flourished in late capital, setting the legal precedent to privatize any cultural item, whether it is an image, a word, or a sound. Thus the plagiarist (even of the technocratic class) is kept in a deeply marginal position, regardless of the inventive and efficient uses h/is methodology may have for the current state of technology and knowledge.

"What is the point of saving language when there is no longer anything to say?" The present requires us to rethink and re-present the notion of plagiarism. Its function has for too long been devalued by an ideology with little place in techno-culture. Let the romantic notions of originality, genius, and authorship remain, but as elements for cultural production without special privilege above other equally useful elements. It is time to openly and boldly use the methodology of recombination so as to better parallel the technology of our time.

<http://www.lewislacook.com/>

http://artists.mp3s.com/artists/385/lewis_lacook.html meditation, net art, poeisis: blog <http://lewislacook.blogspot.com/>

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Re: Raoul Unplugged

— Brian Stefans · 30 October 2002

Stefans defends his counterfeit New York Times page: not collage, which is "pretty obviously collage—there is glue involved," but "impersonating an officer," lifting "the recognizable skin of authority" and parading in it, doctored quotes and all.

Hi Lewis, Stephen, Tom, etc. -- thanks for the comments.

Re: collage, I'm not familiar with the laws of collage, but it seems to me what I did with the Times is very different from collage. It's more like impersonating an officer -- I lifted the entire "uniform" if you will, the recognizable skin of authority, and kind of paraded around in it without really explaining to anyone what I was doing. Collage as we know it is pretty obviously collage -- there is glue involved, some sort of frame, a little tearing, etc. But my page, outside of the URL, was pretty much the entire Times page with the alteration of the quotes.

This also leaves me open to slander -- or something like that -- since it's been generally perceived that I "made up" quotes for Tony Blair, etc., even though I didn't "write" a single word of the article. Tom Daschle, for instance, even though I think his words are quite amazing in my version of the story, would probably not be too happy with them, even though they would make him the Jim Morrison of South Dakota -- and from there, the presidency!

I'd be suprised to discover that the mere act of collage puts something in the public domain -- does that mean that were I to add "found" pictures, or add sentences from Moby Dick, to a new Stephen King novel, then the King novel becomes part of the public domain? That would be remarkable and of course I'd prefer it that way, but I don't think the argument holds water.

The URL that Lewis forwarded re: the Getty argument is very interesting, but as you can see, unless one is going to devote a portion of one's life to building a case against a large corporation, what you get is a lot of e-mails flying back and forth, though I haven't yet heard again from the Times -- I'm not even sure this person exists (it could just be Jeffrey Jullich). I have found other cease and desist letters by Nancy Richman online, though.

Here's Lewis's link again: <http://www.playdamage.org/getty/15.html> Re: Raoul being complicit with my actions -- if any of you out there know Raoul Vaneigem's email address, please pass it on! I like Stephen's musings re: the cartoon animal in the chase scene, and proliferating detournements -- it's funny that you read the theory of detournement coming back in everyone from Hakim Bey and the Critical Arts Ensemble (you can find out about them at the Autonomedia website), but it's not been picked up all that much by web artists, and certainly not by poets.

Here's the letter, by the way. I've deleted the phone number because I don't want anyone playing games here!

I am counsel to The New York Times Company, the owner of The New York Times on the Web at <http://www.nytimes.com>.

It has come to our attention that you have posted an altered version of the home page of the September 24, 2002 edition of nytimes.com at http://www.arras.net/blair_present-dossier.htm. While the page reproduces the nytimes.com template, including the day's advertisements, it replaces selected bylines and other features with content you have supplied. Most significantly, you have substantially changed the lead article to include long and rambling made-up quotes from British Prime Mininster Tony Blair regarding the need to act against Iraq, under the byline of Raoul Vaneigem.

The editors at the Times appreciate a good parody and would not take action against it. However, the subject matter of this particular page appears to be more serious in nature. Therefore, even though we are sure that your intent was non-malicious, we must inform you that your use of the Times's name, logos and home page design and layout constitutes trademark and copyright infringement.

While we respect your efforts to make a statement, we must ask that you do so in a manner that does not violate our proprietary rights, or the rights of our advertisers. Please remove the page from public display and confirm to us in writing within the next ten days that you will not use our home page in the future in this same way. If you would like to discuss this matter, please give me a call at 212- xxx xxxx. Thank you for your cooperation.

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If I say “programmatically poetry”...

— **Corey Frost** · 10 January 2003

Frost asks the list to name a practice it can't yet name: voice-recognition experiments, Goldsmith's mondegreens and week of transcription, Wershler-Henry's spam-bot text. What links them is the poet "giving up a degree of control" to a procedure. Programmatic? Conceptual? Process-oriented?

what do you think? Please mark a mental note of your immediate answer to the question in my subject line and then keep reading.

I'd like to ask for assistance in focussing some ideas, if I may. Many of the posters to this list write computer-code-based poetry or have things to say about it. Computer code is not exactly what I'm interested in, but I'm wondering what the larger context for that might be (what kind of poetry is it?), without expanding the boundaries of context to infinity: does it, for example, bear a relation to Oulipian practice? Lipograms? What about anagrams? The project that was just posted by Jeffrey Jullich in which the audiobook was fed through MS Word's voice recognition software? Kenneth Goldsmith's collection of mondegreens or his project in which he wrote down everything he said for a week? Darren Wershler-Henry's experiments with spam-bot poisoner program text? I know this is a pretty wide net, but what I see linking all these things is the poet giving up a degree of her/his control (actually, mostly his, it seems: I'd like to have some examples of women writing this way) in favour of some program or automated procedure, whether it is a set of rules (more restrictive than the rules of sonnets or haiku) or machinery... Is it reasonable to lump these things together? And if so would programmatically poetry be a fair name? Would conceptual poetry strike closer to the mark? Process-oriented? There is always a process, but in these projects the process is highlighted.

Any lipogrammatic or anagrammatic writer must face the question of whether a computer might not be more able to efficiently produce such texts, which are largely defined by the lexicon or paradigm available and by the syntactical constraints imposed — in other words, texts which are essentially the product of programs. Here's a quote from Christian Bök —author of the Oulipo-influenced Eunoia — "We may exalt the poets of the future, not because they can write great poems, but because they can program devices that can write great poems for us." (ubuweb) I don't think he was talking about code. Oulipo+cyber-poetry=? Other examples?

I'd appreciate your thoughts about these questions, or tell me why you think they are not the right questions.

Corey Frost

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The UbuWeb Anthology of Conceptual Writing

— UbuWeb · 6 April 2003

The announcement of Dworkin's UbuWeb anthology, framed by two questions: "What would a non-expressive poetry look like? A poetry of intellect rather than emotion?" Ancestry runs Stein and Beckett through Fluxus, with Cage, Bök, Acconci and Weiner on the contents page.

__ U B U W E B __
<http://ubu.com>

THE UBUWEB :: ANTHOLOGY OF CONCEPTUAL WRITING Edited and introduced by Craig Douglas Dworkin

What would a non-expressive poetry look like? A poetry of intellect rather than emotion? From the modernist experiments of Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett to the neodadaism of Fluxus, they hint at the range of alternatives and challenges that have been presented to the Romantic lineage of expressive poetry. This collection intends to both recall those traditions and complicate their multiple and intersecting histories. Includes works by Vito Acconci, Art + Language, John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Samuel Beckett, Christian Bök, George Brecht, Victor Burgin, Donald Burgy, John Cage, Hanne Darboven, Alan Davies, Dan Graham, Michael Harvey, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Tomoko Minami, Robert Morris, Taddea Oscuro, Paul Pechter, Adrian Piper, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Gertrude Stein, and Lawrence Weiner.

THE UBUWEB :: ANTHOLOGY OF CONCEPTUAL WRITING can be accessed at:
<http://ubu.com/concept/>

THE UBUWEB :: ANTHOLOGY OF CONCEPTUAL WRITING

TEXTS INCLUDE:

- Vito Acconci: 4 works. "RE"; ["READ THIS WORD"]; "Points for Motion"; "Installment/Installation: Move/Remove"
- Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin: "22 Sentences: The French Army"
- John Baldessari: "I will not make any more boring art"
- Robert Barry: 2 works. "Art Work"; ["This work has been and continues to be..."]
- Samuel Beckett: from Watt
- Christian Bök: 3 works. 10 Maps of Sardonic Wit; String Variables; Vowels

- George Brecht: 3 works. Word Event; 3 Aqueous Events; Chair Event
- Victor Burgin: Any Moment
- Donald Burgy: Checkup
- John Cage: Cheap Imitation; Tacet
- Hanne Darboven: ["eins zwei..."]
- Alan Davies: "A AN AV ES"
- Dan Graham: 2 works. Schema. [miles to...]
- Michael Harvey: card from White Papers
- Douglas Huebler: [vertical line]; .
- Joseph Kosuth: "Five Words in Red Neon"
- Tomoko Minami: 38 [PDF, 344k]
- Robert Morris: "A Method For Sorting Cows"
- Taddea Oscuro: [untitled proposal]
- Paul Pechter: "Proposal for Device entitled Discriminations"
- Adrian Piper: 2 works. [Untitled 1968 work]; "Here and Now"
- Robert Rauschenberg: "Portrait of Iris Clert"
- Richard Serra: [Verb List]
- Robert Smithson: A Heap of Language
- Gertrude Stein: from Five Words in a Line
- Lawrence Weiner: Tracce / Traces

THE UBUWEB :: ANTHOLOGY OF CONCEPTUAL WRITING

THE UBUWEB :: ANTHOLOGY OF CONCEPTUAL WRITING can be accessed at:
<http://ubu.com/concept/>

__ U B U W E B __
<http://ubu.com>

Pardon the cross-posting. Please forward to all.

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Kenneth Goldsmith

— Al Filreis · 17 September 2004

Filreis announces Goldsmith's appointment as Penn's Fellow in Poetics and his new seminar, "Uncreative Writing," whose description opens by declaring creativity "under attack, eroded by file-sharing, media culture, widespread sampling." A useful capsule bio of DAY, Fidget and Soliloquy follows.

Dear Buffalo list friends:

I am pleased to announce that Kenneth Goldsmith has been appointed this year's Fellow in Poetics & Poetic Practice at Penn's Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing. Among Kenny's activities as Fellow will be to teach a writing seminar called "Uncreative Writing" (the course description begins thus: "It's clear that long-cherished notions of creativity are under attack, eroded by file-sharing, media culture, widespread sampling, and digital replication. How does writing respond to this new environment?")

For more about the CPCW Fellow in Poetics & Poetic Practice, see

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/poeticsfellow.html>

For Kenny's EPC page, go to

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/goldsmith/>

For the recorded webcast of Kenny's September 21, 2000 visit to the Writers House, see

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~wh/webcasts/goldsmith.html>

Kenneth Goldsmith took a BFA in sculpture, is a visual artist of great range, publishes as an innovative poet and has created and continually edits what is by far the most comprehensive web site of visual, concrete and sound poetry (UbuWeb). His most recent work includes DAY, HEAD CITATIONS, and SOLILOQUY.

His earlier books and compact discs include Tizzy Boost, a collaboration with Bruce Andrews (1993); 73 Poems, published by Permanent Press (Brooklyn, NY, 1994) with essays by Robert Mahoney, John Schaefer, and Geoffrey Young; No. 111 2.7.96-19.20.96 (The Figures, 1997); and Fidget (Coach House Books, 2000). Fidget is Goldsmith's transcription of every movement made by his body during thirteen hours on Bloomsday (June 16), 1997. Originally commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art as a collaboration with vocalist Theo Bleckmann, Fidget attempts to reduce the body to a catalogue of mechanical movements by a strict act of observation. The online edition of Fidget at www.chbooks.com includes the full text, a self-running Java applet version written by programmer Clem Paulsen, and a selection of RealAudio recordings from Theo Bleckmann's vocal/visual performance at the Whitney on Bloomsday, 1998.

In her afterword to No. 111 2.7.96-19.20.96, Marjorie Perloff has written that it "is an encyclopedic poem based on words ending in the sound ah, a collection of words

drawn from conversation, books, phone calls, radio shows, newspapers, television and especially the internet, arranged alphabetically and by syllable count so as to create a Gargantuan poetic reference book or archive of the argot of our times."

Al Filreis Kelly Professor of English Faculty Director, the Kelly Writers House Director, the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing University of Pennsylvania <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis>

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Kenneth Goldsmith & Conceptual Poetics [call for papers]

— **Lori Emerson** · 31 January 2005

A brief note from Emerson passing along a call for papers on Goldsmith, "already shaping up to be a great special issue of Open Letter." Slight, but it marks the moment the academic machinery starts turning.

All: please feel free to pass this on to anyone you think might be interested in writing on Kenny Goldsmith--it's already shaping up to be a great special issue of Open Letter!

best, Lori

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Jack Raoul Does Kenneth Goldsmith (chap release)

— **Phil Primeau** · 15 June 2006

Primeau announces Jack Raoul's online chapbook, which retypes Section IX of Goldsmith's No. 111 "loyal to the parent text down to the letter." Billed as "half prank, half tribute, half treatise" — three halves — with more "boldly unrevised" sections promised.

PERSISTENCIA || June 2006

a NEW online CHAPBOOK

Section IX from No. 111.2.7.93-10.20.96 by Kenneth Goldsmith by Jack Raoul

In this exciting new publication, Jack Raoul reproduces the work of avant-garde uncreative poster boy Kenneth Goldsmith. Painstakingly copying Section IX of Goldsmith's *No. 111.2.7.93-10.20.96*, Raoul remains loyal to the parent text down to the letter. Half prank, half tribute, half treatise, this chapbook is now available online from PERSISTENCIA. Download and read for free here.* But wait, there's more! Raoul promises more boldly unrevised sections in the near future! Keep an eye out.

PR Primeau
PERSISTENCIA
Manager-in-Chief

Home: <http://persistenciapress.tripod.com>

E-chaps:

<http://www.freewebs.com/persistenciapress/> E-mail: [REDACTED]

*http://www.freewebs.com/persistenciapress/sectionix_jack%20raoul.pdf

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Kenneth Goldsmith Blogging About Conceptual Poetics & Uncreative Writing

— **UbuWeb** · 23 January 2007

Ubu flags a week of Goldsmith blogging at the Poetry Foundation, forwarding his own keyword list for the practice: "unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft... valuelessness, nutritionlessness and boredom in writing." The poet naming his own charges before anyone else can.

Kenneth Goldsmith will be blogging this week at the Poetry Foundation about conceptual poetics, uncreative writing. Topic will include: unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, information management, word processing, valuelessness, nutritionlessness and boredom in writing.

<http://poetryfoundation.org/dispatches/journals/index.html>

UbuWeb

<http://ubu.com>

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No press announces: Rob Fitterman and Nayland Blake

— **derek beaulieu** · 18 March 2008

*Beaulieu announces No press chapbooks by Fitterman: *The Sun Also Also Rises*, which erases Hemingway down to "only the phrases that begin with the pronoun 'I,'" plus a companion volume and Nayland Blake's own alternating version, born at a KGB Bar reading.*

No press is thrilled to announce the publication
of a suite of chapbooks of conceptual writing
by ROB FITTERMAN and NAYLAND BLAKE

*

THE SUN ALSO ALSO RISES by ROB FITTERMAN

(36 pp, sewn binding, full-colour covers)

When I was 13, my brother gave me a copy of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. It was my first foray into real Literature and I hated it. Even with little or no way to enter the novel, I dutifully slugged through it (I mean, what is cog-nak anyway?)

Years later, I have returned to revisit the relationship. In this version, I have erased my way through Hemingway's original text, leaving behind only the phrases that begin with the pronoun 'I.' - Rob Fitterman

*

MY SUN ALSO RISES by ROB FITTERMAN

(36 pp, sewn binding, full-colour covers)

My Sun Also Rises is a parallel companion to the The Sun Also Also Rises which translates my erased version of the Hemingway original into my own experience of moving to downtown Manhattan in 1981. - Rob Fitterman

*

ALSO ALSO ALSO RISES THE SUN by NAYLAND BLAKE

(48 pp, sewn binding, full-colour covers)

In November 2007, I was invited to perform in the kgb Bar Reading Series. Having just completed the two Hemingway pieces, I was eager to perform them, but I needed a second voice, a Hemingway. Happily, Nayland Blake agreed to read the Hemingway part, and we alternated chapters. In the process of rehearsing and thinking about this project, Nayland suggested that he might write his own version. His text, Also Also Also Rises The Sun-a beautiful, minimalist version-further opens the possibilities for reading the piece and for dispelling the authority of the "original." - Rob Fitterman

*

Produced in editions of 60 copies, these 3 chapbooks are available only in tandem with each-other (in numbered editions) for \$25 (postage included).

For ordering information, please contact derek beaulieu at 

*

Flanked between Shell Oil and Mobile Oil gas stations, Robert Fitterman was born in 1959 in Creve Coeur, Missouri-a rinky-dink suburb of St. Louis. Several of his books are collaborations with visual artists, including war, the musical with Dirk Rowntree. He lives in NYC with poet Kim Rosenfield and their daughter Coco. He teaches writing and poetry at NYU.

Nayland Blake is an artist, curator, educator, writer and investigator who lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. His work is represented by Matthew Marks Gallery New York, Fred London, Gallery Paule Anglim San Francisco. Since 2001 Blake has been the Chair of the International Center of Photography / Bard Masters Program in Advanced Photographic Studies.

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An “avant grade” of “Conceptual Poetics?” — Monkeys

— David Chirot · 29 May 2008

Chirot, prompted by news of a monkey moving a robotic arm by thought, asks whether this is "a new form of 'Conceptual Poetry?'" The reductio testing how far the category can stretch, haptic machines and all.

Is the monkey creating in proto a new form of "Conceptual Poetry?"

To telekinetically instruct and move the manipulations of a robotic arm & hand--

(There is already an ever more sophisticated production of Haptic machines, which can actually "feel by touch" and discriminate among varying elements and degrees of the qualities of surfaces.)

For those with cortical damage this is very great medical news-

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/05/29/healthscience/29brain.php> ---

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today through Saturday: UA Poetry Center Conceptual Poetry Symposium

— Tenney Nathanson · 29 May 2008

Nathanson forwards the schedule for Perloff's "blockbuster Conceptual Poetry Symposium" at the University of Arizona — the Tucson gathering the list will argue over for years afterward.

Here's the schedule for this week's blockbuster Conceptual Poetry Symposium at the UA Poetry Center (in Tucson), organized by Marjorie Perloff.

For more, you can go to <http://poetrycenter.arizona.edu/events/symposium.shtml>

please forward to any appropriate lists and individuals

apologies for cross-posting . . .

--Tenney Nathanson

SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, MARCH 29

4:00 p.m.

Reading with Charles Bernstein and Tracie Morris

5:00 p.m.

break for dinner

7:00 p.m.

Keynote Address with Marjorie Perloff

FRIDAY, MAY 30

9 a.m.

Session with Craig Dworkin

The Politics of Conceptual Writing. This seminar will investigate the politics of conceptual writing. Understanding politics broadly as relations of power, we will seek to better understand the way in which those relations are reconfigured by the various contexts in which conceptual writing practices might be read: plagiarism and copyright; new media and government surveillance; psychosis and medical diagnosis; publishing fads; the Situationists principle of detournement. Several case studies will be presented, followed by open participation.

10:15 a.m.

Session with Caroline Bergvall

Forms of Social Engagement. In this workshop, I will be looking at conceptual methods as they frame and favour socially engaged forms of writing. I will be using examples from my own work as well as from a few other writers/poets who work conceptually to set up a discussion around questions of personal history and poetic process; bilingualisms and writing engagement; language awareness and writing systems.

11:30 a.m.

Session with Kenneth Goldsmith

Uncreative Writing Workshop. It's clear that long-cherished notions of creativity are under attack, eroded by file-sharing, media culture, widespread sampling, and digital replication. How does writing respond to this new environment? This workshop will rise to that challenge by employing strategies of appropriation, replication, plagiarism, piracy, sampling, plundering, as compositional methods. Along the way, we'll look at the rich history of forgery, frauds, hoaxes, avatars, and impersonations spanning the arts, with a particular emphasis on how they employ language. Participants will be penalized for showing any trace of originality, sincerity or honesty.

12:30 p.m.

break for lunch

2:15 p.m.

Panel Discussion with featured poets moderated by Tenney Nathanson

4:00 p.m.

Session with Cole Swensen

What to do besides describe it: Ekphrasis that ignores the subject. The tradition of ekphrasis is based in evoking a work of art, of bringing it into the heart of the poem, and, traditionally, this is done through description. And this is all well and good, but

is it not a bit limiting? In this hour, we'll look beyond subject-matter to the many formal echoes between the visual arts and poetry: rhythm, juxtaposition, repetition, parallelism, and many other principles can help the writer engage a work of art in collaborative ways. Introductory comments supported by visual examples will be followed by an in-class writing exercise, so do bring writing materials.

5:15 p.m.

Reading with Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith

6:15 p.m.

break for dinner

8 p.m.

Reading with Cole Swensen, Christian Bk, Caroline Bergvall

SATURDAY, MAY 31

9 a.m.

Session with Tracie Morris

Black conceptual poetics: examples for crafting. In this workshop, we will look at ways in which identity is explored through the simultaneous use of conventional form and the freedom from it. How does freedom in and out of form present models of Black thinking and how does this illuminate an overarching American sense of self? We will analyze specific texts from African American artists and workshop ways in which our understanding of this text helps us in our own writing and editing.

10:15 a.m.

Roundtable Discussion with Marjorie Perloff, Moderator; Jesper Olsson; Marie Smart; Linda Reinfeld; Vanessa Place; Charles Alexander; Brian Reed

Noon

break for lunch

1:45 p.m.

Session with Christian Bk

Two dots over a vowel. Lest we dismiss the tactics of conceptual literature as nothing more than the mere symptoms of a creeping, literary necrosis, occasioned by the murder of the author at the hands of such postmodern theorists as Barthes, for example, or perhaps Foucault let us consider that this novel genre might strive to accent the disjunction between "intentionality" (_what we mean to mean_) and "expressiveness" (_what we seem to mean_). If the lyric voice, for the sake of an authentic sincerity, yearns to repair this breach between what we intend to say and what we appear to say then conceptual literature, by contrast, accentuates this discrepancy.

3:00 p.m.

Session with Charles Bernstein

Poetry Rules!: The Concept of Poetry. What is poetry? said jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer. The definitional question haunts and propels poetry. I will start with some aphoristic remarks on philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical approaches to the issue. Then I will present some case studies. By session end, we should be able to come up with some hard and fast rules for why there can't be hard and fast rules.

4:15 p.m.

Roundtable Discussion with Marjorie Perloff, Moderator; Barbara Cole; Wystan Curnow; Jonathan Stalling; Graa Capinha; Stephen Fredman; Laynie Browne

5:45 p.m.

break for dinner

evening reception tba

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essay by Chirot to go with works at the UA Poetry Center

— David Chirot · 30 May 2008

Chirot links his own symposium essay, "Conceptual Poetry and its Others," and reprints its premise: if the conceptual is "the absence of a material object," a conceptual poem would be "the absence of the poem as a 'realization' of its 'idea.'"

DAVID-BAPTISTE CHIROT: "Conceptual Poetry and its Others"---Haunting Questions Found Hidden in Plain Site/Sight/Cite

<http://davidbaptistechirot.blogspot.com/2008/05/conceptual-poetry-and-its-others.html>

Below are the opening paragraphs of this essay--if interested still, as it goes through many changes and has two appendices as further "evidences"-- go to the blog address above--

Note:I was invited to send Visual Poetry works to the Symposium on "Conceptual Poetry and its Others," along with artist's statements regarding the works. As a participant, to express my sense of and thankfulness for this, I decided it would be nice to include also a brief statement re the "Conceptual Poetics" under discussion.

Once started, so many ideas started flowing, and so many examples came to mind--travel literature of the 18th century, Shakespeare's Richard the Third, to name but two--that I had to draw line somewhere and stop. There is so much more to write however, once started--so these remarks and questions are but a small indication of the most basic beginnings of the myriad directions which are out there to be found--and ones already noted to set down in various forms and actions--

this essay is on display beside my works at the Symposium--persons interested may ask for a copy--

a few examples of further questions among ever so many more--

Why is "boring, unoriginal, impersonal work" promoted by "colorful personalities," just like any other product? Does this not create "a Line" produced by a Brand Name, the Original Author possessed of an "originality" in creating this "radical, new form"--to be marketed as "the latest thing," for the development of new jobs in English/ creative Writing Programs--the "newest way" to "make an impression" by the "original" creation of an impersonal boringness? Is this in itself a "new way" of mass producing standardized and conforming "conceptual poets" who "carry on" the work of the Great Originators?

*

Are monkeys controlling robotic arms with their thoughts on the way to creating a Conceptual poetry?--

What are the interrelationships of possibilities of Conceptual Poetry for use in Propaganda and advertising? For starting wars, altering Wikipedia, sending out false news items and etc etc-- * Haunting Questions Found Hidden in Plain Site/Sight/Cite

for the Symposium "Conceptual Poetry and its Others"

Poetry Center of the University of Arizona

29-31 May 2008

*

* J'ai trop a ecrire, c'est pourquoi je n'ecrive rien. --Stendhal, Journal, 1804

Thoughts come at random, and go at random. No device for holding on to them or for having them. A thought has escaped: I was trying to write it down: instead I write that it has escaped me.

--Pascal, Pensees, #542

To find among typos the unknown writings, the "Helltoy"-- camouflaged clouds, the voice-writings of the ground itself that speaks and moves in lines emerging--

for Petra Backonja

* * I find in thinking with what a Conceptual Poetry might be, that I've begun with a point of view of paradox. That is, considering the conceptual to be the absence of a material object, a conceptual poetry would be the absence of the poem as a "realization" of its "idea." If "the poem" as an object is not to be realized, in what ways may it then be said to "exist"?

One may also asksince language is the material of poetry, if one is to create a conceptual poetrydoes this mean then that the absence of language is involved? That the poetry is not in language, but found elsewhere?

The predominant view of conceptual works in art and poetry is that it is written language which becomes foregrounded, most often as the "realization" and presentation of various directives, with their various forms of pre-conceived constraints, and sets of instructions. Yet does not the written language itself, as an object which "constitutes" the directives and instructions, contradict the "concept" of the "Conceptual?"

{See Appendix B below for some other "Science Fiction" aspects of Conceptual Poetry in Relation to the Work Place.)

The directives themselves, expressed in written language, become road blocks to the Conceptual which is supposed to be "activated" by their instructions.

To use written language then to create a conceptual poetry is not in a strict sense "conceptual" at all, if it produces yet another object in written language.

It becomes instead a piling up, a massing, of materials (language, words) which have "walled out" as it were, the conceptual. Are the words then simply a gravestone or monument to a now absent concept?

And what of the "poet" who is the "author" of "Conceptual Poetry?"

A builder of roadblocks, a maker of monuments and gravestones--?

If a "poet" is the conceiver of concepts and the realization of the concept as a poem is no longer a concept but an object does this then mean that the poet, in order to be "conceptual," must no longer be a "poet?" Or in order to be a "poet," no longer be "conceptual" in approach? And yet who but a "conceptual poet" can produce "conceptual poetry?"

Perhaps true Conceptual Poetry is the creation of illiterates?

And, beyond that, persons who may even be very limited in their "Conceptual capacities?"

I think often of all the Conceptual Poets and Artists who have existed and worked through thousands of years, persons due to their circumstances --gender being the most common among these--who are not allowed to know how to write, nor instructed in "art," nor permitted to be educated, yet all the same--may have produced Conceptually a good deal of the greatest Poetry and Art of which there does not remain and never was an "object," even as a "fragment."

What of these myriads of centuries of Conceptual Works--are they still existing--? Are they alive in the Conceptual realm? The Ether? Or have they found ways on their own, independent of their creators, of camouflaging themselves among those things in the world which are hidden in plain site/sight/cite?

In working with the found that is hidden in plain site/sight/cite, I find often that a Conceptual poetry and art is there--always already there--which I think I am finding yet may well be finding me,

Some aspects of confronting these dilemmas, these "haunting questions," are found among Conceptual Poets who emphasize an "impersonation" via performance, camouflages, costumes, the uses of heteronyms, pseudonyms and anonymity.

In "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire is the first to define Modernism and does so as a conjunction of the eternal and the ephemeral. To find that element of the eternal in the ephemeral which Baudelaire saw as embodying modernity, he turns to an emphasis on the particular form of the living art/art as living of the Dandy. The Dandy is the non-separation of art and life in the conceiving of one's existence as Performance Art. The Dandy becomes not an expression of Romantic personality and individuality, but a form of becoming an animated Other, an impersonator going about performing the actions of a concept, rather than producing the objects of a conception.

This stylized impersonating, non-producing figure begins to appear "dramatically" in the works of Wilde and Jarry and in many ways in the "life and works" of a Felix Feneon, who "creates at a distance" via anonymous newspaper *faits divers* (discovered to be his and republished posthumously as *Novels in Three Lines*), pseudonymous articles in differing registers of language (working class argot, standardized French) in Anarchist and mainstream journals, unsigned translations, and the barely noted in their own pages of his editing of journals featuring the early efforts of rising stars of French literature. Quitting his camouflaged and concealed writing activities, Feneon works the rest of his life as a seller in an art gallery.

The actual "works" of Feneon, then, are not written objects per se, but anonymous actions, ephemeral pseudonymous "appearances in print," and the works of others which he affects a passage for in his editorship and translations, in his promoting and selling the art works of others. This "accumulation" which one finds "at a distance" in time as his "complete works," is often unobserved and unknown to his contemporaries, who know of him primarily via his "way of acting," his manner of dressing, his speech mannerisms, and as the public triptych of images of him existing as a painted portrait by Seurat, a Dandy-pose photo and a mug shot taken when tried as part of an Anarchist "conspiracy." Feneon's "identity as a writer" does not exist as "an author," but as a series of "performances," "appearances" and "influences," many of them "unrecognized" and "unattributed."

Ironically, it his most "clandestine" activityhis Anarchist activitieswhich brings him the most in to the public and tabloid spotlight. As one of "The Thirty" accused and tried for "conspiracy" in a much publicized trial, it is Feneon's severe mug shot that for a time presents his "public face."

The severe mug facing the viewer is actually producing a Conceptual Poetry "at a distance." By not penning a single line, by simply "facing the music" to which others pen the lyrics, Feneon, in doing nothing more than facing the camera "capturing" his image, proceeds to enact a series of dramas "projected" on to him, a series of "identities," and "revelations" which use the documentary material to produce a series of mass-published fictions.

The possible prison term facing the "Felix Feneon" in the inmate-numbered "anonymous" mug shot, "presents its face" to the viewer, a face "taken," "imprisoned" and "caught" by the image and its publicity. This publicized face facing camera and viewer and possible hard time, is "taken to be" the photo of the face of a being from whom the mask of the clandestine and conspiratorial have been torn off, revealing "the cold hard truth" of Felix Feneon.

Facing trial, however, all that is learned of this imprisoned face is that it is "the wrong man, an innocent man." This fixed image, acquitted of its "sensational" charges, is revealed not as a truth, but instead as simply a mask, a mask operating like a screen or blank sheet of paper, onto which are projected the dramas, fictions and "think piece" writings of others. Nothing is revealed other than an "identity" which shifts, travels, changes from one set of captions to another. It is via these captions written by others under his image in the papers and placards, that Feneon continues his "writing at a distance." Simply by facing the camera, facing charges, "facing the music," facing his accusers at trial and facing the verdict and judgment, Feneon is "writing" a myriad captions, breaking news items, commentaries, editorials, all of which change with wild speeds as they race to be as "up-to-minute" as the events themselves are in "unfolding."

The professionals, these writers, these journalists and reporters of "reality," chase desperately, breathlessly, after the unfolding drama in which the mug shot is "framed," and in so doing produce texts of "speculative fiction," a serial Conceptual Poetry with as its "star player" a writer whose own texts are deliberately written to be unrecognized, hidden, camouflaged, unknown. And all the while, this writer writing nothing is producing vast heaps of writing via the work of others, as yet another form of camouflaged clandestine Conceptual Poetry, "hot off the press."

Rimbaud writes of a concept of the poetry of the future in which poetry would precede action which in a sense he proceeds to "perform" himself. If one reads his letters written after he stopped writing poetry, one finds Rimbaud living out, or through, one after another of what now seem to be "the prophecies" of his own poetry. That is, the poetry is the "conceptual framework" for what becomes his "silence" as a poet, and is instead his "life of action."

In these examples, one finds forms of a "conceptual poetry" in which the poetry is in large part an abandonment of language, of words, of masses of "personally signed" "poetry objects," "poetry products." One finds instead a vanishing, a disappearance of both language and "poet" and the emergence of that "some one else" Rimbaud recognized prophetically, preceding the action--in writing in the "Lettre du voyant," "the Seer's letter" as "I is an other."

An interesting take on a conceptual poetry in writing is found in one of Pascal's Pensees, #542:

"Thoughts come at random, and go at random. No device for holding on to them or for having them. A thought has escaped: I was trying to write it down: instead I write that it has escaped me."

The writing is a notation of the "escaped" concept's absence, its escape that is a line of flight that is a "flight out of time" as Hugo Ball entitles his Dada diaries. Writing not as a method of remembering, of "capturing thought," but as the notation of the flight of the concept at the approach of its notation.

Writing, then, as an absence an absence of the concept. A Conceptual Poetry of writing as "absent-mindedness"! A writing which does nothing more than elucidate that the escaping of thoughts "which come at random, and go at random" has occurred.

This flight of the concept faced with its notation indicates a line of flight among the examples of Rimbaud "flight into the desert" as it were, of silence as a poet and of Feneon the flight into anonymous writing of very small newspaper "faits divers" items punningly entitled "Nouvelles en trois lignes" (News/Novels in Three Lines), of pseudonymous writings in differing guises at the same time according to the journals in which they appear, and as translator and editor as well as "salesperson" in a gallery of "art objects," a conceptual masquerader among the art-objects embodying "concepts" and becoming no longer "concepts" but "consumer items." Feneon's framed mug shot on to whose mug is projected a "serial crime novel," written by others and "starring" the mug in the mug shot, a writer of unknown and unrecognized texts who now vanishes into a feverish series of captions and headlines.

Anonymity, pseudonyms, impersonations, poets who write their own coming silence and "disappearance" as an "I is an other," the deliberately unrecognized and unrecognizable poet whose mug shot becomes the mass published and distributed "crime scene" for police blotters and headlines, speculative fictions and ideological diatribes, the writing which is a notation of the flight of the concept, the writing of non-writers who "never wrote a word," yet whose concepts may be found camouflaged, doubled, mirrored, shadowed, anonymously existing hidden in plain sight/cite these nomadic elements which appear and disappear comprise a Conceptual Poetry in which the concepts and poets both impersonate Others and reappear as "Somebody Else," an Other unrecognized and unrecognizable found hidden in plain site/sight/cite.

"It is not the elements which are new, but the order of their arrangement," is another Pascalian "pensee." One finds arrangements of the elements of Rimbaud and Feneon into the various forms of "conceptual poetry" in the works of Pessoa, Spicer and Yasusada. Pessoa creates many others as poets, heteronyms with their own works and actions, their own concepts of poetry. Spicer "translates" poetry "after Lorca" as well as exchanging letters with the dead poet, lives for a summer with his ghost, who provides a foreword to Spicer's Book.

for more turn to the blog address--

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Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center)

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 1 June 2008

Nemet-Nejat takes up Chirot's paradox and sharpens it: when the idea becomes the thing itself, "the conceptual poem is the most platonic of all poems, the actual 'poems' being illusions." The poetry lives "in the space between/among words."

David,

"I find in thinking with what a Conceptual Poetry might be, that I've begun with a point of view of paradox. That is, considering the conceptual to be the absence of a material object, a conceptual poetry would be the absence of the poem as a "realization" of its "idea." If "the poem" as an object is not to be realized, in what ways may it then be said to "exist"?"

When the idea becomes the "thing in itself," it becomes a conceptual poem. To say a conceptual poem exists in itself is to say that ideas exist. The conceptual poem is the most platonic of all poems, the actual "poems" being illusions.

"One may also ask since language is the material of poetry, if one is to create a conceptual poetry does this mean then that the absence of language is involved? That the poetry is not in language, but found elsewhere?

The poetry is in the space between/among words. Words, in a conceptual poem, are demarcations (or thinned out scratches), pointing to outside themselves.

In a "purest" conceptual poem, the signifier (the word) turns into a signified for which the signifier barely exists (only as a relic, in your case, as a found, deserted object). The heart of a conceptual poem is, in my view, in that disappearance.

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center)

— Barry Schwabsky · 1 June 2008

Schwabsky poses the disarmingly plain question: if "conceptual poetry" borrows from conceptual art's foregrounding of language, and poetry is already made of language, then "what distinguishes 'conceptual poetry' from just 'poetry'?"

Am I right in thinking that the phrase "conceptual poetry" is modeled on the earlier "conceptual art"? If so, and if conceptual art is broadly speaking an art that foregrounds language (Weiner, Kosuth, Art & Language, etc.) then does that make "conceptual poetry" poetry that likewise foregrounds language? But in that case, what distinguishes "conceptual poetry" from just "poetry"?

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Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center)

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 1 June 2008

Nemet-Nejat's one-line answer to Schwabsky: as conceptual art moved away from oil and stone toward words, conceptual poetry means "a movement away from the traditional material of poetry, which is words."

Barry,

Very sharp observation. If conceptual art means a movement away from the traditional material of art, oil, stone, etc., toward words, conceptual poetry means a movement away from the traditional material of poetry, which is words.

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center)

— Troy Camplin · 3 June 2008

Camplin's four-word intervention: "Words are concepts, so all poetry is conceptual." The dismissal that ends the debate by denying it ever had a distinction to make.

Troy Camplin

Words are concepts, so all poetry is conceptual.

Troy Camplin

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Re: essay by Chirot (UA Poetry Center)

— Ryan Daley · 3 June 2008

Daley answers the theory not with argument but with a machine-generated pastiche — a poem in which "Poems are made of images of trolls kersnoodling" — parody standing in for rebuttal and plainly having more fun.

I'm going to call this one, Charless Sloat, because it reminds me of him. We sometimes write differently.

Charless Sloat

Poems are made of trolls. Poems are made of images of trolls kersnoodling Poems flicker are made of images of kersnoodling trolls images Poems imagine claims that trolls even kersnoodle Claims hope their handlers know to kersnoodle Claims provide trolls poems with even images Therefore, trolls are what poems made of kersnoodling.

Re: The “originality” of appropriation vs the mass media

— David Chirot · 22 July 2008

Chirot reframes the appropriation debate as political before aesthetic, invoking "torture... prisons, web censorship... surveillance" and, crucially, unequal access "to the Internet, to electricity, to cables, to education" — while his sentences keep dissolving toward the essay he can't stop writing.

Dear Murat:

Many thanks for your reply in ongoing conversation--

i spent some days in writing in return-- i keep trying to write responses & they all begin to turn into essays or parts of the "annals of the new extreme experimental poetry"--

i think that in light of the proliferations of torture, of prisons, of web censorship's and controls, surveillance and altering daily of sites, along with massive dissemination of disinformation, the question of "radical isolation" is being reframed in a great number of new ways and at an ever greater pace-- as well as the question of who has access to the Internet, to electricity, to cables. to education, in the first place-- these are questions i find too little addressed as yet, though an awareness of them is growing probably by the minute--

these issues present new challenges & questions--related to the directions societies are taking in all aspects of "freedoms of speech, the press"--and ones on line have been having anincreasing effect on publishing in the print worlds--

in the following I mention these as pieces which are directly related to many of the issues being discussed--

David-Baptiste Chirot "Haunting Questions Found Hidden In Plain Site/Sight/Cite" with visual Works & Statement for Symposium on Conceptual Poetry and its Others

"Virtuality as Transcendentalism in Reverse"

<http://davidbaptistechirot.blogspot.com/search?q=virtuality+as+transcendentalism+in+reverse>

Poems from Guantnamo

"Non Poetry for Non Readers"

Kaurab Translation Site

David-Baptiste Chirot: "Waterboarding & Poetry" Wordforword #13

I think that before ownership there is definition-- the boundary lines, the extents and depths, of an idea, a person, a place an event--have to be mapped and defined in order for them to be "owned," for there to be the act of "naming and claiming"--

One of the components of mapping and defining in this sense is that is made with reference to some authority-- as in writing that "one writes for no one," the authority of Benjamin was invoked (by yourself), and that of Spicer for "no one listens to poetry."

Hypertext, rather than being "the death of the author" and lacking in ownership, is simply a reinscription of the author "under another guise," and is owned very much indeed by a series of "utilities," corporations, program designers and producers of soft ware, etc. Without electricity there is no hypertext at all, let alone a web, an Internet. Electricity is owned and controlled and is not available to all, It can be shut off and on as an instrument of death and disease as in Gaza, or for non payment of the bill, ever more common right here in Milwaukee. Libraries, public computers-- all these are diminishing in number and amount of time allowed on line to the individual otherwise without access. Electricity, the Internet, can also be be bombed out of existence as power grids, as in Serbia and Iraq, or entirely severed, line line, cable by cable, as in Rwanda, in preparation for the Genocides.

Access to the web is controlled also, and is a control which is being given new methods with which to deny, to restrict and alter access in terms of "profiles," "suspicious activities," "alien contacts," or simply having "a suspicious looking name."

Daily on the web, there are linkages which vanish, removed for a wide variety of reasons, or, being contacted, have been altered substantially by hackers, as individuals or as members of groups dedicated to various projects of "revisionism," "redacting," rewriting and remapping landscapes, histories, peoples and events.

Hypertext does involve authorship as well as ownership in that the linkages themselves that are selected to create the Hypertext evidence an "author" in charge of the programming which controls the selections of links, the means by which they are connected, and the over all point which is made, which is arrived at. And the idea that "one writes for no one" on the web has been pretty much made impossible by the passage into law of al the formerly illegal eavesdropping, let alone the addition of even more "freedoms" in the "freedom" to make "unfree" the web by corporations and governments, secret agencies and the military.

There is a great difference between a "radical isolation" which is chosen, and one which is enforced. And beyond "radical isolation," there is something more radical yet--the refusal by writers to write in writing, and the means by which writings may exist in writing yet be read as non writing, and so become non writings for non readers.

Another form of writing that creates its own readers by making them non readers of a writing it has taken possession of, and made into a form of "radically isolated" writing rapidly becoming a non read non writing, , is "Benjamin's Baudelaire." This fictional figure for a great many readers in the English speaking world, has come to replace the actual Baudelaire, whose writings become non writings for non readers

who have turned their entire reading in Baudelaire's regard to that of Benjamin's writings of Benjamin's Baudelaire.

Surrounded by the heavy weight of documentations, of quotations, invested with the authority of a philosopher/critic far more acceptable to many readers than the actual Baudelaire and his actual poetry, "Benjamin's Baudelaire" is a "fictional" "philosophical" construct who becomes "more real" than the ever dimmer receding "image" of the poet.

The "radical isolation" of "one who writes for no one," paradoxically makes of Baudelaire this figure, while Benjamin becomes the one who readers turn to for "Benjamin's Baudelaire," a figure far more acceptable and "comprehensible" than Baudelaire as a person and poet.

Of course, Benjamin did not intend this--"Benjamin's Baudelaire" is the creation of a great number of persons, who are at the same time in a sense also also reinscribing Benjamin from one position to another in ways which can be at variance with the writings and thought of Benjamin himself.

Jack Spicer, with *After Lorca*, writes a much different form of encounter with the writing of an other poet. "Benjamin's Baudelaire" indicates an ownership of the figure that the philosopher/critic's readers/critics have created, while "After Lorca" means that Spicer is finding ways to respond with the poetry of Lorca, not only in terms of Baudelairean "Correspondances," but also as letters in a written "correspondence" with a dead poet who is also for a summer a lover and a ghost.

"After Lorca" is a way of writing "after effects," of the "ending of an affair," and the ending of the correspondence. These "after effects" of the dead poet/departed lover create the introductory note to the book penned by Lorca. Already in an "uncertain terrain," the reader is unmoored from being able to ascertain "with certainty" where "After Lorca" "ends" and Spicer begins--that is, are the poems "After Lorca," simply that, and in no way at all "actual translations of actual poems?"

After Lorca is extended from this "realm of uncertainty" by the Yasusada writings, in which the fictional Yasusada determines to write works "After Spicer." These works will, like *After Lorca*, contain the correspondences of Yasusada with Spicer, and inact "After" effects of Spicer's writings in those of the fictional Japanese poet. Where Spicer eschews the use of "supporting documentation," the Yasusada poet is supplied with a bevy of "scholarly and critical notes," as though to create a much smaller version of those documentations and allusions which surround the figure of "Benjamin's Baudelaire."

From "Benjamin's Baudelaire" to Spicer's *After Lorca* to Yasusada's *After Spicer*, one moves through an ever expanding series of the "After effects" of "dead authors" (Baudelaire, Lorca, Spicer, Yasusada is "already dead" himself at the "discovery and opening" of his texts, and learns of Spicer's death right after having written to him the first time.)

Rather than a "death of the author," dead authors find themselves experiencing the "posthumous existences," "After Lives," in their "After effects" among the writings of others. These reverberations of Melville's "shock of recognition" that travels the world round, create rippling effects that travel, like those from a stone thrown in a pond--outwards from their continually shifting "centers," creating "spheres" not unlike that of Pascal's image of God: a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere. These rippling "After effects" know no "bounds of sentient existence," and so do not experience "death," but continually appear, disappear, reappear as ghosts, as fictions, as "impersonations," and as actors playing their "part" in re-stagings of the "drama of their lives and works."

One finds the presences of lost, forgotten, hidden, "dead" beings , events and writings via an awareness of these "After effects" which are found all around one, as Whitman found in the Leaves of Grass the tongues of the "sleepers."

There are writers and writings which announce that they are giving voice to those silenced within history. A different way is to find among things in the world those evidences of the actions expressed as "After effects," and by working with them, begin to hear, read, write with these the emergence of the words of the "dead," the ghosts, the fictional ones. Generated by the "shock of recognition," the collaborations of "the living and the dead" find among the unread non-writings "Correspondances" and correspondences creating linkages in which it is neither one singly that speaks and writes, but this Other.

(This is what the rubBEings i have been working with for almost a decade now are. This found non writings hidden in plain site/sight/cite i have worked with when confined in cramped and controlled "non interesting" places, while homeless and sleeping among them, inside of every structure, and outside, all around. As "overlooked" "Unseen" non writings, one begins with working with things which are themselves in a kind of "radical isolation" and in turn, the things one makes with them--as far as one had any thought of it, one doubted there would ever be an audience other than passersby and police officers, property owners and viewers who expressed delight and moved on. To work in full view and be at the same time working in a sense with an "unknown non art form" --known when known at all as an ancient method of copying, indeed the very first "copier machine!"--one realizes often that "who an audience might be" is "unthinkable" in a sense, as what one is finding is more than likely not of any interest to anyone, except to oneself and these collaborators one is working with. One is working with--the excitement of finding--as where it is going, one has no idea other than places of "an outside," where there is a sense of freedom in being in an area without any DEFINITIONS.)

There's a paradox at the heart of quoting well known writers to the effect that "one writes for no one," and that "no one listens to poetry," in that these words are in fact "speaking to a great many, and especially oneself." The words in turn are a sign that one is not writing for "no one," but rather for that as yet "unknown reader." "No one" can in effect also mean "no particular one," which is to say "many" rather than simply a "one" as a specific and limited "one."

Taking these words to heart as a writer means one is using as examples persons who, though writing for no one or saying that no one listens to poetry, are themselves the proof of the contrary. This enables one to believe that though one is writing for no one and/or no one listens to poetry, there will be persons for whom one writes, and ones who do listen to poetry.

For are not these writers quoted the very proof of this? And, quoting them, does not one lay bare one's belief in this same thing being possible for one's self and one's writings? That is, by virtue of these examples, one takes hope--

The very setting of words to a surface--rock, paper, wood, glass, plastic, anything in short including sands which are washed away--indicates a writing for some one to at some point find it.

After all, person who really did write for no one--would have left no quotes to this effect behind them. There would be no writing at all there to find.

Of course, there exist incredible tonnages of unread writings and unheard poetries in the world, whose unreadabilities and unheard poetries are so because they do not fit into the defined boundaries and tastes of what is readable, what is poetry. Some are those in the long parades of writings and poetries discovered only later on,, when the definitions are more welcoming to them, or, are poetries and writings once considered fabulously readable and poetic which have fallen out of fashion or interest and so taken up residence among the archives of the forgotten.

There are also a great many writings existing at al times which are unread or considered non poetries, not listened to, which are so because of the readers and readings who may on the one hand have yet to learn how to read them, or, on the other hand, because the writings and poetries do not want to be read or heard yet to walk among the non readers and no listeners as a sign of refusal of them in their state of non reading and non listening.

And yet again, are those writings and poetries which are never committed to writing in the first place, and among which may be some of the greatest works ever created, yet, having been created by those forbidden through thousands of years from learning to read or write, they have existed only in the minds of their creators, and perhaps, here and there, as spoken to others who have gone on to forget them, or recalled but small bits and pieces.

There are also writers like one in a series of stories I am writing and others in essays which are interested in this, which participate in the refusal of writing so that it does not fall into the hands of others. Or simply as a refusal of writing, while al the while writing elsewhere--in the mind or in other forms which are not recognized as writing.

In an essay written for the recent Symposium conceptual Poetry and its Others, one of the figures noted in this regard is that of Bartleby the Scrivener whose job it is to be a copy clerk yet faced with his task, "would prefer not to" write down a single mark. This conception of writing has interested me for along time, hence the

thinking of the untold number of writings through history written by humans which were never in writing due to all manner of reasons preventing them from knowing how to write at all, as well as all sorts of writings by writers who were not allowed to write, leading to another group, those writers who write a writing which is meant to be unread, even when a person is actually reading it.

These ideas lead one to strange areas where the fictional and the factual exist alongside each other as a paradoxical writing re un writings and non writings and unread and unreadable writings. Moving along in these areas, one's hope is to find others who are interested in these questions. I had read in an Introduction to a book by Cesar Aira written by Roberto Bolano of an author named Enrique Vila-Matas.

Ever on the lookout for something by this author besides what found on line, one day I came across an old issue of Grand street in a dollar bin, and in it were excerpts from Bolano's Distant Star, a great favorite of mine, and one from a book by Vila-Matas--which turned out to be from Bartleby and Company--taking Bartleby as I had done as a figure of a writer who does not write, who refuses to write. . In this way a fictional non writing writer leads one to a writer who shares the same interests and starting point for similar meditations, and who also mixes the fictional with the factual in the study of writing to do with the unwritten --and the unreadable--as a form of writing.

If one writes with a sense that known and even very well known writers have written that they write for no one, and of poets who write that no one listens to poetry, then one is beginning really from the premise that one actually is writing for someone, somewhere, sometime.

That hope which is thrown out into the oceans as the "message in a bottle" is implied in the very act of the writing which entertains this premise. In this sense, one is working with writing which is recognized at the start as being one which has enough in it of what is recognized as writing to be found, possibly, someday, as indeed writing that is readable and so becomes classified among the world's writings.

In a sense then, one is still imprisoned in objects which can be recognized by the definitions of writing that are acceptable, or, being close enough to these, will at some point hopefully be so.

Rather than being "a writing for no one" written in "radical isolation," it is a writing which is written within a writing that one acknowledges being part of, and so hopes that with the passage of time, maybe very short, maybe a bit longer, being carried in the flows of this writing, its 'message in a bottle' will be found, and found to be acceptable and easily read.

"Acceptance," to have one's writing be "accepted," even if one was thinking that one was writing for "no one," is this not a paradox which the question of unwritten writings begins to open? What begins to take place once one thinks not of acceptance, but of refusal, to consider unwritten writings as a refusal to write at all,

or, if forced to write, to write in such a way that it is a refusal of readability according to the definitions of those who are forcing one to write?

A Russian artist notes that "Language is a fascism not because it silences, but because it forces one to speak."

The rejection of silence and forcing of speech--is the function of torture. Even though it has long been well known that torture rarely forces a speaking which "tells the truth," torture remains very much in use. So what is the purpose then? As the earliest of torturers could tell the current ones, it is not what the speaker is forced to speak, it is simply that the speaker is forced to speak that accomplishes the mission of torture.

Where once one might speak of a "tortured prose," there is now the availability of "torture's prose or poetry." The latter is considered a form of "false speech" or writing as it is produced under duress, is forced--even if truly confessional, unlike "confessional poetry," it is denied the possibility of being a truth which is a readily given one, and so distanced from a "Truth value." Yet, being unreadable in such terms, hence being a kind of non-writing, may there not be even here a non written writing which is going on that is being created, not as a code to elude the conceptions of readability of the torturers, of which they are continually in fear, but of a non writing of a different kind, a non writing in writing which is a refusal of readability, a non writing which is a writing outside of codes which can always be suppressed or deciphered?

Forced to write, how then does writing refuse to be "in" the writing that results, and at the same time refuse to be in codes which may be readable by someone?

In a time in which the Internet and all communications are transparent, spied on, listened to and read, and in which prisons fill with unprecedented numbers of people and of unprecedented size are proliferating--(with America leading the way in numbers and percentage of population in the prisons system, and Gaza leading in size and numbers of a single prison)--and in which the uses of torture, disinformation, faked footage, planted evidences and tampered witnesses expands daily--an examination of these writings of refusal, these refusals of writing in terms defined by the Security and Police forces of the cultures of varying societies, is needed.

In a world in which writing is continually "under observation" and more and more forms of language turn into doublespeak--the need to find other ways of writing and reading the simplest words and phrases opens--while around it so much else is closing and being closed off.

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Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history?

— David-Baptiste Chirot · 1 November 2008

Chirot, quoting Burroughs on "words whose intentions are fugitive," argues that translation and appropriation make "meta-narratives" rather than copies — and warns that work "camouflaged" as artistic can be "directed in more sinister directions." Always "more than two sides to a story."

In a note regarding the appended glossary at the book's end, William S Burroughs in his Introduction to Junkie (1953) writes: "A final glossary, therefore, may not be made of words whose intentions are fugitive."

One aspect of both translation and appropriation is precisely that what is done with the original text is NOT to copy, as Murat notes, but indeed to create meta-narratives of and/or with/for them, and not necessarily parallel ones, either.

This last point, for me at any rate, is important to keep in mind, for in examining the questions of translations and appropriations, one needs to remain aware of the possibilities for these to be used in ways which, while being "camouflaged" perhaps as "artistic," may instead be directed in more sinister directions. As usual, there are a good many more than "two sides to a story," and it is in fact this very potentiality, these many possibilities, and the uncertainty principle in regards to which are being activated--that makes the activity of working with as well as studying such materials a more complex and subtly varieagted one than may at first be supposed.

For example, in referring to Walter Benjamin and his "Arcades Project," Murat notes Benjamin's envisioning a work made entirely of quotations, which would be an aspect of the philosopher's conception of an "ideal language."

To open some of the myraid possibilities in any given moment in the act/work of appropriation and/or translation, let's use for a few moments the point of view of Burroughs' words whose intentions are fugitive.

The figure of "Benjamin's Baudelaire," which has become a more familiar and preferred "Baudelaire" for many English speaking readers than the actual (so to speak) Baudelaire and his actual works, is a "living example" of this form of "ideal language" functioning in the direction of a totalizing system, in which the "colonization" of the past is carried out in order to draw from it the indications of the immediate or eventual triumph of the translator/appropriator's ideology/theology/theory of preference. That is, one amasses and arranges the objects and quotations of the past in such a way as to become the accurate predictors of a future envisioned via rear projection and reverse engineering. Thus, perhaps, a new form of astrology may be created as well as "theses on history."

One might look at this from the point of view of a language "whose intentions are fugitive" and recognize in this "ideal language" the dream of an entropic steady state of "security" in all senses of the word, in which the desire for a homogeneity is realized.

One may examine both translations and appropriations in terms of what frame the translator/appropriator is working to insert the "original" work into. That is, the frame of the translator/appropriator's conception of an "ideal language," whether of poetry, history, ideology, theory etc. within the language and society in which they would like their translation/appropriation to "succeed," to "convince the reader of the value of the work beyond its original words and tongue."

In a fitting sense, since this work may involve legal difficulties at some point, the translator/appropriator may become a from of advocate for the "case" of the work of so-and-so to be included in the files of the "ideal language" and the culture which it is participating in the formation of. To "argue the case," so to speak, it may be necessary to withhold some evidence, and exaggerate perhaps the importance of other bits and pieces of "evidences." To alter the meaning of a word here or mute the tone of another there. Small shifts spread over the course of a poem, a collection, a body of work, accrue and accumulate and so build from within the un-ideal original the structure of its "meta-narrative," a new and ideal shining City from out of the shell of the old, to paraphrase the IWW slogan.

At a certain level then, what is sought for via such aspects of translations and/or appropriations is to produce works which are in conformity with the standards desired by the society/culture into which they are being introduced, at least for "the time being," and hopefully "for a long time to come."

The underlying impetus of this might be thought of as the resistance to the uncertainty principle, and the desire for a "security" even in what are called "risky" or "experimental" phases and forms of work.

It is in this sense that an artist like Dubuffet observes the action and writes of an "asphyxiating culture." The "Arcades Project" from this perspective becomes an immense temple-tomb, a colossal assemblage of bric-a-brac on the order of Citizen Kane's Xanadu, a monument to another aspect of the Benjaminian cosmology, "The Collector."

"The Collector" aspect of constructing the "ideal language," via translations, appropriations, is that one becomes a tourist and, if so capable, a tour-guide, which is what many of Benjamin's works basically are. The Situationists, who conceived of themselves as drifters among the psycho-geographies of the urbanescapes, setting out on the long patrols of the derive , scoffed at both conventional and "cultured/philosophical" tourism as "tourism in other people's misery." From this point of view, translation/appropriation becomes the collecting and "taking possession" in all senses of the word, of photos, images, icons, objects, texts, musics, dances which paradoxically belong to others who can't have them, or can't have them in the way that the one "taking possession" of them does.

The irony is that in the age of "intellectual property," the "death of the author" should become such an idealized trope, because if anything, the "author" is more alive than ever.

Again, the spectre of the legal profession arises, the one in which Bartleby made his decision to "prefer not to" be a copyist anymore, and simply become, literally, "silent as the Tombs" in which appropriately named penal institution he perished, he, the former handler of "dead letters." For today one witnesses the spectacle of legal entanglements regarding the appropriation or translation of authors' works, or of their appropriations of others' appropriations, and a Ron Silliman can threaten to sue an anthology which attaches his name (owned by him) to a poem not written by him. (What would happen if a poem written by him were published as an anonymous piece, or attributed to some totally unknown, perhaps even non-existent "name"?)

Until late in the 19th century, there was no copyright to protect American authors from having their works pirated and distributed to great profit by publishers abroad, especially in England. An aspect of the plagiarism that so obsessed Poe was that an author could steal willy nilly from another, and so make money off another's labor without having to do the actual work at all. The attacks Poe made on plagiarism were not always so much about "intellectual property" and "originality" as about the artist being paid for their time and labor and sharing in the profits it created for the publishers. Poe understood this from his own experience, as he had been employed at one point on basically plagiarizing an entire book on conchology, adding just enough "original" touches here and there to make the pirated edition appear "not the same, but new," for the benefit and profit of the publishers. This form of "authorship" was fairly common at the time, and one that was a logical progression from the earlier heyday of Travel Literature (discussed in a previous post.)

In the earlier phases, travel literature ranged wildly from rather crude cobbings of roughly smashed together bits and pieces of others' works, with, if the cobbler of the work had some imagination, some "previously unrecorded" and especially thrilling and "New! Astonishing! Marvels Never Before Seen nor Heard Of!" thrown into the mix to add to the sales and also to the ever more hallucinatory visions of the lands on the other side of the Atlantic, the Indian or Pacific Oceans. (I recently came across an advertisement trumpeting the latest edition of an old classic of the Travel Literature days, one which is made up of a good bit of plagiarism, some invention and some pure nonsense that the Indians had fobbed off on the gullible explorers. The book is still in print as having yet a value as a guidebook to the areas it concerns!)

Lautreamont and Poe made great use of this tradition of license being extended in travel literature and works on such subjects as conchology--for Lautreamont's *Chants de Maldoror* are constructed with vast swathes of pure plagiarism, cheerfully mixed in with le Comte's Baroque treatments of the Gothic tradition from earlier in the same century, and plenty of doses of scientific jargon culled from various dust collecting texts.

(Witness also the opening of *Moby Dick*, which consists of the etymologies and examples of the names of the whale through time and around the globe, among many many languages and cultures.)

I noted before that there is a relationship--as there is in Moby Dick--between the uses of appropriation and translations, mimicry and copying, which make of writing potentially a form of acting, even of an acting in a theater constructed by the writer and in which the writer becomes both the director and the leading character or characters. It is possible also for the writer to become the audience as well and in turn the critics, who provide reviews, commentaries, blurbs, hatchet jobs and fawning notes of introduction for some favorite of theirs whom they wish to promote in the role of a kind of "private agent." This dispersal of the "writer" through so many roles in turn begins to generate ever more series of meta-writers, meta-dramas, meta-commentaries until one has what is basically the long glorious history of the productions of Shakespeare's Richard the Third and their myriad spinoffs, including Johnny Rotten copying Laurence Olivier's Richard in the film version for his creation of the character and existence as a performer on stage of--Johnny Rotten, who in his turn is ranting and attacking the Queen.

This theatricality of a writing which makes use of appropriations and translations (including invented ones) means that the "author" does not "die" but instead becomes an actor, in which the presence of other voices begins to issue through the throat and the writing of "some one else" to come from the hands. The actor whom is the role that the writer has become, speaks lines which are--whose?--The writer's? the actor's? the role's? And out of these emerges a writing which is a fiction which is at the same time real, or a reality which is fictional, and all the while is performing an activity which is a writing, a gestural, visceral, sonic and visual action writing which may in fact exist "nowhere at all" but as the non-writings of a non-writer who regards thinking and writing as the same, just as imagined writing may exist in a sphere in which it has no need of being "written down," as it enjoys in fact the freedom of it's not existing on the page, but in the "else wheres."

When Bartleby says "I would prefer not to" and instead stands staring at the blank view through his window of a very close pressed wall of the building opposite--is it into these elsewheres that his writing now is being done?

So it is that a personage like my "El Colonel" and Spicer's Lorca, and Yasusada's Spicer as well as the Yasusada created by the reader out of the accoutrements that are provided for the acting out of the role--so it is that these "non-existent" writers mingle with actual writers who are actually dead, in a theater in which ghosts are lovers and fictional non-ghosts consort with ghosts and the action of the writing is THE LIVING of that being that one is to think of as either "the author" or "the death of the author author." For it is not death, but dispersal across, through, within, and away from writing itself that is the action of the being formerly known as "the author."

Writing has lives of its own in which the writer may find encounters with it, that outside which now and then bumps into him or her, and then, after a bit, takes off again. Or an outside which is found, hidden in plain site/sight/cite all around one, that writing which is continually alive and changing, moving, at once fugitive and glimpsed by, as Robert Smithson calls it, "the artist's glance," which can be a work

as real as any object, yet not exist except in the time and the "art of looking" of the artist. For once it becomes an object, then the artist is "signing over" the time and art of looking as a possession in which someone else "owns the art" and in a subtle or not so subtle way, also "owns the artist."

The real death of the author may then be the sense that exists at present of the author, a being tied down by legal contracts to a name, an identity card number, an address, a telephone, a place and status within such and such community of other authors.

It is this death which a writer may well choose to "prefer not to" be part of, and so find in a "fugitive" existence the ever changing words and lines of a lexicon which cannot be fixed, nor colonized, nor turned into yet another copyrighted name plated representation of themselves, all ready to charge off to court to protect a name attached to a function which they may at the same time profess to desire the death of.

President Reagan, the Great Communicator, was in his own way an interesting example of a collector of quotations with an ear and eye to creating his own form of "ideal language," one which has proved to be one of the most radical in its effects of modern times. Reagan loved quotations, and his bedside reading consisted of a single colossal tome of nothing but quotations, organized for use on any occasion imaginable and many, one imagines, not yet imagined, but that one should be prepared for, after all, as The Great Communicator.

Having been an actor, a president of the Screen Actors Guild, and a long time pitchman for Westinghouse and GE, as well as a radio announcer and tv celebrity both as actor and advertiser, Reagan had no problem at all memorizing hunks of quotations, plagiarized and appropriated lines and bits of speeches, and "was never at a loss for words," a favorite technique being to tell some ancient joke or story "as though for the first time," so that it's being a quotation was not even noticed. In this way, he appeared to be an alert and quick-on-his-feet-thinker though in fact he was just pulling rabbits out of his well stocked hat.

Reagan's cheerful attitude to taking away the meanings of lines and replacing them with the same words, only now heard as his own, reached a moment of triumph in his appropriating the anti-Vietnam War song "Born in the USA" as his own campaign song in 1984. Suddenly, the verses disappeared and all one really heard were those endlessly repeated choruses of "Born in the USA, Born in the USA" as though that was all that mattered. And in cynical way, he was right--after all the song was made for a movie and appeared long after the actual War, so how it could literally be "an anti-Vietnam War song?" Reagan's appropriation in a sense exposed the song's appropriation of the emotions of another time and another person, and so the Reagan version had as much "validity" as the original did. And, it being a song for a movie, who better to make use of it than an old movie actor, one who had actually appeared in war movies, if not the actual war, unlike the song's author, who had done neither.

And Reagan even quoted in Russian, with translation--the famous "trust but verify" "Russian proverb" he had learned from his buddy "Mr. Gorbachev." At one point, in a pure unadulterated paroxysm of patriotism, he forgot himself and recounted his "war memories"--actually scenes from a war film he had played in. In a sense, to show the "reality" of his emotions, he was "quoting from memory" a "real war scene" in which he had acted competently enough to convince himself that he had actually been in the war. In this way, quoting from his roles allowed him to create a non-existent biography which all the same was "documented on celluloid," that could be edited into various versions of his official "biopic."

In Poe's brief "sketch" written to accompany an illustrated plate, entitled "Morning on the Wissahicon," (a forerunner of Reagan's "New Morning in America" as already a "Mourning on the Wissihicon)--a traveller takes a jaunt down the Wissihicaon and discovers unexpectedly, so close to the metropolis of Philadelphia, a wild and savage remnant of an America already thought to be long past, and but the figments and shards of a former dream. He sees an Indian in a wild overgrowth of unspoiled natural landscape, and as he drifts by the dramatic scene, there even appears a a magnificent and authentic American deer--a sort of proto--"Deer Hunter" moment in which the marvelling traveler is confirmed in his belief that at last he has found the old, the real America, of the wilderness and "savages," and the untamed wild life and untrimmed flora of his "native land." Yet, the traveller later learns, all of this has been an elaborate and beautifully staged simulacra, for a wealthy Englishman has purchased the former Colonial landscape, and populated it with a servant dressed and made up as an Indian, let the flora go carelessly to seed, and provide the whole as a topping to the cake, a domesticated deer who is able to pose as a wild one for the passersby of a Sunday. Already a "quotation" of what had been a stock vision of the "old America" in all its "savage splendour" has replaced the original with a copy which "outshines" as it were not only the long vanished original, but has also made, on is certain, the old real estate greatly increase in value by looking so like what it had replaced in terms of what had been thought to be along lost memory with a Brand new and vivid recreation posing as indeed "the reality of today."

Poe's Englishman thus has accomplished already the creating of an "ideal language and landscape" made entirely of quotations, and for Poe, the "mourning" in this "morning" is that the morning is in a sense not yet over with and it has already been replaced by a quotation of itself, which will "outlive" the former and so in a sense give cause, if one recalls it at all, a "mourning" for the "morning on the Wissihicon" which now no longer exists except as indeed an ideal language and landscape "in quotation."

The further "mourning" is that the English, who had been the former and for a while defeated Colonial Power, have now wrested away what had been known of as an "American original" and turned it into an English owned and recolonized landscape preserved as a copy of the vanished original.

At the time that Poe began writing, ruins were all the rage, due in good part to Gothic and Romantic literature from Europe--the kind of literature and ruins

Benjamin was later to write his now famous unpublished thesis on. Americans were in a state of anxiety, as their country seemingly had produced no "real ruins." Poe--who had attended school five years abroad in Scotland--had seen "real ruins" and as he replied to one critic who accused him of writing in the manner of the Germans of the time--"Terror is not of Germany, but of the soul." Having witnessed the decomposition and descent into ruins via disease of his dying mother, dying older brother and then dying wife, Poe realized that the the lack of "real ruins" are, like Emerson's Nature--"the blank and ruin we see in Nature is within our eye"--is not a lack at all but instead the blindness to what is in front of one--the decomposition and decay at the core of being, no matter how "new."

In his "Philosophy of Composition," Poe constructs an impeccably rational method by which he has gone about composing his poem "The Raven." No "romantic ruins" or frenzy inspired him, no "inspiration," but, instead, a kind of calculating feat of engineering brought to bear on the decomposition of the very thing that has constructed the poem--the rational, the logical, the "constructive" mind. The use of quotation passes from humans to a bird--"quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'" The bird may even be a copy of a bird, a mechanical bird whose cries are repeated by virtue of a timing mechanism triggered by the last lines of the verse preceding its next outburst. Or they may indeed be those of a "real bird," "quoting" "nevermore," a phrase which plunges the student in the poem into one of those ever deepening and decomposing morasses of the soul which Poe depicts also in the guise of decomposing bodies and languages also, which devolve into black birds' cries (perhaps "quoth the Raven" itself--??!!) as in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.

Poe, with his rationally constructed tales in which decomposition and irrationality begin to "take over" and Burroughs with his fugitive languages whose words change their meanings frequently not only in time--from week to week or day to day if need be-- but also vary from place to place along the trail of the outlaw addict, evidence a yearning for a language which will elude the colonization process of appropriation and quotation. For Dubuffet, the "way out" of this nightmare in the "asphyxiating culture" of the art world was Art Brut as he originally found it and conceived of it--that is, Dubuffet recognized its existence there, well having the honesty himself as an artist to know that he himself might learn from these "Raw" artists while not being one himself.

That is, not that there will be an "authorial self" who is "original" but that there may exist "languages" and realms of "communications" in and among and through which the possibility of a continually "living" yet "invisible" writing is "on the move," while behind it are the deposits of its shed skins, its discarded, outdated notations, to be picked up on as "news" and "clues" so as to distract and confuse those would-be appropriators and translators of a writing which does not want to be read, and so creates "fakes" of its non-self in order to provide "cover" for its ever elusive voyages, fictions to amuse itself as it observes the futile hunters continually be led round and round in circles, deciphering non-signs as signs and elaborate scrawls as "lucid

notations" of a "lost language" or of a "new language" which they alone will become the possessors of the secrets of, the sole appropriators and translators of, the alpha and omega of a literature which now is thought to "belong to history and civilization" and which instead is simply an empty wooden horse, a decoy duck, while somewhere, elsewhere, the writing leads lives of its own.

(Note: I just found Wyston Curnow's question re a genealogy of the appropriation use of today--

the issue of appropriation, as noted, begins to change with the introduction and spread of copyright laws, as with the acceleration of the production of copies in themselves-- Benjamin formulates his questions re "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" close to a hundred years after Poe has begun doing so. Hawthorne, writing in the 1840's roughly, in *The House of Seven Gables*, already has as a major figure a Daguerreotypist who provides, along with the narrator, commentaries on the art of the photograph in comparison with that of painting--that is, in terms of their status as not solely copies of persons and scenes, but also as methods directed towards revealing what is otherwise hidden to the eye of an observer. The "composition" of a daguerreotype then, becomes a form of decomposition of not only a painted image, but as well of the "image of the person" themselves--"revealing" aspects hidden not only to others but also perhaps to themselves. As a "reversed mirror image" in a sense, it gives an oddly "corrected" image of that image which one had previously supposed one was seeing as others do.

The very decomposition of the House itself becomes as it were a method of "letting in more light" via the cracked and fissured surfaces, which is the "pencil of light" with which the camera writes into existence a new method of representing things not only singly, but serially, or, as in the famous mirror scenes in *Citizen Kane* and *The Lady from Shanghai*--an endless series of mirrorings of the self trapped in the light of the moment which is turning it into the past as the figure moves before the -- and into--the hall of mirrors.

One might begin with an examination of many of the texts of the "Classic American Literature" (D.H. Lawrence) as the first literature to in a sense compose via decomposition and in so doing decompose the "future" of its own literature before it has happened. (Rather than being a deconstruction *avant la lettre*, as Poe's work has furnished examinations for, it is a decomposition of the work of time on things before they have begun to exist.)

One finds that already a century and a half ago and more, there already exist in this Classic Literature the contemporary the issues of copying, appropriation, translations, quotations, cataloging, "secret messages," "messages in code," the examination of handwriting itself as a method of literary "criticism," the centrality of the role of death, the appearance of "intelligent machines" and "psychic communications" as a form of scientific possibility--the ghostly, the after-effects existences, of unknown writings and languages which haunt the forests and

wildernesses, and as well are still living among them in many vast areas, the complimentary American forms of Gigantism (Walt Whitman, Paul Bunyan, Earthworks) and the Minimalist (Emily Dickinson)--as well as the use throughout American popular art of the copy of an object to represent the trade or concept for which the object's copy is supposed to stand. (The vast and eccentric systems of signs used in the US a hundred fifty years ago are basically the creation of a three dimensional sculptural-visual poetry of incredible variety and ingenuity. In a sense, it is a writing for persons who may not actually know how to read--in any language--or simply in English--)

One of the aspects of this writing is that it in ways is more related to Art Brut and Burroughs' fugitive languages, than to the more confining and constrained of the commonly in use American examples of today, as it sees and makes use of everything as writing. This is neither "the world as text" nor "the text as world" or today's rather fundamentalist and curiously Puritan conception of a "material word" on the page, with the attendant "sacredness of the book, the text," but something blasphemous (Melville to Hawthorne, on completing *Moby Dick*: "I have written a wicked book and am as clean as the Lamb")--that is, that the world is alive with writings which are moving and changing at every moment, and themselves exist on living beings as well as on insentient "materials." (Melville also writes to Hawthorne, that the very hand which lifts now the pen that it has just written with, is not the same hand that just formed the last completed letter of script, and will not be the same as the one that writes the next--)

Tattoos, scrimshaw, the *Scarlet Letter*, the letters of the words of an unknown language carved into the black rock of an island, (in *Pym*; Robert Smithson wrote of these as "perfect proto Earthwords" for a new art criticism)--the disappearing inks and concealed treasure maps, the *Goldbug* and its revelations--as well as the "readings" of Nature by Thoreau and Emerson, and the observations as signs in turn of the "Leaves of Grass" which are the tongues of the sleepers below ground, and, beyond that, "the untold, the unwritten war" that "Will Never Be Written in the Books" of Whitman's *Specimen Days*, or the insects and flowers in Emily Dickinson which form the kind of private language which she uses to "but cross the room and be in the Spice Islands" (the continual voyage theme)--all of these are writings which extend writing far beyond the "normalizing" conventions of the limits of the page--

This vision of a language which is continually in movement, continually changing, concealing itself, reappearing, being thrown overboard, or bobbing about as the carved coffin bearing the absent Queequeg's script and the sole survivor and author to be of the tale of the late Pequod--is itself from a period in which the American language was in flux, not yet standardized and fixed into the defined and set stone of Webster's. A chaos in spelling, punctuation and grammar was perfectly acceptable, as were the wildly varying degrees of abilities of readers to decipher the riot of signs and symbols running amok all around them, and so was a sense of writing as something alive and and unfixed, nomadic and tending, like Art Brut and the addict's

fugitive Jargons, towards an anarchy and "Civil Disobedience" which have become increasingly tamed, toned down and timid.

For example, consider that today, a work of appropriation in a conceptual sense is proffered as that of "unoriginality, copying" and the "author" thus no longer "exists" except as a functionary, a filer of data, a sorter of files. This is precisely the work which Bartleby is assigned to, and which he one day simply decides that he would "prefer not to" do anymore.

Bartleby's act of Disobedience he pays for by being incarcerated in the toms, there to die, refusing all the while to accept anything offered out of a sense of obligation by the employer who had put him there in the first place, as a last resort against homelessness.

In a peculiar way, may one not say that Bartleby is a kind of "political prisoner," (civil disobedience since 9/11 carrying much heavier potential penalties) in the sense that he will no longer carry out the contemporary (today's) idea of what it means to be an author-cum-death-of-the-author? Instead, he would "prefer not to" be a writer who writes as the death of the author as it exists in the conceptual formulation of copyist and filer, even if rejecting this method of writing-as-the-death-of-the-author means the loss of his freedom, and following that, of his life.

In short, Bartleby would "prefer not to" BE a "death-of-the-author-author" but instead simply to die.

here are some examples of a few of the possibilities themselves so myriad and ever expanding of the little i suggest in the above

Conceptual Poetry and its Others

UA Poetry Center

May 29-31, 2008

David-Baptiste Chirot

David-Baptiste Chirot: "Waterboarding & Poetry" Wordforword #13 Spring 2008 (also has Visual Poetry by chirot) Poems from Guantánamo The Detainees Speak David Baptiste Chirot * No* KAURAB Translation Site

David-Baptiste Chirot

El Colonel's Composition Book

<http://the-otolith.blogspot.com/2008/10/david-baptiste-chirot-el-colonels.html>

20080530 David-Baptiste Chirot <http://the-otolith.blogspot.com/2008/05/david-baptiste-chirot-el-colonel-wakes.html>

El Colonel wakes up from dreaming

1. [PDF

] developing poetic ideas

3647k - Adobe PDF - View as

html

El *Colonel* *Smiles*. For Roberto Bolano *...* *El* *Colonel* *smiles*.

Pleasure birds fly in exotic jungles, among tableaux of hacked and *...*
[www.*dusie.org*/ElColonelsmile.pdf](http://www.dusie.org*/ElColonelsmile.pdf)

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Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history?

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 2 November 2008

Nemet-Nejat separates exploitation from his own sense of translation, drawing on Benjamin's "loose gown" of fragments and Spicer's After Lorca: real translation begins with a "misreading" that cracks both languages open, "a linguistic act of liberation" rather than theft.

David,

Just a quick response to your post before I read it more carefully and comment on it in greater detail later: I understand very well your seeing the possibility of exploitation within the idea of appropriation. There is no question historically that has happened often enough, erasing the "original" in the process.

I am referring to something quite different. Do not forget that in his matrix of "translation" and "ideal language" Benjamin sees translation as a "loose gown" or a collection of shards/fragments. Dissolution, particularly of a close system, is at the heart of his concept of translation. In *After Lorca* Spicer picks that aspect of Benjamin's thought. (I have an essay exactly on that relation between Benjamin and Spicer that can be found on line in Lucas's Cypherjournal website.

On the other hand, I do believe that every translation, in my sense of the word, starts with a "misreading" which cracks open the original by fragmenting it. The target language also must "misread" itself cracking itself open. This way both languages undergo transformations, creating a synthesis by joining in the space of ideal language,

What translation does is to explore, crack open *latent* possibilities in both languages which the close system of each suppresses. Translation becomes a linguistic act of liberation. Here is the translation paradox: a translation misreads, but must/can never lie about the original. Misreadings will only reveal, liberate what is inherent in them. That is how they become the very reverse of exploitation.

"Translation is foreignness in a language bending to contain its weight."

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history?

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 3 November 2008

Nemet-Nejat presses the point through Spicer's title: "After" means not homage but pursuit, "predatory." A true translation is "always an act of violence" that must tear the original open — even Lorca reacts "from the grave" with annoyance.

David,

At the bifurcation they part Y one sling, yet in my heart one sling shot.

The word "After" in Spicer's poem does not only mean "in imitation of" or "in homage to." It also means "in pursuit of; it has a predatory connotation. In fact, Lorca's reactions from the grave to Spicer's solicitations is one of annoyance." A true translation is always an act of violence -loving or otherwise, that is the issue-against the autonomy of the original. It literally must tear it up -fragment it- to open it up to a future life, the life of the text. This fragmentation does have the elements of collage. Are you familiar with Eliot Weinberger's essay, "Notes On Translation" [?] of about fifteen years ago about which Kent Johnson wrote an article which appears in the last issue of ALTA's *The Translation Review*?

In your comments, you focus on what a text loses in translation, through misreading (intentional or not) what gets silenced . My feeling is you are particularly thinking of the Guantanamo translations. One should also think of what it gains: what starts as a "complete," closed text opens and becomes a potential one, which is its life through time.

A bad translator sees, detects no resistance in the original. If so, as you state, the "philosophy" of the translator turns the original into a text totally in the translator's image. That is an act of exploitation, the very reverse of what I am talking about. An original resists to be translated. That's why Benjamin says what gives a text translability is distance. The translator translates, integrates that distance. That is why a translation has a tangential relationship to the second language, the distance, expressed as style, existing as an ideal, a template of potentiality for it.

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: capitalism and the long poem

— David-Baptiste Chiot · 30 December 2008

Chiot roots the serial poem in capitalism's economics: Sue's feuilletons and Dickens sold by installment because the reader "will pay any price to find out how the cliff hanger was resolved." Dostoyevsky cranking out serials against gambling debts; Balzac juggling six books at once.

Dear Eireene--

Thank you so much for this excellent piece and the question you pose.

Seriality in writing as a deliberate form is directly an effect of Capitalism--in that serials such as the Feuilletons of Eugene Sue and the serial manner of publishing Dickens' novels, became one of the few ways that an author could make money directly from writing--and also it was used as a way to get people to keep buying the newspaper or journal in which the serial appeared.

Seriality of this kind is constructed round the desire to "want to know what happens next" and is accompanied by the acceptance by the reader that one "will pay any price to find out how the cliff hanger was resolved--and what happens next until the next cliff hanger is reached

An author often could make more money from selling a serial than having a book appear "all at once," due to the lack of copyright for American writers who were pirated outrageously by British publishers, and the lack of copy right in many other countries also.

A writer like Dostoyevsky who had gambling debts would crank out serials to pay off creditors, a vast improvement actually on the strategies open to Balzac, who often wrote six books at a time, for several different publishers, not having yet the serial at his disposal.

(Hence the often strange effect in many of Balzac's works, that a book begun at one point in time, interrupted to complete two others more pressing, then returned to the writer would suddenly decide that a different character should step into the spotlight from its previous position vaguely in the background at the edge of the wings and faded old curtains--and in stepping forward, suddenly alter almost entirely the direction of the narrative and the meaning of the moral Balzac was presenting as another in his philosophies des mœurs in the structure of the Comédie Humaine

A structure whose descriptions and analyses Karl Marx found to be the greatest and most perceptive study ever made of Capitalism in all its function and effects---

Seriality was continued in the early "Motion Pictures" with the famous feuilletons of Louis Feuillade so beloved of the Surrealist--"Judex" "Les Vampyrs" and etc--and in the US the endless series of "Adventures of Pauline" and her constellations of spin offs--tied to the rail road tracks as the train approaches--and escaping miraculously--only to have another misadventure seize hold of her before the reel

runs out--and the lettering on the black screen says--"Wait Until Next Week to Find Out What---"

Serial production functions not unlike a model of addiction--once hooked, one HAS to keep coming back for MORE MORE MORE--which is at once the "same" and slightly different, just enough so, that the sense of being both satisfied that "the stuff is good" and at the same time give an extra "plug" in that one enjoys it for only so long and then has to be in the throes craving until the next fix can be obtained.

Soap operas came about for the same reason--to keep the customer coming back in order to have the familiar fix and also to experience the titillation of the seductive "wait for next time and I'll be there--just waiting for YOU--"

"Soap" opera referring to be sure to the selling of laundry soaps that paid for the serial production of these "Opere"--so that both the "serial" and the product become inseparably associated and one finds oneself suddenly craving--soap!!

Actually Language Poetry's assertions about grammar being an expression of, structured by, Captialism, is a fallacy, in terms of linguistics, and is instead a kind of "soap" that sponsors the reader's having a new "mode of production" i.e. "a new line"--to develop an addiction to--'what will be the next book from language writers?--what will be the next exciting daring thing they do in their hair raising battle with capitalism"--in other words, a fallacious "anti-capitalist" production is marketed as just that--hey!! Buy us!! We are anti-capitalisms structuring of grammar!! We are liberating you!--From what?

From buying one form of poetry one is freed to buy another. Nothing has changed but the "exterior appearance" of the product. Inside it is the same old thing--production, product, authors, canons, sub divisions of categories of styles, rhetorical devices and morphemic transgressions replete with torque and the tensile strengths of the requisite number of allowances for the readers constructions of their own meanings-- and all of these crammed within the new models so that one might choose still somehow between a convertible or a coupe, or perhaps simply a two door or a four door---

And what colors would you like these to come in?--With or with out ash trays, CD player--radio?--No smoking?OKwell make a note of thatno lightereither--

Oh!! Did someone mention Hybrids--??!! How marvelous!--What a pun, mon vieuxdo you mean automobiles or genres--?or perhaps some fantastical life formout of Lewis Carroll or Borges

A used car dealer, a used poem dealeror perhaps in these days of tightened beltsthe two combined and displaying their wares on the same much contracted lot whose fading banners may well not be seen by the dawns early lightother than as limp remnants of plastic curling and scuttering across the tarmacs in the gusts of an ill wind blowing no good

Yesfrom the assembly line to the poetic line

Is a very fine line indeed

And so one can replace the unemployed's former jobs on the assembly line

With jobs on the poetic line

Hard at work creating serial production again--

The serial is created to "provoke and sustain interest through time--"

And indeed one might think of this interest as a paying of interest in that instead of one product in full paid for all at once, one is paying for the product stretched out through time, and so pays more for each "section" in the serial, bringing the total cost of the completed series to quite a bit more than if one had simply been able to purchase the whole thing inside one cover. But then--one would have been deprived of the thrill and the touch of each new issue each new episode arriving in the stores or in the mails or on line or video--awaiting with that craving so deliciously satisfied by the insertion into the human system of the capitalist addiction system--and then, as the pleasure is moving through out one in a sensuous erotic glow--suddenly one is cut off--and told to wait until next time--

And there one is, "Waiting for the Man, 26 dollars in your hand/he's never early, always late/the first thing you learn/is you just got to wait."

And so there were and may still be--long lines queuing up on the days that the "Man" is coming --shivering and shaking in the junk sick streets until at the last moment of unendurable waiting, when all are cursing the "Man" who is subjecting them to this suffering--at this last moment when all are ready to forever consign this Monster to the dustbins of their crashed hopes and illusions--here he or she is!! And like salivating dogs they all rush to lick her (or his) feet and rub against his (or her) legs and practically shit themselves in delight--with outpourings of love finally getting their greedy paws on the serial's new installment, and putting down all their hard saved coins and bills for this immediate satisfying of the unbearable cravings building up--

How many times does one not find someone writing of having to satisfy their poetry fix with a quick rush to a book store and their tear off their coats, yank up their sleeves, wrap the nearest belt or cord around their scrawny arm and inject three or four chapbooks--and with great and sudden euphoria--plunk down whatever price they are told these precious "rocks" are jacked up to this week--

Who hasn't seen lurking near the bookstores and poetry dens the sinister figure of the Reviewer loaded with the latest galley's and review copies of releases, willing to sell them cheaper than the store--or forego the cash as long as the figure is paid for in some kind of trade--for sex perhaps, or say season ticket to the opera or ball game or perhaps simply the inside scoop on some trading tip on good old Wall Street--or a tip on the races--

A different method of composition was advocated by Edgar Allan Poe, who, in his "Principles of Poetry" and "Philosophy of Composition" formulated one of the

most influential approaches to this day for the production of poems and , to be sure--short stories. This is to create works which, given the speeding up of life and magazine production, can be read in one sitting, because, argues Poe, only in having the entire poem or story all at once, is one experiencing the full power of the Effect. For Poe, --and this is also an argument against the "Inspiration of Romanticism--a poem is constructed deliberately, almost mathematically as well as musically--by choosing first the effect to be experienced by the reader, and working "backwards," determining the elements and their arrangements within the structure which is determined by the length of time as measured in numbers of words.

Where the serial exploits the drawing out of time, as a never quite consummated series of piquing of desire--the work as advocated by Poe--delivers an Effect so great that is far more satisfying than the long drawn-out "sickness" of serial addiction, with its attendant ever demanding layouts of cash--

The short story, the short poem--for Poe these offer a much more interesting field for the investigations of questions of composition--because they provide CONSTRAINTS--which provoke rather than limit discoveries--because "Necessity the Motherfucker of Invention" is a goad to the imagination completely at odds with its dispersal as in a serial--in which the poet or writer has far more TIME to dream up what happens next--

Poe's theories of Composition, traced via Baudelaire and his invention of the short prose poem--and the theory of Correspondances--is at the basis of French Symbolism as it culminates in Mallarmé--a good friend of his Tuesdays attendee Félix Fénéon, who, combining his anarchist ideas with those of the "creation of the effect"--much as Mallarmé noted that Fénéon's words were "detonators" as much as the bombs he advocated and may have thrown himself--comes up with the turning of his hack job writing "Faits Divers" for the mass circulation *Le Matin* into the writing simultaneously of news (Nouvelles) and "short stories" (nouvelles), which become known when published posthumously as his "Nouvelles en trois lignes"--News Stories/Short Stories in three lines. Like Poe, who published his works in newspapers and large circulation journals, Fénéon is melding "news of the day in its documentary "detective story" aspect with its fictional "Balloon Hoax" (published in a newspaper to emulate one that had been taken as truth) and "Purloined Letter," "Ms in a Bottle" aspects.

Since the short story and short poem, the "Faits Divers" hack filler turned into a short story/documented event do not create the dependence the "fort-da" psychology of Captivist Need and Desire, these short, effect driven works subvert in a strange way the more "profitable" serials in that they offer the "most bang for the buck"--as it were, rather than endlessly teasing out the most bucks for an ever differed bang as does the serial.

This "bang" effect is literally "realized, if one is willing to think of this way--in the naming of the NFL Baltimore Ravens for Poe's poem. The Ravens, a hard hitting team led by a Super bowl MVP Ray Lewis who has been charged in the past with

connection to a homicide--play with indeed the most bang delivered for the buck--producing some "shocking" effects and like Poe producing a "mystery story to be investigated by detectives."

One of the reasons for Poe's development of his theories was not surprisingly, economic. In Poes time American writers had no copyright protection, so the one surest way to "get the most out" of a piece of writing was to have it produce its effect all at once, before it was pirated. "The Raven," for example, was pirated thousands of times--it was a "Platinum Selling Hit" for its times--yet Poe was paid only once, and that, for him, a not too miserly fee of a few dollars. was all he ever received.

In the 1890s, Henry James was faced with the example of Poe, a writer who in the past he had been dismissive of. After the fabulous failures of his dramatic pieces on the stage, James found himself in need of money to keep himself and his beloved Lamb House afloat. (His neighbors there were to become Stephen Crane, Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells.)

James decided at first one the old familiar standbythe writing of a serialwhich proved to be *The Turn of the Screw*. As he worked to find a way to keep on creating an Effect on which each episode would end so as to keep the suspense hanging and make the reader desire intensely to purchase the next episodes as they appearedJames began reconsidering Poes theory of the Effect. From the creation of a ghost story serial, James began to turn to the creation of short stories which, like Poes are created with the final effect in mind.

(While dictating aloud to his red haired Scottish typist *The Turn of the Screw*, James discovered himself building in each episode to the proper cliff hanging effectonly to see not an effect produced on the typist, but rather his poker faced question as he paused with fingers in mid air to type the next wordsAnd then? This may have contributed a bit towards James deciding he would prefer to produce the Effect in toto in a short storyjust to see what if any Effect it had on the seemingly unimpressonable red haired typist.)

Another interesting example is Roberto Bolano, who turned from writing poetry to producing short stories after his marriage and with a child on the way. Bolano, like many other writers who have used this material of the short story competition for short stories in themselves, discovered that in Spain a great many towns and small cities offered prizes for best short story on such and such a theme, place or person of the immediate region. Competing for prizes helped Bolano develop his skills at producing Effects that would outshine those of his opponents.

From the short stories he moved to the novella form, and he became aware his life was rapidly getting shorter and shorter, and that the best way to leave a profitable legacy for his family was to compose novelsand ever bigger ones!Bolano devoted himself literally feverishly to the production of as many words as possible, in order to earn the most money posthumously for his widow and small son.

The connection between Captialsim and writing is NOT grammar, but WORD COUNTpage lengthand, hopefully for the writer and publisher both, NAME RECONITIONby which a much slighter prodcution can be marketed if the authors name, rather than the bulk, merits the raising of the price no matter how short a work may be.

In one of his essays the Italian Futurist (an ex-Symbolist whose Futurism is littered with many of the most hackneyed of Symbolist images and techniques), considered that literature and poetry could be assigned values based on a system of weights and measures, including that of measuring and weighing qualitywhich is not unrelated is it not to Name Recognition as a guarantee of at least a certain level of quality being available to the reader.

This is another of the paradoxes of the hack work of Feneons Faits Diversthat in an anonymous poorly paid and very low-regarded form, he would decide to go about producing work of the highest quality, while getting absolutely no credit for it in name nor being rewarded for his extra efforts by any increase in the minimal pay.

And so it is only a century later that Feneons Faits Divers aka Nouvelles en trois lignes appear in English, in a translation of most of the pieces. (The translation unfortunately uses the word novels for nouvelleswhich disappears the punning of short news items, news briefs and short stories. Instead there is a making much by reveiewers of the pieces being novels which contradicts the entire meaning of the pun. It also makes impossible the contemporary punning of news flashes with todays flash fictions.)

Flaubert, after all, had already accomplished the turning

Several decades earlier of a provincial journals Faits Divers into the novel Madame Bovary:

Delphine Delamare, 27, wife of a medical officer in Ry, displayed insufficient austerity. Worse, she ran up debts. To avoid paying them, she took poison.

But then, despite the Figure of the Dead Author which strides so stridently about among the assertions of Authors who grow plump with the fees their Name Recognition brings as they Bang the Drum Slowlyperhaps SLOWLY NOT AS A DIRGE BUT AS A VERY VERY VERY LONG DRAWN OUT SERIALOR-- EVEN BETTER-- A DECADE ADTER DECADE ONGOING SOAP OPERA

What writer of today would anonymously take on hack work of the slightest kind FOR THE LOWEST PAY and work on creating of each item a short story beautifully composed via the elements of structure known as syntax, word choice and the obligatory listing of information such as who what when why where-

And a few years later basically stop writing altogether other than letters to friends and business associatesfor it was Feneons aspiration to silencehis works were constructed to attain

In effect, a writer who combines Bartleby's I prefer not to with Rimbaud's leaving of writing for work in a business establishment. (In Feneon's case, a well-known Parisian art gallery turning his no longer being France's best art critic since Baudelaire to use in selling the wares he once wrote of.)

See also:

Feneon's Faits Divers and Poe's Principles of Poetry <http://cronacasouversivafeneon.blogspot.com/2008/12/feneons-poe-tic-ghosthumously-anonymous.html>

FELIX

FENEON AS CONCEPTUAL POET

<http://cronacasouversivafeneon.blogspot.com/2008/12/felix-feneon-as-conceptual-poet.html>

| I sat down to write a little piece about this Russian poet, and came up with a strange take on the long poem--an idea that the Seriality of it is somehow related to consumer capitalism--»

<http://tsky-reviews.blogspot.com/>

| not the pleasantest thought--
and so I was wondering if anyone has any good counter arguments, or different takes on why so many are so obsessed with this form right now. & will we fall out of love with it during the recession?
e»

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Re: capitalism and the long poem

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 31 December 2008

Nemet-Nejat crowns Chirot's argument with a single line — "Poetry should be infused with the dimension of failure, as anti-production" — and a happy new year. Agreement offered as a small polished gift.

David,

Beautiful! Poetry should be infused with the dimension of failure, as anti-production.

Happy new year!

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: capitalism and the long poem

— Troy Camplin · 31 December 2008

Camplin raises the counterexample the thesis has no room for: the epic "all but dies off with the advent of the Modern Era and capitalism," and Homer, Sophocles and Virgil all predate the market. "How does one fit the rest of world literary history into your model?"

There's a lot of interesting stuff here, but one does wonder how one fits pre-capitalist societies into this. The epic poem all but dies off with the advent of the Modern Era and capitalism. How does one fit the idea of line production in fact being LOST with the advent of capitalist society? Homer, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, Virgil, et al were well-known authors, all pre-capitalist. Certainly your points about serialization and novel production with Balzac are quite interesting and true, but your thesis almost treats literary production as having arisen with capitalism. How does one fit the rest of world literary history into your model?

Troy Camplin

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Re: capitalism and the long poem

— Steve Russell · 2 January 2009

Russell answers Camplin not with history but with the soap opera as "post history" — its viewer an "addict... always groping for some finale," "poor guy, semi-literate." Argument traded for a jab at the audience.

Perhaps the soap opera is post history: the viewer, the addict, must tune into episode after dopey episode, never fully satisfied, always groping for some finale, a resolution, a hopeful high ... poor guy, semi-literate, post McClued-in- tuned-in-or-out-to-what...

There's a lot of interesting stuff here, but one does wonder how one fits pre-capitalist societies into this. The epic poem all but dies off with the advent of the Modern Era and capitalism. How does one fit the idea of line production in fact being LOST with the advent of capitalist society? Homer, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, Virgil, et al were well-known authors, all pre-capitalist. Certainly your points about serialization and novel production with Balzac are quite interesting and true, but your thesis almost treats literary production as having arisen with capitalism. How does one fit the rest of world literary history into your model?

Troy Camplin

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Re: The Longest Poem in the World

— David Chirot · 22 August 2009

Chirot finds the paradox in constraint work: rule-bound projects keep aiming at the "Endless" and "Longest." A cross-country "Longest Poem" would inevitably meet the ocean ("O Ocean!"), and he pulls in Burma Shave jingles and Gelett Burgess's "Are you a Bromide?" on the inevitability of the trite.

A Paradox: that constraint based works are so often founded on the principle of producing the most "unconstrained" works--i.e. "Endless," "Longest," maybe even someday the "Loudest" poem, like Blue Cheer's "primitive" (by today's sonic standards) late 60's/early 70's acid hard rock concept of "Louder than God."

There is also something of the "inevitbale" about these constarint based works:

For a moment i thought the Longest Poem might be something like the Burma Shave jingles (many, oddly, very like some of the poetry of Charles Bernstein) which stretched from coast to coast--hence a long poem covering thousands of miles . . . so this project would have as it's "inevitably" the meeting with the Oceans, something that Lautreamont i a strange way would understand: "O Ocean!"

Another form of this inevitblilty that one finds in these lines i the "Longest Poem" is they express both a tritieness and a lack of suprise in resoving by rhyme their dilemans.

That is--do they not read i a small way like the Fates terribly at Work?

Geleth Burgess in a 1968 Art Magaine article considered the Inevitbale from the point of view of the trite and the Bromide in "Are you a Bromide?" examiniing 48 "genuine cliches," in thre Grand Tradition of Flaubert's Dictionairre des idees recues (Dictionary of Accepted/Rceived ideas.) writes: of,for example, "It's not the moeny, it's the priniple of the thing" that: "Iti s not merely because the remark is trite that itis Bromidic. Ot is because with the Bromide the remark is INEVITABLE."

(Note: you can find Flaubert's Dictionary coupled with Ambrose Bierce's Devil's Dictionary being "serialized" letter by letter at <http://davidbaptistechirot.blogspot.com> Also being "serialized" is Edward Bernays's classic work from 1928: Propaganda, and a series of poems, tales, etc from H.Chase's 1958 book of homophonic "translations"..I hope to "serialize more such works re language, writing, words letters etc including more texts re the language of our times which is best expressed as the satuation of it by/with Propaganda/advertising objectives. One of the misunderstanding of Corporate State Fascism as it is devloping in the US's latest formsof Capitalism is that the distinctions between advertsisng and Propaganda have been broken down. A book blurb can be read as an example of this, in which an ideology of writing is combined an ideology of "buy this book"! And why buy it--because it is part and parcel of what is good for one--the delicious fast food delights("You Are What You Eat") of propaganda-ads. Isn't that what this poem is about, "The Longest Poem?" And how

about any poem one may read today written in the USA? Is it not saturated by the ideologies of production-consumption-more-more-faster-faster--a bizarre echoing of the terms in Charles Olson's Projective Verse: One sense impression/breath, letter, syllable, word, phrase, line following another, fast , faster, citizen!--etc) I met once a Ukrainian poet who claimed to have written "The World's longest Palindrome," helped by the fact that the Ukrainian language is apparently extraordinarily rich in palindromic possibilities. This "World's Longest Palindrome" was either 4 or 8 small pages folded together and done in fine type. (forgive the lapse in memory, what's left of it.) Bob Cobbing, when this pronouncement/announcement of the World's Longest Palindrome was made clear to him became quite vividly and demonstrably antagonistic, saying, no no no!!!! HE had written the world's longest Palindrome because his was just a simple "round" that endless spun around and around as a form of linguistic perpetual motion machine; thus, to be sure, being perpetual, it was "The World's Longest Palindrome." This Palindrome after all, being perpetual, would be the longest in "Eternal Time," while the "mere" Untrained Palindrome was only long in the number of words, so that it's duration in time was far shorter. This conversation itself had a Palindromic quality to it in that a Russian had to translate from Ukrainian to Russian for another Russian who translated from Russian to German which I then translated from German to English for Bob's reply, which then went "backwards" to its "original source," the Ukrainian poet. This project by Mr Gheorghe (a Russian born "1005 Romanian) has also attracted the attention of CNN, as one may see in the note below from one of Mr Georghe's sites (he is also a radio/tv star as well as a school teacher in Romania. Constraint based works often are very leaden in their effect, the "concept" being productive of things only too inevitable, like the thudding tautologies say of "Conceptual Poetry" of the contemporary American kind (nothing like Conceptual Poetry in "reality"). I think Mr. Gheorghe's project is an example of the Fun/Funny side of the Constraint based work's put to use to illustrate as it were the Inevitability of the Bromidic running amok!

,

Longest Poem featured on
CNN.com

The Longest Poem in the World , my experiment that I previously told you about was just featured in an article on CNN Technology.

Strangers gather on Web to make collective
art

.

Enjoy :)
6 comentarii
Work , Programare
web,
General

Re: The Longest Poem in the World— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 24 August 2009

Nemet-Nejat names the engine flatly: "process/procedure determined digital poems are longest-poems producing machines" — a concept functioning as "a word producing machine," the surrealist tool of automatism now "afflicted with cancer."

David,

I think process/procedure determined digital poems are longest-poems producing machines. Or a poem based on a number series stretching infinitely at both ends. Here a conceptual work leads to a plethora of words -a concept as a word producing machine.

Did you think of the connection between longest-poems and machines, which itself a "rationalization" of automatism, this surrealist tool afflicted with cancer.

Ciao,

Murat

Re: The Longest Poem in the World— Daniel Zimmerman · 24 August 2009

Zimmerman offers a real contender against the digital ones: a 13-year-old Tibetan schoolboy who, after a mysterious dream, can recite "The Life of King Gesar" for six hours at a stretch — a thousand-year epic with its own field, "Gesarology."

Another contender for longest poem:

[http://www.ld4all.com/archive0205/viewtopic.php?](http://www.ld4all.com/archive0205/viewtopic.php?tG16&start=0&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight)

tG16&start=0&postdays=0&postorder=asc&highlight Posted: Tue Oct 28, 2003 5:06 am Post subject: Tibetan boy able to recite world's longest poem after dream!

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/afp/20031022/od_afp/china_tibet_offbeat_031022132306

Tibetan boy able to recite world's longest poem after dream

BEIJING (AFP) - A 13-year-old Tibetan schoolboy has miraculously memorized large parts of the world's longest poem after having had a mysterious dream.

Sitar Doje, a fifth-grader from Qamdo prefecture, had his dream two years ago and can now recite "The Life of King Gesar" for up to six hours on end, the Xinhua news agency reported Wednesday. The agency says Tibet has a long tradition of people waking from sleep inexplicably able to recite the poem from memory. Most of these

"God-taught Masters", however, are much older than Sitar Doje and are usually illiterate, the agency said. The lengthy 1,000-year old epic is also cherished by Mongolians and has given rise to a whole field of study referred to as "Gesarology", Xinhua said.

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Re: The Longest Poem in the World

— David-Baptiste Chirot · 25 August 2009

Chirot turns on the giants: "gigantic production of words stands in the way of the concept," burying it under "word waste," and he predicts contests for "the most boring poem, the worst poem." He ends by mourning the countless would-be artists, mostly women, never permitted to create at all.

Dear Murat in an essay on conceptual poetry i wrote that is gigantic production of words stands in the way of the concept-- to produce at the Paul Bunyescue dimensions of sheer colossal Million Year Planning Programs (a nice pun in there!) defeats the conceptual by burrying it under masses of word waste . . . over-production leading to overflowing of garbage and then the need of barges and places coerced into storing the endless verbiage . . . i think mr georghe in a sense distances himself from these actions--or does he--more than other so called conceptual poets (plus the work is hilarious at first in the sense of poetry , poems now entering the Guinness Books of Records--soon there will be contest for the most boring poem, the worst poem, the most politically correct poem, the poem with the most allusions to oneself, the absolutely most advanced poem and etc even the most stoned or drunk poem! the DWI poem! one of the problems of conceptual art arises here which is there were shows of it back in the seventies where the verbiage explaining and accompanying in some constrained manner perhaps--all of this verbiage dwarfed the actual object of production consumption and waste (i can hear freddy fender singing "wasted days and wasted nights" for me an aspect of the conceptual works that are truly so, is to think of the millions and millions through human history who were a great poet or artist and because (most primarily gender) were not allowed to write or paint or create their own forms of dance, music-- to me these conceptual works which find one when one is finding one's way along--these are the truly conceptual works because they exist as concepts, never realized and become the opposite of conceptual activity and bury it in masses of words robert Smithson wrote that a great artist can create art with a glance, and so the work is not trapped in an object, art object which has to be judged in terms of value and time--with ignoring the artist's time being paramount--i believe in this very much a various superconstraining places and situation one is allowed to only make conceptual arts in their purely conceptual stages there are some serious and interesting issues and ideas in thinking with the conceptual in relation to a "work" (in all the punning senses of the word) of art--because the production contradicts the conceptual--one has to find a different way than the sophistry or jokes bandied about re conceptual poetry.

oh my God NO i didnt think of automatism the real ineterst in conceptual poertycan be such things as The Literature of the No, to which i i am realting it in various ways-- i do think though every day of some great or just painter poet dancers who can't work today in their media nor have been been bale to across the spans of history this is why an connection with the Literature of the NO is important, because in a way its NO exists as Protest against the suppression, the enforced no's--superporouction is just what it always is -superproduction--leading basially to waste and pollution etc

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Re: The Longest Poem in the World

— Steve Russell · 27 August 2009

Russell riffs Chirot's disgust into burlesque, promoting his own "DUI poem" — "handcuffs, fingerprints... how perfectly abstract, yet completely transparent" — with a self-help coffee-table sequel to follow, and copyrights the joke on his way out.

yes, verbal clutter. verbal mud wrestling. the wicked verb -- to do what exactly?
the DWI poem.

did you mean the DUI poem, Dave?

that's my invention.

i'll copyright my next...

the DUI poem: handcuffs, fingerprints ... how perfectly abstract, yet completely transparant, revealing the very core of the artistic inner-self ... the self/help coffee book soon to follow, yes/yes/yes!!!!!!!!!!

--- On Tue, 8/25/09, David-Baptiste Chirot wrote:

Dear Murat ion an essay on coneceptual poetry i wrote that is gigantic production of words stands in the way of the concept-- to produce at the Paul Bunyesque dimensions of sheer colossal Million Year Planning Programs (a nice pun in there!) defeats the conceptual by burryin git under masses of word waste . . . overproduction leading to over flowiing of garbage and then the need of barges and places coerced into storing the endless verbiage . . . i think mr georghe in a sense distances himself fro these actions--or does he--more than other so called coneptual poets (plus the work is hialrious at first in the sense of poetry , poems now entering the Guinbess Books of Records--soon there wil be contest for the most boring poem, the worst poem, the most politically correct poem, the poe wuith the most allusisons to onself, the absolutely most avanat poem andetc even the most stoned or drunk poem! the DWI poem! one of the problems of conceptual art arises here which is there were shows of it back in the seventies where the verbiage explaining and accompanying in some constrained manner perhaps--all of this verbiage dwarfed the actual object of production consumption and waste (i can hear freddy fender singing "wasted days and wasted nights" for me an aspect of the conceptual works that are truly so, is to think of the millions and millions through human history who

were a great poet or artist and because (most primarily gender) were not allowed to write or paint or create their own forms of dance, musics-- to me these conceptual works which find one when one is finding ones way along--these are the truly conceptual works because they exist as concepts, never realized and become the opposite of conceptual activity and bury it in masses of words robert Smithson wrote that a great artists can create art with a glance, and so the work is not trapped i an object, art object which has to be judged in terms of value and time--with ignoring the artist's time being paramount-i believe in this very much a i various superconstraining places and situation one is allowed to only make conceptual arts in their purely conceptual stages there are some serious and interesting issues and ideas in thinking with the conceptul in relation to a "work" (in al the punning senses of the word) of art--becuase the production contradicts the coneptual--one has to find a different way than the sophistry or jokes bandied about re conceptual poetry. oh my God NO i didnt think of automatism the real ineterst in conceptual poertycan be such things as The Literature of the No, to which i i am realting it in various ways-- i do think though every day of some great or just painter poet dancers who can't work today in their media nor have been been bale to across the spans of history this is why an connection with the Literature of the NO is important, because in a way its NO exists as Protest against the suppression, the enforced no's--superporouction is just what it always is -superproduction--leading basially to waste and pollution etc

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"Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jeffrey Side · 26 September 2009

Side forwards the announcement of Kent Johnson's Day, quoting Spahr's blurb that where Goldsmith's 836-page Day made him "the leading conceptual poet of his time," Johnson's 836-page Day nudges the politics of Conceptual Poetry toward "truly negational, critical spaces." The fuse of the list's longest thread.

'Day' a new work by Kent Johnson now available:

<http://www.blazevox.org/bk-kj4.htm>

"If the 836-pp. Day established Kenny Goldsmith as without a doubt the leading conceptual poet of his time, the 836-pp. Day by Kent Johnson may well be remembered for nudging the politics of Conceptual Poetry out of blithely affirmative, institutional framings, and into truly negational, critical spaces."

Juliana Spahr

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New blog post: "Another Day for Kent Johnson"

— Jeffrey Side · 27 September 2009

The next day Side spells out the joke: Johnson's Day is "an exact reproduction of Goldsmith's" — itself a work Goldsmith would grant he never "created" in any authorial sense. A copy of a copy, blurbed as if original, asking who could possibly own the gesture.

New blog post:

'Another Day for Kent Johnson'

A new book by Kent Johnson is now available. It's called Day and is published by Blazevox. It has had some good reviews, including the following by Juliana Spahr:

'If the 836-pp. Day established Kenny Goldsmith as without a doubt the leading conceptual poet of his time, the 836-pp. Day by Kent Johnson may well be remembered for nudging the politics of Conceptual Poetry out of blithely affirmative, institutional framings, and into truly negational critical spaces'. Commendation indeed, if not for the fact that Johnson's Day is an exact reproduction of Goldsmith's "work". I've put "work" in quotes because Goldsmith would readily agree that the work in question was not "created" by him in any authorial sense. He describes his working procedure for the book

<http://jeffrey-side.blogspot.com/>

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jonathan Ball · 28 September 2009

Ball delivers the first cool verdict: a "clever joke" but "conceptually" thin. Where Goldsmith's DAY did Duchampian work, recontextualizing prose into "a rich text... replete with previously dormant meaning," Johnson's "does little more than repeat the gesture."

I presume the "blurbs" in support of Johnson's book are also appropriated or fabricated. This is a clever joke, but I don't see how it is conceptually interesting. Unlike Goldsmith's DAY, which recontextualized text in an "uncreative" gesture (a Duchampian raising of "journalistic" prose into the realm of poetry), and thus produced a rich text, replete with previously dormant meaning, Johnson's DAY does little more than repeat the gesture, and thus the only significance it seems to hold is to question the validity of assigning such a work to any single, particular author, something already implicit in Goldsmith's project and only superficially interesting in the first place.

--- Jonathan Ball

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Skip Fox · 30 September 2009

A five-word endorsement: Fox seconds Ball's dismissal of Johnson's Day as merely "superficially interesting," pronouncing the phrase "very precise" and declining to add a single word to it.

"superficially interesting" is very precise.

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jason Harmon · 30 September 2009

Newly arrived, Harmon fires six quick questions at Ball, the sharpest being whether "enlightened" poets can really discuss "two books neither has intentions of ever completely reading" — "How can we discuss if we don't?"

1 - The conceptually interesting point might be that although the germ was implicit, it was followed to its logical, appropriative conclusion. Doing so with this particular work seems apt.

2 - Have you read both?

3 - I prefer Kent's.

4 - I haven't read it.

5 - So....at least one or two "enlightened" poets are discussing two "books" neither has intentions of ever completely reading? Quite a startling thought! How can we discuss if we don't?

6 - What would it even mean to read both?

Thanks for the opportunity to jump into the list!

Jason Harmon

I presume the "blurbs" in support of Johnson's book are also appropriated or fabricated. This is a clever joke, but I don't see how it is conceptually interesting. Unlike Goldsmith's DAY, which recontextualized text in an "uncreative" gesture (a Duchampian raising of "journalistic" prose into the realm of poetry), and thus produced a rich text, replete with previously dormant meaning, Johnson's DAY does little more than repeat the gesture, and thus the only significance it seems to hold is to question the validity of assigning such a work to any single, particular author, something already implicit in Goldsmith's project and only superficially interesting in the first place.

--- Jonathan Ball

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Bobby Baird · 30 September 2009

Baird catches Ball defending Goldsmith's Day for its "rich text, replete with previously dormant meaning" — precisely the originality Goldsmith disavows — and quotes Kenny back: "you just need to know the general concept."

It's interesting, Jonathan, that you'd defend Goldsmith's DAY (and dismiss Johnson's DAY) in the name of originality ("produced a rich text, replete with previously dormant meaning"), when this is the regime of value that Goldsmith explicitly and repeatedly rejects. (See Goldsmith, internet, passim.) I presume that you, like many other people, accept that rejection as a pose, a mere mockery of public modesty, even though Goldsmith, apparently, does not see it that way. ("In fact, every time I have to proofread [my books] before sending them off to the publisher, I fall asleep repeatedly. You really don't need to read my books to get the idea of what they're like; you just need to know the general concept.")

Or maybe you take Goldsmith's word for it that "In conceptual writing the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an author uses a conceptual form of writing, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair." If that's the case, then tell me, please, what makes Goldsmith's idea interesting? Given that the same idea has been had, and executed, by thousands of others, including Richard Prince, Sherri Levine, and anyone who's "written" a found poem, why should we see Goldsmith's project as any more or any less interesting than Johnson's?

But here's a thought: what if the dismissal of Kent's DAY as "superficially interesting" was exactly the point of his project? I don't say that it is; Kent can speak to that (or could, if he weren't banned from this list, though I'm sure he'll find a way to participate somehow). But what if? What if one took the annoyed response to Johnson's DAY as exactly the reaction he wanted, since it proved the fact--which you may take to be obvious, but which no one seems willing to publicly acknowledge--that there is a bright line between the kind of people whose uncreative writing allows them to reap every reward the culture industry has to offer publication, glossy magazine interviews, fellowships and tenured academic positions--and those whose *identical* uncreative writing gets them shunned as wannabes? And what if that bright line has nothing to do with the work, or the ideas behind the work, and everything to do with the fact that one has gone to the right schools, lived in the right cities, and licked the right boots? I think you'd have to admit that it's a superficially interesting thought, at the very least.

Bobby

Bobby Baird

<http://www.digitalemunction.com>

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Mairéad Byrne · 30 September 2009

Byrne dates her thrill to first reading of Goldsmith retyping the New York Times: "The charge was in the concept." The book she ordered but never read; Johnson's counter-gesture rates only "the status of a joke."

I got a massive charge of energy when I first read about this guy in New York City re-typing the New York Times. I think I read it in the New York Times actually! Could it be? I've met Kenny Goldsmith since then but I still see that first Kenneth of my imagination (a bald guy, a little like Stanely Tucci) in his apartment stacked with New York Timeses.

The charge was in the concept. You can read the book or not (I haven't). You can order it for the library (I have). There's quite a heft to it. Often there's a sweet tension between the conceptual and the material in Kenny's work. Writer of wooden books. Sculptor of provocation. He's an artist.

Kent's gesture has the status of a joke for me. It's a bit funny. And, materially, I like the idea of Geoffrey Gatza getting deliveries from Amazon, sticking on stickers, filling orders for \$250 well, maybe not. Perhaps there isn't a performance dimension.

Bobby Baird's original (!) 6/3/08 comment to Harriet fits its skin better:

"And so here's my question: who gets to be an uncreative genius? And more importantly: on what grounds? If I recreate Day-an achievement, one must admit, that would be even more uncreative than the "original"-am I a genius? Will The Figures publish it under my name? Will Publisher's Weekly review it? Will I be invited to speak at the next Conceptual Poetics conference on the basis of it?"
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2008/05/marjorie-perloffs-unoriginal-genius/>

He answers the question in his next paragraph, which is a bit dreary. At least Kent's gesture locates itself in the paragraph with most energy.

Mairéad

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jonathan Ball · 1 October 2009

Ball breaks with conceptualism's central tenet that "the charge is in the concept," insisting the poetic richness of execution still counts — "Kenny Goldsmith's books are WORTH READING," capitals his — while dismissing Johnson's Day as empty satire.

Bobby, I think you've put your finger on something --- regardless of Goldsmith's stance, I disagree with a basic tenant of conceptualist art, that the concept is

everything, or "the charge [is] in the concept" as Mairad more elegantly puts it. The facility of the execution and the richness of the end result maintain their lustre, and I think it is a mistake for Goldsmith and his ilk to eschew these "traditional" values in a fetishization of newness that belies the facility and the poetic richness of their works. For all of Goldsmith's boisterous contempt for originality, he is producing original texts that are worth reading. That's right ... Kenny Goldsmith's books are WORTH READING. Appropriation and recontextualization is old hat, as you say, insofar as artistic tactics are concerned, but old though they may be these tactics can still produce good work. In short, I disagree with Goldsmith and consider a text like DAY both readable and interesting, full of poetic richness. Johnson's DAY is not as interesting to me because it is a perfect example of the kind of empty conceptualism which Goldsmith CLAIMS to practice, when in fact his writing is more interesting than his soundbites regarding same. Of course, since the texts are identical, Johnson's book is just as "rich" as Kenny's. But where Kenny produced a "uncreative" and yet, in another sense, "original" poetic text through the application of an artistic technique, Johnson is merely satirizing Goldsmith's pose.

Jonathan

Or maybe you take Goldsmith's word for it that "In conceptual writing the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an author uses a conceptual form of writing, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair." If that's the case, then tell me, please, what makes Goldsmith's idea interesting? Given that the same idea has been had, and executed, by thousands of others, including Richard Prince, Sherri Levine, and anyone who's "written" a found poem, why should we see Goldsmith's project as any more or any less interesting than Johnson's?

But here's a thought: what if the dismissal of Kent's DAY as "superficially interesting" was exactly the point of his project? I don't say that it is; Kent can speak to that (or could, if he weren't banned from this list, though I'm sure he'll find a way to participate somehow). But what if? What if one took the annoyed response to Johnson's DAY as exactly the reaction he wanted, since it proved the fact--which you may take to be obvious, but which no one seems willing to publicly acknowledge--that there is a bright line between the kind of people whose uncreative writing allows them to reap every reward the culture industry has to offer publication, glossy magazine interviews, fellowships and tenured academic positions--and those whose *identical* uncreative writing gets them shunned as wannabes? And what if that bright line has nothing to do with the work, or the ideas behind the work, and everything to do with the fact that one has gone to the right schools, lived in the right cities, and licked the right boots? I think you'd have to admit that it's a superficially interesting thought, at the very least.

Bobby

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jeffrey Side · 2 October 2009

Side posts Kent Johnson's blog reply, which enlists Buchloh and Foster on the readymade's endless "cut and pasted ad infinitum" recycling to indict Goldsmith's work as "uncreative and boring" — theory marshaled behind the joke.

Kent asked me to post his response to someone on the Digital Emunction blog:

"OK, Brennen, but if it isn't, then what is it I might have plagiarized? I'm not saying I haven't, I'm just curious what you mean.

I see that you are thinking about this at your blog in terms of recent art history and theory, quoting Danto, and I think that's great (Kenny should think it's great, too, since he's supposedly all about reflection and discussion).

In their writings on the Duchampian readymade and its neo-avant-garde recyclings, I find critics like Buchloh and Foster more interesting than Danto. Though they take strong exception to Burgers' wholesale dismissal of the neo-avant-garde, they're also very critical of ways the great, original readymade move has been cut and pasted ad infinitum into the art market since, say, Nouveau réalisme recycled gestures with this or that generic tweak or novelty, that is, emptied of any radical, anti-institutional charge ready-made, as it were, for rapid capture and incorporation by the networks of Museum Culture.

This recycling, I'd say, is transparently the case with the work of Kenny Goldsmith (Goldsmith and Bok, to be sure, who despite their polemics for the benefits of ego-less uncreativity seem to have been drunk for the past few years on some kind of secret Author Function Ego Juice, are quite exuberantly open about their desire for the Museum). KG's work is uncreative and boring not just as affective extension of its proclaimed poetic and ontological premises; its uncreative and boring because it's so damn old hat: an attempted importation of decades-old gestures into a Post-Biz scene that, as Goldsmith himself puts it, is forty years behind art, and thus likely (at least part of its crowd) to take his conceptual banalities as exciting and new. In some circles, they call it snake oil.

But it's MY Day, Brennen, that is truly new, you see. The Authentic Item. Because no one has ever done it quite like this before. I've taken his whole bookum and made it mine, in single decisive act. And doing so, I've put his plagiarized bookum into the dustbin of sub-poetic sub-history. I am being both funny and serious, in saying that. Doubled in my intent, so to speak, like the red-hot Doubled K poker that K. dreamily mentions in his blurb to my Day, where he acknowledges me, his mirrored K, as his master. And it's why he's going to put my book up on UbuWeb.

And one more thing, though here I'm not kidding around: What they call Conceptual poetry? It's forty years behind Broodthaers and Institutional Critique.

Kent"

Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson— Jonathan Ball · 2 October 2009

Ball answers Johnson's defenders: appropriation and "thievery as art" are "dry, boring notions by now," so Johnson's gesture is "more of the same" and "hamfisted satire" of a rhetoric Ball already finds stale.

Thanks Jeffrey, however I did read your post when you originally sent it around. My original point is to take issue with your statement, as I claim that there is nothing innovative or audacious about this appropriation by Johnson. Its conceptual value is not to earmark thievery as art, or to question categories of authorship --- both dry, boring notions by now --- but rather to extend to its logical extreme the rhetoric of a conceptualist like Goldsmith.

My point is that Goldsmith's rhetoric of conceptualist value being the only value is already dry and boring. What makes Goldsmith's texts, such as DAY, innovative and audacious works is the actual poetic richness of the texts produced under these "uncreative" constraints, not the their conceptualist underpinnings. Therefore, Johnson's act, aside from being hamfisted satire, is just "more of the same" insofar as conceptualist writing is concerned. Goldsmith makes use of conceptualist tactics to defamiliarize language (in this case the language of journalism and advertising) through a reframing in order to produce poetic texts. Johnson is taking a work of conceptualist poetry as his source, and turning it into more conceptualist poetry no such radical defamiliarization of language has occurred (in other words, no poetry is produced through a shift of the text's framework).

Moreover, the act by Johnson will not lead to legal action --- Goldsmith suing over somebody stealing his previously stolen text the thought is absurd. The original act by Goldsmith is the only one subject to legal action. In any case, whether or not a poetic act is subject to legal action is no source or guarantor of its artistic value.

Jonathan

Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson— Mairéad Byrne · 2 October 2009

Byrne sketches the pair as types — Goldsmith the energizing importer of art-world ideas "in VERY large letters," Johnson "a kind of policeman (CIA man?), setting off small bombs to injure poets, or at least crumple their horny toe-nails."

Other aspects of the artistic practices of KG and KJ are worth considering. KG has brought Abbie Hoffman's Steal This Book to vital and extraordinary development in the stunning super-energizing panoramic UbuWeb. He's also an A1 performer: live,

on paper, and conceptually. Ever seen/heard/sat under his Bern Porter piece? I agree with Maria that he's a LOT of fun. KJ is kinda fun too, and appeals just as heartily to some senses of humor as KG does to mine. The work often seems mean to me, not just mean-spirited but flimsy. A lot of what KG is doing is energizing the poetry world by importing and writing (in VERY large letters) ideas from the art world. KJ, to me, is a kind of policeman (CIA man?), setting off small bombs to injure poets, or at least crumple their horny toe-nails. This policeman is an upstanding citizen as teacher and translator though, maybe he even loves poetry there. But at night, he puts on his little cape, and runs round sticking needles into thingsYIKES now he's heading for me....

Jonathan Ball 10/02/09 9:39 AM >>> Thanks Jeffrey, however I did read your post when you originally sent it around. My original point is to take issue with your statement, as I claim that there is nothing innovative or audacious about this appropriation by Johnson. Its conceptual value is not to earmark thievery as art, or to question categories of authorship --- both dry, boring notions by now --- but rather to extend to its logical extreme the rhetoric of a conceptualist like Goldsmith.

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Jonathan

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Murat Nemet-Nejat · 2 October 2009

Nemet-Nejat nominates Thoreau's jail night as America's first conceptual art, then faults Goldsmith and Johnson for risking nothing — mere "conversation pieces" beside Doubled Flowering — and presses the standing question: has anyone actually read Goldsmith through?

For me, Thoreau's going to jail for his civil disobedience (even if only for a day) is a piece of conceptual art. In fact, he may be the first conceptual artist, at least, in the United States. That act itself is followed by words, the essay "Civil Disobedience," which actually is a manifesto of conceptual gesture transformed into political act.

Let's face it, neither Goldsmith nor Johnson expect to go to jail for their acts. Both lack, I think, an element of risk. Therefore, essentially they become conversation pieces as conceptual works. On the other hand, *Doubled Flowering* is truly a conceptual gesture, and John has paid and is still paying a price for it.

I have a question: how many on this list has read Goldsmith's work through? Jonathan, have you read it through? I am curious how many of us are talking about works that we actually read? What does reading of a conceptual mean? Is it the same as any other reading? Jonathan, talking about the "richness" of Goldsmith's text, you are implying that you have read it through. Have you done so?

Ciao,

Murat

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Hugh Tribbey · 2 October 2009

Tribbey defends objective procedure as escape from the "situational fiefdoms" where judgments of "good" hide social shunning; the "awful" it yields "can yield insight," like those who grow "fascinated by melon molds and bat guano."

So much of the "shunning of wannabes" in these situational fiefdoms is hidden in judgments of "good." Makes the whole business a bit silly. So seeking an objective process to engage in may make more sense. The products of applied concepts or objective procedures are often "awful" by conventional consensus, but "awful" is often more interesting than "good." There's more than "entertainment value" involved. The awful can yield insight and trigger creativity. Some people become fascinated by melon molds and bat guano.

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jeffrey Side · 2 October 2009

Side suspects the quarrel is just personal dislike of Kent, and reads back Goldsmith's own litany — "boredom, valuelessness, and nutritionlessness as our ethos" — wondering what response such programmatic self-cancellation could expect.

Nick, I agree. I've been trying to get this across here, but I think people just don't like Kent. I bet if Kent had done Day first and Kenny "stole" it and published it people would say "Wow, what a great idea!".

Regarding Kennys artistic strategies. when he says:

On the contrary, we employ intentionally self and egoeffacing tactics using uncreativity, unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as our precepts; information management, word processing, databasing, and extreme process as our methodologies; and boredom, valuelessness, and nutritionlessness as our ethos. If we appear to you as fads, then we feel weve succeeded beyond our wildest expectations: well be yesterdays news by the time you read this.

What sort of response is he expecting? If all he says is the case, then is it a case worth making outside of his wanting attention from it? Im surprised no one can see though this.

Incidentally, Kenny still hasnt responded to my comment on Dale Smiths blog left some weeks ago, regarding statements in Kennys interview with Dale. In that comment I said:

'I was rather perplexed to see Kenny so supportive of the idea that anything should go in poetry, yet admit that UbuWeb is not a democracy and that he decides what goes there, and that: 99% of what is submitted is not accepted. But thats why its so good. The bar is set very high according to Ubus standards, which are quite rigorous.

Yet, I wonder what criteria are brought into play when deciding what is the best of anything should go, or arbitrarily collaged texts etc. I suppose, there isnt one, and that it is all personal taste.'

Kenny refuses to comment on this.

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Jonathan Ball · 4 October 2009

Ball finally answers the dare: yes, he read Day. "Not a masterpiece," but full of "stunning and exciting poetic effects" from ad-texts interrupting news — while theft-as-art leaves him shrugging, "who cares?"

In response to Murat, yes, I have read DAY, although I read it some time ago. DAY is not a masterpiece. But there are some stunning and exciting poetic effects, most of which result from effective juxtaposition and disjunction that results when ad-texts or other types of text (pull-quotes, headlines, "garbage" like headers) interrupt news stories, and in some cases the news items attain a certain pathos or silliness as a result of their placement in a book rather than a newspaper, as the medium lays additional emphasis on certain things. Of course, I find it conceptually interesting as well.

In response to Jeffrey, it seem to me that defamiliarizing language is one of the basic components of poetry itself. Estranging language from its normal functions for heightened, poetic effect. Insofar as the "conceptualising of theft as an artistic act," I suppose my response is "yes, but who cares"? So what? Theft is conceptualized as an artistic act constantly. Any found poem conceptualizes theft as an artistic act, to a lesser degree obviously, and in this example the theft is very bold and (insofar as the insular poetry world is concerned) high-profile, but so what? I don't see why anyone should care.

Perhaps this does come down to a matter of taste, as you suggest. Insofar as the conceptual underpinnings of each work, I find Goldsmith's act interesting insofar as it works to defamiliarize language, imply commentary on the print medium and on the news media, declare uncreative appropriation and textual reframing as poetic to an absurd degree, and trouble questions of authorship. Johnson's act seems, by comparison, to extend certain of Goldsmith's concerns (theft, questions of authorship) for the sake of satire, and so I don't see what is to be considered radical here.

It seems to me that this debate has become more about the personalities of the authors involved and whether or not somebody likes one or dislikes the other. I have absolutely no interest in this kind of discussion, and unless the tide turns I intend this as my last word on the subject.

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Statement from Kent Johnson

— Kent Johnson · 5 October 2009

Johnson, posting by proxy, professes himself "bemused" that so "trifling" a book breeds such indignation. The triviality, he insists, is the point: his Day aims to be "a dialectical advance in the concept of boredom."

Jeffrey Side wrote, kindly offering to send in a response by me to recent posts here. It would be easier to post directly, of course, but that doesn't seem to be possible.

Just to say I'm a bit bemused by the many earnest comments (at Poetics, at the other two major poetry lists, and at the initial first announcement of the wok here [I just noticed the typo, I'll keep it] <http://www.digitalemunction.com/2009/09/22/advertisement-kent-johnsonsdays/#comments>) that dismiss my new book as "trivial" in nature, as a "tempest in a teapot," as a gesture devoid of "risk," and so on. You have to admit: For a "publication" so trifling, the book sure seems to be generating a lot of indignation!

The thing is, these comments on the work's triviality are quite correct and obviously so. And I am sort of disappointed that part of its conceptual point seems to have been missed by so many. Alison Croggon's "yawn," for example, is perfectly poignant, inasmuch as she seems unawares that the Goldsmith wing of "Conceptualism" feverishly advocates Boredom as a poetic principle! So why my book would be dismissed because it out-bores KG's is beyond me. The muse that paid me a visit, you see, *instructed me* to be boring and to really go all the way, not just halfway, as with the case of KG's dime a dozen neo-readymade move. My Day aims to be, precisely, a dialectical advance in the concept of boredom. Which doesn't mean it's original (well, OK, maybe it is a little bit), or risky, or worth the paper it's not even written on.

I hope that helps clarify things.

Still, it's pleasing to see there are as many poets expressing enthusiasms about my book as there are those in a snit about it. Today, for example, Charles Zito posted the following comment at Digital Emunction, and I share it, eager that the many of you who are avant-garde academics will use it as he plans to use it. Perhaps after the full-page ad comes out next month, in a publication widely available at your local chain bookstore, more of you will? I hope so, as sales of the book (of which there already have been an unexpected few!) will help the continuing work of BlazeVOX, to which fabulous press I am donating all royalties. Anyway, here's what Charles Zito wrote:

After watching a video on Kenny G, I wondered how far this conceptualism, with its lack of concern for originality or copyrights, could go. That it has resulted in this "reproduction" is truly entertaining. I just wanted to let you know that, as a result, your accomplishment will be discussed in my graduate poetry workshop. Thought you might enjoy that knowledge.<

Further, just as an informational note (and I promise I am not making this up), I have heard in the past couple days that there are tentative plans in the UK for the publication of a *_Day Variorum_*, both texts, KG's and KJ's, in one volume, set in parallel columns for ease of comparison. Hopefully, some of the hefty copies will be adopted in future seminars at those new citadels of Conceptualism, U. of Penn and Princeton.

best,

Kent

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Wystan Curnow · 6 October 2009

Curnow declines to be offended, reading the "smartarse" publicity as deliberate "faux avant wrapping" and "strategically acute"; the real interest, he argues, lies in comparing Day's role within Goldsmith's oeuvre versus Johnson's.

Alison wrote: 'what's mostly getting up my nose is the smartarse complacency of the publicity, which is, I guess, the point of the whole exercise.' It is part of the point, but not the whole point. But it's a separate point, 'Conceptualist poetry' comes comes rhetorically wrapped, because I read it as faux avant wrapping, and take its serio-comic register as strategically acute, I do not find it complacent, and it does not get up my nose, let alone my smart arse.

Then she wrote: 'the supposedly radical transformation is not radical at all, it just shifts the language from literature to more literature'.

True enough, except that there's much to be said for, and has been said of, shifting language from literature to more literature. To start with what is of interest in a comparison of Johnson's appropriation with Goldsmith's appropriation, relies less on the matter of 'originality' than on the comparison of the role Day plays in Goldsmith's oeuvre with the role it acquires within Johnson's.

Wystan

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Alison Croggon · 6 October 2009

Croggon scratches the itch she knows she shouldn't: Johnson's gesture is "complacent" because "it has all the answers in advance, and any criticism is instantly self-cancelling" — "deadly," "boring," and about nothing but literary politics.

Hi Wystan. I can't believe how my fingers itch reading this stuff, the way it makes you want to open your mouth and comment, although you know it would be better not to. And then you regret it. And here I am again. I guess in that way Kent's action is a hugely successful provocation.

I was never exercised with its "originality". It's a complacent action because it has all the answers in advance, and any criticism is instantly self-cancelling. I think that's deadly. It's boring because all it is about is literary politics, all that strategic acuteness you mention, as if there isn't a world out there (yes, I am perfectly aware of Kent's background and involvement, and am grateful to him for introducing me to contemporary Russian poetry - I know he can do more interesting things). It presents itself a risk - or at least Jeffrey is presenting it as risk, to be fair I'm not sure Kent is - when it involves no risk at all (it would have been much more risky, and maybe if the question of contemporary authorship was the issue would have had more point, as someone else said, to plagiarise Dan Brown). As if Goldsmith is going to bother to sue. I do think the fact that the book is simply a matter of putting stickers over KG's name is funny, because - as I said in some comment earlier - it's a better joke if the book doesn't exist at all, and it clearly doesn't. But it takes about two minutes to get the punchline, and then I find myself here, being part of the performance, so that Jeffrey can go "aha! you see? what an interesting literary controversy!"

Jeffrey, of course KG "recontextualises" the language in DAY, whether he says he does or not. He takes the text of the NYT and puts it between the covers of a book. If that's not recontextualising I don't know what is. And of course that "defamiliarises" it. I've seen Goldsmith perform his found texts (is this what is meant by "not reading" them?) and it's far from boring, whatever his own intentions - more a sudden levitation of the mundane and unheard into vivid life. I guess this is also a performance of sorts, but really, what for? It assumes a whole lot of things about literature and then goes out to prove them, like bad science. And here I am helping it along. Mouth zipping up now.

xA

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Production film of Day by Kent Johnson

— Geoffrey Gatza · 7 October 2009

Gatza turns the parody into product: a production film scored to Stravinsky's The Rite for ten numbered ones "signed by the Author."

Day by Kent Johnson

Production film of Day by Kent Johnson.

Geoffrey Gatza Editor & Publisher of BlazeVOX [books], publisher of weird little books, constructs Day by Kent Johnson from Day by Kenny Goldsmith. Set to Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring. <http://www.blazevox.org/Day.mov>

Do It Yourself @ Home:

Make your own Day by Kent Johnson with your very own, D. I. Y. sticker.

Download the template here and have your way with your copy!

[http://www.blazevox.org/Day cover flat.pdf](http://www.blazevox.org/Day%20cover%20flat.pdf)

Price: \$30, plus shipping and handling [\$300 for each of ten numbered copies signed by the Author, no charge for shipping and handling]. All copies come with specially designed, affixed stickers (on cover, back cover, title page, spine, etc.) to impart authorship, copyright, blurbs, and co-production.

Book Information:

- Paperback: 836 pages
- Binding: Perfect-Bound
- Publisher: BlazeVOX [books] & The Figures
- ISBN: 9781935402992

for one low low price : \$30 <http://www.blazevox.org/bk-kj4.htm>

Praise

If the 836-pp. Day established Kenny Goldsmith as without a doubt the leading conceptual poet of his time, the 836-pp. Day by Kent Johnson may well be remembered for nudging the politics of Conceptual Poetry out of blithely affirmative, institutional framings, and into truly negational, critical spaces. — Juliana Spahr

Recent trends in technologies of communication have already begun to subvert the romantic bastions of "creativity" and "authorship," calling into question the propriety of copyright through strategies of plagiaristic appropriation. Such developments have caused poets to theorize an innovative aesthetics of "conceptual literature" that has begun to question, if not to abandon, the lyrical mandate of originality in order to explore the potentials of the "uncreative," be it automatic, mannerist, aleatoric, or readymade, in its literary practice. Such activity (employing self and ego-effacing tactics via uncreativity, unoriginality, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts) has become

one of the most radical, if not one of the most popular, limit-cases of the avant-garde at the advent of the millennium. With *Day*, Kent Johnson claims his place as one of the major figures of this new writing, showing, in single move, how Conceptual Poetry has been nearly forty years behind the politics of Institutional Critique. — Christian Bök

As he once asked, at the blog of the Poetry Foundation (though with what seems in retrospect a disingenuous banality), ³Nearly one hundred years after Duchamp, why hasn't appropriation become a valid, sustained[,] or even tested literary practice?² Here now, Kent Johnson wagers the query with a vengeance, brazenly upping the ante of Uncreative dialectic by throwing down before us a readymade gesture that is nothing but dizzying in the synthesis of its conception: a flagrant appropriation of a Conceptual work's Authorship and Copyright, categories which themselves had been branded into this same text, in flagrant appropriation by another K (yes, me), in first, antithetical instance. Thus, here at Boring Ranch, in gamble with a gambol, he claims all the cow chips, one could say, with the searing, asterisked irony of a double-K smoking iron. His *Day* emerges hot and bright from the dead-dark of an innocent pre-dawn, a sort of authentic Afterlife that rises from the ³original² simulacral body in which it had lain (latent and expectant). As in the best of Sherrie Levine, but more radically still, it summons us, now, that we might think harder in its sudden light. Indeed, Kent Johnson's *Day* stands as the first Conceptual gesture of its kind in the history of American poetry: An open, literal theft of an entire ³book,² exhibited without shame, as a new and strange Work of Art in our Museum of Modern Poetry. I can only tip my hat. — Kenny Goldsmith

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Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson

— Mark DuCharme · 8 October 2009

DuCharme names the trap: Johnson "had to become a 'conceptual' poet in order to" parody one, which "cancels out his own critique" — yet grants the affair "a more interesting conversation on this list than we usually get these days."

Alison, I think your comment is pretty exact.

I would add my first thought upon hearing of this project: that Kent had to become a "conceptual" poet in order to (critique? parody?) that moment. And that this in some way cancels out his own critique or parody. Ultimately, the critiques one could make of his project are pretty much the same as one could make of Goldsmith's. And I'm sure Kent is well aware of this.

Yet, exactly for this reason, Johnson's "conceptual" work doesn't fly for me. I agree that some, and indeed most of his work is more interesting. Johnson's *Day* has, though, I think, produced a more interesting conversation on this list than we usually get these days. For whatever that's worth.

Another thought: one problem with the term "conceptual poetry" is that it implies that other types of writing/poetry are lacking in ideas. Of course this is true of some poetry, as it is true of some (most?) cinema and visual art. Yet I think the term as a catch phrase misses/misreads a lot of otherwise interesting writing, while glorifying what I find to be less interesting, frankly. I guess, to make my biases clear, I've always preferred Pollock, Motherwell or Rauschenberg to Warhol, and Warhol most definitely to Koons.

One final question: Where is Kenny G in all this debate? Surely he has something to add to this conversation. Or does he only hang out at the Harriet blog these days?

Cheers,

Mark DuCharme

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Re: 50 years behind

— Jeffrey Side · 9 October 2009

Side, briefly, reads the "50 year" gibe as Goldsmith's own alibi, "claimed... to justify his notion of conceptual poetry, whatever that is."

I agree. I think the 50 year thing was claimed by Kenny Goldsmith to justify his his notion of conceptual poetry, whatever that is.

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Re: 50 years behind

— Michael Marsh · 10 October 2009

Marsh steps outside the quarrel to call the ahead-or-behind metric absurd: art "derives from needs and desires... of the present," so "It is where it is," and the vocabulary of lateness misses what art is for.

I gotta say all this stuff about anything being ahead or behind especially in art seems an absurd notion. Art derives from needs and desires and inspiration of the present and recent past with influences from the further past. It is where it is. It is up to the artists and people who respond to art and the academic and societal structure that supports art to decide what is important now. I think any idea that puts art behind or ahead of its time is missing the point of its value, which seems to me to be help make sense of the time it occurs in and prepare a path into the unknown.

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Re: 50 years behind

— Chris Jones · 12 October 2009

Jones lifts the debate to theory — conceptual art "claims that art thinks and for art to think it must think original ideas" — grounding it in a "gay liberationist critique" and the "material conditions of life in late capitalism."

I agree. I think the 50 year thing was claimed by Kenny Goldsmith to justify his his notion of conceptual poetry, whatever that is.

Forgetting the Burroughs citation, I took this as also referring to conceptual art. Conceptual art is not only about refusing the notion of the original but also claims that art thinks and for art to think it must think original ideas. A break with the painting model of art is part of this and conceptual poetry had me thinking of various strategies that may break with the privileged poetry model of literature. Conceptual poetry then begins with an understanding of the privilege bestowed on poetry, which is certainly onerous. To claim otherwise is utopian and a refusal to confront the material conditions of life in late capitalism and not possible for gay writers intent on a gay liberationist critique.

To break with the privileged model of painting as a metonym for art or poetry also standing in for the whole of literature does not mean one must stop painting or writing verse but rather to understand and find strategies which may break with these privileged models which stand in the place of art and blocking any hopeful progress for art.

Anyways, attempting to give a quick other perspective to conceptual art practices, from an approving gay liberationist agenda.

best wishes, Chris Jones.

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Fitterman and Place Discuss the Response to "Notes on Conceptualisms"

— UbuWeb · 17 December 2009

UbuWeb links a DIY video in which Vanessa Place and Robert Fitterman "pirate the original eastcoast/westcoast by Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt" to ponder the coastal reception of their Notes on Conceptualisms.

In the DIY video, Vanessa Place and Robert Fitterman pirate the original eastcoast/westcoast by Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt to ponder the coastal reception of their book "Notes on Conceptualisms."

http://ubu.com/film/fitterman_conceptualisms.html

UbuWeb

<http://ubu.com>

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Against Expression: Introductory Essays Available

— UbuWeb · 12 February 2011

UbuWeb posts the introductions to Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Dworkin answering with "The Fate of Echo" — the movement acquiring its canon.

The introductory essays and Table of Contents to "Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing" (2011, Northwestern U Press) are available for download.

http://ubu.com/concept/against_expression.html

Why Conceptual Writing? Why Now?

Kenneth Goldsmith

The Fate of Echo

Craig Dworkin

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I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women

— Jennifer Karmin · 9 August 2011

Karmin announces I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women (Les Figues, 2011), gathering "64 women from 10 countries" from Acker to Howe, with a Kickstarter pre-sale — a quiet rebuttal to conceptualism's boys'-club reputation.

hi poetics friends....hope that everyone is enjoying summer.

i'm happy to share that "i'll drown my book: conceptual writing by women" will be published by les figures press in fall 2011. this anthology contains work by 64 women from 10 countries, including many writers who i deeply admire.

there's a kickstarter pre-release campaign to support this project. until august 24th, supporters can buy a discounted copy of the anthology for \$35 (retail \$40) with a free proof page, postcard, and postage. the full list of contributors is below.

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1359907001/ill-drown-my-book-conceptual-writing-by-women>

big thanks,

jen karmin

I'LL DROWN MY BOOK: CONCEPTUAL WRITING BY WOMEN Kathy Acker, Oana Avasilichioaei & Erin Moure, Lee Ann Brown, Angela Carr, Monica de la Torre, Danielle Dutton, Renee Gladman, Jen Hofer, Bernadette Mayer, Sharon Mesmer, Laura Mullen, Harryette Mullen, Deborah Richards, Juliana Spahr, Cecilia Vicuna, Wendy Walker, Jen Bervin, Inger Christiansen, Marcella Durand, Katie Degentesh, Nada Gordon, Jennifer Karmin, Mette Moestrup, Yedda Morrison, Anne Portugal,

Joan Retallack, Cia Rinne, Giovanni Singleton, Anne Tardos, Hannah Weiner, Christine Wertheim, Norma Cole, Debra Di Blasi, Stacy Doris & Lisa Robertson, Sarah Dowling, Bhanu Kapil, Rachel Levitsky, Laura Moriarty, Redell Olsen, Chus Pato, Julie Patton, Kristin Prevallet, a.rawlings, Ryoko Seikiguchi, Susan M. Schultz, Rosmarie Waldrop, Renee Angle, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Tina Darragh, Judith Goldman, Susan Howe, Maryrose Larkin, Tracie Morris, Sawako Nakayasu, M. NourbeSe Philip, Jena Osman, kathryn l. pringle, Frances Richard, Kim Rosenfield, Suzanne Stein, and Rachel Zolf

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Re: "Post-Avant: A Meta-Narrative"

— Michael Farrell · 25 August 2011

Farrell observes that "the lack of congruence b/w the art world & the lit/poetry world is what makes it possible for kenneth goldsmith to be radical," and asks why a survey of the post-avant avoids naming conceptual poetry at all.

interesting adam

the lack of congruence b/w the art world & the lit/poetry world is what makes it possible for kenneth goldsmith to be radical - by framing his writing as poetry

which i dont object to at all .. but things can feel like theyve been done, just because theyve been done in the art world decades before

i noticed you avoid mentioning conceptual poetry altogether - ?

it seems theres still plenty of thematics around to me .. but i probably only dip into whatever reading world yrs is .. wd be interesting to anthologise the post avant thematically perhaps .. sex-eco-whatever

was reading about 2 sexed texts today (bergvall & dorn in ian davidsons ideas of space in contemporary poetry)

but i do think u have something - that theres so much reservation toward narrative & explicit theme that the language gets knotted - curtained? -

im interested in writing about sex more - or at least differently -

tho to some extent ive had reservations about it because of its recent domination of the lit world generally thru the 'sexy' memoir .. in australia anyway

not that i think poetry shdnt take on proses themes & do them better

regards

michael

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New from Snare: “Seen of the Crime: Essays on Conceptual Writing”

— Derek Beaulieu · 19 September 2011

Beaulieu announces Seen of the Crime, his essays surveying "poetry without subjectivity, without narrative, without words, and even without letters" — conceptualism now producing its criticism as briskly as its verse.

New from Snare Books:

Seen of the Crime

Essays on Conceptual Writing by derek beaulieu

In a series of statements, essays, missives, and informal discussions, seen of the crime surveys the radical edges of Canadian and international poetry; the conceptual and the concrete, the political and the playful. With seen of the crime, derek beaulieu explores the flourishing and frustrating alternatives: poetry without subjectivity, without narrative, without words, and even without letters.

Praise for beaulieu's Seen of the Crime:

'Finally, a book about poetry that is actually about poetry. derek beaulieu is quickly proving himself an essential companion to the contemporary.'

~ Sina Queyras

Author of five books of poetry, three volumes of conceptual fiction, and over 150 chapbooks, DEREK BEAULIEU has been consistently praised as having produced some of the most radical and challenging contemporary Canadian writing. Publisher of No Press, former editor of many notable Canadian magazines, beaulieu currently teaches at Mount Royal University, Alberta College of Art + Design and the University of Calgary.

For more information see:

<http://derekbeaulieu.wordpress.com/2011/09/19/seen-of-the-crime/>

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Doggerel for the Masses by Kent Johnson

— William Freind · 23 January 2012

Freind answers conceptualism in kind with Doggerel for the Masses, deadpan fictions of appropriative crime — Kathy Acker on work release, Brion Gysin passing poems as Merwin's, which the real Merwin then claims — funnier than the polemics it spoofs.

In the 1980s Kathy Acker changed her name to Marjorie Lord and moved to Massapequa, NY. Her entire wardrobe consisted of outfits shed lifted from her neighbors clotheslines. Once, she forced a window in search of a burgundy pants

suit. As part of her work release program, she reorganized the card catalogue at the local library, thus ensuring that each author was properly denominated.

Brion Gysin submitted poems under the name of W.S. Merwin to Antaeus, Poetry and the Paris review, all of which were accepted. The actual Merwin was so pleased by the work that he claimed it for his own, publishing the poems in his collection Opening the Hand.

Willem de Kooning was an inveterate prank caller. (These were the days before caller ID.) Robert Rauschenberg, who famously could not take a joke, was one of his frequent targets, and Rauschenberg responded by making weekly trips to the Dutch masters house in East Hampton where he left bags of burning dog excrement on the porch.

Craig Dworkin might have said Signing a text that one hasn't written will surely become less remarkable, and the next frontier of propriety will materialize when conceptual writing antagonizes the institutions of poetry by signing for others under texts that they have not written. Whether he meant it remains to be seen.

Just out from BlazeVox: Doggerel for the Masses: A Post-Scandal BlazeVox Booke by Kent Johnson.

<http://www.blazevox.org/index.php/news/doggerel-for-the-masses-a-post-scandal-blazevox-booke-by-kent-johnson-now-available-70/>

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Charmless and Interesting: What Conceptual Poetry Lacks

— Jeffrey Side · 4 August 2013

Side links Robert Archambeau's "Charmless and Interesting," quoting the question that keeps returning: "In what sense is pure conceptualism poetry, beyond the institutional sense of being distributed and considered through the channels by which poetry is distributed?"

"Charmless and Interesting: What Conceptual Poetry Lacks and What Its Got" by Robert Archambeau.

Quote from this article:

"In what sense is pure conceptualism poetry, beyond the institutional sense of being distributed and considered through the channels by which poetry is distributed and considered?"

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2013/08/charming-and-interesting-what-conceptual-poetry-lacks-and-what-its-got/>

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The Compleat Purge by Trisha Low

— Patrick Durgin · 29 October 2013

Durgin presents Trisha Low's The Compleat Purge (Kenning Editions), a feminist confessional siphoning "the remix culture of social media into the binge and purge cycle," built from the annual "last will and testament" of a Trisha Low "who seems to commit suicide annually."

Kenning Editions is proud to announce the publication of /The Compleat Purge/, by Trisha Low. ISBN: 9780984647552 (2013) \$15.95 in paperback and somewhat less as an ebook. Through November 1st, the paperback book is on sale for \$12.00 when you order directly from the press .

Trisha Low is just another feminist, confessional writer trying to find a good way to deal with all her literary dads. She siphons the remix culture of social media into the binge and purge cycle of an engrossing read, with the emphasis on gross. She reads the diaries of teenage girls, their blog comments and love letters; she dresses like one in performance then throws up fake blood on herself. She once surveyed the reactions of Catholic fathers to scripted confessionals she made regarding rough sex with men, secretly recorded the conversations, and transcribed the tapes. The results were anthologized by a major university press. Her first book, THE COMPLEAT PURGE, consists of the last will and testament of one Trisha Low, who seems to commit suicide annually; the legal documents accumulate into a coming of age story. It goes on to chronicle the sexual fantasies of indie rock fangirls, who may or may not be exorcising the effects of abuse through their blithe avatars (the guy from The Strokes, etc.). Then Trisha Low finds herself trapped in an 18th century romance novel in the most punishing way, but for whom---we're not really sure. "How is Poetry complicit in the urge to falsely 'heal' societal wounds into the silent fixity of It Gets Better? What better place to look than the teen girl, whose cut wrist is an abject fuck-you; whose cute Band-Aid and its artificial 'healing' is really just your sentimental fantasy."

Trisha Low is committed to wearing a shock collar because she has so many feelings. Remote controls are available at Gauss PDF, /Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing/, TROLL THREAD and others. She lives in New York City.

Barbara Browning: Trisha Low's been leaving us periodic notes about what we can keep of hers if she should happen to go off the deep end. She's also been leaving us her email password, her ATM PIN code, and an astonishing amalgamation of amatory fiction, IMs, craft patterns, magic spells, and film noir in which every romantic interest is a MacGuffin. Low says her virtuosic appropriations owe less to conceptual poetics than to her adolescent days of punk vandalism. Never mind if this booty was shoplifted---it's stunning, and I promise, you'll want to keep everything she gives you.

J. Gordon Faylor: Trisha Low is always dying. Age, place, fictional rendering---all are subsumed to an origin already negated. She and her doubles evacuate with unmoving horror their teenage mania, displacing it, emptying the identities about whom its despair circulates. Once, maybe, this Trisha Low generated bodily heat, ate breakfast, loved and desired. No more. /The Compleat Purge/ razes its confessional charms like effigies, foreclosing Low's final vixi to her own secrets before they too are obliterated in time immemorial. "He had gone from her sight, he had not lifted his bowed head, he had not looked back."

Kim Rosenfield: Like hands reaching out from the grave in the final scene of Brian Di Palma's /Carrie/, Trisha Low's /The Compleat Purge/ reaches out to beg the question: "what's happened to the real Trisha?" In Low's epically eloquent new book, she hands us the keys to a crypt wherein identity is theorized as an act of parasuicide and girlhood a version of being buried alive. /The Compleat Purge/ reframes Freud's infamous query: "What do women want?" by breathing new life into shifting ideals of feminine identity, sexuality, and erotics before the culturally determined ones land us in a coma.

Sianne Ngai: In this darkly girlish feat of self-on-self drag, Trisha Low counters the more ascetic mode of conceptualism with a corpus of gestures---some joyful, some painful---that turn the mass-mediated young female body inside out, then outside once again. Her sharp intelligence and exuberantly vandalistic spirit leap out on every page.

Get your own at Kenning Editions

, Small Press

Distribution

, or

Amazon

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Also available by subscription

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Afterword

What became of the new.

This book closes in 2013, which is to say a year or two before the edge of the cliff. It has followed two movements up to the moment of their fullest confidence and stopped there, and a reader is owed a word on what happened after — the more so because the list, in its long unhurried way, had rehearsed most of it.

Conceptual writing was the more decorated of the two. It had the anthologies, the university appointments, a White House reading in 2011, a poet-laureateship at the Museum of Modern Art in 2013. Then, in March 2015, at a conference at Brown University, Kenneth Goldsmith read a piece he titled “The Body of Michael Brown” — the autopsy report of the Black teenager killed the previous summer in Ferguson, lightly rearranged, and reportedly closed on the report's description of the dead boy's genitals. The reaction was immediate and very large; Goldsmith asked that the recording not be released. Two months later Vanessa Place, who had spent several years tweeting the text of *Gone with the Wind* from an account fronted by an image of Hattie McDaniel, was removed by petition from a committee of the national writers' conference. The method that had looked ingenious applied to a phone book or a single day's newspaper had no answer at all when the found material was a murdered child's body or a plantation romance, and the question that undid it — whose words, and taken at whose expense — was not a new one. It is, more or less, the question kari edwards and Maria Damon and others had put to the movement on this very list a decade earlier. It had simply not been believed.

Flarf, which was always a joke about taste rather than a bid for the sublime, aged more gently. The collective loosened into its members' separate careers; the search-engine gag lost its charge as the internet it strip-mined became the ambient weather of everything. And then, in 2017 — twenty years after Gary Sullivan first typed the word — the movement did the thing every avant-garde does in the end: it published its anthology. *Flarf: An Anthology of Flarf*, assembled by five of the original circle, made a canon of the joke by binding it between covers — which is, precisely, the gesture that had turned a loose scatter of poets into “the New American Poetry” in 1960. The movement was over; the movement was now permanent.

And the generation whose arrival set the whole quarrel going? The “New Coast” writers, of whom Silliman had said they had invented no device but one, turned out to have been up to something he named and dismissed in the same breath — the “return to the lyric” he saw draining the social out of their anthology. Within a few years the critic Stephanie Burt would give the tendency a name of its own, “elliptical,” for poets who wanted a speaking self and the whole experimental toolkit at once; and that hybrid — a lyric that had passed through Language poetry and come out the other side still meaning to say *I* — proved more durable, and far more widely inherited, than either Flarf or conceptual writing. The device that was

supposedly no device became one of the ruling modes of the century's poetry, and did it without a manifesto.

Which is where we came in. The movements that named themselves burned brightest and briefest; the tendency that never quite troubled to name itself outlasted them both. The list, twenty years of it, turns out to have been less a sideshow to this history than its rehearsal room — the place where every question the movements would stake their reputations on, and in two cases their standing, had already been asked, doubted, and asked again, by people who had not yet thought any of it worth a name.

— *Kristen M. Fabians*

Biographical Notes

Brief lives of the contributors, each keyed by number to their posts in the volume. Where a life could not be reliably established, the note says so rather than guess.

Christopher Alexander A participant in the list's discussions of science fiction, digital and conceptual writing, and the work of Canadian poet Darren Wershler-Henry; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Joe Amato Joe Amato is a poet and critic whose background in engineering informs books such as the memoir *Bookend: Anatomies of a Virtual Self* and the critical study *Industrial Poetics: Demo Tracks for a Mobile Culture*. [1]

Jim Andrews Jim Andrews is a Canadian digital poet and programmer who since the 1990s has run *vispo.com*, a hub for his interactive, visual, and sound poetry, including kinetic works such as *Nio* and *Stir Fry Texts*. [1]

Bobby Baird Robert P. Baird is a novelist, journalist, and editor who worked at *Chicago Review* and later at *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and *The Paris Review*; his debut novel *The Nimbus* appeared in 2025. [1]

Charles Baldwin Charles "Sandy" Baldwin is a scholar of electronic literature and new media, author of *The Internet Unconscious: On the Subject of Electronic Literature*, and director of the Center for Literary Computing at West Virginia University, where he was associated with the journal *electronic book review*. [1]

Jonathan Ball Jonathan Ball is a Canadian poet, screenwriter, and scholar based in Winnipeg. His books include *Ex Machina*, *Clockfire*, and *The Politics of Knives*, and he has written on horror and on filmmaker John Paizs. [1] [2] [3] [4]

derek beaulieu derek beaulieu is a Canadian conceptual and concrete poet, publisher, and critic who ran the micropresses housepress and no press and edited magazines including *filling Station* and *dANDelion*. His books include *Flatland*, *Local Colour*, and the essay collection *Please, No More Poetry*. [1] [2] [3]

Charles Bernstein Charles Bernstein is a founding figure of Language poetry who co-edited the magazine *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* with Bruce Andrews and co-founded the Electronic Poetry Center and PennSound. His many books include *Content's Dream*, *A Poetics*, and *Girly Man*; he taught at SUNY Buffalo and the University of Pennsylvania. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Haas Bianchi Haas Bianchi edited the online journal and interview site *Chicago Postmodern Poetry*, which documented contemporary experimental writers; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Daniel Bouchard Daniel Bouchard is a poet and editor who ran the journal *The Poker*. His poetry collections include *Diminutive Revolutions* and *Some Mountains Removed*. [1]

George Bowering George Bowering is a prolific Canadian poet, novelist, and historian who emerged from the Vancouver *TISH* group and served as Canada's first Parliamentary Poet Laureate. His many books include the poetry collection *Kerrisdale Elegies* and the novel *Burning Water*. [1]

Donald Byrd Don Byrd is a poet and scholar who taught for many years at the University at Albany, SUNY. His books include the poetry collection *The Great Dimestore Centennial* and the critical study *The Poetics of the Common Knowledge*. [1]

- Mairéad Byrne** Mairéad Byrne is an Irish-born poet and professor at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her collections include *Talk Poetry*, *The Best of (What's Left of) Heaven*, and *Nelson & The Huruburu Bird*. [1] [2]
- Troy Camplin** Troy Camplin is an interdisciplinary scholar and writer, author of *Diaphysics*, who works across literature, economics, and the sciences and has published poetry and plays. [1] [2]
- cris cheek** cris cheek is a British poet and sound and performance artist associated with Bob Cobbing's Writers Forum and the London experimental scene; he later taught in the creative writing program at Miami University in Ohio. [1]
- David-Baptiste Chirot** David-Baptiste Chirot (d. 2021) was a Milwaukee-based visual and sound poet, critic, and mail artist known for his "rubBEing" rubbings and his prolific writing on found and outsider poetics. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
- Alison Croggon** Alison Croggon is an Australian poet, novelist, librettist, and theatre critic, best known internationally for the fantasy quartet *The Books of Pellinor*. [1]
- John Cunningham** A participant in the list's exchanges on appropriation and the ethics of artistic "theft"; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]
- Wystan Curnow** Wystan Curnow is a New Zealand poet, art critic, and curator, and emeritus professor at the University of Auckland; he is the son of poet Allen Curnow. [1]
- Ryan Daley** A participant in the list's discussion of David-Baptiste Chirot's work; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]
- Maria Damon** Maria Damon is a poet and scholar who long taught English at the University of Minnesota. Author of *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry* and *Postliterary America*, and a frequent collaborator with mIEKAL aND, she works at the intersection of avant-garde poetics and cultural studies. [1] [2] [3]
- Jordan Davis** Jordan Davis is a poet and editor in the younger New York School lineage. He co-edited the magazine *The Hat* and *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, later served as poetry editor of *The Nation*, and is the author of *Million Poems Journal* and *Shell Game*. [1]
- Mark DuCharme** Mark DuCharme is a poet based in Boulder, Colorado, whose collections include *The Sensory Cabinet* and *Answer*. [1] [2]
- Patrick Durgin** Patrick Durgin is a poet and critic who runs the press Kenning Editions and teaches writing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His books include *PQRS* and *The Route*, a collaboration with Jen Hofer. [1]
- kari edwards** kari edwards (1954–2006) was a transgender poet and artist whose books include *iduna*, *obedience*, and *a day in the life of p*. Grounded in queer and experimental poetics, edwards received a New Langton Arts Bay Area Award and a Small Press Traffic book award. [1]
- Lori Emerson** Lori Emerson is a media scholar and critic at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she founded the Media Archaeology Lab. She is the author of *Reading Writing Interfaces: From the Digital to the Bookbound*. [1]
- Steve Evans** Steve Evans is a poet and critic who teaches at the University of Maine. He edits *Third Factory* and the annual "Attention Span" reading survey, and has written extensively on the reception of Language poetry and the post-1989 American avant-garde. [1] [2] [3]

Michael Farrell Michael Farrell is an Australian poet known for formally inventive work, including the collections *ode ode* and *a raiders guide*. He co-edited the anthology *Out of the Box: Contemporary Australian Gay and Lesbian Poets*. [1]

Al Filreis Al Filreis is a scholar and teacher, Kelly Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, where he founded the Kelly Writers House and the PennSound audio archive and created the "ModPo" course. He is the author of *Counter-Revolution of the Word*. [1]

Skip Fox Skip Fox is a poet and Professor Emeritus at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. His collections include *Stormy Mondays*, with books issued by presses such as Lavender Ink and BlazeVOX. [1]

William Freind William (Bill) Freind is a poet and critic, professor of English at Rowan University. He edited *Scubadivers and Chrysanthemums: Essays on the Poetry of Araki Yasusada* and is a leading commentator on the Yasusada affair and Kent Johnson's experiments in authorship. [1]

Corey Frost Corey Frost is a fiction writer and performance poet who emerged from the Montreal spoken-word scene and is now an associate professor at New Jersey City University. He is the author of the story collection *The Worthwhile Flux*. [1]

Gloria Frym Gloria Frym is a poet, fiction writer, and essayist, Professor Emerita at California College of the Arts. A student of Robert Creeley associated with New College of California, she won the American Book Award for *Homeless at Home*. [1]

Christopher Funkhouser Christopher Funkhouser is a digital-poetry scholar and poet, a professor at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He is the author of *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995*. [1]

Geoffrey Gatza Geoffrey Gatza is a poet, chef, and publisher, the founder and editor of BlazeVOX [books]. He is known for his annual Thanksgiving Menu-Poems and for a long list of experimental titles issued through his press. [1] [2]

Henry Gould Henry Gould is a poet based in Providence, Rhode Island, author of the long poems and collections *Stubborn Grew*, *In RI*, and *Lanthanum*, and of the long-running blog HG Poetics. [1]

Tony Green Tony Green is an art historian and poet, emeritus professor of art history at the University of Auckland and a specialist in Poussin. Alongside his scholarship he has produced chapbooks and painted, collaged "poem tubes." [1]

Arielle Greenberg Arielle Greenberg is a poet and critic who coined the term "gurlesque" and co-edited the anthologies *Gurlesque* and *Starting Today: 100 Poems for Obama's First 100 Days*. Her collections include *Given*, and she formerly taught at Columbia College Chicago. [1]

Gabriel Gudding Gabriel Gudding is a poet and essayist, a professor at Illinois State University. He is the author of *A Defense of Poetry* and the book-length travel poem *Rhode Island Notebook*, and is known for his satirical and polemical interventions. [1] [2] [3]

Jason Harmon A participant in the Poetics List, Jason Harmon surfaces here amid the discussion of Kent Johnson's *Day*; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Patrick Herron Patrick Herron is a poet, critic, and information scientist based in North Carolina. Author of *The American Godwar Complex* and *Be Somebody*, he created the

online project *proximate.org* and was an early presence in the Flarf-era debates. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

David Hess David Hess is a poet and critic associated with the Flarf milieu, publishing procedural poems alongside criticism such as his *Jacket* essay on Barrett Watten. [1]

David Harrison Horton David Harrison Horton is a poet, visual artist, and editor based in Beijing. He edits the zine *SAGINAW* and has helmed *Chase Park* and *WORK*; his chapbooks include *Pete Hoffman Days* and *BeiHai*. [1]

Kent Johnson Kent Johnson (1955–2022) was a poet, translator, and literary provocateur best known for the Araki Yasusada hoax and for *Day*, his conceptual reframing and needling of Kenneth Goldsmith's book of the same title. [1]

Chris Jones Chris Jones took part in the Poetics List's generational debates; the name is too common to attach to a single figure, and further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Jeffrey Jullich Jeffrey Jullich is a poet and critic whose books include *Portrait of Colon Dash Parenthesis* (Litmus Press) and *Thine Instead Thank*. He edits the journal *LOGOPOEIA* and has written criticism for *Rain Taxi* and *Fence*. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

Jennifer Karmin Jennifer Karmin is a poet, text-sound artist, and educator based in Chicago, author of the cross-genre *Aaaaaaaaaaalice* and co-founder of the Red Rover Series experimental reading collective. [1]

Kevin Killian Kevin Killian (1952–2019) was a poet, playwright, novelist, and a central figure of the New Narrative movement. He wrote *Argento Series*, co-authored the Jack Spicer biography *Poet Be Like God*, and became famous for his voluminous Amazon reviews. [1]

Jack Kimball Jack Kimball is a Boston-area poet and critic who runs the electronic imprint Faux Press. His books include *Post~Twyla*. [1]

Amy King Amy King is a poet and educator whose collections include *I Want to Make You Safe* and *Slaves to Do These Things*. She has been prominent in VIDA: Women in Literary Arts and its campaigns around gender in publishing. [1]

Anastasios Kozaitis Anastasios Kozaitis is a poet and translator of Greek avant-garde poetry whose work and essays have appeared in *Jacket* and *Big Bridge*. [1]

Joel Kuszai Joel Kuszai is an editor and poet who assembled *poetics@* (Roof Books), the first book drawn from the Buffalo Poetics List, and founded the Buffalo chapbook imprint Meow Press. He is the author of *Accidency*. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

Lewis LaCook Lewis LaCook is a new-media poet, musician, and programmer whose codework and hypertext pieces are part of the electronic-literature tradition. [1]

Tom W. Lewis Tom W. Lewis contributed to the Poetics List's discussion of the gendered rhetoric of the "new"; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Rachel Loden Rachel Loden is a poet known for mordant, politically haunted work, much of it circling figures like Richard Nixon. Her collections include *Hotel Imperium* and *Dick of the Dead*. [1]

Michael Magee Michael Magee is a poet and scholar and a founding figure of Flarf. He edited *Combo* magazine, wrote the collections *My Angie Dickinson* and *Mainstream*, and authored the critical study *Emancipating Pragmatism: Emerson, Jazz, and Experimental Writing*. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

Douglas Manson Douglas Manson is a Buffalo small-press poet and editor who edited *Celery Flute: The Kenneth Patchen Newsletter* and ran the Little Scratch Pad imprints, publishing his own poems and closet dramas. [1] [2]

William Marsh A participant in the UB Poetics List exchanges gathered here; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Michael Marsh A participant in the UB Poetics List exchanges gathered here; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Geraldine McKenzie Australian poet and reviewer whose collection *Duty* (Paper Bark Press) won the Mary Gilmore Award in 2002. Her poems and criticism have appeared in *Jacket* and other experimental venues. [1]

Sharon Mesmer Poet and fiction writer, a central figure in Flarf. Her books include the poetry collections *Annoying Diabetic Bitch* and *Half Angel, Half Lunch*, and she teaches creative writing at New York University. [1]

Philip Metres Poet, translator, and scholar. His critical study *Behind the Lines: War Resistance Poetry on the American Homefront* and the documentary collection *Sand Opera* engage war and dissent; he teaches at John Carroll University. [1]

Lynn Miller A participant in the UB Poetics List exchanges gathered here; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

K. Silem Mohammad Poet and one of the founding figures of Flarf, known for Google-sculpted collections such as *Deer Head Nation* and *A Thousand Devils* and for his sonnet-anagram "Sonnagrams." He edits *Abraham Lincoln: A Magazine of Poetry* and teaches at Southern Oregon University. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

Tenney Nathanson Poet and literary scholar, author of the critical study *Whitman's Presence: Body, Voice, and Writing in Leaves of Grass* and the poetry collection *Ghost Snow Falls Through the Void (Globalization)*. He teaches at the University of Arizona. [1]

Murat Nemet-Nejat Turkish-American poet, translator, and essayist. He wrote *The Peripheral Space of Photography* and edited and translated *Eda: An Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Poetry*. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8]

Millie Niss Poet and electronic-literature artist (1973-2009) who ran the Sporkworld website and created the interactive suite *Oulipoems*, often collaborating with her mother, the writer Martha Deed. [1] [2]

Tom Orange Poet and critic active in the Washington, D.C. experimental scene, and a scholar of Clark Coolidge whose interviews and essays helped document Coolidge's early work. [1]

parrishka Contributed to the UB Poetics List discussions gathered here under this handle; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

furniture press Furniture Press is a small experimental-poetry publisher founded in Baltimore by the poet Christophe Casamassima, associated with appropriative and procedural writing. [1]

Phil Primeau A participant in the UB Poetics List exchanges gathered here; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Jason Quackenbush A participant in the UB Poetics List exchanges gathered here; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1] [2]

Doug Rice (fwd) Experimental fiction writer, author of the transgressive novel *Blood of Mugwump: A Tiresian Tale of Incest*. He teaches writing at California State University, Sacramento. [1]

Steve Russell A participant in the UB Poetics List exchanges gathered here; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1] [2]

Barry Schwabsky Art critic and poet who serves as art critic for *The Nation*. His essays on contemporary art are collected in *Words for Art: Criticism, History, Theory, Practice*, and he has also published poetry. [1]

Mark Scroggins Poet and critic, author of *The Poem of a Life: A Biography of Louis Zukofsky* and the poetry collection *Torture Garden: Naked City Pastorelles*. He teaches at Florida Atlantic University. [1]

Kenneth Sherwood Poet and scholar of digital and sound poetics and an early contributor to the Electronic Poetry Center. He teaches English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. [1]

Jeffrey Side British poet and critic, editor of *The Argotist Online* and its imprint Argotist Ebooks, and author of collections including *Carrier of the Seed*. A persistent theorist of poetic "indeterminacy" and affect, he became one of the more prominent critical voices arguing against conceptual writing. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

Ron Silliman Poet, critic, and central figure of Language writing, author of the book-length poem *The Alphabet* and the influential prose work *The New Sentence*, and editor of the anthology *In the American Tree*. His long-running *Silliman's Blog* made him one of the most-read commentators in contemporary poetry. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

Alan Sondheim Writer, new-media artist, theorist, and musician, known for the vast, ongoing *Internet Text* and for pioneering "codework," writing that fuses natural language with computer code and protocol. A selection appeared as *Writing Under: Selections from the Internet Text*. [1] [2]

Juliana Spahr Poet, critic, and editor, co-editor with Jena Osman of the journal *Chain*, and author of books including *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* and the critical study *Everybody's Autonomy*. Her work joins experimental form to ecological and collective concerns. [1]

Brian Stefans Brian Kim Stefans is a poet and digital-poetics critic, author of *Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics* and *Before Starting Over*, and creator of the Flash poem *The Dreamlife of Letters*. He founded the Arras website and, with Kenneth Goldsmith and others, the /ubu editions imprint. [1] [2] [3]

Konrad Steiner San Francisco filmmaker and poet, a central figure in the Bay Area "neobenshi" or live film-narration performance scene and organizer of the kino21 screening series; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Chris Stroffolino Poet, critic, and musician associated with a younger New York School lineage, author of poetry collections including *Stealer's Wheel* and *Speculative Primitive* and the critical study *Stutter*. His scholarship includes work on Shakespeare and Renaissance drama. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Gary Sullivan Poet, cartoonist, and editor who coined the term "Flarf" and wrote its founding manifesto, edited the magazine *Elsewhere*, and later co-edited *Flarf: An Anthology of Flarf*. He is a defining figure of the movement's deliberately "wrong," search-engine-sourced aesthetic. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9]

Mathias Svalina Poet and co-founder of Octopus Books, author of collections including *Destruction Myth* and *We Free the Stars*, and originator of the mail-based Dream Delivery Service. His work favors surreal fable, list, and myth. [1]

Joe Tabbi Joseph Tabbi is a literary scholar and critic of electronic literature, founding editor of the journal *electronic book review*, and author of *Postmodern Sublime: Technology and American Writing from Mailer to Cyberpunk*. [1]

Hugh Tribbey Experimental and visual poet who teaches English at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, with work appearing in journals such as *Otoliths*; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

UbuWeb An online archive of avant-garde, conceptual, concrete, and outsider art, sound, film, and writing, founded in 1996 by poet Kenneth Goldsmith. Freely accessible and non-commercial, it became a key institution and clearinghouse for conceptual writing. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Stephen Vincent Poet, book artist, and publisher based in San Francisco, who ran Momo's Press and is the author of *Walking Theory* and other collections. His work spans lyric, procedural walking pieces, and visual drawing-poems. [1] [2] [3]

Mark Wallace Poet, fiction writer, and critic who teaches at California State University San Marcos, author of *Temporary Worker Rides a Subway* and co-editor, with Steven Marks, of *Telling It Slant: Avant-Garde Poetics of the 1990s*. [1] [2]

Jacquilyn Weeks Scholar and critic who completed a doctorate in English at the University of Notre Dame, with research on the use of fairy-tale language in twentieth-century British poetry; further biographical details could not be reliably verified. [1]

Mark Weiss Poet, editor, and translator who runs Junction Press, author of several collections and editor of the major bilingual anthology *The Whole Island: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry*. [1]

Daniel Zimmerman Poet (1945–2022) in the projectivist and Black Mountain lineage, a collaborator of John Clarke, who invented the anagrammatic "Isotopes" form and wrote *Isotopes* and *Post-Avant*, the latter introduced by Robert Creeley. He long taught English at Middlesex County College in New Jersey. [1]

Sources

Every passage drawn from the UB Poetics List, in the order it appears.

Part I — Before the Name

- 16 August 1994 — Charles Bernstein, *"Provisional Institutions"*
- 25 October 1994 — Ron Silliman, *"Re: absurd category"*
- 28 October 1994 — Ron Silliman, *"Re: Motivation"*
- 30 October 1994 — Steve Evans, *"Motives & Devices"*
- 31 October 1994 — Ron Silliman, *"G2"*
- 31 October 1994 — Kenneth Sherwood, *"G2 -(G1xG7(d/t)+P)"*
- 31 October 1994 — Steve Evans, *"G-ology"*
- 1 November 1994 — Ron Silliman, *"G-ology"*
- 3 November 1994 — Joel Kuszai, *"Re: 'apex of the M' — essay excerpt"*
- 1 December 1994 — Steve Evans, *"The Advert-Garde"*
- 19 January 1995 — Joe Amato, *"apex of the m..."*
- 1 June 1995 — Mark Scroggins, *"Meet the G that killed me"*
- 2 June 1995 — Chris Stroffolino, *"Re: Meet the G that killed me"*
- 14 January 1996 — Ron Silliman, *"Re: Postmodern American Poetry: the Norton Anthology"*
- 27 February 1996 — Ron Silliman, *"dead horses, live theories"*
- 12 March 1996 — Jordan Davis, *"Re: avant-garde"*
- 7 September 1996 — Joel Kuszai, *"Re: 'Poets vs. Critics'"*
- 7 February 1997 — Henry Gould, *"Re: poetry 'schools'"*
- 14 March 1997 — Stephen Vincent, *"Disturb D/re Perloff"*
- 25 March 1997 — Chris Stroffolino, *"THEY WANNA COVER US WITH MARGARINE(alization)"*
- 6 August 1997 — William Marsh, *"'alternativeavant-garde'"*
- 7 August 1997 — Maria Damon, *"Re: 'alternativeavant-garde'"*
- 28 January 1998 — Gary Sullivan, *"Response to Maria's Question"*
- 30 January 1998 — Kevin Killian, *"Missing generation"*
- 30 January 1998 — Chris Stroffolino, *"Re: Missing generation"*
- 16 November 1998 — Joel Kuszai, *"scene report — San Diego's Trip to LA"*
- 12 December 1998 — Joel Kuszai, *"Re: The Hat / women writers"*
- 14 March 1999 — Joel Kuszai, *"of Mothers & Daughters"*
- 4 August 1999 — Lynn Miller, *"6 JANUARY 1995 / 24TH ST & GUERRERO"*
- 14 August 1999 — Jeffrey Jullich, *"cut-ups / 'homosexualization of the New York avant-garde'"*
- 5 December 1999 — Geraldine McKenzie, *"Re: avant garde / mckenzie"*
- 8 February 2000 — Tony Green, *"Re: success"*
- 28 February 2000 — Arielle Greenberg, *"Re: remap + other questions (Maine, P&W)"*
- 8 August 2001 — Mark DuCharme, *"Re: edit, editors, editing"*
- 27 April 2002 — Jeffrey Jullich, *"Re: inchoate / SEGUE [The Zombie Avant-Garde]"*
- 28 April 2002 — Millie Niss, *"Re: inchoate / SEGUE [The Zombie Avant-Garde]"*
- 21 May 2002 — Tom Orange, *"report on telling it slant"*
- 19 July 2003 — Haas Bianchi, *"Re: Anthology of Poets Born After 1966"*
- 19 July 2003 — Gabriel Gudding, *"emma goldman woulda hated anthologies"*
- 20 July 2003 — Gloria Frym, *"Re: emma goldman woulda hated anthologies"*

Part II — Machines & the Screen

- 10 April 1994 — Christopher Funkhouser, *"[technopoetics]"*
- 6 December 1994 — Charles Bernstein, *"Experiments"*
- 7 December 1994 — Donald Byrd, *"Experiments"*
- 5 May 1995 — cris cheek, *"Re: aleatoric composition (longish)"*
- 7 May 1995 — Maria Damon, *"Re: Aleatory Poetry"*
- 29 May 1996 — Joe Tabbi, *"ebr special issue: visual narratives"*
- 10 February 1997 — Mark Wallace, *"the future of an illusion"*
- 26 June 1997 — Charles Bernstein, *"Letter from Jackson Mac Low"*
- 4 September 1997 — Juliana Spahr, *"Chain / 4 now available"*

- 8 June 1998 — Alan Sondheim, *"Distributed Image of the Internet in - r and similar commands:"**
- 9 June 1998 — Joel Kuszai, *"Re: Anarchy"*
- 26 January 2000 — Patrick Herron, *"p r o x i m a t e . o r g"*
- 22 February 2001 — Patrick Herron, *"Angel of Soliloquy"*
- 15 April 2001 — Charles Bernstein, *"E-Poetry 2001: A Digital Poetry Festival April 18-21"*
- 2 May 2001 — Brian Stefans, *"E-Poetry Conference: correspondence"*
- 6 April 2002 — Christopher Alexander, *"Sci-fi, Darren Wershler-Henry, Notes"*
- 1 May 2002 — Geoffrey Gatz, *"Re: Manifestoes"*
- 9 December 2002 — Anastasios Kozaitis, *"Ubu.com/aspen in NYT"*
- 4 April 2003 — Brian Stefans, *"Disquiet on the Electronic Front"*
- 27 January 2006 — furniture press, *"Re: What the &#@%_is_ Electronic Writing?!?"**
- 17 November 2006 — Alan Sondheim, *"Re: Dead"*
- 19 January 2008 — Jim Andrews, *"Re: on code poetry"*
- 19 August 2011 — Charles Baldwin, *"unprintability (part 2)"*

Part III — Flarf

- 12 February 2002 — Gary Sullivan, *"Aww Yeah God!"*
- 13 February 2002 — Gary Sullivan, *"Got Spork?"*
- 14 February 2002 — Gary Sullivan, *"DWORKIN' BJORK"*
- 28 February 2002 — Gary Sullivan, *"OLSON STUDIES"*
- 20 April 2002 — K. Silem Mohammad, *"WHAT IS LAMGuage POETRY?"*
- 22 April 2002 — K. Silem Mohammad, *"NEW WORK ON LANGUAGE POETRY"*
- 1 May 2002 — Gary Sullivan, *"Flarf Manifesto"*
- 9 May 2002 — Gary Sullivan, *"Should flarf ignore macadamia nuts?"*
- 25 May 2002 — David Hess, *"The Pressing Question of Fun"*
- 28 May 2002 — Millie Niss, *"Re: The Pressing Question of Fun"*
- 3 September 2002 — K. Silem Mohammad, *"Re: A Question of Scope"*
- 3 September 2002 — Chris Stroffolino, *"Re: A Question of Scope"*
- 10 January 2003 — K. Silem Mohammad, *"THE GARY SULLIVAN FILES"*
- 10 January 2003 — Gary Sullivan, *"Googlism Kills Flarf Dead"*
- 16 April 2003 — Michael Magee, *"Baghdad, Flarf etc"*
- 23 April 2003 — Jeffrey Jullich, *"my first flarf!"*
- 6 July 2003 — Patrick Herron, *"heraldsun.com (Maria, Ron, Kirby, Mark)"*
- 25 August 2003 — Rachel Loden, *"Kasey on the Beeb"*
- 25 August 2003 — K. Silem Mohammad, *"Re: BBC & Flarf"*
- 26 August 2003 — Maria Damon, *"Re: BBC & Flarf"*
- 19 November 2003 — K. Silem Mohammad, *"Rouge State blurb"*
- 19 November 2003 — kari edwards, *"Re: Rouge State blurb response.."*
- 20 November 2003 — Michael Magee, *"Re: Rouge State blurb"*
- 24 November 2003 — Jeffrey Jullich, *"Re: A patent for writing poetry"*
- 1 June 2004 — Daniel Bouchard, *"American Poetry"*
- 30 January 2005 — Philip Metres, *"Found Poetry origins and theories"*
- 31 March 2005 — Michael Magee, *"some thoughts on Creeley"*
- 27 February 2006 — Ron Silliman, *"Silliman's Blog: Uncreative Writing"*
- 1 March 2006 — Patrick Herron, *"Fralf Roolez! Merchandise"*
- 1 March 2006 — Stephen Vincent, *"Re: Fralf Roolez! Merchandise"*
- 1 March 2006 — Patrick Herron, *"Re: Fralf Roolez! Merchandise"*
- 27 March 2006 — Gary Sullivan, *"FLARF: INAPPROPRIATE EXPLORATION IN 21st CENTURY ART"*
- 19 May 2006 — Jeffrey Jullich, *"ON BECOMING FLARF: sixteen accidents in Ron Silliman's blog"*
- 1 June 2006 — Michael Magee, *"Magee's MAINSTREAM now available..."*
- 23 July 2006 — Jack Kimball, *"hocus ... process"*
- 1 September 2006 — Jason Quackenbush, *"Re: A Small Catalog of Cultural Scripts for Poets"*
- 2 September 2006 — Mark Wallace, *"A Small Catalog of Cultural Scripts"*
- 29 September 2006 — Michael Magee, *"ANNOUNCEMENTS: Degentesh's The Anger Scale & Combo Magazine"*
- 14 November 2006 — Michael Magee, *"Publishers Weekly digs Degentesh's THE ANGER SCALE"*
- 14 November 2006 — Stephen Vincent, *"Re: Publishers Weekly digs Degentesh's THE ANGER SCALE"*

- 29 November 2006 — Michael Magee, *"Flarf goes to College on YouTube!"*
- 3 February 2008 — David Harrison Horton, *"Re: masculine 'new'???"*
- 4 February 2008 — Tom W. Lewis, *"Re: masculine 'new'???"*
- 4 February 2008 — Gabriel Gudding, *"masculinity and the fetish of newness"*
- 4 February 2008 — Mark Weiss, *"Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness"*
- 4 February 2008 — Jason Quackenbush, *"Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness"*
- 4 February 2008 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness"*
- 5 February 2008 — Gabriel Gudding, *"Re: masculinity and the fetish of newness"*
- 4 September 2008 — Douglas Manson, *"Re: URGENT — Copyright Infringement or Collage?"*
- 17 March 2009 — Sharon Mesmer, *"At the Whitney: Flarf Versus Conceptual Writing"*
- 21 May 2009 — Konrad Steiner, *"VAUDEVILLE FOLLIES: flarf performance"*
- 2 November 2009 — Mathias Svalina, *"Re: Two Requests"*
- 2 November 2009 — Amy King, *"Re: Two Requests"*
- 2 November 2009 — George Bowering, *"Re: Two Requests"*
- 19 April 2010 — John Cunningham, *"Re: Art is theft"*
- 19 April 2010 — Douglas Manson, *"Re: Art is theft"*
- 20 April 2010 — Jacquilyn Weeks, *"Re: Art is theft"*
- 13 May 2010 — derek beaulieu, *"NOTES ON WHY CONCEPTUALISM IS BETTER THAN FLARF"*

Part IV — Conceptual Writing

- 19 June 1998 — Doug Rice (fwd), *"Postmodern Piracy Festival / Call for Participants"*
- 22 August 2002 — parrishka, *"Re: The Meaninglessness of Meaninglessness"*
- 13 October 2002 — Lewis LaCook, *"Utopian Plagiarism, Hypertextuality"*
- 30 October 2002 — Brian Stefans, *"Re: Raoul Unplugged"*
- 10 January 2003 — Corey Frost, *"If I say 'programmatic poetry'..."*
- 6 April 2003 — UbuWeb, *"The UbuWeb Anthology of Conceptual Writing"*
- 17 September 2004 — Al Filreis, *"Kenneth Goldsmith"*
- 31 January 2005 — Lori Emerson, *"Kenneth Goldsmith & Conceptual Poetics [call for papers]"*
- 15 June 2006 — Phil Primeau, *"Jack Raoul Does Kenneth Goldsmith (chap release)"*
- 23 January 2007 — UbuWeb, *"Kenneth Goldsmith Blogging About Conceptual Poetics & Uncreative Writing"*
- 18 March 2008 — derek beaulieu, *"No press announces: Rob Fitterman and Nayland Blake"*
- 29 May 2008 — David Chiot, *"An 'avant grade' of 'Conceptual Poetics?' — Monkeys"*
- 29 May 2008 — Tenney Nathanson, *"today through Saturday: UA Poetry Center Conceptual Poetry Symposium"*
- 30 May 2008 — David Chiot, *"essay by Chiot to go with works at the UA Poetry Center"*
- 1 June 2008 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: essay by Chiot (UA Poetry Center)"*
- 1 June 2008 — Barry Schwabsky, *"Re: essay by Chiot (UA Poetry Center)"*
- 1 June 2008 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: essay by Chiot (UA Poetry Center)"*
- 3 June 2008 — Troy Camplin, *"Re: essay by Chiot (UA Poetry Center)"*
- 3 June 2008 — Ryan Daley, *"Re: essay by Chiot (UA Poetry Center)"*
- 22 July 2008 — David Chiot, *"Re: The 'originality' of appropriation vs the mass media"*
- 1 November 2008 — David-Baptiste Chiot, *"Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history?"*
- 2 November 2008 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history?"*
- 3 November 2008 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: appropriative poetics: genealogy/history?"*
- 30 December 2008 — David-Baptiste Chiot, *"Re: capitalism and the long poem"*
- 31 December 2008 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: capitalism and the long poem"*
- 31 December 2008 — Troy Camplin, *"Re: capitalism and the long poem"*
- 2 January 2009 — Steve Russell, *"Re: capitalism and the long poem"*
- 22 August 2009 — David Chiot, *"Re: The Longest Poem in the World"*
- 24 August 2009 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: The Longest Poem in the World"*
- 24 August 2009 — Daniel Zimmerman, *"Re: The Longest Poem in the World"*
- 25 August 2009 — David-Baptiste Chiot, *"Re: The Longest Poem in the World"*
- 27 August 2009 — Steve Russell, *"Re: The Longest Poem in the World"*
- 26 September 2009 — Jeffrey Side, *"'Day' by Kent Johnson"*
- 27 September 2009 — Jeffrey Side, *"New blog post: 'Another Day for Kent Johnson'"*
- 28 September 2009 — Jonathan Ball, *"Re: 'Day' by Kent Johnson"*
- 30 September 2009 — Skip Fox, *"Re: 'Day' by Kent Johnson"*

- 30 September 2009 — Jason Harmon, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 30 September 2009 — Bobby Baird, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 30 September 2009 — Mairéad Byrne, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 1 October 2009 — Jonathan Ball, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 2 October 2009 — Jeffrey Side, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 2 October 2009 — Jonathan Ball, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 2 October 2009 — Mairéad Byrne, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 2 October 2009 — Murat Nemet-Nejat, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 2 October 2009 — Hugh Tribbey, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 2 October 2009 — Jeffrey Side, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 4 October 2009 — Jonathan Ball, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 5 October 2009 — Kent Johnson, *"Statement from Kent Johnson"*
 6 October 2009 — Wystan Curnow, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 6 October 2009 — Alison Croggon, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 7 October 2009 — Geoffrey Gatza, *"Production film of Day by Kent Johnson"*
 8 October 2009 — Mark DuCharme, *"Re: "Day" by Kent Johnson"*
 9 October 2009 — Jeffrey Side, *"Re: 50 years behind"*
 10 October 2009 — Michael Marsh, *"Re: 50 years behind"*
 12 October 2009 — Chris Jones, *"Re: 50 years behind"*
 17 December 2009 — UbuWeb, *"Fitterman and Place Discuss the Response to "Notes on Conceptualisms""*
 12 February 2011 — UbuWeb, *"Against Expression: Introductory Essays Available"*
 9 August 2011 — Jennifer Karmin, *"I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women"*
 25 August 2011 — Michael Farrell, *"Re: "Post-Avant: A Meta-Narrative""*
 19 September 2011 — Derek Beaulieu, *"New from Snare: "Seen of the Crime: Essays on Conceptual Writing""*
 23 January 2012 — William Freind, *"Doggerel for the Masses by Kent Johnson"*
 4 August 2013 — Jeffrey Side, *"Charmless and Interesting: What Conceptual Poetry Lacks"*
 29 October 2013 — Patrick Durgin, *"The Compleat Purge by Trisha Low"*