



**WARNING**

**POETRY  
AREA**

**Publics Under Construction**

The UB Poetics List Writings of  
Charles Bernstein, 1994–2014

Collected from the UB Poetics List Archive

*Edited, with an introduction,  
by Kristen M. Fabians*



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*The UB Poetics List was, for two decades, a mailing list where poets argued, mourned, gossiped, and thought out loud together. Charles Bernstein founded it in 1993 and moderated it for most of its life, so more of his hand is on it than anyone's. This book collects what he wrote there — the essays, polemics, tributes, and experiments reproduced whole, each under a short editorial note and, where he was answering someone, beside the line he answered. A Reader's Guide threads the posts into themes and an Index opens them by name and idea; the notices he relayed are gathered in the appendices, so that nothing he wrote is lost.*

*Edited, with an introduction, by Kristen M. Fabians*

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## Introduction

### *The Man Who Built the Room*

Charles Bernstein started this list. “I started the Poetics List in late 1993,” he wrote at its end, “just after I came to Buffalo and co-founded the Poetics Program and a little while before the founding of the Electronic Poetry Center” — and for the twenty years between that beginning and that end he was the room’s presiding intelligence, its host and its constant, the one voice you could count on to be there whether the month was loud or silent. Others on this list flared and faded; Bernstein simply persisted, evenly, from 1994 to 2014, because it was his house and he was not going to leave the door unattended.

He was, first, a builder of institutions — and a builder of a peculiar, principled kind, who understood that the institutions worth having are the ones you make yourself and can remake at will. He had helped invent Language poetry and co-edited, with Bruce Andrews, the magazine L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E; he built the Poetics Program at Buffalo, the Electronic Poetry Center, and later PennSound; and he built this list, which was itself exactly the sort of thing he theorized under the title of one of his early talks here, “Provisional Institutions.” The list was provisional by design — a made place, propped up by hand, kept going by moderators he was careful to thank by name — and much of what he posted was simply the work of keeping it standing.

So a good deal of the moderator is in these pages, and he moderated with a wonderfully dry hand. He welcomed newcomers, explained the archives, set policy, and drew the line at the length of quoted attachments; and when the list’s own absurdities needed puncturing he did it deadpan, straight-faced, as in the mock-bylaw that “No messages shall be posted between :43 and :52 minutes after the hour.” The administrative posts — the readings, the launches, the calls, the EPC and PennSound and Segue notices — are gathered apart at the back, because there were a great many of them and because they are the record of the labour, not the thought. But the wit that ran through even the driest of them is left where it fell.

He was, second, a polemicist, and the list was one of his favourite rooms to argue in. He had spent a career defending difficult, invented, unabsorbable poetry against what he liked to call official verse culture, and when someone arrived to complain that the work was wilfully hard — as someone reliably did

— Bernstein was there to decline, with relish and at length, to apologize for it. He gave no quarter and took real pleasure in the exchange; the quarrels here are among the most substantive the list produced, and I have reproduced them whole, both his openings and his replies, so the reader can watch a first-rate argumentative mind at work in real time.

He was, third, a teacher, even off the clock. His list of writing “Experiments” — “Write a poem consisting entirely of overheard conversation,” “Write the worst possible poem you can imagine” — circulated here as it did in his classrooms, and it distills a whole poetics into a set of dares: that poetry is something made, by procedures, out of language, and that invention is a discipline anyone can practise. He posted syllabi, reading lists, prompts, and provocations with the same generosity he brought to the archives, on the evident conviction that the tools should be handed around.

And he was, throughout, the list’s elegist. He belonged to a generation that lost enormous numbers of its artists, to AIDS and then to time, and it fell to him — as founder, as the one always present — to mark the deaths. The very first of these came early: “Joe Brainard died of AIDS on Wednesday. He was 52 years old,” he wrote in the spring of 1994, and over the next twenty years he would write that sentence, in its variations, far too many times. He never raised his voice for the dead. The notices are plain, exact, unhurried, and they accumulate into something like a communal book of the dead, kept by the one person positioned to keep it.

The account he posted from was the family’s, and now and then the family is visibly present. In February 1998 a post went out under the name Emma Bernstein — his daughter, then twelve and a half — wading into a quarrel about Plath and Hughes with a ferocity entirely her own and signing herself, magnificently, “emma bernstein, age 12 1/2.” Emma Bee Bernstein grew up to be an artist and a writer; she died in 2008. I have kept her post where it fell, in its year, because it happened here and because her father, who kept everything, would have kept it too.

What the list gave him that the books do not is tempo — the record of a poetics thinking on its feet, day by day, across two decades, in public. The 1990s are the busiest years, the Poetics Program at full strength and the arguments at their hottest; the traffic thins in the 2000s as he moves to Penn and the web absorbs the energy the list once held; and the whole of it is oddly even, because a moderator does not get to have quiet years. I have set the posts in the order

they were sent, which is the only order that shows this — the argument and the elegy and the deadpan rule arriving in the same week, as they did.

The essays, polemics, tributes, and experiments are reproduced whole, each under a short editorial note and, where he was answering someone, beside the line he answered. There are three ways in. The Catalogue lists every post in the order it was sent; the Reader's Guide gathers them instead into twelve strands — the institution-building, the elegies, the quarrels, the experiments, and the rest — each thread followed across the years; and the Index, at the very back, opens the whole to names, works, ideas, and phrases, every entry a link to the passage it marks. The announcements and notices he relayed are listed apart in the appendices, where a complete catalogue records every message in the archive, so the record is whole without crowding the writing.

He closed the list himself, in January 2014, in the same plain administrative voice he had opened it with: "The Poetics List is no longer active. Email delivery has been discontinued. Web archives will remain." It was the founder dismantling his own provisional institution, on schedule, without sentiment — and then, because he was Bernstein and because the point was never any single room but the going-on of the art, he signed off on the whole twenty years with the one word that was always his true position. I have kept it where he put it, at the close of the writing: "Onward!"

— *Kristen M. Fabians*

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*The major sections of the volume; each links to where it begins.*

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*Every post reproduced in this book, in the order it was sent.*

## **A Reader's Guide**

*Twelve strands to follow through the volume.*

## **The Writings, 1994-2014**

*The posts themselves, year by year.*

## **Appendix — Announcements & Notices**

*The readings, launches, and list-notices he relayed.*

## **Appendix — A Complete Catalogue**

*Every message in the archive, in order.*

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*People, works, ideas, and phrases — each a link to its passage.*

# Catalogue

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*Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)* · 05 Apr 1997  
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*Twelve strands to follow through the volume; each title links to its post.*

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*The long defense of difficult, invented, unabsorbable poetry against the demand that it be accessible, natural, or nice — official verse culture named and declined, with relish and at length.*

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[Re: weiner again](#) · [Re: l%a\\*n\(g@u!a\\_g#e](#) · [The Visual in Language](#) · [Re: To the Larks](#)  
[turning left, turning right, tumbling \(Re: Riding\)](#) · [Hannah Weiner \(1928-1997\)](#)  
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[Beyond the Sun & Moon Sale](#) · [Re: Republics of Reality: 1975-1995](#) · [Hannah's visions](#)  
[Jackson Mac Low \(1922-2004\)](#) · [Recommended Reading \(I\): Reznikoff and Riding](#)  
[Riding \(Jackson\) & Stein](#) · [Re: Riding \(Jackson\) & Stein](#) · [Samuel Greenberg](#)  
[Barbara Guest \(1920-2006\)](#) · [PEPC Library: New Resources](#)  
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[Letter from New York](#) · [LOLLIPOP & Bonvincino](#) · [Translation, Chinese-English in particular](#)  
[Raworth's Breakfast Comix](#) · [Another South \(from University of Alabama Press\)](#)  
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[Re: Experimental Irish poets?](#) · [Recommended Reading \(I\): Reznikoff and Riding](#)  
[Recommended Reading \(II\): Antin, Bergvall, Ledebur, Lehto, Mancini](#) · [Samuel Greenberg](#)  
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1994

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***prequel to long post***

20 Apr 1994

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*The Poetics list was barely out of its cradle, and its moderator, a symposium paper in hand, was about to find out how much a young wire would bear.*

I am going to send to the Poetics list an essay I recently presented on the "art object" in an age of electronic communication. It is about 15 screenfulls long—this is an advance warning. I'm not sure it's a good idea to send such long pieces in this way; let me know what you think.

Meanwhile, how's the weather? Publish any good books lately (online catalogs welcome)?

—Charles Bernstein

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***I Don't Take Voice Mail (long post)***

20 Apr 1994

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*Given the floor at a New School symposium on the art object in an age of electronic technology, Bernstein came not to greet the coming superhighway but to defend the intractable, handmade thing against it — the founder of an electronic poetry list arguing, from inside the machine, for all the machine cannot reproduce.*

"I DON'T TAKE VOICE MAIL"

by Charles Bernstein

[Presented at a symposium, sponsored by the Parsons School of Design, on "The Art Object in the an Age of Electronic Technology", at the New School in New York, on April 16, 1994]

Before diagnosing the condition of the art object in an age of electronic technology, let me first address the question of the object of art in an age of global commodification. I won't be the last to note that capitalism transcends the technologies through which it operates. So just as today's artworld is dominated by the marketing, sales, and promotion, so the object of art in the age of electronic technology will continue to be profit; and the values most typically promoted by the art world will continue to be governed by market, rather than aesthetic, formal, philosophical or ethical, values. Within the artworld, as in the corporate board rooms, the focus of discussion has been on how to exploit this new media, as if cyberspace was a new wilderness from which to carve your niche—better get on board, err, on line, first before the prime sites are staked out. For if the object of art is to sell objects, then the new electronic environment presents many problems but also many opportunities. But art, if it could speak, might well

object to these assumptions. (If art could speak we could not understand it — that's one way to put it; perhaps it's more accurate to say if art could speak it would be poetry and poetry's got nothing to sell.) — Art might speak not of its object but it objects; it might testily insist that one of its roles is exactly to resist commodification, to use its materiality to push against the total absorption of meaning into the market system, and that's why it got one the first e-mail accounts on the net—to talk about it. But you can't sell talk, and that can make the net a vexing place for if not for art then for the purveyors of art. Of course, today's internet — a decentralized, largely text-based, linking of individual sites or constellations of users — will be superseded by what is aptly called the information superhighway. Just as the old dirt roads and smaller rural routes were largely abandoned by the megatraffic on the interstates, so much of the present informal, non-capital intensive exchanges on the net will become marginal back channels in a communications systems largely owned and controlled by Time & Space, Inc. and other giant telecommunication conglomerates, providing new and continually recirculating versions of the USA Today with up to the minute weather and sports information, sound files offering *\*Nirvana: The Classic Years\** including alternate studio versions, hypertext tours with high resolution graphics of the British Museum collection, plus hundreds of other choices, available at the click of an icon, including items never before available in any media such as *\*In Her Home: the Barbara Streisand Collection\**; a construct-it-yourself simulation of making a Shaker chair; and a color-it-yourself portfolio of the complete appropriations of Sherrie Levine, together with hyper-textually linked case dossiers of all related legal suits. All with modest fees for each hour of viewing or receiving (the gaze finally quantified and sold) and downright bargain prices for your "own" personal copy, making available unlimited screenings (but remember, "it is a federal offence to make unauthorized copies of these copies", or, as we say in Buffalo: it's okay to copy an original but never copy a copy). Indeed, much of what is now the internet promises to become the largest shopping network on earth, and possibly in the universe (even exceeding the Mall of the Milky Way on Galactica B282); those old back roads will be the place to hang out if you are looking for something other than franchise FastImage.

One of the hallmarks of formalist art criticism as well as media theory has been an analysis of the effects of newer media on already existing media. So we talk about the effect of photography on painting, or movies on theater; or how movies provided the initial content for TV before it arrived at its own particular formats (just as the content of the net is now largely composed of formats taken from books, letters, and magazines). It is useful to remember that in the early days of TV, many observers predicted that such spectator sports as baseball would lose their stadium audiences once the games were broadcast "live". Of course, the

opposite occurred; TV increased the interest in the live-and-in-person event. In a similar way, art on the net may actually increase interest in seeing art in nonelectronic spaces. Formalist critics have wanted to emphasize how new technologies "free up" older media to explore their intrinsic qualities — to do what only they can do. But new media also have a corrosive effect, as forces in the older media try to shift their focus to compete for the market and the cultural capital of what they may see as their new competitors. Within the visual arts, many of the most celebrated new trends of the last decade — from simululutionism to multimediamania to the transformation of Artforum — are symptoms of a fear of the specific and intractable materiality of painting and sculpture; such fear of materiality (and by extension face-to-face interaction) is far greater and long-lasting than the much more often discussed fear of technology — a fear so often discussed the better to trivialize and repress.

What are the conditions of visual art in the net, or art in computer space? We can expect that most visual art on the net will be reproductions of previously existing work, along the line of Bill Gates's plan to display in his home rotating CD-ROM images of the masterpieces of World Art, images for which, notably, he has purchased the CD-ROM reproduction rights. The Thing, a new visual arts online service, which has been immensely useful in imagining many possible formats for art on the net, already features an innovative, in the sense of anachronistic, pricing structure—selling over its BBS a numbered and "signed" diskette of an art work. (The idea of selling a disk is itself no more objectionable than selling a book, but numbering and signing a disk is an attempt to simulate scarcity and limit in a medium in which these conditions do not apply. I wouldn't be surprised, however, if this format was included on The Thing to call attention to the issue and also to poke fun at the net's prevailing ideology of utopian democracy, a.k.a. netiquette). In any case, telecommunications systems promises to dominate the distribution of text and image in the near future at a price —though few are now willing to acknowledge it—of more controlled and more limited access (through high user fees, institutional restrictions, and technological skills barriers) and loss of privacy rights we now take for granted. But technological change —it's a mistake to call it progress—will not be reversed and artists run the risk of nostalgia if they refuse to recognize and respond, the better to resist, the communications environment that, for better or worse, they find themselves within. I want, then, to focus not on how electronic space will actually be used, indeed how e-space will be exploited, but rather to think about the new media that has been created by technological developments combing computers and telecommunications, and how works of visual arts can recognize and explore these new media—even if such works run the risk of being relegated to the net's backchannels, along with "new mimeo revolution" poetry magazines and psychic

readings by electronic Tarot. The most radical characteristic of the internet as a medium is its interconnectivity. At every point receivers are also transmitters. It is a medium defined by exchange rather than delivery; the medium is interactive and dialogic rather than unidirectional or monologic. At this moment, the most interesting format on the internet, apart from the basic electronic mail function, is the listserve: a series of individuals join a list—any post to the list address is immediately delivered to all list subscribers. Individuals can then post replies to the entire list or to the individual that sent the post. Lists may be open to anyone to join or may be private. The potential for discussion and collaboration is appealing—the format mixes some of the features of correspondence with a discussion group, conference call, and a panel symposium such as this one (with the crucial difference that the distinction between audience and panel is eroded). While many cyberspace utopians speak of virtual communities with much excitement, what is particularly interesting about the interconnectivity of computer space is its difference from other types of group formation; for what we are constructing in these spaces might better be called virtual uncommunities. The art world remains a difficult place for community or group formations because the gallery system recognizes value primarily in terms of individual achievement. In contrast to the poetry publishing and criticism, in which the poets themselves play a substantial and perhaps determining role, individual visual artists are largely restricted to (or restrict themselves to) the role of producers of potentially saleable objects. Competition among artists is more common than broad-based alliance, with the occasional exception of loyalty to a small circle of friends. At the national level, of course, there are local communities of artists in every region. Various movements and schools—aesthetic or political or both—can also be understood as art communities. Most recently, the connections of artists within ethnic, gender, or racial groups have been seen in terms of community. But despite these sites of community among visual artists, sustained interaction, dialogues and collaboration remains rare; indeed, these activities are not generally recognized as values. The internet provides an extraordinary space for interaction and exchange among artists living in different places and, perhaps more significantly, encourages collaboration between visual artists, writers, and computer engineers. In a way remarkably anticipated by the mail art movements of the seventies and eighties, the net suggests the possibility of art works created for their exchange rather than market value—works that may be altered, augmented, or otherwise transformed as they pass from one screen to another. —What I am envisioning here is not art from another medium imported into the net but rather art that takes the unique constraints and potentials of the net as its medium. To begin delineate this and related computer and telecommunications media, let's start with the "small" screen. Indeed, we

might begin to speak of the screen arts to suggest the intersection of video, tv and computer art that share the same physical support or monitor. More and more computers are now equipped with video quality monitors and the screen arts—in this broad sense—will be transmitted via modem, cable and wireless systems as well as plugged in through cassette, cd-rom, disk, and cartridge. I distinguish among interactive, interconnected, and presentational screen media: Presentational screen media is the broadest category. On the one hand, it includes the use of the CPU set-up as a means to present work realized in a non-CPU medium, such as a video tape or photographs, or read-only text files. On the other hand, presentational screen media also includes work produced and viewed on computer systems that do not require viewer intervention beyond basic directional and operational parameters such as those available on a video recorder. — A hugely important subcategory here is works produced on computer screens but not presented on screens. Word processing, "paintbrush" and "photoshop" programs are some of the tools of this medium, which promises to reimagine the way we read and see text and graphics; moreover, this new medium allows for a greater integration and interaction of verbal, visual, and sound elements than possible with previous printing technologies. Interactive computer screen art utilizes the processing system of the computer and includes significant viewer participation via keyboard, mouse or joy stick. While video games are the most elaborate visual realization of this medium, works of computer art can be created that are not game-oriented but that use many of the features developed in video games. Still another format for interactivity is often discussed under the general heading of hypertext. Hypertext involves the lateral movement and linking of a potentially infinite series of data pools. It allows for nonlinear explorations of a range of data bases; that is, unlike presentational modes, in hypertext there is no established forward path through the data. For example, Jerome McGann and colleagues are at work on an edition of the complete works of Dante Rossetti that will include multiple discrepant versions of his published poems along with ms versions of these poems, together with his related paintings as well as source material for the paintings and the poems. All of this information will be linked so that one can move through the data in many directions. Claims of many enthusiastic hypertextualists notwithstanding, many of the most radical features of hypertext are technologies made available by the invention of alphabetic writing and greatly facilitated by the development of printing and bookmaking. Such formats as page and line numbering, indexes, tables of contents, concordances, and cross-referencing for in encyclopedias and card catalogs, are, in effect, hypertextual. Much of the innovative poetry of the past 100 years relies on the concept of hypertextuality as a counter to the predominance of linear reading and writing methods. While hypertext may seem

like a particular innovation of computer processing, since data on a computer does not have to be accessed sequentially (which is to say it is "randomly" accessible), it becomes a compensatory access tool partly because you can't flip through a data base the way you can flip through pages or index cards. (I'm thinking, for example, of Robert Grenier's great poem, *\*Sentences\**, which is printed on 500 index cards in a Chinese foldup box.) Finally—my third category—interconnectivity utilizes the network capability of linked systems such as the internet and formats such as listserves, bulletin boards, newsgroups, and group-participation MUDs (multi-user domains) and MOOs and other "real-time" multi-user formats. Interconnectivity allows for works of collaboration, linking, and exchange, as well as the possibility of simultaneous-event or immediate-response structures. Interconnectivity turns the screen into a small stage and in this way combines features of theater with writing and graphic art. The most static of the three modes I have just defined is the presentation screen mode. Presentational screen media will merge with what is now available via broadcast TV, video cassettes, or video disk and CD. But, of course, certain computer features will provide novel methods for searching or scanning material, for example, enabling particular item or graphic or song or word amidst a large data base. Yet because computer screens are often smaller than TV screens, a class of interactive and presentational screen art can take advantage of the more intimate single-viewer conditions now associated with books and drawings. Indeed new technologies for viewing texts may well supplant print as the dominant medium for writing and graphics. Books, I should add, will not be replaced—and certainly will not come superfluous—any more than printing replaced handwriting or made it superfluous; these are different media and texts or graphics disseminated through them will have different qualities. Nonetheless, it is useful to consider graphic and verbal works created specifically for the intimate presentational or interactive space of the small screen that use features specific to the CPU environment, including scrolling, lateral movements, dissolves, the physical properties of the different screen types (lcd, gas plasma, active matrix color)—an extension into the CPU environment of the sort of work associated with Nam June Paik and the video environment. The status of computer-generated films may help to test my typology. Anything that can also, and with increasing resolution, be projected on a movie screen. Nonetheless, it is still possible to distinguish, as distinct support media, the small backlit screen of the TV and computer monitor and the large projection-system screen of film. Moreover, the scale, conditions of viewing, and typifying formats make video, film, and TV three different media, just as animation, photography and computer graphics may be said to be distinct media within film. (Hybridization and cross-viewing remain, of course, and active and welcome possibility.) Computer-generated graphics, then,

may be classified as presentation computer art modelled on small screens for big screen projection. Note, also, that I have not included in my sketch nonscreen art that uses computers for their operation (for example, robotic installations and environments)—a category that is likely to far surpass the screen arts in the course of time.

[Slide #1: Petah Coyne] But I don't want to talk about computers but objects, objects obduring in the face of automation: I picture here a sculpture from Petah Coyne's recent show at the Jack Shainman Gallery. For it has never been the object of art to capture the thing itself, but rather the conditions of thingness: its thickness, its intractability, its untranslatability or unreproducibility, semiotic density, opacity, particularity and peculiarity, its complexity.

[Slide #2: Karen Dolmanish] For this reason, I was delighted to see a show of new sculpture at Exit Art last month that seemed to respond to my increasing desire for sculpture and painting thick with its material obsessiveness, work whose response to the cyberworld is not to hop on board for the ride or play the angles between parasite and symbiosis—but to insist ever more intractability of its own "radical faith," to quote the title of this work by Karen Dolmanish

[Slide #3: Byron Clercx] Object: to call into question, to disagree, to wonder at, to puzzle over, to stare at —Object: something made inanimate, lifeless, a thing debased or devalued —Whatever darker Freudian dreams of objects and their relations I may have had while writing this essay, nothing could come close to Byron Clercx's witty sculpture, "Big Stick," in which he has compressed and laminated 20 volumes of the complete works of the father of psychoanalysis into one beautifully crafted Vienna Slugger, evoking both the uncanny and the sublime ~ finally, an American Freud. Here is the return of the book with a vengeance, proof positive that books are not the same as texts. Go try doing that to a batch of floppy disks or CD-ROMs.

[Slide #4: Jess]. In Jess's 1991 paste-up "Dysleclstasy", we get some glimpse of what hypertext might one day be able to achieve. Collaged from thousands of tiny scraps collected over many years, Jess creates an environment of multiple levels and dizzyingly shifting contexts; and yet in this world made of tiny particulars, it is their relation and mutual inhabitation that overwhelms and confirms.

[Slide #5: Susan Bee, "Masked Ball"] I long for the handmade, the direct application of materials on an uneven surface. I feel ever more the need for the embedded and encrusted images and glossings and tones and contours of forgotten and misplaced lore, as in Susan Bee's painting "Masked Ball." I want to contrast the solitary conditions of viewing a work on a computer screen my posture fixed, my eyes 10 inches from the image, with the physicality of looking at

a painting or sculpture in a large room, moving around it, checking it out from multiple views, taking in its tactile surface, its engagement with my thoughts.

[Slide #6: Susan Bee, "Help"] & here, a final image from Susan Bee — On the journey of life, lost in cyberspace, where will we find ourselves: not who we are but who we will be, our virtual reality.

—Charles Bernstein ( [REDACTED] )

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## **Re: Beatnik Bliss**

30 Apr 1994

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*A reader wanted the initials decoded; he supplied the address, then let the answer wander off after the free wings.*

| OK, What is CPG?

Central Park Grill, 2519 Main Street, Buffalo, NY (USA)

We are working to bring these events on-line in interactive formats not yet devised. The Poetics Technical Crew is having particular trouble bringing into the model the free wings (with blue cheese dressing) generously provided by the bar after each reading. But we pledge not to go on the World Wide Web with this type of, as they say on TV, "live" programming until we attend to details such as these.

"POETICS@UBVM: so real you can taste it"

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## **Alberta on My Mind**

12 May 1994

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*Back from a reading at Vancouver's Kootenay School and a philosophy convention swallowed by the West Edmonton Mall, Bernstein files the year's first true dispatch — and ends by asking his young list, in effect, to keep its voice down.*

I've been travelling

to Vancouver, where I read at the Kootenay School of Writing & tried to get the collective authorities there to sell me a Ph.D. for less than the \$50 (Canadian) they have been asking, only that I enjoy discounts and special pricing, I mean I don't question the value, so we're in a Vietnamese restaurant & Colin Smith pulls out a letter he happens to have in his bag from some official government agency telling KSW that they must cease and desist from offering unlicensed postsecondary instruction to which Colin suggests that the best solution may be to send the person who wrote the admonition an honorary degree from KSW —

hm, Canadians really are different than us Statesiders, they seem to know how to get along

so, Bruce, speaking of Canadian poets —Idaho, Canada that is —got word of a celebration in Vancouver next spring of Robin Blaser's 70th birthday, now in the planning; and just missed Peter Quartermain's 60th birthday; & realized I had failed (old story) to mention, in my hyperbolic notices for (KSWers) Kevin Davies's & Deanna Ferguson's new books in the new Sulfur, Catrinna Strang's *Low Fancy*, which I got only after I turned that notice in

& on to Edmonton, where I got lost in the Fantasyland Mall on the way to one of the demikeynotes at the International Association for Philosophy and Literature "Thinking Between Poetry & Philosophy" convention & so missed most of the lecture on the "The Ineluctable Split of Poetry's Unsayable Name: Reading Derrida through Nietzsche's Unknowable Answer to Celan's Joyce (A Response to Benjamin)." Many of the conventioners noted that the "Bourbon Street" food mall was a perfect example of "simulation" —a view I have trouble understanding (again not unusual for me) since the patrons of food court seem to enjoy the fact that "Bourbon Street" is ineluctably in the West Edmonton Mall & the designers of the street seemed to go out of their way to emphasize this fact, making it look like a plastercast sketch of a picture of a New Orleans street & not like the "real thing" at all; the only ones fooled were we conventioners having our dinner as we chatted about the breakdown of reality and simulacra (or *simusoy* for the lactose intolerant). & talk about authentically local as you might, the Buffalo wings on Bourbon Street in the West Edomonton Mall never tasted so real (or would have; I had the trout)

so somewhat late to respond to the various & sundry recent posts

but, speaking of simulacra, Jed Rasula's book, which I recently read in manuscript, is called *\_The American Poetry Wax Museum: Reality Effects 1940-1990\_*. I hope it comes out soon: it's not-to-be-missed. Jed has a way of making the story of what he calls New Criticism, Inc., absolutely rivetting, so much so that I could understand, as if for the first time, what made the American poetry canon of the 1950s possible. Jed's work is essential in its elucidating the cultural logic of the countermodernist turn. I also just got word that Alan Golding's *\_From Outlaw to Classic: Canon in American Poetry\_* will be out this fall from the University of Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, Douglas Messerli's 1135-page epic *\_From the Other Side of the Century: A New American Poetry 1960-1990\_* (Sun & Moon Press) is now out and beginning to make its way into the world. I just got an advance copy today.

+++++++ A Note on this List

As new people join Poetics@UBVM I ask them not to mention the list on any public internet space (BBS, listserve, etc) in order to keep this particular group to a relatively small scale. This is not to discourage people from recommending the list to others but to keep the list to people who have a direct involvement with its current constituency (however undefined that may be).

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## ***I remember Joe Brainard***

27 May 1994

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*Joe Brainard — poet, collagist, and the most disarming hand of the New York School — died of AIDS on the twenty-fifth of May, at fifty-two. Here the list met its first death.*

Joe Brainard died of AIDS on Wednesday. He was 52 years old.

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PEOPLE OF THE WORLD: RELAX!

Beware of boys in tight pants They are perverts Beware of tight pants They chap the fanny and irritate the leg muscles Your friends will laugh And your mother will know Do not feel guilty if showers turn you on There is nothing wrong with masturbating in the shower I masturbate in the shower And there is nothing wrong with that Everyone does it If you do not do it, try it Everyone does it

People of the world: RELAX!

If you want to be a movie star go to Hollywood If you want to be a dancer dance right now Or it will be too late And you will be unhappy Be a dancer if you want to be a dancer Do not be afraid Some of the best people I know are dancers

People of the world: RELAX!

Take it easy and smoke a lot Make all the noise you want to on the toilet Other people will hear you but it does not matter

People of the world: RELAX!

Put on a clean white shirt and RELAX Do not be afraid Some of the best people I know are afraid Do not be afraid of death It will not hurt you

People of the World: RELAX!

This is a good life Go of-of-doors a lot Smell flowers Sit down in the grass It will not hurt you Look at the tree The sky is blue Climb every mountain Air is the only hope Do not kill any ants They are your best friends

PEOPLE OF THE WORLD: RELAX!

The world is yours Here, take it

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I remember when polio was the worst thing in the world.

I remember that little jerk you give just before you fall asleep. Like falling.

I remember a dream of meeting a man made out of very soft yellow cheese and when I went to shake his hand I just pulled his whole arm off.

—Joe Brainard, from *\_Selected Writings\_*  
(New York: The Kulcher Foundation, 1971)

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## **Warren Tallman / from Robert Creeley**

05 Jul 1994

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*Warren Tallman taught at Vancouver and, in 1963, convened there the conference that brought the New American poets north and redrew the map of two countries' poetry; Bernstein gives the floor to Creeley, who owed him as much as any of them.*

—Boundary (ID oTjVMpHWBpRrJM1RIImBFWg)

*We've had the sad advice from his family that Warren Tallman died yest-erday (July 4) in Vancouver, British Columbia, thankfully at home and without difficulty. It's hard to imagine the present fact of Canadian poetry and its relation to our own sans the immense effort which Warren Tallman made in his years as a teacher at the University of British Col-umbia, and, even more, as the indefatigable reader and friend of all the defining poets of both countries. In 1962, for example, Warren's students at UBC included Daphne Marlatt, Fred Wah, George Bowering, Gladys Hind-march, Lionel Kearns, and David Bromige, among many others. The landmark 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference was almost entirely Warren's remarkable invention, bringing together for the first time a decisive company of then disregarded poets such as Denise Levertov, Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, Margaret Avison, Philip Whalen and myself, together with as yet unrecognized younger poets of that time, Michael Palmer, Clark Coolidge and many more. Be it said that Warren wrote the first decisive piece on Jack Kerouac's skills as a writer, "Kerouac's Sound," published in the *Evergreen Review*. Donald Allen and he subsequently edited together *POETICS OF THE NEW AMERICAN POETRY*, a crucial backup of Don's initial anth-ology which, seemingly, changed everything. Warren's two substantial col-lections of essays report and review the tenets of poetry which underlie the revolution he had so much to do with.*

*All that can finally be checked out. What will be sorely missed is the singular insight and invention Warren brought to his relations with poetry and poets. He was a great reader, a great, great heart. Defined by the American Great Depression, he believed absolutely that books mattered, that what people can think of and so imagine is true, that it can really happen. So it was that he brought Robert Duncan first to Vancouver, to talk with his students in a series of meetings, all managed by the money they could themselves modestly and communally provide. Jack Spicer's last articulate lectures were fact of the same circumstance. I was able to teach for a year at UBC at a time when virtually no other job was possible, just that Warren BELIEVED. I cannot*

*overemphasize the significance of such a power. It's as if Warren brought not only the US and Canada together in such interests, but that he really brought western Canada's poetry into the international world it now helps to define and keep possible.*

*Well, this can be the beginning, I hope, of what can now continue as Warren's work: bringing it all home, keeping the beat, making that joyful sound. Warren loved the sense of "mother tongue" always. He really knew how to listen.*

*Here's to you, brother, forever.*

Robert Creeley

—Boundary (ID oTjVMpHwBpRrJM1RIImBFWg)—

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## **mundanity**

16 Aug 1994

*A prelude to the long essay that follows, and an unhurried thanks to the unglamorous machinery — a good Buffalo bookstore, a distributor that had lately started taking Visa — on which the whole alternative economy quietly depended.*

Following up on Charles Alexander's "mundane" note, I thought a recent rather mundane, and introductory, essay of mine on alternative presses might, at this point, be of some interest to some of you. The essay is called "Provisional Institutions: Alternative Presses and Poetic Innovation". (I have sent copies of slightly earlier versions to some people on this list already). It's about 15 ms pages and I am posting it as a separate file for those who might want to take a look.

A local note: Buffalo's own Talking Leaves books continues to be the model of the independent bookstore. John Walsh and his virtually collective staff (I suspect this primarily means that John is the last to be paid) have an incredible commitment to new poetry books, as well as just about anything else in book format I have found myself interested in during the past years. You can pick up more information browsing the shelves of Talking Leaves than in possibly any classroom in the US (my own, needless to say, included). In fact, it strikes me that John knows more about books than just about anyone I know (he also does a great reggae show on the community radio station every Saturday night).

Not only that, but ... Talking Leaves brings the poets books to every local reading we do, stocking the books at the store for months before and after the poet's visit.

One useful turn of events is that SPD, with its essential list of mostly U.S., but also Canadian and UK books, now takes VISA, which makes ordering considerably easier for people from outside the U.S. As I say in my essay, on-line booksellers, like Grist and Lisa Robertson's anticipated reformation of Proprioception, and poetry information servives like Taproot and the UB's Electronic Poetry Center

suggest necessary new directions — not, I'd note, "progress" but rather innovations necessary just to keep up with the changing environment. So it is no surprise that some of the people involved in these new formats are a part of this electronic discussion group.

—This is Charles Bernstein transmitting direct to your screen from just outside the village of Swan Lake in the Town of Bethel, County of Sullivan, State of New York

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## ***Provisional Institutions (long post/essay)***

16 Aug 1994

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*The essay he had just flagged, delivered first to the MLA and now to the very people who ran the presses it describes: a defense of the small press, the reading series, and what he calls the negative economy of poetry. It is Bernstein the institution-builder showing his work, down to the printing bill for a Sun & Moon paperback.*

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 cliches 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 Waldalton'sbooks (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-omancy 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 "proofreading" 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 Douglas 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 Infinites* by Rosmarie Waldrop. *Witz*, edited by Christopher Reiner (P.O. Box 1059, Penngrove, California 94951), is a newsletter featuring poetics, reviews, and listings of recent publications; it is published three times a year in association 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); *Situation*, 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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*The list fell quiet through the autumn — a founding year keeps founding hours — and when it stirred again in December, the occasion was a death in Paris.*

## **Guy Debord Commits Suicide**

03 Dec 1994

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*Guy Debord had taken his life at sixty-two, in a village in the Auvergne; the news reached Bernstein at a slant — passed from a clarinet list — just as he was teaching The Society of the Spectacle to a graduate seminar.*

—Boundary (ID O3lfGI1F5OAu3opGgZ+Ogg)

PARIS (AP) — Guy Debord, an avant-garde essayist who influenced the upheavals of French society in the late 1960s, has committed suicide. He was 62. Town officials in the village of Champot where Debord lived announced an investigation Thursday into the suicide. No details about how Debord took his life Wednesday were disclosed. Little-known outside France, Debord denounced what he called ``the show-biz society" and declared that performing arts should be based on powerful emotions, passions and sexual desire. His ideas were influential among theoreticians and essayists who achieved prominence in the May 1968 student-led cultural revolt that shook French society.

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Ben Friedlander passed this bulletin on to me from a clarinet list. I had not yet heard about Debord's death. Having just read the new and worthwhile translation of The Society of the Spectacle for my current graduate seminar, Debord has been very much on my mind. (The description of his work in the notice is quite odd.)

—Boundary (ID O3lfGI1F5OAu3opGgZ+Ogg)—

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## **NEW: Ex-peri-mints**

06 Dec 1994

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*Prologue to the famous list that follows: a defense of the word experiment against those who hear in it only failure or mere exercise, with Ashbery conscripted to the cause. Along the way he takes the year's inventory — community in spring, anthologies in summer, labels in fall, and, as winter closed in, war.*

I am a G4 in the textual body of a G3. For roughly twenty years I have sought psychosurgical intervention for my problem. Now, with the ever-collapsing

interior folds of cyberspace, I can begin to see the damp at the end of the tunnel ...

In L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E #3 (and later The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book), we printed Bernadette Mayer's compilation of writing "experiments". Over the years I collected additional experiments and changed some on the original list to reflect a somewhat different orientation. Given the conversation here lately, or not so lately perhaps (it just has taken me a long time to get this out), I hardly need to note that calling such lists as this "experiments" is tendentious. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call the list a series of nontraditional poetic forms. Experiments, I suppose, is the term that gets used for such lists to contrast with the ubiquitous books of writing "exercises" for creative writing class; in this sense, "experiments" are exercises with different poetic motivations and lineages: and one which, I would say, thinking of Eric Selinger's comments just now, do emphasize pleasure, or anyway the fun of writing. The common dislike of the term "experimental poetry" can, I think, be traced to such work being disparaged as mere "exercises", preliminary and incidental to the "actual work" of poetry. In this way, both "exercise" and "experiment" are deployed, positively and negatively, against assumptions about intentionality, related to the that other binary pair, process versus product.

I use the "Experiments" list in my work as a teacher. (I used to work for corporations, but now I {just} work for the state.) Indeed the first class I ever taught at a university (UCSD) had the official title "experimental writing", which was appealing in that "poetry", that vexatious term, didn't appear (the other class I taught that quarter was entitled "advanced poetry" for which, of course, I designed a completely different syllabus). Nowadays I use the "Experiments" list not so much for teaching writing, but for teaching reading, that is, some of the "experiments" work as methods for "reading" through poems and others work as ways of approaching, if not imitating, certain poetic methods. I bill my classes these days as "reading workshops" and refer to working with this list as doing "something like lab work", shamelessly, and falsely, appealing to if not the prestige of science perhaps the acceptance by students that in science they will be dealing with methodology and form — and also, obviously, to encourage a different way to think about reading poetry, linking two things most students don't associate — scientific experiment and poetry. Actually, I distribute a shorter version of this list for "reading through" — the ones that involve using prior texts, but it will be apparent which ones will work for this and which not.

Anyone notice this full-page statement opening the new Exact Change catalog?:

"RECENTLY a major publisher brought out a huge anthology of contemporary American poetry and title it 'post-modern' for no better reason than that the term 'avant-garde' sounded too old-hat and the term 'experimental' seemed to connote failure. Well, it's time to revive these two perfectly good adjectives and take back our modernism from the learned bores of postmodernism. Besides, it never really went away, you know, it's here with us, superbly alive and well in the \_Exact Change Yearbook\_."

—John Ashbery

Perhaps "our modernism" is something like Ashbery's often quoted "the other tradition", a.k.a. Don Byrd's mainstream, a.k.a. radical modernism, a.k.a. formally innovative poetry, a.k.a. "that poetry of which we speak" ... Exact Change runs a striking half-page color ad (black and white drop out lettering on red background) in the new New York Review of Books headlined "Classics of Experimental Literature" and featuring books by Aragon, Roussel, Lautreamont, Stein, Cage, de Chirico, Soupault, Appolinaire, Kafka. (I have most of these and highly recommend the entire set.) I haven't seen the Yearbook yet, by the way, but it is edited by Peter Gizzi, & includes a Michael Palmer feature, and a CD. \$35 from Exact Change, Box 1917, Boston, Mass. 02205 (who'll also send you the catalog — or maybe we can get an electronic version to post — are you listening Peter?). The term "experimental" does not appear in the Exact Change catalog, except in Ashbery's inside front cover statement. This use in the ad suggests an active, indeed commercial sense of the term, at least in the (considerable) judgement of Exact Change publisher Damon Krukowski. Of course one could easily note that "experimental classics" is a touch, well, oxymoronic; but let she or he whose rhetoric is without oxymoron complain, I certainly am in no position to. In contexts like this, "classic" is a way to undercut the assumption that "new" or "experimental" works are undifferentiable in respect to quality — how can you tell one from another. (Pay attention is one possible answer.) New Classics plays off the sense of "classic" as having enduring value against the sense of "classic" as being traditional: I'd translate the expression as, something like, a work of untraditional value, valuable, in part, because it is untraditional or unconventional, but not exclusively for this reason. I would say the most common, and empty, charges against nonconventional literary works is that they are \_only\_ about their nonconventionality or antitraditionality or, so the refrain goes, only about "language"; as if one breaks forms or finds new one for sake of that activity rather than to be able to make articulations not otherwise possible. I would say such comments (and they are just as frequent in the alternative poetry worlds as in the mainstreams) mask the fact that conventional and traditional literary writing reinscribe the meanings implicit in their forms but that poetry is

not limited to this activity of reinscription (lovely or comforting or pleasurable as it sometimes may be). There may be no pure outside (chorus: "no pure outside" "no pure outside") but there isn't no pure inside either (chorus: "no inside ether, no inside ether"). — I remember going to some marketing meetings when I was working for *Modern Medicine* in which they told us the readers (all physicians) were most likely to read an article if the word "new" was in the title. This will come as no surprise to any who drinks New Coke in their New Chevrolet, even if we are still bedeviled by the fact that Madison Avenue understands "make it new" quite well — yet, against all odds, I would still say, *understands it differently*. In *Modern Medicine* the spin had a different moral imperative: "new cure for", "new protocol for" etc., so that the audience felt compelled to read these items in order to be competent, or, negatively, in order not to be sued; at the meeting we were urged to say new whether or not the item was new. This works because there "actually" are new developments in medicine with which physicians need to keep up: "new" is open to manipulation not because it is meaningless but because it is a marker of "practical" value. To say that marketing capitalizes on the claim of the new does not mean that newness is an empty claim: the difference between Madison Avenue's claim's and poetry's practice is one of motivation and ethics. SO, echoing Williams, I would say there is still news from poetry, and that women and men do die from the lack of what is found there (but not only there and it is surely not the only thing they die from the lack of).

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Over the years, I have come up with many labels, names, movements, and candidates for popular catch-words or art-critical jargon. I consider this similar to the activity (certainly not experiment!) of coming up with fifty possible names for a new poetry magazine). Few of my candidates have caught on, but as I toss out so many I shouldn't be surprised if once and a while my somewhat pataphysical namings enjoys a brief half-life. A young friend (e.g. "younger than me") recently wrote me to ask if I had realized that a book of poems I quite admired was actually written by him, though published under a pseudonym in a tiny edition. Since he seemed to want to enter into the social space of poetry, I suggested he include his own name in future distribution of the book. Still, the gesture struck me as a radical position about names and labels: read the work. I remember Spencer Selby, years ago, complaining that magazines accepted work, and readers read work, based primarily on name recognition; he proposed that work be published anonymously. A similar point was made here yesterday by Roger Kamenetz. While I understood the point, I had to admit that I like knowing who wrote what and didn't want to give up the frame, and the history, for the sake

of what I suppose Spencer thought would be more fair — a level playing field? Let me close with one more observation: three main yarns/braids (which I propose as an alternative term to 'threads' in cyberspeak) on the Poetics list have revolved around questions of the configuration of poets and/or poems: community in the spring, anthologies in the summer, labels in the fall. Now with winter, we seem to be focussing on war: the destruction of some communities by other communities.

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There is a virus out there but it is not trying to get to your hard drive but your inside and outside. & you can never completely rid yourself of this virus but you can be a more or less hospitable host. & sometimes there is nothing you can do about it, and those may be just the times when it seems most urgent to imagine that you can do something. (There is a pleasure, also, in delusions of this kind: not of grandeur but of agency.) But because some things are beyond redress it does not follow that every circumstance is without recourse, nor every case without prospect. — I would say it could matter quite alot where you were in a burning building, depending on which direction the fire was going in.

I am sending the Experiments list as a separate post immediately following this. Please send me (on or off the list) additions so that I can continue to extend and supplement. I realize my examples of works written in the particular forms is spotty but I don't have time just now to improve it. I send it with the hope that Bernadette Mayer gets better soon (many of you will have read the letter from The Poetry Project of St. Mark's Church forwarded by Chris Reiner) — and returns to this experiment that is our everyday lives.

—Charles Bernstein

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## Experiments List

06 Dec 1994

*The document itself — drawn from Bernadette Mayer's workshop list and a decade of Bernstein's own accretions, and handed round ever since as the nearest thing the innovative poetries have to a common syllabus.*

## 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=26) 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 aleotric 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 a 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 RADI OS 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, exeriencies, 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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## 1995

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### ***Eric Mottram: In Memorium***

*16 Jan 1995*

*Eric Mottram — poet, critic, and the great London champion of the adventurous poetry of both his island and ours, the first to teach the Beats in Europe — had turned seventy only weeks before. Word reached Bernstein by transatlantic telephone the morning he died; he marks the loss plainly.*

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, 1995 3:45pm NYC time

Eric Mottram died this morning in London. Tom Raworth just phoned me, just while Allen Fisher was phoning Pierre Joris, both telling us that Eric had died four to five hours ago from multiple infections. He had been hospitalized a day or two ago.

Eric turned 70 on this past December 29.

From the introduction to *\*Alive in Parts of this Century: Eric Mottram at 70\**, just out from North and South Press:

"Eric Mottram is one of the most important figures of post-war literature and teaching. He was the first to teach Beat writing in Europe in the 1950s, the first teacher of American Studies at the University of London, and a co-founder of the Institute of United States Studies in the University of London in 1963. He edited *Poetry Review* in 1972-75, ran the King's Poetry Series in 1967-80 and co-edited *The New British Poetry* (1988). He has had two dozen collections of poetry published since the late 1960s including *\*Elegies\**, *\*A Book of Herne\** and *\*Selected Poems\**. [*\*Selected Poems* (1989) *\*Alive in Parts of This Century\**, both from North and South, are available from Small Press Distribution.] His essay collections include *\*The Algebra of Need\**, the first essay full study of William Burroughs, and *\*Blood on the Nash Ambassador\**, a selection of essays.

An indefatigable supporter of the most adventurous, inventive, and socially engaged poetry of the UK and USA, Mottram introduced at least two generations of poets to poetry hidden from view by the a literary establishment, on both sides of the Atlantic that, in Mottram's words, promoted a conformist poetry decoration and decorum. Mottram's own uncompromising poetry demonstrated how poetry can be political without sacrificing formal investigation. As Pierre Joris wrote of Eric's poetry — this is work of "gut passion, crystal clarity of intellect."

For *\*Alive in Parts of This Century\**, Pierre Joris chose lines (almost all) from Eric Mottram's work for his contribution. (The format of the poem was disrupted in e-conversion; it should be flush right.)

# HOMAGE/COLLAGE FOR ERIC MOTTRAM @ 70

1. ...I am searching unceasingly for my own discovery" 2. it takes leisure to be a  
man is revolution 3. granddad, why are they all whispering? 4. this is not what I  
want to do, I want to know 5. an image an open hand with things in it 6.  
the result of composed ascent 7. concepts as modes of ordering 8. performance  
as what is revealed, moving outwards 9. the embryonic form of organisation 10.  
laughter of naked bathers 11. of transformed beings returned to the steep sea  
12. break the mesh that grips us 13. an errand in wilderness 14. consult a  
good bookseller as to whether a book is 15. the fields of exchange 16. back there  
at origins a travelling forward soul springs up 17. the waterfall the illuminating  
gas 18. I hope this list will be regarded as an open 19. do you enter space from  
edges by intersecting lines 20. you eat light your eyes carry 21. a  
parenthesis of what is to be known 22. but a gun to show that he was a faithful  
private 23. in liberty a space of flame between us 24. Social roles, rituals,  
taboos, manners and conventions are boundaries of 25. their bark and moan  
songs of the story tellers 26. believe that in offering a candid account of himself  
he creates 27. to chose insecurity 28. gather surprise among limestone turf  
plants 29. The clearest example of work which actually leapt out of the area of 30.  
knows that the naturally depraved yearns to be a policeman 31. trample workers  
32. Intelligent ones should generate the excellent Bodhi-mind 33. when  
creatures learn brain nucleic acids change 34. our nostrils move we stride  
on a hill curve air moves 35. from then on my road meets everymanUs road from  
the south of solitude 36. shieldless venture in adventure / we dare in the undaring  
sea 37. tracks laid down underwater 38. from seperate existence/this bites in my  
mouth your kiss 39. "Collage-design method is, as he puts it, 'transformation.' It is  
similar 40. neck erect for songs at a high level space/ 41. on each cusp spandrel  
corbel lovers beside angels 42. have you woken up mad with information 43.  
against fluted pillars the grainy dark of news 44. "the subversions of his own  
power and confidence" 45. tokens of myself brought here up through clay and  
soil 46. so a tongue breaks words it assumed memorized 47. the balance acts  
refuse sacrifice the waste loneliness 48. from a man half through our wall strides  
towards us parts us / and 49. few leaves touch to live a difference of  
breath 50. satori 51. determined not to disappear 52. living in a world more or  
less homicidal and desperately mercantile 53. "gut passion, crystal clarity of  
intellect: two energies, two modes" 54. the work: encounter between  
and consolidation 55. he returns me to his head 56. here rewrite the message

that is you 57. shaken by the fire and darkness of his time I lived the lives of  
 others 58. friends we need to believe 59. whereby I lived, and moved, and had  
 my being aboard the 60. media prisons through terrors of recognition 61. three  
 kinds of silence and movement in the long wind-strung day 62. "Mottram  
 demonstrates how poetry can be political without" 63. a liberation into power  
 64. of leisure without guilt 65. shards in winter Night in Tunisia 66. fertile  
 to recognize resemblance 67. a man goes forth stops in the sun 68. beneath  
 light surface fold on fold 69. we to whom the world is our native country 70.  
 "figures always foreboded, awaited, and loved rise into view"

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*Between the Mottram elegy and February, Bernstein sent the list's  
 subscription apparatus over and over — the welcome letter, the archive  
 commands, the map to the Electronic Poetry Center. Those recurrences  
 have been kept to the catalogue; the reading resumes with the season's  
 new books.*

## ***New from Sun & Moon***

19 Feb 1995

*A publisher's notice that turns, midway, into something better — the introduction Bernstein  
 had just given for Rae Armantrout at Buffalo, whose precision and unadorned scale he  
 prized.*

### NEW FROM SUN & MOON

*\_Finite Intuition: Selected Poetry and Prose\_*, by Milo de Angeles, tr. with an  
 intro. by Lawrence Venuti, has just been published by Sun & Moon Press. This is  
 the last selection in the book:

### POETRY AND THEORY

The Greek *\_theoria\_* signifies "reflection," but also "solemn embassy,"  
 "spectacle." And perhaps there can be no great poet who has not had theoretical  
 insights into other great poets, who does not represent them on the stage of a  
 conceptual power. Yet there is that pathetic mythology of the poet who—devoid  
 of this power—nevertheless knows how to "tell a story" or to "dream," as if dream  
 were the land where the thorn of intellect grows dull. It happens that some line  
 open the veins of their own thought until it is beyond recognition. But this  
 clenched thought *\_must have been there\_*: only then can the lines enter the region  
 which it doesn't know! This is delirium, in the most distinct accent on the  
 calendar. Yet if those lines remain in doubt, if they are worried about not having  
 thought enough...how much unworthy poetry of ideas is born from this  
 worry...how many genuflections to philosophers...ho many lines get cornered in  
 the poetry of sensations. There should be no submission of theory to poetry, if

they are Greek sisters. And no comparison, because these two strangers must have loved each other.

(C) 1995 by Milo De Angeles and Lawrence Venuti. Used by permission of the publisher.

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Also just out this month from Sun & Moon:

MADE TO SEEM by Rae Armantrout

Rae Armantrout read this past week at UB, at the Poetics Program's Wednesday at 4 Plus series. Here is my introduction:

Rae Armantrout poem "Extremities" ends with the line "the charmed verges of presence": and indeed her poems are charms, virtual presents. Armantrout's poetry is notable for its precision and elegance, its seismographic ability to chart the slightest shifts of social register on the city streets, in the suburban malls, and in the university corridors. In an early poem she writes "The smallest / distance / inexhaustible" — a poetic credo of commitment to the specific scale of an unadorned everyday life, words lived in their pajamas as much as their toupees. "The smallest / distance / inexhaustible" — providing a reservoir of wry, wacky, wicked, torqued and torquing observations, skewering any bloated sense of proportion, skewing lines of logic to make poems of sentient, radiant sense: returning us to the pleasures of reflection and consoling, indomitable wit.

—Charles Bernstein

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## ***The List Itself***

03 Mar 1995

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*The list had been arguing about its own format; here its owner sets down what he takes the medium to be and not to be — and why, whatever the volume, he will never agree to moderate it.*

### The List Itself

1. I appreciate discussions of the format of this discussion group, since many of the subscribers to Poetics receive the posts in different personal circumstance (at home, at the office); with different automatic formatting (headings, directories); and with different software (facilitating up and downloading, or making it impossible). Insofar as possible, I would hope the list might be able to conform to the specific needs of the participants. But I have limited knowledge of the listserve program that determines some of the choices available.

2. Please note that if your e-mail server is down, or if your personal mailbox is full, and a Poetics message gets bounced, you will be automatically unsubscribed from the Poetics listserve. When your system comes back on line or you have cleared your back messages, just subscribe anew. It should be easy enough to tell if you subscription has been "auto-deleted": a day will pass with no Poetics posts!
3. The DIGEST option is working and that is clearly useful for those who want all the Poetics messages from one day sent as one single e-mail post, or for those whose systems set limits on individual messages. (To get DIGEST, send a one-line message with no subject line to [REDACTED]: set poetics digest; to remove digest send a message that says: set poetics mail.) I have no control over the format of the DIGEST: the listserve program generates the daily digests automatically. If you use the reply option to respond to a message sent in the Digest, the subject line will be the Digest subject head; if possible, send such a message direct to Poetics so that you can write the subject line yourself.
4. To some extent, the Digest option resolves the problem for those for whom the volume of messages is difficult to handle. My commitment is to keep this space open and unregulated — indeed, I suspect it is the unregulated aspect of the listserve format that is particularly appealing for a list like Poetics. There are no circumstances under which I would consider formally "moderating" this list; though this is an option for other lists because the listserve program makes it possible for messages to be sent to the listowner \_before\_ they are distributed. In any case, rest anxious, "moderation" has never been considered here at Poetics@UBVM!
5. I am interested in continuing to explore what formats and styles of posting encourage, rather than simply allow, participation in this "virtual uncommunity". The volume of messages is certainly a useful measure of list activity; but volume itself may be an obstacle for some to participate, just as it may encourage others. Who subscribes is a crucial element: both subscriptions and posting on Poetics are unrestricted, which allows participants to subscribe and unsubscribe themselves at will. When people send me inquiries about the list, I send them the "welcome" message and, generally, ask them to subscribe themselves. The list remains "private", which means that our address will not be found in Guides to the Internet; word-of-mouth (or word-of-net?) seems a better way of including individuals who have a commitment to our multiple areas of investigation. I believe that without some sense of limit, albeit constructed in process, the always fragile sense of intimacy or relatedness that fosters some forms of conversation can easily be lost. But then again, maybe I am resisting the sheer magnitude of the net, as if an imaginary seawall can ever hold back the sea? In any case, different lists and bulletin boards and newsgroups will approach the limits of

participation in different ways; no one list can possibly embody all the possibilities. Even as it gets bigger, I still think of this list as "small-scale".

6. As listowner, I spend a certain amount of time dealing with list maintenance. That remains my primary commitment here, even when it prevents me, given drastically limited time, from participating in other ways. There are many posts that I would like to respond to, but to which I am only able to compose responses in my head. I suspect this is true many participants, for several different reasons. I am particularly conscious of this when someone notes a lack of response to their post: I want to call out that it wasn't lack of interest but lack of time!; and I know this is a common feeling.

7. I think of the listserve as a distinct medium, but what characterizes this medium? My question is partly, what does this medium make possible that is not possible in other language media? Cris Cheek and Kali Tal have both offered elucidating descriptions of the medium as improvisatory and I suspect that their thoughts on the matter come close to answering my questions. But just as TV was filled with content from older media, such as movies, so listserves will also be filled with older genres: letters, essays, catalogs, etc. I have found it difficult to leap into the specifically listserve space, and my own contributions, like a number of others, have tended to be composed offline and over fairly long periods of time. I hope that those like me who are still squeamish about the immediacy of this space will participate in less immediate, but no less performative or theatrical, modes: for a theatrical space like this can also be used in refractory and constructed manners.

\*\*\*\*\*8. Amidst the discussion, I want to reiterate the value of information postings by presses and magazines. Full catalogs of small press publishers are always welcome and will be separately listed at the Electronic Poetry Center site. Please also send notices of new books or magazine issues! Individuals are also encouraged to send information on their own new books or other publications. Recommended reading, with ordering information, is also welcome.

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9. The Poetics list was started in January 1994. Since then there have been over 1600 posts. As of today, there are 192 subscribers to Poetics. I thought some of you might like to see a copy of a post I made one year ago. It's called "Hermits Crabs Don't Cry." I will send it as a separate post following this.

—Charles Bernstein

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## ***Hermit Crabs Don't Cry (Annals of Poetics 3/5/94)***

03 Mar 1995

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*Reposted from a year before: his deadpan code of impossible Listserve Rules, enforced by Total Automation — the standing reply to everyone who ever asked that the room be brought to order and made real.*

### HERMIT CRABS DON'T CRY

On one of my frequent trips to the Folded Place inside the Ethernet's Thirteenth Passage, with the new translation into Idiophone of Moses Maimonides's Guide for the Perplexed in my left hand, I had occasion to jot down some rules of conduct (not so much community standards as uncommunity striations) into my Blake's Newton Feelpad (TM pending) (a pad is after all a kind of home, or used to be). The Feelpad, as many of you will know (and I use the word "you" carelessly), is able to convert inner feeling processes into linguistic signs. The protocols of the Blake's Newton Feelpad do not allow me to review the file before downloading directly onto your screens (and I also use the word "your" carelessly):

All of these proposed Listserve Rules will be enforced through a fully automated new version of the Youngman Listserve Program (Henney 33.95). As I am sure you will agree (and I use "you" loosely), Total Automation of rule enforcement is the only way to ensure fair and impartial Rule Maintenance:

1. Postings on Poetics@UBVM shall be neither in prose or verse. Rather, all postings shall conform to shifting character/line formats, announced periodically on the list. Initially, lines shall have at least 43 and no more than 51 characters; hyphenation is discouraged.
2. No messages shall be posted between :43 and :52 minutes after the hour.
3. All postings shall be made from "Dos"-type platforms; Apple users may post from "IBM"-type computers but the graphic orientation of Macs make these environments inappropriate for Poetics postings.
4. You have to sound 30 or show ID.
5. On the third Friday of every month, only short "chat" messages to friends on the list may be posted. For those without, or who no longer have, friends on the list, a message service will be available to provide names of friends as well as appropriate messages.
6. The Listowner will provide a name purging service to permit anonymous postings. Purged names will remain strictly confidential, although, at the Listowner's discretion, they may be sold, on condition of continued

confidentiality, to benefit the outreach services at Poetics@UBVM provided by Whitewater Development Company.

7. Subscribers to Poetics@UBVM agree to end all "back channel" communication. All communication among subscribers shall be sent to the list as a whole: no individual e-mail or conventional mail may be exchanged, no face-to-face verbal communications will be permitted (nonverbal communication is in no way restricted by this rule). At first, this may be difficult for those who live in the same area. But, over time, the enormous advantages to community-building will become apparent.

8. In order to cut down on those repulsive smile icons that are used on Other Lists to indicate humorous intent (as we used to say in Method Acting class — DON'T INDICATE) [Remember the one about the actor who asked the director what his motivation was to walk across the set and light a cigarette, to which the director replied, "your motivation is, that if you don't, you'll be fired"?] —where was I? even when I write I lose track of where I am — oh yeah, in order to cut down on those smile icons, and for other reasons that should be obvious to all of you (I use the word "you" inadvisedly), all irony (including sarcasm, schtick, mocking, jokes, and comic innuendo) will be prohibited from the list. This is a particularly difficult rule to enforce automatically, but recent, unpublishable, research, indicates that there may be genetic markers of sarcasm and our team of crack(ed?) computer experts are working around the clock to find programs to detect this "irony gene" in linguistic expression.

*FINALLY< For those who have asked that this listspace move toward \*reality\* rather than float in talky virtuality, the following rule implementation procedure will be adopted:*

If there is significant sentiment on the list in favor of these rules, they will not be adopted; if, in contrast, there is strong opposition to these rules, they will become effective immediately.

In addition, to bring even more reality into the system, between three and five Listserve Rules will remain concealed from all subscribers AND about one percent of all messages will be randomly deleted before delivery.

\*\*\*\*\* PS

Our public relations team at Hungadunga, Hungadunga, and McCormack is currently considering two campaigns. They will be making their decision in the next few weeks:

POETICS@UBVM — we're taking the unity out of community! Unsubscribe today!

or

Not getting enough community at home? Subscribe to POETICS@UBVM.

Yours in virtuality,

C \* h \* a \* r \* l \* e \* s

B \* e \* r \* n \* s \* t \* e \* i \* n

[originally posted to Poetics 3/5/94]

(rest area)

—Boundary (ID aXbsCtXW+EAcNXFasdGCGw)—

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### **WARNING: Poetry Area--Publics Under Construction {long post/essay}**

11 Mar 1995

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*The essay Bernstein had just delivered at Louisville, on a panel with Maria Damon: that poetry constitutes publics as much as it serves already-formed ones, and that difficulty is not elitism but the native condition of any culture not built to maximize its market share. It is his fullest defense this year of the small-scale against the mega-market — and of the net as its provisional refuge.*

The following is most of the essay I presented at the Twentieth Century Literature Conference, at the University of Louisville, on February 25, at a panel entitled "Constructing Publics", organized by Robert von Hallberg; Maria Damon also spoke at this session. —Charles Bernstein

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#### WARNING ~ POETRY AREA: Publics Under Construction

Do publics construct poetry or does poetry construct publics? Not so fast, where's the shell under those nuts, the nuts under those texts, the texts under those author-functions, the author-functions inside those periods, the periods inside those stanzas, the stanzas inside those ever-loving tats for ticks, quantum for particles, buzz saws for heliotropes, missionaries for bugle boys? The public does not and cannot exist until it can find means to constitute itself; to convene in, on or about the precincts of language; to explore its multiple, overlapping or mutually exclusive, constituent parts, elements, components, units, fractions, links, bands, conglomerations, alliances, groupings, configurations, spheres, clusters, divisions, localities; to find means of conversation without necessitating conversion, among and between these constituent parts, allowing that these parts shift and reconfigure in response to changing circumstances. Poetry explores the constitution of public space as much as representing already formed constituencies; risks its audience as often as assumes it; refuses to speak for

anyone as much as fronting for a self, group, people, or species. In the process of recognizing new communities, new audiences, and new publics for poetry, as well redressing the previous exclusion of groups from our republic of letters, I want to honor the complexity of contemporary American poetic practice over and above its representativeness. Within universities in the 1990s, contemporary poetry is increasingly being taught for the ways it marks, narrates, and celebrates ethnicity, gender, and race. To fit this curricular imperative, some poems may be selected for their explicit and positive group representations. Other poems (by the same poet or by other poets) may seem less useful if they are found to complicate representation because of their structural or formal complexity — their contradictory, ambivalent, obscure, or mixed expressions or inexpressions of identity; or because of their negative or skeptical approaches to fixed conceptions of self or group identity. For poetry may wish to question, rather than assume, group identity as much as self identity — not to deny that selves and groups exist, or have voices, but to take their description and expression as a poetic, as much as an epistemologic, project. Like many developments in education, the trend toward a representative poetry is as much market or consumer-driven, not to say demographic, in origin as it is ideological. The gorgeous mosaic of students in the classroom, to use former New York City Mayor David Dinkins's term, puts an enormous, and appropriate, pressure on teachers to create syllabuses that reflect the various origins of our students as much as their multiple destinations. Yet, like in electoral politics, not every group is recognized as equally significant in the often schematic, not to say gerrymandered, patchwork of multicultural curricula. Similarly, some subject areas such as contemporary poetry are being used to front for the far more static approach to issues of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation in other areas of the humanities and in the social and natural sciences. There are good reasons for this unequal development, since contemporary poetry remains an indispensable site for the exploration of the multiplicities, and multiplicitousness of, identities. TV and Hollywood movies continue to provide inadequate, or nonexistent, representations of many groups in our culture. This may help to explain why poetry and the small press are a central place for such representations, given the independent press's ability to serve what can as easily be called small or niche markets as "marginal" communities. For some groups in our culture, poetry may be a primary site of basic cultural exchange in a way that is hard to comprehend for those who identify with the cultural representations of the mass media. This is why it is crucial to differentiate share-driven mass media from popular and local and folk-cultural activities whose lifeblood is their low market share — their small scale, let's emphasize, rather than their "unpopularity". But it is not only sociologically identified "groups" that are unserved or underserved by the

majoritarian, market-share-driven, mass media, but also "outsiders" of every sort and kind, of every stripe and lack of stripe, as Maria Damon eloquently argues in *\_The Dark Side of the Street\_*. In an increasing intolerant American cultural landscape, nonmajoritarian cultural activities are stigmatized as elitist and as "special interests" even though these activities are the last refuge of local and particularistic resistance to the big government and big media claimed, by the right, to be the source of our problems. The current attacks on public television and public support for the arts and humanities are a sharp warning that intellectual complexity, aesthetic difficulty, and non-mega-market-driven cultural production have become "minor" art activities that cohabit the same shadow world of poetry and the small press as do group- and outsider-identified cultural practices. For if commercial culture is increasingly dominated by entertainment products that are developed, through the use of focus and dial groups, to evoke maximum positive response at every unit of exposure; then art that is not just figuratively but literally untested, art that evokes contradictory and confused initial response, or simply appeals to a statistical minority of targeted readers, will not be circulated through commercial channels. It should be no more a surprise to us in the USA, than it has been for the past few years to citizens in the former USSR, that market forces create different, but not necessarily desirable, cultural values compared to those imposed top down by the old-guard of cultural arbiters or commissars.

In the post-Pantheon world of book publishing, the diversified companies that own the major trade publishers are charged with publishing not simply profitable books but the most profitable books. Works that appeal to minor or micro publics, that is to say small constituencies, are excluded from this system in favor of works that appeal to macro publics, which is to say a substantial market share of the targeted audience. The circumstance is somewhat analogous to a TV show with millions of enthusiastic viewers being cancelled for its failure to garner an adequate public. Yet unprofitable cultural product does continue to be manufactured in the commercial sector and not simply as a result of the inevitable market failures of the entertainment industry. The question is, why are some works published despite their relatively poor profit potential in preference to other works with a similar profit profile? It isn't just nonprofit arts organizations that lose money supporting their particular cultural agendas. Indeed, as far as losing money in an effort to construct a public, the independent and alternative presses 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. Of course, publishing statistics are notoriously unreliable, especially when they concern the amount publishers are willing to lose — less to obtain cultural legitimacy, let me correct myself, 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 public 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.

Now should be the time to pull the hat out of the rabbit, the bottle out of the genie, the tree out of the paper, the riddle out of the problem. For example to extol the emerging electronic gateway as the balm for poetry, which will soothe our wounds of poor capitalization and shrink-wrapped publics of long-term outsiders, far-out insiders, subaltern-centric rhapsodes, and other statistical anomalies from the upper west side of Manhattan to the Castro district of San Francisco to the vacant lots behind the Galleria mall in Nowhere, USA. .... I don't believe that technology creates improvement, but rather that we need to use the new technologies in order to preserve the limited cultural spaces we have created through the alternative, nonprofit literary presses and magazines. This is

a particularly important time for poetry on the net because the formats and institutions we are now establishing can provide models and precedents for small-scale, poetry-intensive activities. At the same time, the new interactive environment suggests new possibilities for every aspect of poetic work, from composition to visualization to display to performance to distribution to reading, and indeed, to constructing publics, this afternoon's putative subject. (You say subject, I say object; you say focus, I say associate: subject, object, focus, associate, let's call the whole thing art. But oh, if we call the whole thing art then we must part and oh if we must part — I'd be the object and you'd be the subject or you'd be the subject and I'd be the object: let's call the art part off.) An enticing thing about today's internet environment is the spirit of innovation and engagement that prevails. A poem with a sound file electronically published by \_PMC\_ (\_Postmodern Culture\_) will get many more "hits" (user connections) than a poem published in a comparable print journal because so many people are cruising the net looking for new material. Poetry enters into a performance space on the net, providing text-based content — something poetry is particularly good at! — to an audience hungry for it. There is some general interest, from an internet-focussed public, in the new formats being created, including those by poets and poetry editors. The result is that for the moment the public of poetry on the net is unusually eclectic, even open, in their specifically poetic or literary interest. That is, a range of people will read and listen to poetry, or participate in poetry-based discussion groups and bulletin boards, who would not be interested in this genre in its print- or performance-based forms (a claim that also could be made for performance versus print and vice versa). At the moment, we have on the net something like a general audience for poetry — a claim that rightly will alarm those people conscious of how restricted physical access to cyberspace is. (Of the poets I know in New York, less than 10 percent have e-mail accounts; while in Buffalo, in a university based environment, about 90 percent of the poets I know have e-mail accounts.) But I would argue that it is the current limitation of access and programming that gives poetry its particular edge on the net and as the information superhighway is put in place, the public that will be constructed by it will return poetry to its hard-core. Poetry on the net is very small-scale: I am not talking about big numbers so much as a certain fluidity of audience. At the University at Buffalo, we have set up an Electronic Poetry Center, designed by Loss Glazier, a poet and our humanities librarian, and Ken Sherwood, a poet and a doctoral student in our Poetics Program. The EPC, still under the construction, provides gopher and WWW access to extensive listing of small press catalogs and addresses, electronic versions of print journals and archives of electronic magazines and our Poetics listserve discussion group, plus alphabetically arrayed poems and essays, recent obituaries, sound files, etc. A related project is \_Rif/t\_

magazine, a electronic poetry magazine (publishing poems, essays, reviews, and chapbooks) edited by Glazier and Sherwood. *\_Rif/t\_* itself has 1,000 subscribers. As to EPC, the number of connections or hits per month has been increasing: we estimate something over 600 connections per month. Some of these hits may be the same user going back for more; at the same time the statistics do not account for all modes of access to EPC, so the number of sessions is actually higher. In any case, over 600 hits in one month compares favorably to the public for an establish literary magazine. Luigi-Bob Drake's *\_Taproot\_* magazine provides the most extensive and useful listing of small — press magazines available — providing short reviews of over 300 different magazines and chapbooks in the last issue. *\_Taproot\_* is also available on line, minus its feature articles. The hard copy version of the magazine has a print-run of about 2500, of which 500 are distributed free in Cleveland, its home base. The e-mail version goes out directly to 500 subscribers and is also redistributed to an additional 1,000 e-mail accounts as part of *\_FactSheet5 Electric\_*, which in turn is available from over 20 archive and gopher sites with undetermined additional "hits". *\_Taproot\_* itself is also available via the EPC. More startling, and more informative as to the potential for electronic distribution of "literary-niche" audience material, is the incredible success of the electronic journal *\_Postmodern Culture\_*. According to co-editor John Unsworth, in the approximately six-month period from May 18, 1994 to Dec. 8, 1994 there were over 40,000 requests for the table of contents of all issues of the journal. In total, more than 358,000 items have been requested from the PMC archives during this same period. Poetry on the net is not so much a positive development as a necessary one. The internet will become increasingly central for poetry because of the economy of scale it provides, given the high cost of printing and paper, the increasing expense for unreliable postal service, the shrinking of the presently tiny public support for literary publishing, and the absence of poetry-committed bookstores in most localities. Poetry editors and publishers often have few alternatives but to use the cheapest means of reproduction available: mimeo in the 60s, xerox and offset in the 70s and 80s, and electronic publishing in the 90s. In the words of Joe Hill, Don't mourn, organize (though there is plenty to mourn over). A crucial prerequisite for that organizing is understanding how this new space will affect the composition and presentation of our work, especially insofar as we respond in our work to this new electronic medium. We also need to explore the implications this emerging space has for the composition and disposition of the publics for poetry. Unlike poetry on the net, poetry in print and live formats presents few physical limits to access and user-interface given the prevalence of hard-wired body systems for processing spoken language and broad familiarity with alphabetic technologies. Our limits are more conceptual and ideological: the very niche-based, specialized, focussed,

small-scale, often non-overlapping readerships that are a fundamental and vital and source of poetry's aesthetic and social value. Many people say that the university, with its captive audience of mostly 18-24 year-olds, has become the primary site for the distribution of poetry. I don't think this is quite true, but few can fail to recognize how much of poetry's public consists of students. This reflects badly neither on poetry nor universities, quite the contrary; rather, it reflects the appalling lack of public cultural space outside the narrows confines of the literary academy. It is bad for poetry, and for poets, to be nourished so disproportionately; for the sort of poetry I care for has its natural habitat in the streets and offices and malls and parks and fields and farms and houses and apartments and elevators and stores and alleys and parades and woods and bookstores and public libraries. Sometimes I imagine the kind of audience contemporary poetry would have if it were on the radio on a daily basis: say a new half-hour program every night at 8. The public for this programming would be small, although larger than our current publics for poetry. At the turn of this now turning century, radio promised to revolutionize the distribution of poetry, making widely accessible, at no cost, the new the new acoustic riffs of the language arts. For, of all our technologies, radio has the greatest potential to create a democratic listening space. Without access to the public soundwaves, subsidiary, privately available, spoken art media (tapes, CDs) cannot flourish. The exclusion of contemporary language arts from the public air, from radio, is a stark warning about what we can expect from the upcoming merging of cable TV, radio and the internet. If contemporary poetry is able to construct only a series of disconnected publics, then poetry is banished from that virtual republic that we aspire to, all the more, knowing it unattainable. For all the utopian promise of technological optimists, the answer is not in our machines but in our politics. For we see in this society a constant erosion of public space —space not privatized for maximum profit, but made available for common use. And so it seems we can only imagine the public square, the town green, a Central Park of our poetries, where, leaving the solitude or sustenance of our rooms or communes, we might jostle against one another, unexpectedly mingle, confuse our borders: refigure ourselves, reconstitute our affiliations, regroup. There is no education in the arts equivalent to having art works available in open channels — public spaces — to intrigue, befuddle, and engage those unfamiliar and familiar, but especially unfamiliar. Such initial points of public access to art must not be abolished; neither should they be privatized, through the restrictions of pay TV or high admissions prices. For such sites to have a democratizing function they must be maximally accessible from a physical, technological, and financial point of view, just that what they exhibit may not be so immediately accessible in other ways. We must resist the idea that difficult art is elitist, any more than that science is

elitist or that learning is elitist. Such arguments breed demagoguery not populist empowerment. By denying the value of the labor necessary to become linguistically and culturally informed, we encourage the maintenance of an uninformed, indeed, ignorant, citizenry. If the arts are denied public support, it is not the artists or dedicated readers and viewers who will suffer, for one way or another their commitment will keep them working and they will be prepared to find art in out-of-the-way places. But for the uninitiated, the decline of public space for art can be devastating, for they will have no common place to find non-market driven art production. Public radio and public television, despite their manifest inadequacies, are, like public arts funding through the NEA and other agencies, a fundamental point of intersection between the public and the arts. They are the town square of art. In a society that has few such points of access, any diminishment of our public spaces for culture is a catastrophe. Don't lament, or don't lament only: construct.

#### NOTES

1. Elizabeth Kolbert, "How Tina Brown Moves Magazines," in *The New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 5, 1993, p. 87. I lift this paragraph and the following one from the footnotes of an essay in which I discuss some closely related issues — "Provisional Institutions: Alternative Presses and Poetic Innovation", which is forthcoming in *Arizona Quarterly* (Spring, 1995).
2. More on this in "I Don't Take Voice Mail", in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* #16.
3. EPC connections through the main menu are as follows: July, 1994: 614; September, 367; October, 429; November: 573. Perhaps an additional ten percent accessed the server through Veronica searches or direct gopher connections.
4. "The WAIS-based search function for PMC, which operates through a WWW fill-out form, is heavily used, with more than 6,000 requests for that. The table of contents for the May 1994 issue (our most popular recent issue) has been requested over 6,000 times. Our most popular single item has been the popular culture column on Krazy Kat, with roughly 2,500 requests for the opening page. By the way, the page of information and archives on PMC-MOO has been requested almost as many times (5,700+). PMC-MOO, by the way, is now the second largest virtual community on the internet, with 2,718 "citizens," over half of whom have been active on the MOO in the two weeks [prior to this tabulation]. And we've had close to 900 requests for the table of contents of the PMC book of collected essays. I should add that none of these numbers reflect the non-WWW distribution channels; I don't have stats for gopher or ftp use, but we do have over 3,000 subscribers to the listserv distribution list for the journal's table of contents

and calls for reviewers." — John Unsworth, personal communication, January 31, 1995.

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## ***Letter from Alan Loney (preface)***

20 Mar 1995

*A preface to a forwarded letter from Alan Loney — with, characteristically, a detour to press the New Zealand poets, Loney and Michelle Leggott, on a room that may not yet know them.*

I invariably, or at least variably, call O Books (Leslie Scalapino's press) O Press (Michael Lally's lively press of the 70s). I think O! Press, but Leslie notes "op-press".

In an separate post, to follow immediately, I am sending a longish letter to the editor by Alan Loney, a terrific poet from New Zealand. I thought the letter might be of interest "here" even in the absence of the review to which it responds. Alan Loney has been a subscriber to the Poetics List, but has recently signed off. He is the author of two recommended books:

Missing Parts: Poems 1977-1990 (Christchurch, NZ: Hazard Press, 1992)

and

The Erasure Tapes (Auckland University Press, 1994), which Loney describes in the Preface as "an autobiography in which I refuse to tell the story of my life."

I am not sure how people outside New Zealand can get these books, or the (also highly recommended!) book by Michelle Leggott, *\_DIA\_* (egad! another poet-scholar, the self-same author of the awesome study of Zukofsky's 80 Flowers from Johns Hopkins a few years back (*\_Reading 80 Flowers\_*). But I think that Wystan Curnow and Tony Green, who should be reading this message "now", might be able to help out?

Charles Bernstein

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## ***The List Itself***

27 Mar 1995

*Sandra Braman had asked whether the list was growing; the answer becomes another meditation on the paradox of an open room that can drown people as surely as a closed one keeps them out.*

Sandra Braman asks about any increase in the number of people on this list. As of today, there are 200 subscribers to Poetics. So, yes, the list grows by a few people every week. The policy on new subscribers has remained the same all along, and there are no plans to change it: the list is private, but anyone who finds

out about it (usually through another list member but also through discovering the list by browsing EPC) is free to subscribe. I continue to see the advantage of keeping the list to a smallish scale, but then I don't know what smallish means in an environment as big as the internet. (In a talk on Friday, at UB's conference on the internet and related issues, Loss Glazier quoted some remarkable statistics on the day by day growth of the internet; perhaps he will post those here.) The paradox is that in an attempt to be open and nonexcluding one can end up excluding those who are unable to handle the volume: people are drowned out rather than kept out — until Dreamworks Interactive, Inc., guides us and we asphyxiate. If people on the list have thoughts about this, please let me\us know.

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A reminder that if your server is down or your "disk quota" is exceeded you may find yourself automatically unsubbed from Poetics; should this happen, just resubscribe yourself. Some subscribers have changed their user IDs, often from initials or numerals to full names; the listserv program evidently can't recognize the old and new addresses as the same and this may cause difficulties in setting options, unsubscribing, and posting. If you do change your ID, unsub with the old and resub with the new (?!). If you want to temporarily stop getting Poetics mail it may be easier to send a message to [REDACTED]: set poetics nomail & later: set poetics mail than unsubbing and resubbing. If you get the Digest: if possible, try to send any replies to the list without using the "reply" function so that you can write in a specific subject head; otherwise the subject reads "Digest". On my vax system, the only information I have about a message from the directory is that it is from Poetics, the date, and the subject; other systems, as I understand it, give more or different information. There is some snare in the "automated" archiving of Poetics files, so that we don't have monthly compilations for the last three months. I have requested that this be fixed and hope it soon will be.

\*\* Once again, let me encourage those of you out there who edit magazines or publish books to send information to the list on new publications as well as complete backlists. Also welcome: information on new and recent books and publications by list participants (I have been tempted to put together a recommended reading list just of recent books and publications by people on this list, many of which have not been cited here, but the job is too extensive for me just now.)

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## ***The List Itself (2): How to Unsub and Other Stories***

11 May 1995

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*Housekeeping — how to leave, how to pause the mail — that stops to thank Loss Glazier, whose unpaid hours at the Electronic Poetry Center kept the whole apparatus running.*

In the "Welcome" message for this list I give a misleading instruction on how to unsubscribe to the list. To do this send a one line message (no subject line) to

████████████████████:

do not include your name in this command.

You can temporarily stop getting mail (for example if you will be off line for a while) by sending this message:

set poetics nomail

and then get mail again by:

set poetics mail

\*this is easier than subbing and unsubbing\*

& y'all know about:

set poetics digest

which can be turned off by "set poetics mail"

I hope this is all correct! Let me know if not.

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As of today, there are 222 subscribers to Poetics.

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I want to add my thanks to Loss Glazier for the pioneering work he is doing with EPC. As things are getting tougher at SUNY, I know there is a greater squeeze on him at his official library job. While EPC is exactly the sort of thing a public university should be committed to supporting, Loss's work on EPC is all on his own time — as, of course, is much of the work of the other editors and publishers, and poets, hereabouts.

If you haven't checked into EPC via WW or lynx, I encourage you to do so, and to let us know what you think:

URL=gopher://writing.upenn.edu/hh/internet/library/e-journals/ub/rift

You will find a month by month archive of the Poetics List going back to the December 8, 1993, announcement of Robin Blaser's *The Holy Forest* and taking us through March 1995. Loss has spent a good deal of time reformatting this

archive to make it easier to read and to search (we also had to manually put together the files for the first several months of Poetics).

AND just out — the new Rif/t, which I assume most of you get by direct subscription, but which is also available at the EPC. Especially recommend in the hypertext versions.

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One final note, especially to those who don't post much: PLEASE post information on your recent publications, books or articles or works just out or immediately forthcoming. There are some people on the list who have had books out in the past few years but never announced them here. Now is the time!

V\*i\*r\*t\*u\*a\*l\*i\*y y\*o\*u\*r\*s,

—Charles Bernstein

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## **Warren Sonbert 1947-1995**

06 Jun 1995

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*Warren Sonbert — whose intercut, montage cinema poets claimed as their own kin — died at forty-seven, of AIDS. A recent list quarrel about sentimentality hangs over the notice, which weighs the fact of one death against the unrepresentable general fact of a generation's.*

Warren Sonbert died on Wednesday, at home and surrounded by friends. He was 47 years old. I got the news in a letters from Lyn Hejinian and Tom Mandel. Tom wrote:

Charles, the news may have reached you already. Warren died yesterday (wednesday) at 10:30 am. In his bed, in his sleep, and with friends at his side. Beth and I had been in SF the whole weekend, left tuesday, and were with him daily. He was conscious on thursday when we arrived, tho in pain with organs failing and unable to speak or to move much, and would confirm requests by squeezing his hand around yours. We read to him, to a strong attention. Whitman. The days that followed he was agitated, feverish, only occasionally responsive (hands) and in much discomfort increasing. By sunday evening it had become obvious that fluids and pureed food only caused intense pain and prolonged it too, by whatever number of hours or few days, and the decision was taken to limit them severely and to up his morphine substantially. By monday afternoon, when I kissed him goodbye, he was fading and probably not conscious of one's presence or only fleetingly and as shallow this sense of any world as his breath, shallow, effortful, unsustaining. I will miss him, deeply and for a long time.

tom \*

Lyn, after telling me the news, and remembering Warren, mentioned that there is to be a screening of his early films at the Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco on June 22. Carla Harryman will introduce.

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Warren's wonderful, poetic, films immeasurably enriched the art of cinema.

His 15 films are:

Amphetamine (1966). "First film, heavy influence by Goddard and Warhol — designed to shock." (sound/10 min.)

Where Did Our Love Go? (1966). "First pleasure romp: along the various venues of culture, circa 1966, New York." (sound/15 min.)

Hall of Mirrors (1966) — made while a student at NYU film school: 'correcting' dailies from a 1947 murder film, with added sequences of Rene Ricard at home, Gerard Malanga at a show of Lucas Samaras's 'Hall of Mirrors'. (sound/7 min)

The Bad and the Beautiful (1967). "Mutual (I film them, they film each other) portraits of eight New York couples, mercifully, you'll be relieved to learn, only one pair of whom are still together. Editing in camera" (sound/30 min.)

Holiday (1967). "High spirited glances (along with \*Truth Serum\*) at Coney Island, Appalachian Trail, New Jersey, the Janis Gallery." (silent/15 min.)

Truth Serum (1967). (silent/12 min)

Carriage Trade (1971) — the first film of his most characteristic mode consisting of a procession of intercut images, an open-ended collage of shots taken in widely disparate locations. Warren himself wrote: "Magnum opus (and my first real silent) made up of section of [early films]. The strategies of combing 'old' images with recent trips through Asia, North Africa, Europe and North America. I went to see this film with my daughter Emma (then 9) this past fall; it played as part of the Museum of Modern Art's October Sonbert retrospective. It is hard to believe that a film this stylistically commanding and elegant was made by Warren when he was in his early 20s. Like many of Warren's films, there is an elegiac quality to the passing of the images, of the evanescent quality of scenes screened, time slipping by. (silent / 61 min.)

Rude Awakening (1972). "Tautening this silent period's approach." (silent/36 min)

Divided Loyalties (1978). "Further development of editing concerns." (silent/22 min.)

Noblesse Oblige (1981). "Furthest distillation (along with \*The Cup and the Lip\*) of later manner editing/dislocation approach." (silent/58 min.)

A Woman's Touch (1983). "A backslide into earlier 'personality' scheme." (silent/23 min.)

The Cup and the Lip (1987). (silent/20 min.)

Honor and Obey (1988). "Quick setting (two weeks?) of a film on a dare for the NY Film Festival." (silent/22 minutes.) Since Warren often worked for years on setting, eg cutting, his films, his comment is striking. It was fun to see Sonbert's film as among the few such works shown at the NY Film Festival. At this point, such films were shown as shorts, accompanying feature films, always provoking the ire of the "sophisticated" film festival audience. The running joke was that someone would yell out "SOUND!". Later, the festival grouped such films together under the title "avant garde visions" as I recall: they've got narrative we've got visions. Actually, Sonbert's films are a running revision of the possibility of narrative in the cinema.

Friendly Witness (1989). NY Film Festival again with music/image interplay. (32 min.)

Short Fuse (1991). "Last NY Film Festival music/image experiment." (37 min.)

[All quotes from the flier for his October 1995 MoMA retrospective.] \*

Whiplash - According to Tom Mandel a rough cut of this film exists; hopefully, a version of this final film will one day be available.

((((()))))

"The body dies, the body's beauty lives" — Wallace Stevens

On the Poetics list there has been a recent discussion of sentimentality and I suppose it's in a notice like this that it is most difficult to find a balance between sentiment and substance. Because nothing you can say can account for the fact of Warren's death at 47 and because grief over Warren's dying also echos with that of many others of our generation who have died of AIDS. So there is a need to balance that hideous, unrepresentable, general fact with the specifics of this particular person.

Warren had an extraordinary grace both in his films and in his life. Talking about this quality of Warren's with Abby Child yesterday she said "he was a 'prince'". But only in the sense that he made you feel graceful too, to be with him, to talk of movies or poetry or music or gossip about friends. He seemed to live a charmed life — travelling the world, attending operas in Europe and North American, having his work shown at Festivals and museums. But charms are haunted.

As part of his MoMA retrospective, Warren got to pick four feature films that he particularly liked, and these were shown alongside his films. For those who can't get one of Warren's films, rent a video of one of these and watch it in his honor: Lubitsch's "The Man I Killed (Broken Lullaby)" (1932), Wilder's "Kiss Me Stupid" (1964), Preminger's "The Cardinal" (1963), and Vertov's "Man with a Movie Camera" (1929). Last night, AMC was playing one of the Sirk films that Warren loved: "Imitation of Life" (where early on the earnest young photographer tells of his implausible ambition to have his pictures shown at the Museum of Modern Art). When I mentioned this to Tom Mandel he pointed to Sirk's "Magnificent Obsession"; catch it, if you can, \*tonight\* on AMC.

When Warren was visiting us in the Fall, Emma was taping interviews of friends, relatives, and neighbors. She asked Warren what his favorite holiday was. He said, "Halloween, because I like to dress up."

This prince is dead. His films live to light up the shadow his death has cast.

—Charles Bernstein

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## **Think the Reverse**

16 Jun 1995

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*Tom Beard had offered the old counsel — learn the rules, then break them. Bernstein takes the reverse and runs with it, into a scat of pure contrariety, with Senator Exon and his war on smut caught in the spray.*

Tom Beard writes, mentioning traditional forms, "learn the rules, \_then\_ break them."

I like to "think the reverse" whenever possible and even if not:

break 'em enough times you won't have to learn 'em, or the rules will have changed, or you will change them, or make up your own rules and don't follow those either; anyway whose rules are they?, I didn't see the signs, musta missed them in the duststorm; or as we say in Medias Res (Medias Res, Nevada) — rope 'em and then learn 'em, shoot 'em and then cook 'em (chop up fine before marinading indefinitely), float jerkily and carry a Bic pen at all times, where aim I?, is this my fear / or did I just step into the public sphere?, are you there Mordred?; Give me your tired tuxes, your tattered nabobs of oligarchy yearning to Keep that Smut Off the Net, Thank you Sen. Exxon the open spaces around here were scaring me, how many syllables can you fit on the head of a pin cushion? what's that spell, Mario? who are you calling a verse? That's not what I meant y'all, not what I meant at all.

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*Summer thins the traffic — Bernstein is often offline, and July leaves no trace in the archive at all. Around these kept posts ran a season of forwarded newsletters and censorship alerts, routed elsewhere; the room reconvenes in August.*

## ***The List Itself***

12 Aug 1995

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*The list had tripped its own daily message ceiling twice in a week — occasion for another defense of smallness, and a wary sidelong glance at what he calls the Eisnerization of the net.*

For the second time this week, but only for the third time in the history of the list, there were over 50 messages posted to Poetics on Friday. When this happens the list locks itself automatically, and Listserv sends me a message that I have to unlock it by sending out an unlock message. At 10am this morning I did this and something like 30 messages that had been held were released. I think 50 is a reasonable upper limit for daily messages. But as I am not online every day, especially during the summer, there is a potential problem here.

As many of you know, if you change your user ID you also need to unsub to Poetics under the old name and resub under the new name or you will not be able to send posts. If you have a problem with this send me a message with the old address and I can delete it manually. You should be able to resub yourself with the new address without problem. If you are having any problem with your account, or our nearing the disk week from servers that have can't deliver a Poetics message and these are, to say the least, a nuisance. The worst instance of this was some mad recycling of bounced messages from one subscriber's system last week, to the tune of 3000 error messages a day for a couple of days, effectively closing my own e-mail account down. Subscribers who bounce messages are removed from the Poetics list so if this happens, once you've solved the problems that caused the messages to bounce, just resub yourself.

All of this reminds me of my commitment to keep the scale of this list on the smaller side, not only because I am committed to small-scale exchanges but also because this particular list is not set up — *\_I'm not set up!\_* — to handle more volume than we've now got. I have noted before that sheer volume on a list has as much of a tendency to exclude, by effectively preventing participation by those unable to sort through the volume, as more explicit means of limiting subscription. For some using sophisticated software, or indeed having easier access to the net, sorting through this volume may be less a problem than it is for, I suspect, many Poetics subscribers. This is all changing very quickly. My hope is that with the Eisnerization of the net, we have some basic alternative sites, EPC and Poetics are two models, firmly in place. But I certainly don't have the answers

and see Poetics as only one of many possible formats for listserve poetry discussion groups.

I often feel that the time I spend on list maintenance actually keeps me from posting more, but this is, for now, my principal method of participation.

Charles Bernstein

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## **Agency (1)**

10 Sep 1995

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*A near-empty dispatch, titled and numbered in reverse across two days — Bernstein in his conceptual-deadpan mode, agency reduced to a blank.*

This message intentionally left blank.

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## **Distribution or Bust**

18 Sep 1995

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*The standing house rule — tell us what you've published — opens out into an essay on how poetry actually reaches its readers: the failing New York bookstores, the loyal ones like Talking Leaves, and the net as an ally to print rather than its undertaker.*

One of the few rules on Poetics@UBVM is that participants (lurkers and not) are requested to post news of their recent publications, together with information on how best to get these items. It has come to my attention that some of you are out-of-compliance with this "don't balk/must tell" rule. The fuller the listings (table of contents, etc) the better. If you are a publisher and editor and have new material on the EPC, it is still useful to post it on Poetics as well, since many of the subscribers either don't have Web access, don't use it, or don't check new listings. This is may also be a way to compensate for the recurring distribution and bookstore problems discussed here.

On Bookstores: Problem with the New York bookstores discussed here is that even if they carry a new poetry book they rarely re-order, or re-order so erratically that you can never count on finding a book, even a recent book, in stock. This is why the sales rep system is so crucial, since the initial order of a new book is ultimately the one that will determine if the book gets any bookstore life in New York at all. So if you don't find a book, it's possible that it was ordered and sold out; the books in stock are often the ones that didn't sell. In the 70s and 80s, when I used to pester these stores to carry specific books and magazines, I always felt getting shelf space was like getting a gallery show; "naturally" places like Gotham and Books & Co. felt having the books in the store was enough, they

certainly didn't have to pay you for what they sold too! (In my experience, St. Mark's always paid. But they were the exception.) At the same time, the real estate costs in New York are so high that it is probably not possible to survive with the sort of commitments to poetry many of us look for in a bookstore; I say probably because people do manage to figure out how to do improbable things, as any number of our alternative poetry institutions show.

I don't buy books in New York, preferring to buy direct from the publishers, or from SPD, but most often from Talking Leaves Books (which in turn buys them from SPD). Talking Leaves remains my favorite poetry bookshop and I have been talking with the coop owners there about working directly with the Poetics list and EPC: setting up accounts, taking order via e-mail, and so on. So you should be hearing more about that soon (though as they are understaffed and have limited access to computer technology that this is taking longer than they would like). (In the meantime, they are happy to take orders by phone or mail: 3158 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14214; [REDACTED]; fax--837-3861.) As has been noted by others on this list and off, bookstores like Talking Leaves and Woodland Pattern are always in danger and need the same sort of support we give to small presses and SPD and indeed other poets: we are all in it together.

The Internet and the Web are becoming increasingly central for poetry distribution, even if as yet many of the readers of the books often discussed on this list are not on-line. At this point, I see one of the primary values of the EPC and the Poetics List as facilitating the distribution of print books and magazines rather than (not as opposed to) making work available electronically. I see many parallels with the work I did on Segue's distribution catalog in the 70s and 80s and the work on the EPC now. We can't afford to have the Net "replacing" bookstores, publishers and distributors that support new and "alternative" poetry: that would be a net loss, indeed. We have to find way to use the Net to help these institutions survive. To this end, listings and short reviews/discussions on Poetics of new work become a mode of distribution.

About 15 years ago my continually new friend Cris Cheek prepared, on his manual typewriter, an extensive list of UK small press publications, carefully annotated with prices and address, issued as supplement #2 of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E. I'm reminded of that because the EPC and this list seem such a good place for the sort of exchange of information and ideas among the UK, US, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia. And while we talk about the lack of information between N. American poets and U.K. poets, it's been my sense that at least in the particular world represented by those of us "here" that, in a small way, this is beginning to take care of itself just as we talk about it.

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## **Emerging Generation**

15 Oct 1995

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*Two births among the list's families, relayed with plain pleasure — and with Whitman drafted, deadpan, as one of America's top ten poets.*

Julius Erlich was born to Erica Hunt and Marty Erlich on October 10.

Jackson Hercules Hauty was born to Diane Ward and Chris Hauty on September 9. {To avoid further confusion with Buffalo's Diane Ward, who has recently posted to Poetics, this is Diane Ward of Los Angeles, author of *\_Never Without One\_ etc.*} On the birth announcement, Diane and Chris include this quote from one of America's top 10 poets:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

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## **Re: Steiniana**

21 Nov 1995

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*Herb Levy had written about the days-long marathon readings of Stein; Bernstein answers with his own memory of reading *The Making of Americans* at three in the morning to a tiny SoHo audience, and a claim for how the work holds up to something like chant.*

| Spake Herb Levy earlier today:

Spake Herb Levy earlier today:

For many years, there has been a marathon reading of *The Making of Americans* every New Year's, days long; in recent years it has alternated with a reading of *Finnegans Wake*. It takes place at the Paula Cooper Gallery in SoHo (New York). The first few years, in the middle or late 70s, I read at 3 or 4am to a quite small, even tiny, audience. These were hardly "straight" readings but I think fairly engaging. The work, it seemed to me then and there, held up well to something like chant or anyway highly intoned reading (a kind of davening perhaps). I have had other occasions to read the from the book, even when fully awake, and found many rhythmic and performative possibilities there. I have always felt that Stein's work would be better served by a more all over reading from her works, but the fact that *The Making of Americans* has held up to repeated and complete readings for so many years (though of course "stands up" to whom?) is interesting.

—Charles Bernstein

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## ***Re: Steiniana {corrected}; shelflife***

22 Nov 1995

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*A correction — the extract he was answering had dropped out in transmission, so Levy's doubt is printed again — with a new coda on where bookstores ought to shelve poetry, and why the Dewey Decimal system, filing it under nonfiction, had it right.*

Somehow the extract from Herb's post that I was replying to got dropped in the transmission, can't figure out how.

This is what Herb Levy posted yesterday, or a bit of it:

*... sounds like it was pretty good. In the context of all of those, uh, value-added performances, though, it's still hard to imagine a straight reading of a big chunk of The Making of Americans getting over, no matter where it was in the program.*

& this what I added:

For many years, there has been a marathon reading of The Making of Americans every New Year's, days long; in recent years it has alternated with a reading of Finnegans Wake. It takes place at the Paula Cooper Gallery in SoHo (New York). The first few years, in the middle or late 70s, I read at 3 or 4am to a quite small, even tiny, audience. These were hardly "straight" readings but I think fairly engaging. The work, it seemed to me then and there, held up well to something like chant or anyway highly intoned reading (a kind of davening perhaps). I have had other occasions to read the from the book, even when fully awake, and found many rhythmic and performative possibilities there. I have always felt that Stein's work would be better served by a more all over reading from her works, but the fact that The Making of Americans has held up to repeated and complete readings for so many years (though of course "stands up" to whom?) is interesting.

\*\*\*\*\* PS — on the shelving of books in bookstores, Stein is always a problem but after a while EPC may be able to provide for call-up consultations for bookstore workers to help them diagnose ... er, classify the stock. For myself, I always liked the fact the the Dewey Decimel system classifies poetry as a type of nonfiction, unlike novels and short stories. I would encourage bookstores to shelve poetry along with the other nonfiction books, where it belongs.

—Charles Bernstein

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**1996**

**idelect**

22 Jan 1996

*Maria Damon had wondered whether 'idelect' was a private coinage of his; here Bernstein traces the word home to his essay on a poetics of the Americas, where the long argument — dialect and idelect alike in revolt against standard English — was built to carry it.*

In "The Poetics of the Americas" I use the word 'idelect' to suggest a constructed, ideological self-conscious poetic language practice. That essay, which A.L. Neilsen is including in "An Area of Act": Race and Readings in American Poetry (forthcoming, University of Illinois Press) (I should be doing the revisions on that now rather than this!, any day, A.L.!) discusses formal and social affinities between dialect and idelect poetry. I particularly emphasize the shared resistance to standard English among dialect and idelect poets. One way or another I have been working on this theme since the late 1980s and have given several graduate seminars at UB on the issues (as you can see if you check out my course syllabusssssssssssssses @ [writing.upenn.edu/epc](http://writing.upenn.edu/epc)). The titles for those seminars have involved plays on dialect/dialogue/ideology/idelect/idiolect/dialogic/dialectic ... I use idelect in order to socialize the idiolectical and indeed the idiosyncratic but also because the poetry I am writing about is not an idiolect. The root contrasts, *ideo/idea* vs *idio/I-own*, are the sort of mutually cancelling, not to say paradoxical, distinctions that are at the heart the essay (self/nation, individual/group, word/phrase). In this context, I read dialect as constructed fully as much as idelect. Susan Schultz refers to a version of my "argument" in her essay in A Poetics of Criticism. So, Maria, my use of the term idelect is not idiosyncratic, though possibly neologistic; surely ideological.

\*\*

Here's a brief excerpt from "Poetics of the Americas":

In the poetry of the past two decades, I think we have moved away from the choice of subjective, objective, or even constructive and toward a synthesizing or juxtaposing these approaches. Here the influence of the dialect poetries of the modernist period gives way to a dialectical poetry that refuses allegiance to Standard English without necessarily basing its claim on an affiliation with a definable group's speaking practice. The norm enforces a conduct of representation that precludes poetry as an active agent to further thought, unbound to the restrictions of rationalized ordering systems. Poetry can be a process of thinking rather than a report of things already settled; an investigation of figuration rather than a picture of something figured out. Such ideologically informed nonstandard language practice I call ideolectical. ... The invention of an ideolectical English language poetry, as a poetry of the Americas, involves the

replacement of the national and geographically centered category of English (or Spanish) poetry not with the equally essentialist category of American poetry but with a field of potentialities, a virtual America that we approach but never possess. English languages, set adrift from the sight/sound sensorium of the concrete experiences of the English people, are at their hearts uprooted and translated: nomadic in origin, absolutely particular in practice. Invention in this context is not a matter of choice: it is as necessary as the ground we walk on. The impossible poetics of the Americas of which I speak has, in the U.S., a history of breaks from the received literary language of England. The vernacular was a crucial factor in many of those breaks, particularly as explored by such African-Americans poets as Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, J. W. Johnson, and Melvin Tolson. At the same time, the American language was being transformed by the "bad" or "broken" English of the European immigrants from the 1880s through the early years of the new century: "new" syntaxes, new expressions came along with the new world. Here it is significant that Williams, Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky and other makers of a new American poetry were themselves second-language speakers of English, while others were children of second-language speakers, as Peter Quartermain notes in *Disjunctive Poetics*. So for these children of immigrants, English became less transparent, more a medium subject to reforming. Correlatively, on the other side of the Atlantic, the explorations of dialect traditions by Basil Bunting and Hugh MacDiarmid and in the Caribbean by Claude McKay and more recently by Linton Kwesi Johnson, Louise Bennett, Michael Smith, or Kamau Brathwaite (who rejects the term dialect, preferring "nation language"), become a source of shared language resources among English language poetries. I realize that my emphasis on nonstandard language practices makes for unexpected affiliations. Tony Crowley, in *Standard English and the Politics of Language*, points to two senses of "standard". A standard is a rallying point for the forward movement of an ideology or group, by means of which a unity is invoked, as for example a flag in battle. But a standard is also an objective unit of measure and regulator of uniformity, and as such a product of normalization and averaging. Standard American English involves both these senses: it is a sociohistorical construction, embedding class, ethnic, and racial preferences, that serves to build national unity; and it is also a regulator of language practices, serving to curb deviance. Under the aegis of standardization, problems of social coherence are displaced onto questions of linguistic correctness. .... As our literary history is usually told, the nonstandard language practices of the radical modernists, and their descendants, are not linked to the dialect and vernacular practices of African-American poets. But the construction of a vernacular poetry was a major project for many poets, black and white, during the modernist period, and the fact that

these developments often took place without reference to each other — the fact of the color line — should not now obscure their intimate formal and sociohistorical connection. Stein's breakthrough into the ideolectical practice of Tender Buttons, for example, was prepared by her problematic improvisations on African-American vernacular in "Melanctha". A generation later, both Melvin Tolson and Louis Zukofsky used complex literary framing devices as a means of working with, and against ~ I'd say torquing ~ vernacular linguistic materials. By linking dialect and idelect I wish to emphasize the common ground of linguistic exploration, the invention of new syntaxes as akin to the invention of new Americas, or possibilities for America. In Brathwaite's account, however, dialect is better called "nation language" and if that is the case it would seem to run counter to idelect, whose nations may be described, in Robin Blaser's phrase, as image nations, imaginary, ideological; dialectical in that other sense. I don't wish to relieve this tension so much as to try to locate it as pivotal to our literary history and contemporary poetics. I am convinced, however, that nonstandard writing practices share a technical commonality that overrides the necessary differences in interpretation and motivation, and this commonality may be the vortical prosodic force that gives us footing with one another. ....

—Charles Bernstein

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### ***Bernadette Mayer Fan Club (charter member)***

02 Feb 1996

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*The list had begun trading a familiar rumor — that the Language poets shut Bernadette Mayer out; Bernstein, who has loved and taught her work for years, corrects the gossip without tidying her into a label.*

Just to jump in quickly on this as it is the sort of thing that I find particularly disheartening: Bernadette Mayer was included in such 70s and early 80s assemblings of poetry and poetics as L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, In The American Tree, This, etc.; her work has always been very important to me (I've written about it and often teach it) and I know that is true for many others who also published in these places. At the same time, Bernadette has publically expressed reservations about the approach to poetry and poetics often associated with these contexts. If this makes it difficult to "label" her, that's all for the good. But I do take exception to this (gossip assumed as fact no sooner than it's uttered):

*but I definitatly wouldn't call Bernadette a language poet— and I don't at all mean that derogatorily to Bernadette---didn't the L poets exclude her though they championed MacLow, etc—*

*Can anyone elaborate as to why Bernadette was excluded? I hope it was a damn good reason—but I can't imagine it was.*

[↑ Contents](#)**Larry Eigner (1927-1996) [long post]**

05 Feb 1996

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*Larry Eigner, the great poet of the perceptual particular, who wrote from a life bounded since birth by cerebral palsy, had died on February 3rd; Bernstein, who counted him a friend and a hero, marks the loss and sets beside it two things he had already made in Eigner's honor.*

I can't collect my thoughts any further, dwelling on the meanings of Larry Eigner's life, except to remember the time spent with him in conversation, or say the time Bob Grenier, Brian McInerney and I took him to the Museum of Natural History on his one trip to New York. As we came into the room with some of the largest dinosaurs, Larry pointed straight ahead and said "that's interesting". He wasn't pointing to a dinosaur skeleton, though, but to an old sign posted on the back wall; it was interesting, in a style long banished (in exhibition halls now replaced). I think of that remark of Larry's as displaying how much he lived out his version of a democracy of particulars, as against the craving for highlights, for the heightened, that is as much a literacy aesthetic as a consumer imperative. For Eigner, this didn't mean a flattening of affect; on the contrary it meant a luminosity of every detail: the perceptual vividness that his work so uncannily concatenates. This acknowledgement of the daily, a series of remarks on the otherwise unremarkable, a sort of poetic alchemy that is not dissimilar to one strain of Jewish mysticism (a strain in which the mysticism dissolves into an active apprehension of the real), is an abiding model of and for a poetry where things as they are let to stand for themselves.

This poet of the ordinary lived an extraordinary life, as if the physical challenges he faced since birth were spun by poetic license into mental acrobatics. Larry Eigner is hero of our times. His will to think was unsuppressible. It was no ordinary privilege to have known him. I can't think of anyone I admired more.

\*\*\*\*\* I wrote this for an Eigner celebration at UC-Berkeley's University Art Museum in June 1993:

**AGAIN EIGNER**

There is no writing I know as vivid as Larry Eigner's. He's invented, for poetry, something equivalent to three-dimensional photography: his works present a series of perceptions etched deep into the mind, where the mind is charted on a page and the page becomes a model of the thinking field. Perception and thought (words and things) are completely intertwined in Eigner's work, which brings to a visionary crescendo the exploration of the ordinary — the transient flickerings of the everyday that otherwise pass more unnoticed than regarded, more dismissed than revered. In Eigner's poems, one "fragment" is rivetted to the next, so that

one becomes, in reading this work, likewise riveted by the uncanny democracy of details, where attention is focussed unhesitatingly on each particular with equal weight, equal exhilaration. This is a poetics of "noticing things," where, as Eigner writes, "nothing is too dull" with "material (things, words) more and more dense around you." But equally, Eigner's is a poetics of coincidence, where "serendipity" (contingency) takes its rightful place as animating spirit, displacing the anthropocentric sentimentality of much of the verse of our time.

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In 1988, Leslie Scalapino's O Books republished Eigner's "Anything on Its Side" in O One/An Anthology, for which I wrote this verse commentary:

"THE ONLY WORLD WE'VE GOT"

\_Anything on Its Side\_ is placed, like  
 a volume in a tank of water, with utter  
 gravity against the next moment that occurs  
 in what is called time but for Eigner is always  
 spaced, for example on a page. What  
 would it be to be grounded, to know  
 the ground under you by the weight  
 it pushes back with? "Every atom of me  
 . . . across distances." No awful trembling  
 unto undecidability, everything founded in  
 its site, cleaves to what there is, to  
 what is there. "\_To be\_" is involved  
 such words that hold / times in the mind":  
 a way, still, that a poem can enact its  
 own presence, with full measure of the  
 necessary determination to move from  
 anything to that which juts against it,  
 a conviction that life is made of (of)  
 just such leaps, the contingency of an eye  
 (aye, I) 'gainst a field of "r/oars" ("\_suddenly\_

a day"). Something like deep  
 focus, as if the poems had become  
 an organ, the sky bellows. Step by  
 step, slowly turning. Yet there is no  
 opening onto image here, no mime of  
 a rehearsal of a scene. Eigner's depth-of-  
 field \_charges\_ each page to \_hold\_ its own,  
 "to have things whole". "to see / dark  
 the / invisible". Perception all right,  
 but not sun-drenched barns: "fishmongers",  
 "pigment", "air". If there's  
 narrative, it's narrative unhinged  
 of causal nexus, logical spools. Each  
 line rivets its moment & moves on, like  
 angels on the head of a quill pin, nor  
 looks ahead nor back, but "bangs" indissoluble  
 at precise splice ("each fief") that  
 bodies the moment from one to next. "to  
 negotiate the ocean drop by drop  
 if there were time". In adjacency  
 is act-uality: "you thought it was  
 as it is". Nuggets of sound carving  
 space. "Motion" "motor" "process"  
 "winds" "bells" "floating" "echoing"  
 "coursing" "falling" "roaming" "wading"  
 "spilling" "flying" "dazzling" "burning"  
 "unflagging" "blows" "stirs" "curves"  
 "spirals" "stagger" "dives" "slips"  
 "slicks" "shakes" "hums" "simmers"  
 "twist" "float" "flap" "dangle" "glitter"

"subside": "\_imagine\_ the extent" (a  
 geometry of ties that blind in music,  
 "the great sea orchestrated with men"—  
 "what's unseen" "what sound for our  
 ears"). What is "\_displaced\_" at each  
 juncture is the plenitude of eyes seeing  
 beyond sight, the replenishment of  
 occlusion's hold, storehouse of an  
 interior horizon s(t)olid as emplacement.  
 "What you / see you / settle / on"—  
 settlement, homestead in the moment's  
 whole, "such words that hold" nor need  
 an other embrace. "your eyes open" "we  
 \_see\_ something to \_say\_ or / listen to".  
 Imagine the extent.  
 [—ch. bernstein]

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## **Jack Foley on Larry Eigner**

08 Feb 1996

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*Bernstein had sent Eigner's Berkeley friend Jack Foley his own remarks; Foley wrote back, and Bernstein — unwilling to let that side of the friendship go unrecorded — forwards the letter, and the obituary Foley prepared for the family.*

Jack Foley has given me permission to forward this letter to the Poetics list. I had sent him the comments on Larry Eigner I posted to the list a few days ago.

*Dear Charles,*

*Thank you for your touching, eloquent remarks about Larry. As you suggested, I'll email my press release and also fax it to you.*

*I've been so busy, partly with trying to spread the news about Larry and partly with other things (had to record radio interviews with Adrienne Rich and Jerry Rothenberg), that I've been barely able to put my thoughts together. Larry had been in the hospital for a week before his death, comatose. This morning, quite early, both Michael McClure and my son Sean phoned me to tell me they'd heard of Larry's death and funeral arrangements on NPR. That was exactly the kind of thing Larry would do —phone me at an hour when no one else would phone me to tell about something he'd heard on the radio. He's been my friend for ten years—I'd see him once a week and*

hear from him on the phone quite often. Our birthdays were two days apart—we had a joint party once. He wrote a preface to my first book, *LETTERS/LIGHTS—WORDS FOR ADELLE*, the only preface he wrote to anyone's book. (Except for the few remarks he made at the beginning of Ron Silliman's *CROW*. I had asked Larry for a blurb. He responded with a preface.) My current book, *EXILES*, was at his bedside during the last conscious week of his life. His voice on a message machine was something to hear. He once left a message on Michael McClure's machine. Michael couldn't make heads nor tails of it, but I was able to catch what Larry was saying. Larry was not easy to be friends with. The pattern tended to be for people to visit him for a while, make some effort to understand his speech, and then to drift away. I was able to stay friends partly because I didn't live with him and partly because I understood his speech as well as anyone. This was more something I willed than something I learned. I was running a poetry series in Berkeley and I admired Larry's work and wanted him to read in the series. Barry Watten gave me Larry's phone number, not his address, only his phone number. I've never known whether this was some sort of joke on Barry's part, since he certainly had his address as well as his phone number. I phoned and Larry answered, saying something like "UNGHHHHH." I had known that Larry was disabled but hadn't realized until that moment that the disability extended to his speech. I simply decided I would understand Larry. There is no other way to put it. By the time the conversation was over, Larry had given me his address and directions to his house, and we had agreed on a date when he was to read. Kathleen Frumkin told me later that she had been listening on an extension phone and had been ready to help me out if I needed it. She never said anything because I seemed to be managing. You write, "His will to think was unsuppressible." Yes, but so was his will to speak—to speak in any manner he could. You've been with Larry and know how he would talk all the time. "To break out with a man's cry," if I'm quoting correctly. His writing, with all its silences, necessarily partook of that urge towards talk. People complained of it—Bob and others accused him of "monologuing." Yet there it was, at his very center, controlled in certain ways but in others not. Hard to think of him silent.

Here is the piece I wrote at the request of the Eigner family:

LARRY EIGNER: 1927-1996

Distinguished American poet and writer Lawrence Joel (Larry) Eigner died Saturday February 3rd of pneumonia at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley. Eigner was 68 and is survived by two brothers, Richard, who lives in Berkeley, and Joseph, who lives in Saint Louis, Missouri.

Born August 7, 1927, in Swampscott, Massachusetts, on the North Shore of Boston, Eigner got cerebral palsy as a result of a birth injury. Though he remained "non-ambulatory" throughout his life, he recalled that his mother, Bessie Eigner, encouraged him to develop a "work ethic," and his schooling was conducted at home through Swampscott High School. Later, seven correspondence courses from the University of Chicago gave him "a toe-hold of application and hope." Curiosity, he claimed, was always an important factor, "my eyes still big for my head, most things...always tantalizing beyond or almost beyond sight and hearing, out of reach."

In 1949 Eigner "bumped into [poet] Cid Corman reading Yeats, on the radio" and wrote a letter disagreeing with Corman's non-declamatory way of reciting. "This

began a correspondence in which I got introduced to things, and the ice broke considerably." Donald Allen's landmark 1960 anthology, *THE NEW AMERICAN POETRY*, includes Eigner's exquisite, often enigmatic verse in the section devoted to "The Black Mountain Poets," a group of writers publishing in *THE BLACK MOUNTAIN REVIEW*, an experimental magazine printed by Black Mountain College in North Carolina. Many of these poets had also appeared in Corman's magazine, *ORIGIN*. Among the poets associated with this group were Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, and Robert Creeley, whose Divers Press published Eigner's first mature book, *FROM THE SUSTAINING AIR*, in 1953. After reading that book, William Carlos Williams remarked on Eigner's "perfect ear" and added, "It's strange how oldfashioned he makes much of the work of the past appear. But it is always so with every new and outstanding writer."

Eigner's many books, all of them published through small presses, include: *ON MY EYES* (1960, edited by Denise Levertov); *ANOTHER TIME IN FRAGMENTS* (1967); *SELECTED POEMS* (1972, edited by Samuel Charters and Andrea Wyatt); *THINGS STIRRING TOGETHER OR FAR AWAY* (1974); *COUNTRY / HARBOR / QUIET / ACT / AROUND* (1978, selected prose edited by Barrett Watten), and *WATERS / PLACES / A TIME* (edited by Robert Grenier, the book was co-winner of the San Francisco State Poetry Award in 1983). *AREAS LIGHTS HEIGHTS, SELECTED WRITINGS 1954-1989*, edited by Benjamin Friedlander, appeared from Roof Books in 1989. Eigner's current book of poetry, again edited by Grenier, *WINDOWS WALLS YARD WAYS*, appeared in 1994 from Black Sparrow Press, publisher of many of his titles. Another volume of poetry edited by Grenier, *READINESS / ENOUGH / DEPENDS / ON*, is forthcoming from Sun & Moon Press. In 1967 Toad Press published a second, expanded edition of *FROM THE SUSTAINING AIR*, and in 1988 The Coincidence Press reprinted the original edition. Ron Silliman's 1986 anthology of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, *IN THE AMERICAN TREE*, was dedicated to Larry Eigner. A short "Autobiography" is forthcoming from Gale Research, Inc. in Detroit. In Eigner's poems, themes of ecology and explorations of his Jewish heritage exist side by side with the most advanced experimental techniques and deep, deceptively simple, sensuous evocations of the world around him. "Parodying Socrates a little," he wrote, "you might say I know enough to feel naive."

In August, 1978, a few months after his father's death, Eigner relocated to Berkeley, CA, where his brother Richard was residing and where he lived till his death. Many young poets visited him there, and he carried on an active correspondence with poets throughout the world. The door to his home was frequently unlocked. As a regular at Jack Foley's Larry Blake's reading series in Berkeley, Eigner became a familiar figure to the Bay Area poetry scene. Despite the difficulty many people had in understanding his speech, he gave many readings of his poetry, often in the company of Foley.

Eigner was also something of a media figure. In 1973, Leonard Henny and Jan Boon made *GETTING IT TOGETHER*, a documentary film about Eigner with poetry readings by Allen Ginsberg. In August, 1994, Foley broadcast an hour-long interview with Eigner on KPFA radio. *THE UNITED STATES OF POETRY*, a forthcoming series made for public television by Bob Holman, has a segment featuring Eigner. In the summer of 1993, at the suggestion of Berkeley poet Lyn Hejinian, the UC Berkeley University Art Museum paid tribute to Eigner with a special *MATRIX* exhibition. His

*poem, "again dawn," from ANOTHER TIME IN FRAGMENTS, was inscribed on the building's facade. A special poetry reading at which Eigner appeared was held to commemorate the event. Eigner's last public appearance was at a tribute to Gertrude Stein which Hejinian presented at New College of California in November, 1995.*

*Eigner's innovative poetry was widely admired by poets of very different persuasions. The poets to whom he returned again and again were Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, and Charles Olson. Denise Levertov wrote, "More than almost any poet I can think of, he demands a suppleness, an imaginative agility, a willingness and ability to leap with him from image to image...." Robert Duncan asserted that Eigner had produced "a new development of Williams's line: his phrasings are not broken off in an abrupt juncture but hover, having a margin of their own—stanzaic phrasings—suspended in their own time within the time of the poem."*

*Funeral services will take place on Tuesday, at 2 p.m., at The Rolling Hills Memorial Park (Tel Shalom section), Richmond, Interstate 80 at Hilltop Drive. Eigner's family requests that the public and freinds not send flowers. A contribution can be made in Larry Eigner's name to KPFA-FM, 1929 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Berkeley, CA 94704.*

Jack

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## **Pound & Man at Yale**

17 Mar 1996

*The list had turned to reading Pound; Bernstein answers by remembering the 1986 centennial at Yale, where — the youngest speaker and the only Jew among them — he alone insisted on naming the fascism, and was made, socially and editorially, to feel it.*

I wrote a follow-up piece to "Pounding Fascism" (which is in *\_A Poetics\_*) called "Pound and the Poetry of Today". It was published in *\_The Yale Review\_* in 1986 (I don't have the exact citation handy). The speech was originally presented at the Pound Centennial at Yale: an occasion at which at I was made to feel (and no doubt also made myself feel) very unwelcome. I was just about the youngest person invited to speak, and the the only Jewish one; it didn't seem a coincidence that I was also the only person to raise the question of Pound's fascism at this occasion. The spirit of the supposedly academic event was set by the Pound's daughter asking us to observe several minutes of silence in honor of the anniversary of her father's death, which coincided with the Yale event. In keeping with this reverential spirit, the tone of the event was solemn and studiously respectful. In contrast, my speech would have seemed boisterous and structurally irreverent; though insofar as this was so it was was oddly more in the mood of the putative subject. While I was excluded from some of the social occasions set up for the participants (for example the lunch just before my talk), I was invited to a formal dinner at one of those Yale halls filled with dusty oil paintings of important Yale men (fortunately, Susan Howe, who was living in

nearby Guilford, came to the dinner with me). This was the sort of occasion where you'd hear people murmuring to one another, "you know, despite it all, maybe Pound was right about social credit" (and maybe some other things too). Creepy. The Yale Review had written to me saying they wanted to publish works from the proceedings. After the event, at which it was made clear to me that I should not have spoken the way I did (not a new problem for me however), I wasn't surprised that Yale Review turned the piece down. While they may have had other reasons to reject it, since it was advocating an approach to poetry antipathetic to their aesthetic agenda, I couldn't help but interpret it as an extension of the reception I had gotten at the centennial. I made my views known to them and they reluctantly relented, agreeing to publish the work not as an article, but as "commentary" which meant the back of the ... book and in a smaller point size.

After insisting on the necessity and value of reading Pound in terms of his fascism, my speech begins with a discussion of Jerome Rothenberg's anthologies as a counter to the Core Curriculum mania (then in full swing), which I suggest is a logical extension of Pound's ideas of master texts. (Here I distinguish between Pound's "panculturalism" and "decentered multiculturalism".) I go on to differentiate Pound's desire for "montage" (the use of contrasting images toward the goal of one unifying theme) from his practice of "collage" (the use of different textual elements without recourse to an overall unifying idea). The piece ends with a discussion of Jackson Mac Low's great book *Words and ends from Ez*, which it still seems to me is a fundamental resource for any consideration of Pound.

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## ***Re: reading Pound***

22 Mar 1996

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*This is the year's central argument and Bernstein's fullest statement of it: that the honest way to read Pound is through the fascism and the antisemitism, form and content together, not around them — and that quarantining the poems from the politics is itself an interpretive politics. He answers Rothenberg, Perloff, and Mac Low as much as he joins them, and he takes up Perloff's charge to begin such reckonings, as he puts it, at home.*

What Greek logomachy had in common with the  
Hebrew poison was debate, dialectic, sophistry, the  
critical activity that destroys faith. ....

The Hebrew attack, crying out for vengeance,  
began by destroying the Roman Gods. ...

But faith is weakened by debates, [which are] more  
or less rabbinical and if not rabbinical at least anti-  
totalitarian.

— `Che l'intenzione per ragione vale." —

Faith is totalitarian. The mystery is totalitarian.  
The sacred symbols are totalitarian. The destruction of  
the images of the Gods did not increase faith. ...

... That fatal inclination to want to understand  
logically and syllogistically what is incomprehensible is  
Hebrew and Protestant.

—Ezra Pound, 1942 (in *\_Meridiano di Roma\_*), qtd  
by Peter Nicholls in *\_EP: Politics, Economics and Writing\_*

\*

THUS, in thanks to Jerry, Marjorie, Jackson, Rachel, and the rest of the Poetics  
"Jews" and Protest-ants (irregardless of ethnic origin) who insist on debating  
what they/we cannot understand. This is Charles Bernstein speaking ... from the  
Upper West Side of Manhattan, home of Zabar's and Barney Greengrass, the  
Sturgeon King.

& now for some further sophistry: "the critical activity which destroys faith":

\*

Many of the poets and critics who discount Pound do not do so because of his  
fascism but because of a dislike for collage, parataxis, and the very strikingly  
rhetorical surfaces of Pound's poems. They also discount other poets, working in  
related modes, whose politics are quite contrary to Pound's. The converse of this  
is also true, as the remarkable posts by Rothenberg, Mac Low, and Perloff, among  
others, have shown. In this context, I don't take the new wave of Pound criticism  
that regards fascism as central to Pound's poetic project to be a move away from  
reading Pound or as a way of undermining his significance or influence. This new  
Pound criticism, which in some ways incorporates aspects of what has come to be  
called cultural criticism, or cultural and gender studies, tries to integrate Pound's  
political and economic ideas with his poetic practice. Like all critical projects,  
this one is limited. Much of the best Pound criticism before this period tended in  
various ways to cauterize or surgically remove the cancerous parts of Pound's  
work, or career, in an attempt to save the good parts. Partly this was a strategy to  
"save" the work, but it was equally a forceful interpretative system, an "apolitics"  
of poetry if you will. (Peter Nicholls: "Most previous criticism of [Pound's] work  
has, from a variety of motives, sought to keep these different strands separate,  
tending in particular to drive a web between the 'literary' and political dimensions  
in his writing.") Starting in the 1980s, critics like Nicholls (a deep lurker on this  
list), Rachel DuPlessis, Richard Sieburth, Jerome McGann, Burton Hatlen, Bob  
Perelman, and others, but most militantly Robert Casillo, tried to integrate  
Pound's political and economic and gender ideologies into the "tropical system"  
that is his poetry. In doing this, these readers were giving Pound the respect of

taking him at his word, in contrast to those critics who, like well meaning relatives, were often forced to say Pound didn't know what he was talking about. The point here is not to say one approach or the other is right but to note that these approaches allow for different readings of Pound's poetry. None of this work, it seems to me, ought to drive one from reading Pound; quite on the contrary. (Possibly this may be the work of a distinctly younger generation of scholars who no longer felt that raising these issues aligned their views with those who roundly dismissed Pound in the postwar period; this earlier polarization pushed those who went to the defense of Pound's poetry to avoid dwelling on the relation it has to his politics and views on money.) Casillo and Sieburth actually brought me back to reading Pound; that is, reading through the fascism and masculinism brought me from a passive, largely unarticulated, aversion to Pound, to an active, and ongoing, interest in all aspects of his work. Certainly I have been polemical in my essays on Pound, but not without the ironic realization that Pound relished just this sort of poetic polemicism. Reading Pound through the fascism means reading Pound in the most specific social and historical terms. It also means reading poetic forms politically, as an economy of signs; it means thinking through the implications of poetic structures, rather than imagining them ever to be neutral or transparent. A poem including history means we must read the history too, and this history is writ in the style, in the symbolic/semiotic economy of the poem, in the material means of production, as much as in Pound's "disembodied" "ideas" — a matrix of material meanings that Christine Froula so brilliantly calls "The Pound Error": error as much in Joan Retallack's sense of typos and errancy as in political misjudgment: it's all there. Poetry is not worth reading because it is comfortable or happy or understandable or uplifting, any more than history or philosophy is. Nor does reading for a politics of poetic form mean that forms are liberating; more often we find, as Ray DiPalma once wrote, that "all forms are coercive". If one starts with the assumption that a poetry should be truthful or beautiful, that its meaning should transcend the circumstances of its production — then of course talk of the politics of Pound's poetic forms will seem dismissive of Pound's work, since it pulls that work down from the heights of poetic vanity into the real-politics of the actual poem in actual history. People say, Pound was deluded, Pound was insane, Pound was paranoid, Pound was delusional, as a way to explain away, or possibly contextualize, his fascism. I don't doubt this, but it doesn't get me anywhere. Fascism itself was (IS) delusional and paranoid, and Hitler and Mussolini and Goebbels are certifiable in my book, as are the shouting Brown Shirts pictured in *Triumph of the Will* (don't we call this "mass hysteria"?). [Highly recommended, in this context, in the recent documentary on Riefenstahl, "The Wonderful, Horrible World of Leni Riefenstahl".] I agree with Pierre Joris that what's important

to understand as we approach the end of this long century is the nature of this delusion, of this insanity, that has attracted so many otherwise admirable, sometimes brilliant, people, groups, indeed cultures. Of course Pound was delusional during the period of his Radio Speeches; reading Pound means reading through these delusions, trying to come to terms with them. It doesn't mean that in making these judgments one is free of one's own delusions, or that such a reading gives a complete account of this poetic works, which demands multiple, contradictory, readings. Pound was not just a fascist; he had different politics, and poetics, at different points in his life and even at some of the same points. Nicholls notes that from 1930 to 1937, Pound was eager to keep a dialogue open with the American Left; and earlier in his life his views seemed more Left than Right, although, reading Nicholls, one begins to see this as much as a weakness in the Life/Right distinction as an inconsistency on Pound's part. Nicholls also shows that "perhaps the most disquieting thing about [Pound's] savage propaganda is that it was to some degree an extension of ideas that had governed the earlier Cantos." Indeed, Nicholls's tracings of the (de?)evolution of the practice of "authority" and "ideological closure" in Pound's work is crucial for understanding a fundamental dynamic of modernism. Yet Pound's poetry is never simply a direct reflection of his politics; indeed, I would argue quite to the contrary that Pound's work contradicts his fascism. The fascist reading of Pound's poetic practice is valuable as one approach; it is not a final or definitive reading; as with all critical methods, it illuminates some issues while obscuring others. Of course, as Casillo's book and other Pound criticism shows, it also may push the criticism to the polemical and even hysterical, as if the critic feels she or he is wrestling with a demon more than interpreting a poem. This too needs to be historicized and contextualized before it can be judged. Pound told Allen Ginsberg he suffered from "that stupid, suburban prejudice of antisemitism", as if he should have been immune from such a low, "suburban" consciousness. But one thing that is notable about Pound is that he does not appear to have been "personally" antisemitic, which would have been in no way unusual for a person of his generation and background. His attacks on Jews are not related to his hatred of individual Jews or his desire to be a member of an "exclusive" country club. His views of Jews are highly theoretical and structural, projecting Jewishness, more than individual Jews, as the core force in the destruction of the most cherished values of the West. This demonization is not a "stupid suburban prejudice", it is the systematic paranoia-producing ideology that has come to be called by the fascism. (Burton Hatlen: "we will all seriously misunderstand fascism if we insist on seeing it as a "right-wing" political movement. For fascism ... blended an authoritarianism usually associated with the 'right' and a 'populism' usually characteristic of the 'left'.") Marjorie Perloff is quite right to point to it in

Buchanan and the fundamentalist right; they too have gone well beyond "stupid suburban prejudice", even as they bank on it. It is scary to see the degree to which fascist ideas have rooted themselves so deeply in mainstream American life, often in the guise of family values and consonance with a natural order. Pound's most fascist polemics resonate in an eery way with the current wave of attacks on the arts, gays, the disenfranchised poor, immigrants, feminism, and the cities. I say this because there is often a tendency among Americans to exoticize fascism; Pound did his best to bring it home. There are any number of fascist writers who are of virtually no interest to many or probably any of us on this list. And there are virulent antisemites like Celine, whose work I like more than is comfortable to say, but which I don't find as structurally and "tropically" rich in terms of the sort of issues I am raising here. Pound's work, it seems to me, not only allows for but provokes an ideological reading; it insists that it be read, form and content, for its politics and its ideas. And it is precisely this that is one of the enduring values of his work. The dystopian aspects of Pound's work are important to fully explore, even with tempers flying off the page, because he is a fundamental part of that elective tradition (thinking of Christopher Beech's useful sense of Pound's influence in his ABC of Influence: Ezra Pound and the Remaking of American Poetic Tradition) that, as Beach and others have noted, consists mostly of poets whose politics and economics differ so radically from Pound's. But the more important Pound is for that tradition, then the more important it is to understand the disease that consumes his work, which cannot be disentangled from what is "good" about it. Nicholls, for example, notes how Pound's insistence on "making it new" made for an affinity with related fascist ideals. The significance of "the Pound tradition" requires that we interrogate it for what it excludes as much as what it makes possible: interrogate the assumptions of poetic lineages not just to acknowledge their effects but also to counteract their effects. (Perhaps one aspect of this elective tradition is a commitment to difficult writers and difficult writings; after spending some weeks lately writing about Laura (Riding) Jackson, that possibility is hard to miss.) Marjorie urges us to "begin at home" with our political concerns, to look around at what is happening in 1996 in America. Given the context of her own life experience, her warning is all the more ominous, all the more to be heeded. But also, I would say, I hope within the spirit of her wake-up call, but also in the spirit of "debate", that in the context of this Poetics list, taking on Pound's fascism is also a way of starting at home.

\*

N.B. The first paperback edition of *The Cantos* (expanded) is due this spring from New Directions

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## ***Introjective Verse (reply to David Kellogg)***

26 Mar 1996

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*David Kellogg had admired a comic point-for-point inversion of Olson that he'd heard Bernstein read in Chicago, and wanted to cite it; here, briefly, is where to find it.*

In reply to David Kellogg —

*Re: static poetry, I have a question for Charles Bernstein. In Chicago in December you read a hilarious point-by-point inversion of Charles Olson's PROJECTIVE VERSE. Is this out somewhere? I would like to reference it.*

"Introjective Verse" will be in the immediately forthcoming issue of CHAIN, ed. Juliana Spahr and Jena Osman: Chain / 3.

I wrote this over the summer in response to a request by Olivier Cadiot and Pierre Alferi to do something on "Projective Verse" for a "speed" issue of their periodical incroyable \_Revue de litterature generale\_ and it will be, I think, in the 2d number of the review, in a translation divided into hexameters.\_

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*The Pound argument spent March's heat and then the room fell quiet:  
April is silent in the archive, and the spring that follows survives here  
mostly as flyers — readings at the Ear Inn, an anniversary issue of  
M/E/A/N/I/N/G — which the edition has set to one side. The list, like its  
moderator, seems to have gone offline for the season.*

## ***Re: The Twentieth Century***

17 Jun 1996

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*Burt Kimmelman announced a globe-spanning survey of the twentieth-century world; the straight line was irresistible.*

At 11:51 AM 5/30/96 EST, Burt Kimmelman wrote:

*I am slated to teach an interdisciplinary course called "The Twentieth Century World"; the course is global in scope.*

I realize how fashionable it is to focus on the modern and the postmodern, but I have to question if there is enough material here to sustain an entire semester's course.

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## ***"He's So Heavy, He's My Sokal" (song)***

17 Jun 1996

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*Alan Sokal had just sprung his hoax on Social Text and the theory-world was busy being scandalized; Bernstein set the whole affair to Danny Kaye.*

HE'S SO HEAVY, HE'S MY SOKAL

after Danny Kaye and Milton Schafer

Please, please don't Sokal me Sokal the baby, Sokal the priest But don't, don't  
Sokal me I'm laughing so hard I could cry

If I Sokaed you You wouldn't like it You wouldn't approve If I Sokaed you You'd  
Sokal so hard you would split

O, O let go of my 'no' It isn't so funny you goof Oh, no I've misplaced the sunny  
Stop or I'll fall up through the roof

But please, please don't Sokal me Sokal the baby, Sokal the priest Sokal your  
mother, Sokal your brother, Sokal some other guy But don't, don't Sokal me I'm  
laughing so hard I could sigh

Cut it out now, cut it out now! I'm historicized, I can't take it anymore! Come on,  
beat it, get out of here! You're symptomizing me! I'm practically reified!

Wait until I get you, you piece of .... Cut it out 'cause I'm getting sore

And please, please don't Sokal me Sokal the baby, Sokal the priest Sokal your  
father, Sokal your sister, Sokal some other guy But don't, don't Sokal me I'm  
laughing so hard I could cry

© 1996 by Poets' Ludicrously Aimless Yearning (PLAY)

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## **LINEbreak@EPC**

24 Jun 1996

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*Martin Spinelli and Bernstein had begun mounting their LINEbreak radio interviews as sound files at the EPC; here Bernstein, half evangelist and half technician, argues for the archive of the poet's recorded voice even before the means to hear it were in most people's hands.*

Martin Spinelli has been putting up on the EPC the first of the series of LINEbreak radio programs that we made together over the past year. These 30-minute shows include readings as well as discussion. Already up are interviews with Robert Creeley, Jena Osman, Ray Federman, Ron Silliman, Cecilia Vicuna, Dennis Tedlock, Steve McCaffery, and Fiona Templeton. = Another twenty or so are in the works. I believe that sound files on the web will fundamentally change access to the archive of poets' reading their work. At this time, we realize we= are using formats that many of you will not yet have easy access to. But we feel it is necessary to get this material in place for the time when= playing digital sound files will be more accessible. (Some time in the future, we plan to distribute the program via audio cassette; however, cassettes are not available at this time.) Our first choice, radio, is limited by the culturally benighted attitude toward that medium by most commercial and noncommercial radio operators.) Martin has

insisted that our first priority be to make available the best quality sound possible. This he has done. The sound files take up a lot of memory and take a long time to download. However, once you have done this, you will have sound that is good as any recorded poetry I have ever heard. Soon, it will also be possible to play our sound files with RealAudio; that allows immediate playing at roughly telephone quality. I think in the end this will be the most appealing way for most people to play these files, but it would not be satisfactory as the only way to have them available. The world of sound files can be quite confusing. First off, you need to have a sound card installed in your computer; that is, if it didn't come with the computer, as it does on Macs and many PCs. You also need to have speakers; most internal computer speakers are of course not going to be as good as plugging in better speakers (I plugged my sound card into the same mini speakers I use for my stereo system). (Martin notes that you'll need to download the speaker driver (speak.exe) from our info page if you want to use your internal speaker.)

The next problem is that sound files come in different and incompatible formats (most commonly .wav and .au and .mpeg); that means you have to have several different sound or media players: (NAPplayer comes with Netscape (and plays .au files) and windows PCs come with a "Media Player" (for .wav files). LINEbreak files are mostly in .MPEG and that requires that you download a player for that, though the ones we recommend for that will play some of the other formats as well. Finally, you have to tell Netscape or your web browser what to do when you click on a sound file: download to your harddrive or play as soon it loads up in your RAM. We recommend that you download our sound files, as it may take four hours to download a full 30-minute show (with a fast modem). But we have also put up short files, mostly of single poems, and those take considerably less time. In any case, if you download to your hard drive, you can easily play the file over again, don't have to stay on-line, and can more easily record it on a tape. If you don't download it to your hard drive, you get to play it just while you are on-line (and have to pay attention to when it finishes downloading to RAM). Martin has written very clear, step-by-step instructions on how to use our sound files. These instructions are far more helpful than those provided by the software manufactures. You will find these, and the programs, at <http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/linebreak>

One more thought about access. While few will have access to the technology that makes these sound files available, our commitment here, is, nonetheless, to creating at the greatest possible public access to these sound files. We expect that schools at all levels, from lower schools to universities, as well as public libraries, will acquire the technology to gain access to such files (due to the increased commercializing of the Web, not because material such as ours is

available!). And we are committed to making all these files, indeed all the material on the EPC, free and unrestricted. This is a public space, even if only a small portion of the public is able to enter into it. Nonetheless, given the scale of poetry in North American, our collection of poets' voices promises to make such material far more accessible than it has been in the past. This activity is only possible because it is supported by a public university and, perhaps more crucially, produced through the unpaid labor= of people committed to making poetry available in the newly emerging public spaces of the Internet. (It helps, as with so many projects in the Poetics Program at UB, that we have small amounts for seed money and to cover some cash outlays.) Martin Spinelli – who is not a poet, but a radio= producer and a graduate student at UB working on utopian thinking starting in the 19th century in the UK – has put in hundreds and hundreds of hours into engineering, editing, distributing LINEbreak; he has also taken in upon himself to learn about the possibilities of sound on the net.

Please let Martin and me know what you think about LINEbreak – the shows= or the technology we are using to make them available.

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## **Pierre@50**

13 Jul 1996

*A concrete-poem greeting flung across the ASCII for Pierre Joris's fiftieth birthday.*

//////////Fiftieth//////////

| Birthday<<<<

=====Greetings>>>>

^^^^^^to^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

Pierre Joris

\*\*\*\*\* born July 14, 1946 \*\*\*\*

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## **Re: Spoken Word, LINEbreak, & the list**

01 Aug 1996

*Back from a month offline, Bernstein sees to the list's housekeeping — a new helper in Joel Kuszai, an address about to change as the old VAX is dismantled — then turns to the phrase spoken word, which he would sooner call a poetry reading.*

I am just back from a month mostly off-line (I did check in a few times earlier in the month) and will soon read through the 1500 or so messages for what once a slow month on this list. Thanks again to Joel Kuszai who watched over the list in my absence and will continue to work with me on the list. Questions about the list

should be directed to us at [REDACTED]. At least for the moment. The whole VMS cluster at UB (our VAX system) is being dismantled this year so all those "@ubvms" addresses will be changing to "@acsu.buffalo.edu". Our IBM system is also being dismantled and that means this list will be shifted over to a UNIX machine, as "transparently" as possible, and that our new list address will change either to Poetics@acsu or Poetics-L@acsu. The "L" might be good as point of clarification but then "poetics" alone remains appealing. More on this as we hear about it.

ON SPOKEN WORD, or as I would prefer to call it, poetry readings, as many on the list will know, in 1994 I edited a CD called LIVE AT THE EAR, with selections from 13 poets: Susan Howe, Ron Silliman, Leslie Scalapino, Ted Greenwald, Rosmarie Waldrop, Alan Davies, Barrett Watten, Erica Hunt, Bruce Andrews, Hannah Weiner, Steve McCaffery, Ann Lauterbach, and myself. Remarkably, copies are STILL AVAILABLE for the original \$15.95 if you ACT NOW. Order from SPD or direct from the Elemenope Productions: 7 Market Square, Suite 281 Pittsburgh, PA 15222 or use Elemenope's "800" number: 1-[REDACTED].

I posted some information, including technical details, on LINEbreak as my last post in late June. But to repeat: These are a series of about 30 half-hour interview shows that I did over last year, produced by Martin Spinelli; each include about 10 minutes of readings. All the shows will be put up at the EPC but we are also making cassettes available and we are also working on a book version of the shows. The shows are now available through the Public Radio Satellite Program and will be made available to independent stations as well: however, radio programmers are not exactly lookin' to add poetry to their schedules so the potential for this program to be heard over the radio is sadly diminished. For further information on LINEbreak, you can contact Martin at [REDACTED]. OUR URL is <http://writing.upenn.edu/ecp/linebreak>.

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## ***Speed and Hannah Weiner***

*09 Aug 1996*

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*Hannah Weiner — the clairvoyant poet who saw words and wrote at speed — was under discussion; Bernstein, long her champion, testifies to the performer she was and the polyvocal scores she left, then promises the bibliography he has been keeping.*

Hannah Weiner is one of the truly great performers of the time. The best record of this is the New Wilderness Audiographics tape of Hannah reading with Sharon Matlin and Peggy DeKoursey: Hannah reads the roman type (diary voice), and Peggy reads the italics (mostly comments) and Sharon reads the CAPS (give instructions); both italics and Caps are "words seen" for me it's the best realization of polyvocality I know of. James Sherry and I once performed with

Hannah and it was interesting to see how exacting her directions for our reading were. She had a very specific pace in mind and also wanted a precise adherence to the text. This is partly because she had an auditory vision of exactly what the text sounded like. (I have a copy of this performance and someday may be able to put it up on the web as a soundfile!) Hannah is also featured on the Live at the Ear CD and you can get some sense of her speed reading from that. Hannah always said to me she couldn't stand slow readers at poetry readings and that applied to virtually all readings by fiction writers. In her earlier work she would fill the page up without any space or margin partly to transmit the electric sense of speed that pulses through the writing. White space was a vacuum that she abhorred or sucked up.

I have a bibliography of Weiner books, mss and reviews that I did in 1990 and have today updated; I will try to bring to put it up on the EPC as soon as I can. I will also send a version out to Poetics now. There are a couple of queries in that and no doubt some errors; any help appreciated.

\*\*\* As I think I probably mention on the list before, I wrote "Introjective Verse" (now out in the new CHAIN) in response to the editors (Pierre Alferi and Olivier Cadiot) of a French magazine "Revue Generale de Litterature" wanting a piece on Olson's "Projective Verse" for an issue they were doing on "speed". I wanted to do something on slowing down, along the line Wystan suggests in his post.

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## ***My Home Pages***

*11 Aug 1996*

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*Ostensibly a notice that his essay Frame Lock and some HTML poems are now online — but Bernstein cannot recommend a book plainly, and the post buckles, gleefully, into the very polyvocal static his criticism preaches.*

A while ago Mark Wallace mentioned my essay "Frame Lock". With the permission of Jerry McGuire, editor of College Literature, which published the essay in 1994, I have now put it up on the EPC:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/bernstein>

In June I also put up some "HTML" poems I have been working on, and you can find these at my home page as well, with links to Kenny Goldsmith terrific ongoing anthology of visual poetry. My idea for these works was to create visual texts that came out working within my word processing program, so that the "visuality" was less pictorial and more a byproduct of the means available in this medium to visually represent language (and in this way related to my other visual texts, such as "Veil" and "Language of Boquets" that Kenny has samples on his site). I have

also put up the syllabus for my Fall graduate seminar on the Poetics of Translation.

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~~~~~

Hannah Weiner's SPOKE is the longest work of hers published and one of the best: a good introduction and a must for those interested in Weiner's work: get them while they last @\$4 from Sun & Moon (██████████).. [—How's that for an example of my conventionally evaluative prose that apparently contradicts my advocacy of a destabilizing polyvocality of language, a point Bob Perelman makes in his new book, just out from Princeton, *The Marginalization of Poetry*. Let me be perfectly clear, let me aver any equivocation on this point: buy that one too and don't waste a minute getting to it, or not more than a minute, well maybe till Labor Day, but not longer that, or not too much longer ....:

now let me translate:

let me be efectlky celard don;t wasted a monet the suns' sup and the sky is a limnit of what you thinkg it might be some support out small and enven medium sixed presses and even the ups th eUPS, when they publiher thingsd lik tyhis]

+++++=  
+=====

JUST OUT: Bruce Andrews' *Pardadise & Method: Poetics & Praxis*, his collected essays going back over 20 years, from Northwestern University Press.

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## ***Re: weiner again***

25 Aug 1996

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*Maria Damon had asked about a Jewish resonance in Weiner's work; Bernstein, candid about the speed of the medium that keeps making him misremember, offers the tefillin — the scripture bound at the forehead — as a gloss on the words she saw written there.*

I am sorry I don't have time tonight (first week of classes at UB and acutely hectic for me) to respond more fully to Maria's thoughts about Hannah Weiner, though I do try to touch on some of the same issues in the LINEbreak interview I did with Hannah. But I think the reference Maria is referring to is from her recent work "Paw" where she recounts that a magical creature has followed her from Mexico to NYC and that this creature houses itself in a small velvet-lined drawer inside her forehead. This, it seems to me, is an image of the Tfellin\* (the scripture that Orthodox Jews bind on their forehead). Also: Hannah emphasizes, in respect to the Clairvoyant Journal, that she see words on her forehead and the picture of her

on the cover of the book has WORD written on her forehead. BUT, Hannah Weiner herself makes no connection to any Jewish reference.

I think on the LINEbreak tape I pose this to Hannah and she notes that I misremembered some of the details on "Paw" (which I heard at a reading about two years ago but have not read). Problem is, with this speed of this medium, to send this out now, and not in a month say, I am repeating the same misremembered details, which, if adjusted to what is in "Pah" would, I think, still hold. (I believe this poem is part of a ms that will be coming out before too long. It's a marvelous —wild — piece, kind of a cross between Beatrice Potter and Magic Realism, but then again like neither one, and presented by its author as actual. But I better stop before I misremember more.)

\*not sure if I spelled this right I checked my on-line dictionary here and it suggests "Telling", the title of Laura (Riding) Jackson's book [The Telling]. Weiner's method is also, of course, an image of a/the "telling".

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## **Frank Kuenstler 1928-1996**

02 Sep 1996

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*Frank Kuenstler — the neighbor Bernstein used to run into at the xerox store, poet of the compacted two-word torque of LENS — had died in August; Bernstein gives him the bibliography, the reading, and the appreciation no newspaper obituary managed.*

### Frank Kuenstler 1928-1996

Poet and film maker Frank Kuenstler died on August 11. A short obituary appeared in The New York Times, August 31. There will be a memorial service for Frank on Wednesday, September 4, at 670 West End Avenue (call [REDACTED] for more information).

In the next month I hope to have a full bibliography of Kuenstler's work= on the EPC. His books are:

LENS (New York: Film Cultures, 1964) Selected Poems (New York: Eventorium Press, 1964) Paradise News (New York: Eventorium Press, 1966) Fugitives. Rounds (1966) 13½ Poems (New York: SZ/Press, 1984) Continued (New York: Night Three Press. 1987) Miscellany (New York: Night Three Press. 1987) In Which (New York: Cairn Editions, 1994)

Here's what I wrote for 13½ Poems:

The publication of 13½ Poems marks the twentieth anniversary of Film Culture's edition of Frank Kuenster's first book Lens. Lens's= brilliantly iconoclastic and cosmic compression of syntax and lexicon ranks Kuenstler with such pioneers of Zaum (Khlebnikov's word for pervasively neologistic poetry) as Gillespie,

Melnick, and Inman. In 13 ½ Poems, we get another= side of Kuenstler – less intractably opaque, more lightheartedly amusing. Each= of the poems in the new collection suggests a different style: Kuenstler has provided a group show all on his own. More remarkably, in the long, final poem, "Text", Kuenstler achieves a maniacally nonstop synthesis of "blunt" cut-up and everyday "pandemonium" —"Foolish spirit foolish theory zeal almost macabre A craze ... alert aggressive, military Maudlin, extreme."

LENS remains, for me, Kuenstler's great work. It is composed, basically,= of two-word pairs joined by a period (though a period follows every word pair as well); though sometimes phrases stand in for single words. It is flush right, with hyphens noting split words. It runs 92 pages and is dated at the end: 1952-1964. Here is the opening of LENS (minus the italic "f."s and accents on metie'r and cre'me & not justified):

mm.Pris. metier.AAA. prime.Airies. numbers.Racquet. comma.Dei. rr.1919.  
peru.Ruse. glen.A. ggg.Ire. leapfrog.Mick. creme.Nail. game.Ble. flame-Bouyant.  
f.Rose. not.Ice. door.I. nigh.Eve. feather.Rail. mm.Error. mm.-Pris. Oscar.Later.  
f.Oil. I'm.Moon. bb.Abe count.Tokay. newman.Asiatrics. mezzo.Potomac.  
sinned.Drone. signed.Hormone. rr.Asp. clues.Ott. oft.Shoes. Deaf.Acid. ggg.Own.  
rape.Cyclical. Faith.Per Se. soul.Elicit. F.Uncion.= tie-Grass. sign.Am  
carp.Pathagorean gas.Tone mm.Acquire f.Rail salon.-Leica. Canine.Father  
tv.Jeeps it must be spring-A. picture of a flower just flashed upon the screen.  
rr.Lourdes. rr.Lao-tse. rr-Enter. Rr.Entire.

Frank lived in my neighborhood not only metaphorically but literally: I occasionally ran into him in the xerox store and on the streets. For a number of years he send out xeroxed pages of found art, with just an almost anonymous ARCHIVE stamped where a return address would usually be. Bruce Andrews did a cut-up of LENS for L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E #13 (1981);= he called it: "And For Anything I Could Call My Own Thinking".

\*\*\* finally a haiku from Paradise News:

Fish swim. They die. They rise to the surface. It is their way of falling.

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## **Helmut Heissenbüttel 1921-1996**

22 Sep 1996

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*The Times had buried the German poet Helmut Heissenbüttel under a lazy label; Bernstein corrects it, then lets Rosmarie Waldrop's translation of him speak, plainly and at length, about the dead who are no longer there.*

I note with sadness a small item in today's New York Times marking the death of Helmut Heissenbüttel, a marvelous German poet, whose work will be known to

many on this list. The Times, via the AP, presents Heissenbuttel as a "leader in the post-Dada style of literature known as concrete poetry, an experimental form relying on puns and other wordplay, and not adhering to the rules of grammar and punctuation." What? Well ... not quite, not even nearly ...

I have three pamphlets of Heissenbuttel translated by Rosmaire Waldrop and published by Diana's BiMonthly (Tom Ahearn) in 1977: The Dilemma of Being High and Dry, Schematic Development of Tradition, and Novel. The middle of these ends like this:

"and thus those who aren't there any more have already taken along immeasurably much of what those who were there did and resolved in memory of those who weren't there immeasurably much is in possession of those who aren't there and it will always grow more and more and since they have it in their possession and this possession is ever growing one can in regard to those who aren't there speak of their memory of those who are there

because those who aren't there any more were once there

not being there is something that is thought of while being there and being there is living off the possession which those what aren't there are still accumulating

in the name of those who aren't there any more and are more

because those who aren't there anymore and are more have a name and we are there in their name."

\*\*\*\*\* And to all those out in Poeticsville Have a good 5757

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## ***Conductors of Chaos***

13 Oct 1996

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*Steve Evans's notice had steered the list toward Iain Sinclair's Conductors of Chaos, an anthology of contemporary British poetry; Bernstein orders a copy and cannot quite hold his tongue about the table of contents while he waits for the book to arrive.*

Steve Evans' superb critique might prompt some of us to follow up on Ken Edwards's suggestion to get *Conductors of Chaos: A Poetry Anthology*, ed. Ian Sinclair.

Included: Bergvall, Catling, cheek, Corcoran, Crozier, Duncan, Fisher, Gascoyne, Graham, Griffiths, Halsey, Harwood, Haslam, Hendry, Home, James, Jones, Lake, Lopez, MacSweeney, Mengham, Milne, Monk, Moore, Oliver, O'Sullivan, Out to Lunch, Pattereson, Prynne, Reed, Riley, Riley, Rodefer, Torance, Wilkinson, Williamson.

I don't have this book yet, so I will reserve some of the comments I am tempted to make just based on that list ...

but I do have the order form for it and I am going to use it.

---

Plesase send me \_\_\_ copies of The Conductors of Chaos 0 330 33`35 3 @ 9.99 pounds

Payment method: check to Macmillan Distribution (but I assume UK currency only) OR

AmEx, Visa, Masterecard Card # expiration date: signature:  
from

Picador 25 Eccleston Place London SW1w 9NF fax:0171 881 8001

I am unaware of any US distribution —

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**Re: l%a\*n(g@u!a\_g#e**

21 Nov 1996

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*A reader hunting a copy of The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book gets good news of a reissue — and the list gets a glimpse of the moderator's other job, fielding the harassment then leaking in from a rogue address.*

The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book has been out of print for many years, but Southern Illinois has recently decided to resissue it. I think the new printing (with a new color for the cover) will be out this Spring.

\*\*\*\*

I have received several of the harrassing messages from chronotope.com but don't know where they are coming from or why. I hit reply and sent the whole messages back to the source asking that the sender stop sending out such posts. This is clearly an abuse of our subscriber list, but I don't know how else it can be responded to it at this point.

At 09:21 PM 11/20/96 -0500, you wrote:

*would any of my american friends be able to help me locate a copy of the LANGUAGE(='s) anthology. please backchannel. thank you, kevin hehir*

████████████████████

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*From here the year subsides into housekeeping — a rebuilt welcome message, the new archive's sorting features, a last flurry of reading notices and forwarded catalogues — all of it routed elsewhere. What remains of*

*Bernstein's 1996 is the arguing and the mourning; the announcements  
can keep themselves.*

## 1997

### **The Visual in Language**

06 Jan 1997

*Herb Levy and Rod Smith had been pressing for a multiplicity of theories; Bernstein counters with a multiplicity of histories, claiming visual and sound poetry as native ground for what L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E always meant to take in.*

With luck this means there must continue to be a multiplicity of theories, rather than just one for any post-poetries. — Herb Levy writes, echoing Rod Smith, and also for me Charles Alexander's recent post on the "visual"... In the interest of emphasizing this multiplicity, but even more multiplicity of histories, I want to give a very different account of an interest in visual poetry and sound poetry from the 70s on than that of Ron Silliman's. Not only do I feel my work intimately connected to these projects, but one of the things Bruce Andrews and I wanted to do with L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E (the magazine) was to incorporate discussions of visual and sound work (domestic and foreign) into the discussion of the poetry to which we were committed, but which was rarely discussed in this context, and vice versa. Indeed, this was, what we thought anyway, a difference between our approach and that of others, who also placed their work in the context of the New American Poetry, and it was also a difference (at least in emphasis) with many of the New American poets themselves. The resistance to visual and sound work is very strong in the poetry precincts in which I travel, indeed for many of my favorite writers such concerns are quite alien. I don't criticize this partialness, it seems to me that poets, and other artists, are necessarily partial if they are to focus on what they can or need or want to do (poetry is all about resistance, a point too often elided in discussions like this). However, for others of us, the concerns of visual poets, book artists, and sound poets were a concrete part of what we imagined we could do as poets, and also what we did. Certainly this was and remains the case (though each case is a different story) for Nick Piombino, Susan Howe, Bruce Andrews, Steve McCaffery, Ray DiPalma, Tina Darragh, Joan Retallack, Hannah Weiner, Chris Cheek, Johanna Drucker (one of whose typographically extravagant books I reviewed in the first issue of L=), and myself (to mention a few obvious folks); it is why Jackson Mac Low (among others) was such a crucial figure, and still is, for many of us (some of us) (me), not to mention why the anthologies of Jerome Rothenberg, which link up these often separated strands of the visual/verbal/vocal (to use a phrase of Bob Cobbing's) have been so significant. (Jerry made this relevant comment on this list on Oct. 29, 1995: "Concerning Jim Rosenberg's digression regarding concrete poets & Black Mountain poets, etc., let me just say that it doesn't correspond at all to my memory of all of that. What I recall is a relative indifference back & forth, with as much occasional hostility on one side as on the other & several notable crossovers.") I've always felt more affinity with many book artists and "visual" poetry than with most "contemporary" poetry; that probably goes without saying; then again the point probably does need to be made because the genre of poetry often tends to push up against, but resist, the upper limit of visibility and the lower limit of sonicality. Of course, Ron's ongoing engagement with the

*borders of "prose" leads into other, also fruitful, conjunctons, syntheses, &c, one in which the visual marking often associated with poetry seem to disappear (they don't of course: they are only reconfigured, as Ron would be the first to note). (I recommend looking at Ron's very early \_Mohawk\_ to see another side of his visual interests.) It also seems to me that among the younger poets ("younger than me") whose work I read with the greatest engagement, this interest in the visual and acoustic domains in, about, around, and through poetry — that in any case cannot ever be split off from poetry — is quite strong. Certainly in Buffalo. Crucial, now (now is never "post" except in a secondary sense), in this respect (and so this is brings me to an directly respond to the question that is also floating around on the list) is poetry on the web, in which the visual dimensions are even more visible (they are always inescapable), for example choices of color, font and background, which many more writers are now confronted than in the past — if not in HTML, then on their computers.*

—Charles Bernstein

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## **Re: To the Larks (incorporating "Riding")**

06 Jan 1997

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*Rod Smith had lifted a phrase — that poets turn — from Bernstein's introduction to Laura (Riding) Jackson's Rational Meaning; here he reprints the paragraph it came from, on Riding's and Oppen's long silences and whether the lyric survives the camps.*

I've been slowly catching up with the last month's posts, so will give something of a scattered response to several issues that have come up, in this and separate post.

I. Riding Panel at the MLA Lisa Samuels, who it seems to me is the person doing the most interesting work on Riding these days, organized a panel on Riding's Prose. She gave an excellent "report" on Anarchy Is Not Enough, one of Riding's best, and certainly most bouyant, works. She was so convincing that she may have gotten a publisher to put the book back in print. Barrett Watten and I were the other speakers.

Rod Smith wrote to the list:

*Still, it would be a mistake to consider the "young" unengaged with issues of poetics— Mr. Bernstein's phrase in his Riding paper "for what poets do is turn" provides something of a description for what I see happening in much contemporary writing.*

I thought that I would clip and send the paragraph from which Rod quoted from "Riding's Reason", my introduction to (Riding) Jackson's and Schulyer Jackson's Rational Meaning: Toward a New Foundation for Words, which will be published by University of Virginia Press this Spring. Certainly the paragraph brings up several threads of the past month:

\*\*\*\*\* After the publication of her Collected Poems in 1938 and two non-poetry books the following year, Riding published almost nothing for thirty years. In

1970, her *Selected Poems: In Five Sets* was published under the name Laura (Riding) Jackson. In the preface she explained her renunciation of poetry, saying that the craft of poetry distorted the natural properties of words and that the sensuosity of words blocked what she called, in her poem "Come, Words, Away", the soundless telling of truth that is in language itself. She puts it this way in "The Wind, The Clock, The We":

At last we can make sense, you and I,  
 You lone survivors on paper,  
 The wind's boldness and the clock's care  
 Become a voiceless language,  
 And I the story hushed in it  
 Is more to say of me?  
 Do I say more than self-choked falsity  
 Can repeat word for word after me,  
 The script not altered by a breath  
 Of perhaps meaning otherwise?

The thirty-year pause in this life of writing, at least as reflected through a cessation of publishing, echoes the gap between George Oppen's *Discrete Series* (1934) and *The Materials* (1962). Oppen, just seven years younger than Riding, perhaps had not found a way to reconcile his left political commitment with his practice of poetry. But he did return to poetry, and with an epigraph that he could share with Riding: "They fed their hearts on fantasies / And their hearts have become savage." Riding, whose politics moved in the opposite direction from Oppen's, never returned to poetry, where meaning is always "otherwise" than intended, instead turning (for what poets do is turn) toward a way of meaning otherwise, that is not toward poetry but to a voiceless telling. The long poetic lacuna of these two "non-Jewish Jews" implicitly acknowledges the question later stated most famously by Theodor Adorno: can lyric poetry be written after much less during the systematic extermination of the European Jews? As far as I know, Laura (Riding) Jackson does not explicitly address this issue, but what she does say of 1938 and 1939 is significant: "Human sense of the human stood at last poised at the edge of an unignorable question about the human." Within this historical context, perhaps Oppen's commitment to a clarity and honesty ("that truthfulness / that illumines speech" ) that is expressible only though a highly delimited diction can be linked to (Riding) Jackson's recurrent concern for "right use" and "good sense" and frequent censure of what she experienced as linguistic violation. For the unnameable catastrophe of these years, with its rationalized but irrational logic of extermination, engendered a crisis of and for expression in which the abuse of language became inextricably identified with the abuse of the human.

\*\*\*\*\*

To finally just append a response to Maria Damon. Yes I think Hannah Weiner can be understood as creating an "anti-lyric subjectivity", if not to say simply rejecting the lyric, as it has been known and practiced. I think also her use of a visualized prose, and moreover the enormous range of prose-format poems of the past thirty years, is also relevant in this regard.

—Charles Bernstein

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## ***Re: The Visual in Language***

07 Jan 1997

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*The day's queries about his new book with Susan Bee, dutifully answered — until Bromige's idle question gives him licence to inventory his own sweater, corduroys, and velcro sneakers.*

Charles Alexander asks for some information on my new book with Susan Bee. In some way its most like the book we did with Charles and Chax Press about ten years ago called Fools Gold, though it works with large page formats and plays with the frame of the bound book more than that one, which has an accordion-fold format.

Heres what the prospectus for the book says:

LITTLE ORPHAN ANAGRAM by Susan Bee, with new poems by Charles Bernstein

Susan Bee has created a companion volume to her 1995 Granary Book, Talespin, transforming the genre of the illustrated book with her brilliantly colored, dizzyingly inventive, and poignant juxtapositions of new and found images. In this fin-de-siecle mix of fractured nursery rhymes, distressed mottos, riddles, and inscrutable sayings Nonsense meets Folly on the road to Imagination.

\*\*\*\*\*

As Charles speculates, Little Orphan Anagram is a limited edition book: there will be 35 copies and the 40 pages (20 spreads) of each book will be hand-painted by Susan. (The process involves collages [with poems and images] that are letterpress printed and then painted over.) For more information you can contact Steve Clay at Granary: [REDACTED]. Steve will put some images of the book up at the Granary Website (<http://www2.granarybooks.com>) and also there will probably be some additional images put up at Kenny Goldsmith visual poetry site (<http://www.ubuweb.com/vp>) though not until next month. You can see pages from Susans Talespin at both sites.

Meanwhile, for folks in NY Jan. 18, come to the opening:

Susan Bee: Recent Paintings and a New Granary Book January 18 - February 28,  
1997 Opening: Saturday, January 18, 5-7 pm \*\*\*Gallery Hours: Thurs.-Sat., 12-6  
pm and by appt.\*\*\*

Granary Books Gallery is pleased to announce a show of recent paintings and a new Granary Book by Susan Bee. Bee's paintings are collaged, mixed media works in oil and enamel paint that revolve around the figure as presented in movie posters of the 1940s and 50s as well as in paper dolls, postcards, and advertisements. These paintings involve narrative fragments in combination with multiple layers of paint. The collaged elements are embedded in encrusted, paint saturated surfaces. There is a tension between the narrative significations of the images and the abstract, formal qualities of the picture plane. In some of the paintings, the compositions involve decorative, organic arabesques and floral motifs. The paintings play out dramas and gender roles, psychic states, and visions.

Little Orphan Anagram will also be shown.

\*(\*(\*(\*(\*(\*(\*(\*(\*\*\*(\*\*\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*)\*\*"

Sylvester Pollet asks about the Mina Loy work in the "Surrealistic Pillow" show. I haven't seen this yet, but Susan tells me that there is one collage by Loy in the show, and that it is certainly worth seeing. Also recommended is the great New York Dada show at the Whitney, which has some great Duchamps, Man Rays, Stettheimers, &c., plus a terrific small section of visual/typographics poetry. While there is Man Ray's photo of Loy, and one of the cases has a magazine open to a Loy poem, there are no visual works by Loy in this show.

[illegible]

*i would enjoy knowing what our correspondents are wearing says David Bromige*

As I write this post I am wearing a green sweater and brown corduroy pants (bought at the train station in DC on my way to the MLA, one of the hard-to-pass-on sales at a place called Structure), and black New Balance sneakers with velcro flaps (I don't see why people still wear laces, kind of like being stuck in Dos). Hm, Structure and New Balance ...

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**Re: Language in the Visual //Pound & the classics**

08 Jan 1997

*Danny Huppatz hoped that blurring writing and visual art might draw communities together; Bernstein, from a New York vantage, marks where the art world keeps the poets out — then turns to defend one of Pound's most sarcastic poems.*

*I think this kind of shifting of territories can help "deterritorialize" writing (or "poetry") while at the same time loosening up other disciplines such as visual art or philosophy. Plus it also serves as a link that can bring different communities together.*  
—writes Danny Huppatz

I certainly find your project of great interest, but have to report, from a strictly New York point of view, that there is an unfortunately strong barrier between writers who foreground the visual dimension of their work and visual artists using verbal language in their work. The crossover points are artificially narrow: not that the folks coming out a poetry context aren't engaged with the visual artists who use words, but that the "art world" tends to ignore the "poetry" in its representation of this whole field of activity, focussing almost exclusively on figures whose base-of-operation is the art world. I would love to see a discussion of Lawrence Weiner linked to a discussion of Robert Grenier, but if that were to happen I bet it would be someone on this list who would write it and another on this list who would publish it. That's all well and good. But interesting to note lines where lines exist. (I realize that this is something that Wystan Curnow and Marjorie Perloff have both written about and worked to change; and I think also of Mary Ann Caws's lecture on Ian Hamilton Finlay and Tom Phillips at the MLA, both of whom are counter-examples of cross-over figures. Also Susan Bee and Mira Schor's special issue of *New Observations*, "Ripple Effects: Painting and Language", about about which I recently posted an announcement.) Thanks, Mike, for mentioning Grenier, someone whose work is often on my mind. I should have added him to the list I made in response to Ron Silliman's post on the visual in language, although, speaking of the 70s, I would have been thinking of Sentences, his radical refusal of the bound book in favor of a Chinese box containing texts printed on large-format index cards; or possibly his instance on nonproportional space type, as in *A Day at the Beach* (an insistence that echoes Duncan's). However, in recent years, his remarkable series of color handwritten poems have fundamentally challenged the stability of the alphabetic code, bringing the page as field of verbal investigation closer to, or overlapping with, drawing: a sort of holographic attention similar to Susan Howe's reading/viewing of Dickinson's mss. By the way, my list in my post was not a comprehensive list of poets doing "visual" work but a specific response to comments of Ron. In any case, I was glad to hear from Miekal And as his and Liz Was's work is quite relevant: many wonderful books etc. But I am sure they, and others like Karl Kempton, could well report something within "poetry" that I am speaking about

within the "art world", and this was Charles Alexander's point I believe: poets primarily identified as visual poets publish and exchange work in relatively separate networks than poets doing work close to that but not primarily identified with the "visual". However, here there are MANY crossover points, such as And and Was's Xexoxial and Charles Alexander's own Chax. But often the projects are considered quite separate, even if parallel.

\*\*\*\*\* and one more note —

: [REDACTED] Subject: Discourse & Theory, not sitting in a Tree

*Isn't it strange to think Pound was disturbed as recently as 80 years ago by "the thought of what America would be like if the Classics had a wide circulation?" Poor Pound in his troubled sleep, dreaming of beautiful lilies in the land of vulgar acorns. Did he think an ennobled civilization would come from a populace with access to (and presumably reading) the Greeks and >Romans? And then this civilization would help transform the world into a better place as HE imagined it? Or would it just be a nicer place to hang out? Pound must have thought his contemporaries were reading crap.*

But surely, of the many things Pound wrote that would make this point, this is an odd poem to choose. It's one of Pound's most sarcastic poems. As the note in Personae frames it — The "learned judge" in a censorship case says he would allow an obscene reference in the classics that he would not allow in popular reading, since the readers of the classics are "comparatively limited [in] number" and I think by implication less likely to suffer the ill effects of such images and representations. And Pound's poem in the reply to that ... saying in effect that if that classics had a wild circulation they arouse the populace to a sexual high, not heighten their sensibilities (though I wouldn't necessarily won't to separate those two).

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### ***turning left, turning right, tumbling (Re: Riding)***

10 Jan 1997

*Chris Stroffolino had pressed him on the claim that Riding turned right as Oppen turned left; Bernstein holds his ground and carries the argument into the list's running quarrel over dialect and the ideology of correct English.*

Chris Stroffolino,

My essay on Rational Meaning, and the book itself, is too involved to summarize here so I'd rather you read one or both before I add much more. However —

*Riding's politics moved in an opposite direction as Oppen? In what sense do you mean this? There's an implication that Oppen's leftism and his return to poetry are related, while Riding's attempt to critique*

*certain aspects of poetry from a seemingly genreless perspective may invoke a kind of "rightism?"*

Oppen's politics are related to his poetic turnings just as Riding's politics are related to hers (one leading to return, the other to a final turn away). But more significant, at least in regard to questions of language, the political issues became, for both, fundamentally ethical questions. — I am not being especially metaphoric or elusive about Oppen to the left or Riding to the right. These are declared allegiances as the 1930s came to a close. Notable in this respect is Riding's tract *The Left Heresy in Literature and Life*, co-authored by "ex-Communist" Harry Kemp. This was one of the two last books that Riding published in 1939; she didn't publish another book till the 1970 selected.

*Are you implying that Riding's "voiceless telling" does away with "poetic turning?"*

No, I am saying the opposite; but in saying the opposite I am certainly contradicting (or turning around again) Laura and Schulyer Jackson's claim, that "poetic telling" and especially poetic turning is no telling at all, but a falsity.

Let me add one further note on this in the light of the recent discussion of dialect on the list (and thanks, Steve Vincent and Aldon Nielsen, for your posts). One of the problems with *\*Rational Meaning\** is its rejection of language change: it argues not for standard English but for the linguistic truth of the English of Spencer, with a deterioration ever since. This is an extreme position, but it is implicit in many of advocates of "correct" English, as opposed to "standard" or what I would prefer to call "conventional" English. This implicit, and false, idea of correctness comes up repeatedly in the review of the new "Fowler," for example, and is also a crucial if often tacit part of the recent public discussion of dialect. A great value of *\*Rational Meaning\** is that it doesn't hedge on this argument. It shows what is behind much of the neoliberal posturing on this issue by its adamant rejection of a neoliberal facade.

By the way, my essay on nonstandard English (the ideology of dialects), "Poetics of the Americas", written for Aldon Nielsen's forthcoming collection of essays, "An Area of Act": Race and Readings in American Poetry, is now available on line at the Modernism/Modernity web site (it's published in the M/M vol. 3 #3). You can find this at <http://writing.upenn.edu/authors/bernstein> HOWEVER: this is only good for those affiliated with an institution that has a subscription to Johns Hopkins Press's Muse project. If you would like to get an HTML file of this essay, but only if you can receive this as an attachment to an email, let me know **\*\*BACKCHANNEL\*\*** ( [REDACTED] ) and I will attach the file to my reply.

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## Recent Publications

11 Jan 1997

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*Miekal And had praised the list's open-posting ethos; Bernstein, sorry to have missed a rival list's months-long debate over subject-header tags, seizes the chance to dun the room for the publication notices it keeps failing to send.*

*Also I really like the openposting feeling, that folks are free to publicize readings, publications, research projects whatever. On one other list I was on there was debate that went on for a couple months about codifying subject header tags — says Miekal And, from the land beyond the universities*

Personally, I'm sorry to have missed a months-long discussion of subject header tags, but I'm a fairly dull person, or I have a strange sense of humor, or both.

However, I have noticed all together TOO FEW listings of recent publications by list participants. In fact I have been getting books and magazines published by people on this list without seeing any announcements of them on the list. So perhaps this will prompt more such postings: editors, publishers: please send listings of recent publications including ordering information. Individuals: please send information on any new publications.

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## Re: Marty Ehrlich

23 Jan 1997

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*A small correction with a smaller needle in it — who Marty Ehrlich is married to, told to two men who had stood in the same room as the couple days before.*

Marty Ehrlich is most definitely married to Erica Hunt, and they together have two children: Madeline and Julius. Pierre and Tom — you were both in the same room with Marty and Erica on Saturday, at Susan Bee's opening at Granary Books!

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## Re: deletion & the politics of the list

27 Feb 1997

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*His week away, the list had worked itself into a fright over whether members could be deleted, Joel's sarcasm taken for policy; Bernstein returns almost incredulous to affirm that Poetics removes no one, and to reflect on how the medium foments such misreadings.*

I have been out of e-mail range for about a week and am trying to read through the accumulated Poetics messages. But I hope it is now apparent to one and all that the policy at Poetics is to welcome anyone interested in joining the list and (virtually) \*never\* remove anyone from the list (except in the extremely rare sort of cases outlined by Eliza McGrand, Alan Sondheim, and Joe Amato, which have not been a problem for this list). I find it odd that I should even have to write such

a sentence in this context, but I am reluctant to torque it in a way that might be misunderstood — although anything you say can and will be misunderstood (isn't that Amberian's 99th Law of Community?). I think one reason Joel felt his sarcasm would be understood as ironic is that the possibility that he would delete folks from the list in the way he described is so far-fetched to him, as it is to me, as to be patently absurd. But of course, the lesson is (if we need one): it is *\*not\** too far fetched to be believed and that reasonable, sympathetic people can imagine that we could actually conduct this list in such an abhorrent fashion. I know the problem from the inside too: that odd feeling I have more than I'd like of not knowing if something is a joke or not, or for that matter the similar feeling that the people I have grown to trust could somehow not be who I thought they were. Somehow this e-space foments these unmoorings, since, as many have noted, one doesn't see that the person making the "appalling" remark can hardly keep from laughing; and where the frames, established in a poem or essay to indicate a (yes, indeed, *\*possibly\**) nonauthorial point of view, may not be noted even if they are marked. So we land again on the problem of the ironic or indeed the dramatic, if I understood Fiona Templeton's recent point about shifting tones. (I can confirm, by the way, that Herr A. Hitler is not subscribed to this list despite active efforts to reach him in his multi-e-media-equipped bunker, with the expectation that participating in the list might encourage him to reconsider his views on "degenerate" art, which I, for one, have always found problematic. However we do hope to have both Evita and Larry Flynt on board soon.) [Joke emoticon removed for further genetic study.]

I want also to register my appreciation to Jerry Rothenberg for his remarks on the responsibility we all have in posting to this or any list. I have always felt that the spontaneity of response that seems the very heart of the list at its best also has the darker side of circulating ideas that have not been well considered (or considered also by another reader — editor or friend). Given this is the case, though, one has to read this genre of communication for what it is and always with some skepticism. The problem is when we read what is more like a spontaneous comment made in the heat of exchange as if it were revised or edited essay. That is, the reader bears some responsibility for keeping in the mind the context of the writing. I realize I may be belaboring the obvious here, but it is because I am interested in what are the specific characteristics of exchanges on email lists, which tend toward the improvisational rather than the compositional.

As to the (recurring) discussion of the politics of the poets, I recommend Jerome McGann's "Canonade" in *New Literary History* (25;3, Summer 1994), which takes up the problem from a somewhat different point of view, and one which I suspect would bring into agreement some of those lately disagreeing. McGann's focus is

on the attempts on both sides of the academic "canon wars" to construct a canon of, let's say, saintly poets. McGann's is a critique of the ever-resurgent idea (on both left and right) that art should be uplifting. Indeed, McGann won't let us forget that range of poetry that dwells, without disavowing — that is, dwells in ways that make readers anxious — on the foulest thoughts and darkest visions of a culture. He quotes Blake's idea that "The greatest Poetry is immoral" but also Byron's

He left a [Poet's] name to other times,  
Linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes

[to use the substitution for "Corsair" that McGann, in effect, suggests].

McGann goes on to say about Eliot's most notorious poem: "Yet what a remarkable poem—indeed, how remarkable exactly because it has sunk into its own disgusting imagination!... Serpentine, garage-door, phlegm: all have, like the beast Ahab, their humanities. Their eyes are watching God, even when they watch from that cesspool titled `Sweeney Among the Nightengales.'"

\*\*\*\*\* A Short Note on the Privacy of This List

The Poetics List does have a wide open front door: it's called the Electronic Poetry Center. We make every effort to have the EPC listed as a link at poetry and art sites and guidebooks and lists. Through the EPC it is relatively easy to find out about the list — if interested. Also the 473 list subscribers, and hundreds of nonsubscribers who are familiar with the list, recommend the list to interested people. As I have written in previous posts, the issue of inclusion/exclusion in this medium is complex. For many reasons, a number of subscribers on this list would not be willing, or in many cases able, to participate if the list volume increased substantially from what it is now or if the list took on the character of a news group of strangers meeting for the first time. We have here a semblance of knowing one another, and beyond that many of us do know one another, or end up meeting one another at one time or other. The aim is to maintain an open space for exchange among people with specific and related, if necessarily undefined and polydictory, poetic commitments. That is, to have a list such that the participants generally (want to) read (most or all of) the posts and have some sense of the history of what has transpired here. This requires a long-term committed relationship, like they (used to?) say (which is not to say that other kinds of e-relations might not have other values). As I've put it when the list had half the current number of subscribers: "The paradox is that in an attempt to be open and nonexcluding one can end up excluding those who are unable to handle the volume: people are drowned out rather than kept out — until Dreamworks Interactive, Inc., guides us and we asphyxiate."

And speaking of being swamped, this also has to do with the limited capacity of those of us dealing with administering the list to handle any greater volume. For example, Joel's daily work on list maintenance, not a particularly fun job, though somewhat interesting at times. Thanks again, Joel. (As to Loss Glazier's Herculean labors on the EPC: enough cannot be said.)

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## **Allen Ginsberg**

04 Apr 1997

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*The plainest kind of dispatch, and a stricken one: the news that Ginsberg was dying, and Bernstein's first admission of what a lifetime of him had meant.*

Allen Ginsberg has been diagnosed with liver cancer and is not given much more time to live. There are articles about his illness in today's New York Post and Philadelphia Inquirer.

I would imagine everyone reading this will have the same intense reaction I am having. It seems like Allen Ginsberg has been with me all my life.

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## **Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)**

05 Apr 1997

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*No words of his own — Blake's, the piper's song that opens the Songs of Innocence, set down as elegy.*

Piping down the valleys wild Piping songs of pleasant glee On a cloud I saw a child.. And he laughing said to me.

Pipe a song about a Lamb: So I piped with merry chear, Piper pipe that song again So I piped he wept to hear.

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe Sing thy songs of happy chear So I sung the same again While he wept with joy to hear.

Piper sit thee down and write In a book that all my read —So he vanish'd from my sight, And I plucked a hollow reed

And I made a rural pen, And I stain'd the water clear, And I wrote my happy songs, Every child may joy to hear

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## **Re: LAURA NYRO (one child born to carry on, etc....)**

10 Apr 1997

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*Kevin Killian had offered the tale of his father, a broken man, bribing him with a car to surrender his Laura Nyro albums; Bernstein answers in kind, mourning the singer in the key of teenage devotion.*

Gee, my parents thought I should get out of the house more too! Nyro is being played quite a bit on the radio here in New York City, and especially WFUV; the NYTimes obituary is pretty good. As for that perfume, I checked and there is no trace left on my copy of "Eli and the Thirteenth Confession". The absence of this aroma has conjured for me many blank memories.

*It's Kevin Killian. I adored Laura Nyro. I remember my father coming to me, a broken man, knocking on the door of my room, and saying, "Kevin, we know you have a right to listen to whatever music you want, and you're 13 now, but your mother and I have agreed to buy you a car if you promise a) to get out of the house more and b) to surrender those Laura Nyro albums." One of her records (or maybe it was the sleeve) was impressed with a strange haunting perfume. That scent put a spell on me.*

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## **Re: Ginsberg and the Gap**

11 Apr 1997

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*The list had been worrying Ginsberg's appearance in a Gap ad; Bernstein reads the fine print — literally — and finds the poet's defense in the smallest type on the page.*

If you look at that ad, in tiny type running vertically on the side, it does say that the proceeds from the use of the photo have been donated to Naropa. Since I have always believe the smallest type in an ad is the most important I appreciated this bit of counter-information. There was nothing similar in the other Gap ads in the series.

*He said he had a good deal of doubt about his decision, that he had rejected the Gap many times, but had, the last time, decided that donating the money (I think to Naropa?) would do more good than harm.*

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## **Re: George Wills and the Imago of Alan Ginsbuerg in Victorian England: The Opera**

16 Apr 1997

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*Someone had reached for a Victorian analogy; Bernstein answers with Wilde, hounded to death at the height of his fame, to measure exactly what Ginsberg's defiance had helped make unacceptable in America.*

*I simply meant to imply that in certain ways today our social milieu shares many traits with those of Victorian England. . . . My point in writing the post you quote was to learn what disasters had been spared by 'media revolutionaries.'*

A hundred years ago Oscar Wilde — a writer perhaps even more celebrated in Victorian England than Allen Ginsberg in postwar America — was hounded to death while at the very height of his fame and at the top of his magnificent form. Allen Ginsberg, and to be sure many others, courageously refused to be bashed down by the perverts who would end a person's life and career because of their sexual orientation or lifestyle. He was part of a massive cultural movement to make what happened to Wilde if not unthinkable at least unacceptable in the U S of A. He did this not by presenting "positive" images of being gay or smoking pot but by presenting by turns joyous and defiant images of these things and a number of others. Wilde ends his days in jail and then disgrace. Ginsberg is celebrated even in the pages that reviled him — the Times, the New Yorker, &c — I write that not because it is not well known to the people on this list, but because it bears repeating.

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## **Welcome Message**

23 Apr 1997

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*The list's founding document, reproduced as he periodically reposted it — the policies, the cautions, the standing welcome — in the presiding voice of the man who kept the room.*

Rev. 3-4-97

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Welcome to the Poetics List

&

The Electronic Poetry Center

sponsored by The Poetics Program, Department of English, Faculty of Art & Letters, of the State University of New York, Buffalo

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<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc>

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9. Publishers & Editors Read This!

[This document was prepared by Charles Bernstein ([REDACTED]), Loss Pequen~o Glazier ([REDACTED]), and in coopeartion with Joel Kuszai ([REDACTED]).

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1. About the Poetics List

Please note that this is a private list and information about the list should not be posted to other lists or directories of lists. The idea is to keep the list to those with specific rather than general interests, and also to keep the scale of the list small and the volume manageable.

individual posts of participants are sent directly to all subscribers, we continue to work to promote the editorial function of this project. The definition of that project, while provisional, and while open to continual redefinition by list participants, is nonetheless aversive to a generalized discussion of poetry. Rather, our aim is to support, inform, and extend those directions in poetry that are committed to innovations, renovations, and investigations of form and/or/as content, to the questioning of received forms and styles, and to the creation of the otherwise unimagined, untried, unexpected, improbable, and impossible.

The "list owner" of Poetics is Charles Bernstein: contact him for further information. Joel Kuszai is list manager. For subscription information contact us at [REDACTED].

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2. Subscriptions

line, to:

[REDACTED]

the one-line message should say:

{or}

(replacing Jill Jillway with your own name; but note: do not use your name to unsub)

We will be sent a notice of all subscription activity.

\* If you are having difficulty unsubscribing, please note:

Sometimes your e-mail address may be changed slightly by your system administrator. If this happens you will not be able to send messages to mail. To avoid this, unsub from the old address and resub from the new address. If you

can no longer do this there is a solution if you use Eudora (an e-mail program that is available free at shareware sites): from the Tools menu select "Options" and then select set-up for "Sending Mail": you can substitute your old address here and send the unsub message.

The most frequent problem with subscriptions is bounced messages. If your system is often down or if you have a low disk quota, Poetics messages may get bounced. Please try avoid having messages from the list returned to us. If the problem is low disk quota, you may wish to request an increase from your system administrator. (You may wish to argue that this subscription is part of your scholarly communication!) You may also wish to consider obtaining a commercial account.

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### 3. Cautions

Please do not send attachments or include extremely long documents in a post, since this may make it difficult for those who get the list via "digest" or who cannot always decode attached or specially formatted files.

In addition to being archived at the EPC, some posts to Poetics (especially reviews, obituary notices, announcements, etc.) may also become part of specific EPC subject areas. Brief reviews of poetry events and publications are always welcome. (See section 7.)

Please do not send inquiries to the list to get an individual subscribers address. To get this information, see section 6.

If you want someone to send out information to the list as a whole, or supply information missing from an post, or thank someone for posting something you requested, please send the request or comment to the individual backchannel, not to the whole list.

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### 4. Digest Option

The Poetics List can send a large number of individual messages to your account to each day! If you would prefer to receive ONE message each day, which would include all messages posted to the list for that day, you can use the digest option. Send this one-line message (no subject line) to [REDACTED]

set poetics digest

NOTE:!! Send this message to "listserv" not to Poetics or as a reply to this message!!

You can switch back to individual messages by sending this message:

set                      poetics                      mail

## 5. Temporarily turning off Poetics mail

Do not leave your Poetics subscription "active" if you are going to be away for any extended period of time! Your account may become flooded and you may lose not only Poetics messages but other important mail. You can temporarily turn off your Poetics subscription by sending a message to "listserv."

set poetics nomail

& turn it on again with: set poetics mail

When you return you can check or download missed postings from the Poetics archive. (See 8 below.)

## 6. Who's Subscribed

To see who is subscribed to Poetics, send an e-mail message to [message blank](mailto:message blank). In the body of your e-mail message type:

review poetics

or

review POETICS by name

(which will give you the list alphabetically by name)

You will be sent within a reasonable amount of time (by return e-mail) a rather long list containing the names and e-mail addresses of Poetics subscribers. This list is alphabetized by server not name.

Please do not send a message to the list asking for the address of a specific subscriber.

## 7. What is the Electronic Poetry Center?

our URL is

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc>

The mission of this World-Wide Web based electronic poetry center is to serve as a hypertextual gateway to the extraordinary range of activity in formally innovative writing in the United States and the world. The Center provides access to the burgeoning number of electronic resources in the new poetics including RIF/T and other electronic poetry journals, the POETICS List archives, an

AUTHOR library of electronic poetic texts, and direct connections to numerous related electronic RESOURCES. The Center also provides information about contemporary print little magazines and SMALL PRESSES engaged in poetry and poetics. And we have an extensive collection of soundfiles of poets' reading their work, as well as the archive of LINEbreak, the radio interview series.

The EPC is directed by Loss Pequen~o Glazier.

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## 8. Poetics Archives via EPC

Go to the EPC and select Poetics from the opening screen. Follow the links to Poetics Archives. You may browse the archives by month and year or search them for specific information. Your interface will allow you to print or download any of these files.

Or set your browser to go directly to:  
<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/poetics/archive>

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## 9. Publishers & Editors Read This!

PUBLISHERS & EDITORS: Our listings of poetry and poetics information is open and available to you. We are trying to make access to printed publications as easy as possible to our users and ENCOURAGE you to participate! Send a list of your press/publications to [REDACTED] with the words EPC Press Listing in the subject line. You may also send materials on disk. (Write file name, word processing program, and Mac or PC on disk.) Send an e-mail message to the address above to obtain a mailing address to which to send your disk. Though files marked up with html are our goal, ascii files are perfectly acceptable. If your word processor ill save files in Rich Text Format (.rtf) this is also highly desirable

Send us extended information on new publications (including any back cover copy and sample poems) as well as complete catalogs/backlists (including excerpts from reviews, sample poems, etc.). Be sure to include full information for ordering—including prices and addresses and phone numbers both of the press and any distributors.

Initially, you might want to send short announcements of new publications directly to the Poetics list as subscribers do not always (or ever) check the EPC; in your message please include full information for ordering. If you have a fuller listing at EPC, you might also mention that in any Poetics posts.

Some announcements circulated through Poetics and the EPC have received a noticeable responses; it may be an effective way to promote your publication and

we are glad to facilitate information about interesting publications.

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END OF POETICS LIST WELCOME

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***Re: Birthdate // what have I subscribed to?***

*12 May 1997*

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*A newcomer asked when the list began and another griped at the flood of book notices; Bernstein answers both from the archive itself — the first Poetics post, from August 1993 — and defends the listings as the list's true business.*

| *Can anyone tell me when this list began?*

This was the first Poetics Message:

Date: Wed, 25 Aug 1993 14:55:05 -0400

From: Charles Bernstein

To: Multiple recipients of list POETICS <[REDACTED]>

Subject: first flight

<color><param>0000,0000,ffff</param>Above the world-weary horizons

New obstacles for exchange arise

Or unfold, O ye postmasters!

</color>

\*\*\*\*\*

However, in the fall of 1993 we were still testing the list mostly locally in Buffalo and it became a national list in December 1993, with Peter Quatermain's announcement of the book launch for the <italic>Holy Forest</italic>.

#####  
####

| *These past few days I've seen more 'ads' for books, etc. than I've seen conversation. I'm not against people and presses, especially under-funded and under-read ones, attempting to gain some exposure, but that is not what I joined this list for; and even though it's poetry, it's still mail that I did not solicit.*

<color><param>ffff,0000,ffff</param>As our Welcome message makes clear (section 9) subscribing to the Poetics List  
</color><color><param>0000,0000,8080</param>is</color><color><param>ffff,0000,ffff</param> soliciting information on the poetry-related books,

magazines, performances, reading series, conferences, and talks that participants are editing, coordinating, curating, or advocating. This is one of the fundamental purposes of the Poetics List and fully as important to our mutual exchanges as conversation about poetry. After a while, I hope you will see this as integral to the activity. From the first, it has seemed to those of us coordinating Poetics that the Internet and this list in particular were ideally situated for exchange of often difficult-to-obtain poetry listings. There is no "other" space for this activity, and beyond that I actually find the listings posted here of great interest.

In fact, this reminds me to make my (periodical) request to hear about publications in which list members are involved. Please be sure to include full information on how to order any items mentioned.

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*June belonged almost wholly to a long letter from Jackson Mac Low, anatomizing a lifetime of chance and choice in his methods — printed elsewhere, and set aside here in deference to this edition's single author.*

## The 50 Limit

24 Jul 1997

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*Bromige questioned the arbitrary fifty-message daily cap; Bernstein, who fields this every six months or so, explains the ceiling and turns it, as ever, into a meditation on keeping the list small enough to survive.*

*A number of these multiple postings held my interest. The problem is the 50-per-day limit, as I see it. Can't it be changed? It sounds so arbitrary (why not 49 or 51?) What's the reason for it? Do more than 50 messages a day cost the listmaster more? asks David Bromige*

50 is the default on the listserve program we use, but yes this can be reset to 49 or 51. There is no limit to the size of individual messages, however, so in general it is better to send one message that responds to several threads, if so inclined.

This issue recurs every six months or so. A few years back I posted this comment:

All of this reminds me of my commitment to keep the scale of this list on the smaller side, not only because I am committed to small-scale exchanges but also because this particular list is not set up — *\_I'm not set up!\_* — to handle more volume than we've now got. The paradox is that in an attempt to be open and nonexcluding one can end up excluding those who are unable to handle the volume: people are drowned out rather than kept out — until Dreamworks Interactive, Inc., guides us and we asphyxiate. My hope is that we have set-up some basic alternative sites: EPC and Poetics are two models, firmly in place. But

I certainly don't have the answers and see Poetics as only one of many possible formats for listserve poetry discussion groups.

\*\*\* by the way, the "failed mail" messages some of you report as getting are likely just bounced mailed from individual subscribers who did not get your individual post. These only occasionally go out to an individual poster, but they come by the scores to our Poetics account and this is the rather monotonous maintenance task that Joel Kuszai has generously been doing for the past year. When a subscriber's address stops working, we have to manually delete them from the subscription roles. In any case, suffice it so say, we do prefer those list "defaults" that minimize extra maintenance. You get a different message when the 50 limit is reached. The Buffalo listserve generates a message to say that your message is being held until the list is released by the list owner.

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### **Hannah Weiner (1928-1997)**

12 Sep 1997

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*Hannah Weiner was a friend and a poet he had long championed; here he reports her sudden death and appends the bibliography of her work he had kept for years.*

I have very sad news to report. Hannah Weiner has died. Word of her unexpected death reached me late last night. Apparently she died of natural causes in her apartment on East 12th street in Manhattan. Hannah meant so very much to me and I know to many other poets who were lucky enough to have known her and her inspiring and courageous work, her enthusiastic engagement with writing, her brilliant and acute (and often wickedly funny) perspectives on poets and poetry, her incredible performances. While her last few years weren't easy, she continued to produce amazing writing, pushing her own poetry and the possibilities for poetry into new zones of perception.

Hannah would have turned 69 on November 4.

I include here a bibliography of her work that I compiled a few years ago. It doesn't include a forthcoming Roof book and perhaps a few other more recent pieces. There is also a LINEbreak interview with Hannah available via the EPC as well as a one hour radio show (with readings and an interview), produced by Erneso Grosman, that is also up at the EPC. <http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/weiner/>

\*

"Well we all consider it quite remarkable that we hear each other almost entirely in her mind" \*

MS/Book Chronology 1966 Magritte Poems (Sacramento: Poetry Newsletter, 1970). 11pp. Nonclairvoyantly written, short poems. 1968 The Code Poems (Barrytown: Open Studio, 1982). 29pp. 1970 The Fast. 50pp ms. Sections published in Acts #4, United Artists #14, and Blue Smoke #1 (in that order); (New York: United Artists, 1992). 1971 Country Girl. 18pp ms. Descriptive journal about seeing auras. 1972 Pictures and Early Words. app. 69pp. — untyped. Seeing pictures and early versions of seen words. 1973 The 1973 Journal. app. 200pp ms; short segment in This # 7. Has caps and quoted words for words seen. 1974 Clairvoyant Journal. 180pp ms. About one-third published in Angel Hair edition, 64 pp. (1978: Lenox, Mass). Other sections in up to two dozen magazines, and in Sun June 9, 5 pp. (Providence: Diana's Bimonthly, 1975). Audiocassette from New Wilderness Audiogrpahics (wth Peggy DeCoursey and Sharon Matlin), c. 1976 (New Wilderness taped the whole Journal and published March and April). Videotape (1974 solo reading): New York: Internmedia Foundation, 1985. 1976 Little Girl Books. Four small notebooks. 1977-80 Little Books/Indians (New York: Roof Books, 1980). 91pp. 1980 Nijole's House (Needham, Mass.: Potes & Poets Press, 1981). 24pp. 1981 Spoke (College Park, MD: Sun & Moon Press, 1984). 115pp. 1982 Sixteen (Windsor, VT: Awede Press, 1983). 16pp. 1984 Written In/The Zero One (Victoria, Australia: Post Neo, 1985). 21pp. 1986 Weeks (Ann Arbor: Xexoxial, 1990). 50pp. Published with audiocassette. 1988 Abazoo. 13pp ms. 1989 Seen Words with It. 20 ms. 1989 The Book of Revelations. 106 shaped pages in notebook. 1989-91 Silent Teachers / Remembered Sequel (Providence: Tender Buttons, 1993) [1990 Page / Articles / Same Page 120pp ms.] 1992- Visions and Silent Musicians. Ms in progress. 1993-4. We Speak Silent. 89pp ms.

\*

"a thought is not to be written write it down"

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## **Re: Hannah Weiner (1928-1997)**

12 Sep 1997

*A coda to the notice — a few lines from Weiner's own pages, gathered as the Poetry Project made ready to remember her.*

### Remembered Sequel:

Hannah Weiner's We Speak Silent was published by Roof books this past spring:

"what am I hanging on a branch ok well thats a vision you gotta explain that seeing visions isnt all that easy"

"hassid: those who are hidden may be unhidden but those who are unhidden may never be hidden"

"the best teacher is always your very own self"

"the dead speak too"

\*\*\*\*

Plans are underway to have a celebration of Hannah and her work, at the Poetry Project of St. Mark's Church, a place that was so close to her.

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## ***Pseudonyms/Bad Addresses/Confidentiality/Knot***

*23 Sep 1997*

---

*A subscriber's refusal to give a real name had hardened into a quarrel over the list's rules; Bernstein lays out the pseudonym policy and its reasoning, and — printing his name, office, and phone number — takes full and personal responsibility for the list he owned.*

Dodie Bellamy writes:

*I didn't see the beginning of this thread, having been out of town and not being able to face the 150+ old poetics messages that awaited me, but if I'm surmising right what's being discussed here—I believe that the issue is that pseudonyms are not allowed on the Poetics List—I don't think there's anything \*personal\* being/having been done to RS.*

Dodie is right. The Poetics List reserves the right to ask for the real names and addresses of all subscribers. We take this as a basic responsibility of administering this list and facilitating the automatic and unedited distribution of so many messages (up to 50 a day) to so many people (about 500). I have no problem with handles, pen names or the like, and recognize that this policy limits the focus and possibilities of the Poetics List. For those interested, there are many other places on the Internet with different policies on this point: pseudonyms are a major dynamic on many web sites. I very much appreciated Eliza McGrand's and David Columbia's post on this matter, and they together highlight a number of concerns I share. Certainly, the use of pseudonyms might be fine in a number of circumstances and I realize the Poetics List has a relatively conservative stance on this. But it should be noted that pseudonyms and pseudoaddresses on the Internet are not the same as in the age of print. Handles, web names, and phantom addresses on the Internet pose a different set of problems and no doubt a new set of possibilities. Nor is the use of a handle on a fantasy site the same as the use of the same handle in a newsgroup, chat line, moderated list (where an editor reads all messages before they are posted), a local list where people are in frequent face-to-face contact, a literary magazine or other edited web publication, or on an unedited listserve with the stated interests

and purposes as this one (and, again, Eliza detailed some of the issues I am concerned about here). Certainly, if we ask a new subscriber for further information on their userid, name, or address and they "prefer not to" say, there is no reason to make any value judgement on this choice.

As to "bad" addresses, and as several people have noted, when the Poetics List has a problem with an address, we often don't have the time to figure out what went wrong or to send out additional notes about the status of the address. We have to rely on subscribers to provide us with working and authenticatable addresses.

All subscription information and correspondence relating to subscriptions on the list is confidential. The exception to this is the list of current subscribers, which can be obtained with the "review poetics" command. Please use this command to find addresses of subscribers rather than making an inquiry of the whole list.

Finally, let me end with this: My name is Charles Bernstein and I am Listowner of the Poetics List. I take the responsibility of being listowner quite seriously, probably too seriously. As I've said before, it can often seem to interfere with my ability to participate in the list as fully as I might otherwise enjoy. While I discuss list policies and procedures with those who generously volunteer their time to help me with list management, I take full and personal responsibility for decisions relating to the protocols and functioning of the list. My office address is 438 Clemens Hall, Buffalo, NY 14260 on the North Campus of SUNY-Buffalo, where I am employed. My phone number at UB is [REDACTED]; if I am not available, a message can be left. I can be most easily reached at the email address listed in the header of this message. Due to the volume of Poetics-related subscription mail (mostly related to bounced mail), I prefer if questions about the list be sent to a special administrative account set up for the Poetics List: [REDACTED]. Access to this account is restricted to those working directly with me on the list. — I take it that all of this are given facts to every subscriber on this list. I find it quite ironic, and at the same time chilling, that a subscriber who prefers not to give the Poetics List an address or any information about his name other than a nonspecific userid, complains that no personal name was given in correspondence from the Poetics List. But the point of calling attention to the Personal Name ("temporary name") that appears before that @ of the address — the point, that is, of not signing the message sent to this subscription address— was just to emphasize the fungibility of names in this environment and to make apparent the need to know to whom one is exchanging messages. Of course this is unsettling: it unsettles me. The reaction of the subscriber suggests the value of the policy. Furthermore, I take it as a given that personal communications between individuals, correspondence about subscriptions, as well as other

writings by individuals, are not to be reproduced on this or any list without the permission of the author. In this instance, in the letter that was forwarded to this list, we have an example of what happens when that principle is not followed. Indeed, I have only just realized, in reading one of the recent posts, that a word was elided in one sentence of a letter sent to one of the list subscribers:

*if you read the original note we sent again you will note that all that we said that we were writing as a matter of list policy and that the content of your messages were word dropped: NOT related to this*

In conjunction with that original note, it might have been apparent that "content" \*has never been\* and \*is not\* an issue in this instance, especially since both notes make clear what the issue is. Of course the elision of "not" is regrettable; but this note was not intended to be reproduced twice to 500 people and scrutinized for unintended meaning. Furthermore, there were a number of ways that the possible misinterpretation of the dropped "not" might have been clarified, short of sending the note out to the entire list. In any case, at the other end of the line at Poetics is me, among others, and I think it's fair to say that it's unlikely that any of this is about anything other than what I have stated here. And if you want to know where I am to discuss it, you know that too, so send me an email or come by to see me. I'm around (if too often neither here or there but someplace else and in a knot).

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### ***Re: Lyn Hejinian's essay "Rejection of Closure"***

*30 Sep 1997*

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*Someone was hunting Lyn Hejinian's Rejection of Closure; Bernstein supplies the citation, the list doing the thing it loves best.*

The entire essay is reprinted in an relatively new and in-print anthology, mentioned previously on this list:

Onward: Contemporary Poetry & Poetics ed. Peter Baker Peter Lang (NY, 1996)

the original essay was published in Poetics Journal 4 (1984)

*Does anyone know how I might obtain a copy of Hejinian's essay "Rejection of Closure," originally in Poetry Journal, sometime in the late 1980's? Web searches have been unsuccessful so far.*  
Thanks,  
Pete Balestrieri

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## ***Archive at SF State in Jeopardy***

07 Oct 1997

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*Norma Cole had asked him to raise the alarm: San Francisco State's Poetry Center archive — thousands of recorded readings — was about to lose its archivist. He passed the appeal on at once.*

One of the crucial resources of our extended poetry communities is under threat. I have just gotten an email from Norma Cole ([REDACTED]) who asks me to urgently pass on this information to the list:

As of December, Laura Moriarity's job as archivist of The American Poetry Archives at the Poetry Center of San Francisco State University will be lost due to funding cuts. The Archives currently has more than 4,000 video and audio-taped performances by poets and other writers which are available for sale, rent, and loan. SF State Poetry Center will be lost due to funding cuts. To get a sense of the scale of their holding, go to their new web site: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~newlit/welcome.htm>

Norma writes:

"Needless to say, chaos will ensue, the tapes will drift away, no more archive etc. So we're trying to mount a campaign to let the President of SF State know that people all over the place care about this resource. ... Encourage everyone & their brother, sister & mother to send this letter OR their own letter to President Richard A. Corrigan and also to the Poetry Center Director Jewelle Gomez."

Here are the addresses:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And for anyone who wants to use the postal system:

President Robert A. Corrigan, San Francisco State University 1600 Holloway Ave.  
San Francisco CA 94132

&

Jewelle Gomez, Executive Director Poetry Center San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway Ave. San Francisco CA 94132

\*\*\*\* Office of the President San Francisco State University 1600 Holloway Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94132

Dear President Corrigan,

We understand that yet again San Francisco State University has decided not to fund the position of Archivist at the Poetry Center and American Poetry Archive. And so, after 24 years and 6 complete print catalogues, with 3 sixty-minute video

anthologies (Archive productions), 20 issues of the Archive News, footage of countless writers placed with many national and international news broadcasters, viewings of Archive tapes at festivals such as the Venice Biennale and other major venues world-wide, and now the entire Archive catalogue on-line (of what is to date the largest literary audio and video collection available to the public), the Archive will sit inert "in state" in its state-of-the-art climate-controlled vault on the top floor of the Humanities Building.

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### **Poetry Center Archives: Correction**

07 Oct 1997

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*A correction to the alarm: the cut came from vanished NEA money, not the university — and beneath it, the older grievance about the long war on public arts funding.*

In my original post on the Archives, I indicated that San Francisco State had cut the archivist position. But as Laura Moriarity made clear in her post, the problem comes from a loss of NEA funds that previously had been available for this type of position. That is one more instance, as if we needed more examples, of the cost of the continuing attacks on public arts funding. Now the university is in the position of having to cover for the cuts, which is a very different circumstance than making them in the first place. I appreciate the efforts of SF State to support such a vital poetry center over so many years and I am sorry to have misrepresented the situation. Maybe when they hear how much so many of us care about this program, they will find a way to increase their support so that the Archives can remain active.

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### **David Ignatow (1914-1997)**

21 Nov 1997

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*A brief notice of David Ignatow's death, carried by the poet's own lines on whether writing can outlast the body that made it.*

David Ignatow died on Monday, according to an obituary in Wednesday's New York Times.

from "All Else is Prelude" in *The One and the Many*:

"If language could save me from death, I would already have been declared bodily immortal. I wrote that with thought in mind, thinking writing was an elixir of the secret of living forever, until I began to spy my hair graying. I had to a knowledge that if there is immortality, it is in writing itself as an art, not as an elixir of the body's survival. Now I have to write so that what I write has the very breadth of

life itself, such as I can write into it to have it live beyond me, for me, by me, having by then died."

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## 1998

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### **Reprinting material posted to Poetics**

11 Feb 1998

*A flap over whether a post here is fair game — quotable, reprintable, or fenced off — had been running; twice contacted by the author of the essay that set it going, Bernstein draws the line he finds obvious between citation and wholesale reprinting, then wonders aloud whether the whole question is dull or somehow not.*

My own sense of this issue is stated in the welcome message and underscored by recent posts on the matter by Aldon, Kali, and Matt. I should note that David Caplan, the author of the PMC article, did contact me, twice, even though the quotations he was using were authorized by fair use (he didn't need my permission or anyone else's for anything quoted in his article). Writers have the right to quote from excerpts of published material in the course of a discussion of that material and you don't need to get permission to do that (and that accounts for citations of the list in the footnotes to a number of articles: quoting from the list is no different than quoting from a printed source in that respect). Printing a work in its entirety is another matter.

I can't tell if this is terrifically dull or interesting in some way ... But so much these days strikes me like that.

By the way, here is the information on that PMC essay: "Who's Zoomin' Who?: The Poetics of [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org) and [writing.upenn.edu/epc](http://writing.upenn.edu/epc)" by David Caplan <http://jefferson.village.Virginia.EDU/pmc/issue.997/review-7.997.html>

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### **Civil Society, or Knot?**

15 Feb 1998

*A subscriber had written privately, unwilling to say it in the open, that the list no longer felt like a place she could speak; Bernstein prints the complaint unsigned and says, more plainly than he usually cares to, what moderating this list is meant to protect.*

I have received a number of complaints about the tone of some recent post on this list. Here is the most recent (I have chosen to withhold the name of the writer for reasons explained in the note):

*I would like to register my complaint about Dale Smith's continued abusiveness on the list, comments like today: In fact, it confirms the sort of petty, self-serving and snivelling fealty I have >>>come to expect from this 'community.' This is far from the*

*worst of his abusive behavior. I don't feel that the list is a safe place for me to register my discomfort at this rudeness, this incendiary behavior. ... I no longer feel it is a forum I can participate in.*

*I feel there should be a certain bottomline of politeness that is enforced. Of course people are going to occasionally go off the deep end and cross that line. But this unrelenting aggressiveness, name-calling, and hostility should not be tolerated. Thanks and sorry to complain.*

Perhaps as a member of this virtual assembly, if not yet community, it's time for me to note that the kind of post being cited here degrades the possibilities for free and open exchange on this list insofar as it may work to silence others. At a certain point, confronted with the charge that *\*this\** community is at fault, it may be the case that we are at fault if no response is made to this, especially as in this case where it comes in a message trivializing the reasonable concerns of other members of this list that their work, as posted on this list or elsewhere, not be reprinted without their permission. I recognize, and moreover, appreciate, the need for boisterous and impolitic language in the kind of free and open exchanges on this list. I am not setting up a hard and fast rule on this issue and will not. However, as stated in the Poetics Welcome message, this is a moderated list and it will be moderated in keeping with the primary goals of the project. Other lists will of course establish different parameters. In this instance, all that I am asking for is consideration of these concerns.

Charles Bernstein

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## ***Re: Plath and Hughes***

*20 Feb 1998*

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*The account was the household's, and here it is not Charles at the keyboard but his daughter Emma, twelve and a half, answering Marjorie Perloff about Plath and Hughes in a voice already unmistakably her own. Emma Bee Bernstein grew up to be an artist and writer; she died in 2008.*

to marjorie perloff,

i, who have read many works by plath, and the work in the paper by ted hughes, have to agree with you on every note. i think that ted hughes and his repetitive approach to excuses for plath's death has become an intoxicating journey. he has tried to measure up to the dismal beauty of Sylvia Plath, and he has not succeeded. It must make him feel horrible to be accused of being a murderer, which is what he is (only in the sense of killing her work), so that he felt he must justify himself. which is fine, but in such a vapid approach, it becomes a obvious mere reconciliation. i have heard so many reviews, front page articles, but nothing that he can say, or write, nobody that he can scapegoat, will take away from the selfish

deed he did when he took the right to destroy some of Plath's last work, for his own self indulgence.

emma bernstein, age 12 1/2

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## **Ronald Johnson 1935-1998**

05 Mar 1998

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*Ronald Johnson had spent decades on ARK, the great architectural long poem then just complete; word of his death at sixty-two came through Creeley, and Bernstein, long among the poem's devoted readers, marks it.*

I've just gotten this message from Robert Creeley:

*I've just had the sad word from Jodi Panula, Ronald Johnson's sister, that he died >Wednesday evening, March 4th, in Topeka, Kansas from the effects of his cancer. I'd be grateful if you can get the information out to people with some quick emphasis upon ARK and his significance to us all. Many thanks.*

I know the many devoted readers and admirers of Ronald Johnson's work on the Poetics List — and I count myself as one of them — will be detailing the remarkable and lasting achievement of Johnson's work, culminating in the University of New Mexico publication of ARK.

Literally, a flowing: a form-take-hand  
-with-form  
(That Which Fasseneth Us)  
pillar to pillar the great dance arch itself through all that  
is or was or will be, 3/4 time. This will be a glade  
at the head of one stream  
and a resonant gnomon before it will stretch regions of signaling  
gnat-like resiliencies in the atmosphere  
of where we are —  
or were.  
Or will be, when the mingled frame of mind  
of man is celebration  
  
Gates, which separate the wings  
of tiered ilex, open  
in caverns of atoms passing from one into another's zenith  
of periodic movement, vast helicoidal shift:  
a vaulting of arteries  
beating their heads against the dark.  
  
This is the body of light.

[from BEAM 30, The Garden]

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## **Hilda Morley (1919-1998)**

24 Mar 1998

---

*Hilda Morley belonged to the Black Mountain years and had a new collection just appearing; again it was Creeley who sent the news from that old circle, and again Bernstein relays it with a poem left to stand for her.*

Bob Creeley sent me this note this morning:

*Just yesterday we heard that Hilda Morley had died Sunday night in London — expected ... but hard none the less. We would have delightful long telephone conversations — and I have known her since Black Mountain days. She has a substantial selection of her poems coming out just now with Moyer Bell, The Turning, for which I did a brief but heartfelt preface.*

\*\*\*\*\*

I picked this up from <http://www.moyerbell.com/books/TURNING.HTM>:

### THE TURNING

Hilda Morley

"Hilda Morley's work inhabits a universe of quietly intense coastlines and rockscapes, of radiant sunlight and luminous mists . . ." - Choice

"[Her poems] come to us wild and fresh, radiating a joy of invention that is inseparable from her word play." - Stanley Kunitz

In her fifth collection of poems, poet Hilda Morley proves a master of rhythm and in poem after poem reveals her ability to recite with perfect pitch. With striking visual images, she brings new life and beauty to nature and inanimate objects. Her work has been described by colleagues as fluid, elegant, and organic.

there is only the language of a voice which turning  
on itself says (the dark streaking itself with  
glimmering) words of that voice saying (the only  
one in this dark place) begin, begin again.  
(from "The Turning")

Hilda Morley has published five books of poetry, including What Are Winds What Are Waters and Cloudless at First (Moyer Bell), and has won numerous awards and fellowships. She lives in Sag Harbor, New York and London.

ASPHODEL PRESS Poetry 190 pages : 7 x 10" ISBN 1-55921-202-0 : \$16.95 cloth

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**Ishihara/Reinfeld**

27 Mar 1998

*A query from Linda Reinfeld reminds him to praise a card-deck translation of the Hyakunin Isshu; then, the Jonesboro schoolyard killings still fresh, he reaches back eight centuries for a poem about grief and the crying deer.*

Since Linda Reinfeld posted a query for Toshi Ishihara, it reminded me to recommend their wonderful 1996 collaborative translation "The Game of 100 Poems": a set of 200 cards that together make up the 100 poems of Hyakunin Isshu, based on the anthology of 100 tanka poems (5-7-5, 7-7) compiled by Sadaie Fujiwara in 1235). This version consists of 100 cards with the first line and 100 cards with the second line, which you can match up in a variety of ways. In the introduction Ishihara and Reinfeld note that "Although this anthology has frequently been translated into English, our translation is unique, for we have chosen to use couplets, rather than free verse of syllabic form, to reflect the two-part structure of the poems".

I hope that copies of this remarkable box of poems are still available; if interested, write to Linda Reinfeld: [REDACTED].

\*

I thought of this poem, attributed to Fujiwara no Shunzei, Master of the Grand Empress's Household, in reaction to the events in Jonesboro:

In all the world there's no road far from grief: Even the deer cry deep in the mountains \_\_\_\_\_

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**Re: hannah weiner queries**

21 Apr 1998

*Someone reading Hannah Weiner's Clairvoyant Journal wanted the real people behind its coded names; Bernstein, at home in the downtown music world of the seventies, supplies the composers.*

| in weiner's Clairvoyant Journal, who is "Rhys?"

This is Rhys Chatham, a friend of Hannah's, a composer/new music person, who was active around The Kitchen (NY) in the 70s, may have even have been the music director. Quick web search found

<http://www.goddard.edu/wgdr/kalvos/chatham.html>

[http://www.trouserpress.com/bandpages/RHYS\\_CHATHAM.html](http://www.trouserpress.com/bandpages/RHYS_CHATHAM.html)

"charlemagne" This is (Brooklyn born) Charlemagne Palestine, a fabulous pianist/composer, also active in New York in the 70s, who I believe has stopped

performing, and I think also stayed away from recordings of his work as well. He gave mesmerizing performances of work somewhat in the area of Young or Riley or Reich or Glass but more idiosyncratically expressive, more driven. He is also a visual artist and continues to show his work, mostly in Europe as far as I know. Found this item, a 1989 "interview"/phone call with Charlemagne Palestine: [http://home.cdsnet.net:80/~michaelm/death/ch\\_int.html](http://home.cdsnet.net:80/~michaelm/death/ch_int.html) It's quite interesting — Both were quite well-known on the Downtown new music/performance scene of the mid-70s.

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### ***Re: [Fwd: Re: Poetry at the White House, Anthologies] (fwd)***

27 Apr 1998

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*Word had reached the list of a White House poetry evening at which, the report went, the lone avant-gardist present was Bernstein himself — news to a man who had spent that night at dinner in Buffalo.*

*The White House event went very well. I was a bit disappointed that the only avant poet there was Charles Bernstein.*

News to me. On Wednesday night I was having dinner with Carolyn Burke, author of the highly recommended Mina Loy biography "Becoming Modern", who gave a lecture on her book the next day for the Poetics Program at UB. Hadn't heard about the White House event till the report surfaced here.

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### ***Welcome Message***

01 May 1998

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*Sent out at every month's turn, the Welcome Message is the list's constitution: its aversion to generalized poetry-talk, its warning that to post here is to publish, its patient care of a private room six hundred strong. Read it once — much of the year is an argument with it.*

Rev. 2-1-98

(This message is sent out to all new and renewing subscribers and it is sent out to the list at the beginning of every month)

---

Welcome to the Poetics List

&

The Electronic Poetry Center

sponsored by The Poetics Program, Department of English, Faculty of Art & Letters, of the State University of New York, Buffalo

Postal Address: 438 Clemens Hall, SUNY, Buffalo, NY 14260

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<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc>

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[This document was prepared by Charles Bernstein ( ),  
Loss PequeñoGlazier ( ), and Joel Kuszai  
( ).

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Above the world-weary horizons  
New obstacles for exchange arise  
Or unfold, O ye postmasters!

1. About the Poetics List

The Poetics List was founded in late 1993 with the epigraph above.

There are presently almost 600 subscribers.

Please note that this is a private list and information about the list should not be posted to other lists or directories of lists. The idea is to keep the list to those with specific rather than general interests, and also to keep the scale of the list relatively small and the volume manageable.

individual posts of participants are sent directly to all subscribers, we continue to work to promote the editorial function of this project. The definition of that project, while provisional, and while open to continual redefinition by list participants, is nonetheless aversive to a generalized discussion of poetry.

Rather, our aim is to support, inform, and extend those directions in poetry that are committed to innovations, renovations, and investigations of form and/or/as content, to the questioning of received forms and styles, and to the creation of the otherwise unimagined, untried, unexpected, improbable, and impossible. **<color>ffff,0000,0000</color>**We also encourage subscribers to post information on publications and reading series that they have coordinated, edited, published, or in which they appear (see section 9 below). **(THIS MEANS \*YOU\*)**.

**</color>**

Please keep in mind that all posts go out immediately to all subscribers, and become part of an on-line archive. *\*Posting to Poetics is a form of publication, not personal communication.\** Participants are asked to exercise caution before posting messages! While spontaneity of response may seem the very heart of the list at its best, it also has the darker side of circulating ideas that have not been well considered (or considered by another reader — editor or friend). Given the nature of the medium, subscribers do well to maintain some skepticism when reading the list and, where possible, to try to avoid taking what may be something close to a spontaneous comment made in the heat of exchange as if it were a revised or edited essay ("Let the Reader Beware!").

The "list owner" of Poetics is Charles Bernstein. Joel Kuszai is list manager. For subscription information contact us at [REDACTED].

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## 2. Subscriptions

Subscriptions to Poetics are free of charge. But we ask that you subscribe with your real name and we reserve the right to request additional information, including address and phone number. All subscription information you supply will remain confidential.

message, with no subject line, to:

[REDACTED]

the one-line message should say:

{or}

(replacing Jill Jillway with your own name; but note: do not use your name to unsub)

We will be sent a notice of all subscription activity. Please allow several days for your new or re-subscription to take effect.

\*

If you are having difficulty unsubscribing, please note:

Sometimes your e-mail address may be changed slightly by your system administrator. If this happens you will not be able to send messages to mail. To avoid this, unsub from the old address and resub from the new address. If you can no longer do this there is a solution if you use Eudora (an e-mail program that is available free at shareware sites): from the Tools menu select "Options" and then select set-up for "Sending Mail": you may be able to substitute your old address here and send the unsub message.

The most frequent problem with Subscriptions is bounced messages. If your system is often down or if you have a low disk quota, Poetics messages may get bounced. Please try avoid having messages from the list returned to us. If the problem is low disk quota, you may wish to request an increase from your system administrator. (You may wish to argue that this subscription is part of your scholarly communication!) You may also wish to consider obtaining a commercial account.

In general, if a Poetics message is bounced from your account, your subscription to Poetics will be temporarily suspended. If this happens, simply resubscribe to the list in the normal manner, once your account problem has been resolved.

All questions about subscriptions, whether about an individual subscription or subscription policy, should be addressed to the list's administrative address: [REDACTED]. Please note that it may take up to ten days, or more, for us to reply to messages.

---

### 3. Cautions

Please do not post to the list personal or backchannel correspondence, or other unpublished material, without the express permission of the author. Copyright for all material posted on Poetics remains with the author; material from this list and its archive may not be reproduced without the author's permission, beyond the standard rights accorded by "fair use".

The Poetics List has a 50 message daily limit. If more than 50 messages are received, the listserver will automatically hold those additional messages until the list is manually unlocked, usually the following day. While it is difficult to prescribe a set limit on the number of daily, weekly, or monthly posts for any subscriber, please keep this limit in mind. If you plan to respond to multiple threads, it is generally preferable to consolidate your reply into one message. While relevant excerpts from a post to which you are responding may usefully be

appended to your reply, please do not include in your new post the whole text of a long previously posted message.

Please do not send attachments or include extremely long documents in a post, since this may make it difficult for those who get the list via "digest" or who cannot decode attached or specially formatted files.

In addition to being archived at the EPC, some posts to Poetics (especially reviews, obituary notices, announcements, etc.) may also become part of specific EPC subject areas. Brief reviews of poetry events and publications are always welcome. (See section 7.)

Please do not send inquiries to the list to get an individual subscribers address. To get this information, see section 6.

If you want someone to send out information to the list as a whole, or supply information missing from an post, or thank someone for posting something you requested, please send the request or comment to the individual backchannel, not to the whole list.

---

#### 4. Digest Option

The Listserve program gives you the option to receive all the posted Poetics message each day as a single message. If you would prefer to receive ONE message each day, which would include all messages posted to the list for that day, you can use the digest option. Send this one-line message (no subject line) to



set poetics digest

NOTE:!! Send this message to "listserv" not to Poetics or as a reply to this message!!

You can switch back to individual messages by sending this message:

set poetics mail

---

#### 5. Temporarily turning off Poetics mail

Do not leave your Poetics subscription "active" if you are going to be away for any extended period of time! Your account may become flooded and you may lose not only Poetics messages but other important mail. You can temporarily turn off your Poetics subscription by sending a message to "

set poetics nomail

& turn it on again with: set poetics mail

When you return you can check or download missed postings from the Poetics archive. (See 8 below.)

---

## 6. Who's Subscribed

To see who is subscribed to Poetics, send an e-mail message to e-mail message blank. In the body of your e-mail message type:

review poetics

You will be sent within a reasonable amount of time (by return e-mail) a rather long list containing the names and e-mail addresses of Poetics subscribers. This list is alphabetized by server not name.

or try:

review POETICS by name

review POETICS by country

which will give you the list alphabetically by name or a flawed list by country (since all ".com" and ".net"s are counted as US)

\*Please do not send a message to the list asking for the address of a specific subscriber.\*

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## 7. What is the Electronic Poetry Center?

our URL is

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc>

The mission of this World-Wide Web based electronic poetry center is to serve as a hypertextual gateway to the extraordinary range of activity in formally innovative writing in the United States and the world. The Center provides access to the burgeoning number of electronic resources in the new poetics including RIF/T and other electronic poetry journals, the POETICS List archives, an AUTHOR library of electronic poetic texts, and direct connections to numerous related electronic RESOURCES. The Center also provides information about contemporary print little magazines and SMALL PRESSES engaged in poetry and poetics. And we have an extensive collection of soundfiles of poets' reading their work, as well as the archive of LINEbreak, the radio interview series.

The EPC is directed by Loss Pequeño Glazier.

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## 8. Poetics Archives via EPC

Go to the EPC and select Poetics from the opening screen. Follow the links to Poetics Archives. You may browse the archives by month and year or search them for specific information. Your interface will allow you to print or download any of these files.

Or set your browser to go directly to:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/poetics/archive>

## 9. Publishers & Editors Read This!

PUBLISHERS & EDITORS: Our listings of poetry and poetics information is open and available to you. We are trying to make access to printed publications as easy as possible to our users and ENCOURAGE you to participate! Send a list of your press/publications to [REDACTED] with the words EPC Press Listing in the subject line. You may also send materials on disk. (Write file name, word processing program, and Mac or PC on disk.) Send an e-mail message to the address above to obtain a mailing address to which to send your disk. Though files marked up with html are our goal, ascii files are perfectly acceptable. If your word processor will save files in Rich Text Format (.rtf) this is also highly desirable

Send us extended information on new publications (including any back cover copy and sample poems) as well as complete catalogs/backlists (including excerpts from reviews, sample poems, etc.). Be sure to include full information for ordering—including prices and addresses and phone numbers both of the press and any distributors.

Initially, you might want to send short announcements of new publications directly to the Poetics list as subscribers do not always (or ever) check the EPC; in your message please include full information for ordering. If you have a fuller listing at EPC, you might also mention that in any Poetics posts.

Some announcements circulated through Poetics and the EPC have received a noticeable responses; it may be an effective way to promote your publication and we are glad to facilitate information about interesting publications.

END OF POETICS LIST WELCOME

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*The Welcome Message lays down the list's ideals; the rest of the year is the list testing them. A thin stretch of notices and forwards followed — a symposium at Cornell, a publisher's clearance, a weekend the server*

*went dark — before the summer's quiet broke on the first of the year's  
losses from Buffalo.*

## **Al Cook**

10 Jul 1998

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*Albert Cook had died at seventy-two. It was Cook who founded the Buffalo English department where Bernstein now taught, and who first drew Olson, Creeley, and the poets to SUNY — a debt the wire obituary could not know to record, and that Bernstein pauses to.*

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) - Albert Cook, a Brown University professor who published more than 20 books and plays, died Tuesday of cardiac arrhythmia and coronary artery disease. He was 72.

The scholar of comparative literature, classics and English wrote criticism, poetry, plays and textbooks.

He taught at the University of California, Western Reserve University and the State University of New York at Buffalo before going to Brown in 1978.

\* Forrest Gander just sent this sad news to me. Cook was the key figure in initially bringing poets, and not incidentally, poetics to SUNY-Buffalo, hiring Creeley, Olson, Weiners and many others and envisioning an English department where poets and fiction writers would teach literature, rather than creative writing, to undergraduates and graduates. Cook founded the UB English department, and taught there from 1963-1968. He was the author of over 20 books of criticism and 8 books of poetry, and the translator of Oedipus Rex and The Odyssey.

Among his most recent books are Canons and Wisdoms (University of Pennsylvania Press), Temporalizing Space: The Triumphant Strategies of Piero della Francesca (Peter Lang), and a collection of poetry, Modes (Mellon). Other books include: An Anthology Of Greek Tragedy, The Burden Of Prophecy: Poetic Utterance In The Prophets Of The Old Testament, Canons and Wisdoms, Changing The Signs: The Fifteenth-Century Breakthrough, The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean; A Philosophy of Comedy, Enactment: Greek Tragedy, Figural Choice in Poetry and Art, French Tragedy: The Power Of Enactment, History/Writing, The Meaning of Fiction, Modularity: Poems, Myth and Language, Progressions and Other Poems, The Reach of Poetry, The Root of The Thing; A Study of Job and The Song of Songs, Shakespeare's Enactment: The Dynamics of Renaissance Theatre, The Stance Of Plato, Thresholds: Studies In The Romantic Experience, and Soundings: On Shakespeare, Modern Poetry, Plato, and Other Subjects.

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## **Re: Poetry Daily Website**

23 Jul 1998

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*A note to Rae, half logistics — where to catch James over the weekend — that turns, as his notes do, into a small theory: electronic space has no scarcity, which makes a website printing only a fragment of a poem a puzzle.*

| *I should be around, just back from Buffalo*

Dear Rae,

I should be around, just back from Buffalo and also just about to leave for Buffalo, as usual!

I think your best best is James: it is rarely at his place over the weekend.

██████████ is his work email, which I think he will get sooner than his home email.

If that doesn't work, let me know.

Since one of the characteristics of electronic textual space is that there is no real scarcity of "space" — it wouldn't cost anything more to post your whole poem, then the Poetry Daily thing is even more odd. Anyway, I had never heard of the site till Ron mentioned it —

Love,

Charles

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## **QUERIES (CB and DS)**

05 Sep 1998

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*A subscriber half-remembered a Bernstein line — something about living longer and losing more money — and asked the room to place it; Bernstein obliges by quoting himself, deadpan, with no remark on the oddness of being asked to identify his own poem.*

Date: Tue, 18 Aug 1998 22:12:38 -0400

From: louis stroffolino ██████████

*Does anybody here know what Bernstein poem (i think it's at least 9 years old) that has some line (or sentiment) to the effect of "Hey, I'm glad I didn't live any longer, because if I would have I would have had to spend more money?" (this is a TOTAL paraphrase, from flimsy memory.... I probably have the TONE totally wrong, and maybe even the MEANING). Any help would be appreciated? Thanks*

\*\*\*\*

"Debris of Shock/Shock of Debris" in \_Dark City\_:

"If I'd have lived longer, I'd have lost even more money."

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## ***Beyond the Sun & Moon Sale***

19 Sep 1998

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*Douglas Messerli's Sun & Moon was clearing poetry titles at four dollars each; Bernstein turns the sale into a small argument about the dire economy such a press survives on, and the bulk-buying readers who might keep it alive.*

I've just had the great pleasure of receiving Sun & Moon Press's two most recent books: Joan Retallack's *How to Do Things with Words* and Myung Mi Kim's *Dura*, both of which I have been eagerly awaiting. I keep thinking there must be some magic to Douglas Messerli's publishing: how can he do so many books? But I also know that there is no magic, and that Sun & Moon lives within the same dire poetry publishing economy that many of us on this list are all too familiar. While at crucial points in its history, Sun & Moon did benefit from NEA and foundation grants, that time seems more and more remote. And a press like this, without the kind independent resources that have sustained some other literary publishers of a comparable scale to Sun & Moon, is dependent on sales for its survival.

So when Sun & Moon sent those lists of \$4 poetry books last week, it seemed to me that buying multiple copies of those books might be the ideal way to support Sun & Moon, to ensure that it is able to keep publishing books like the ones on the lists. While Sun & Moon is actually and officially a nonprofit organization, fund raising by the press has been negligible. But the sale, it seems to me, offers a great way of making a contribution to Sun & Moon — and, in the bargain, getting books for oneself and also books to give to friends. It's a little like what Peter Pan says about Tinkerbell: if we want a press like Sun & Moon to survive, we all have to sprinkle a little fairy dust now, in the form of bulk buying of those \$4 books. That may be the only kind of magic that works — the kind that comes from readers who want these books and want more of them.

For those who want to take another look at the list of books available, check out the Poetics List archive for this month under messages from Douglas (<http://listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu/archives/poetics.html>) or write to Douglas Messerli direct (at [REDACTED]) and I am sure he will return your request with a copy of the list. (The Sun & Moon website it at <http://www.sunmoon.com> )

Charles Bernstein

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***More Announcements on the list, Please!****31 Oct 1998*


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*For all the list's taste for argument, Bernstein reminds it that nothing posted here matters more to him than the notices of new books and readings — and, gently, opens the wider question of what belongs on the list and what belongs backchannel.*

A primary purpose of this list is the exchange of information on readings, books and magazines related to poetry. From my point of view as the list organizer, there is nothing that is posted on this list that is more important than these announcements. All those who edit, publish, organize or wish to recommend such publications or events are not only invited to list them here, but encouraged. Indeed, I know there are a number of subscribers who have not listed recent publications and I would ask them, as part of their participation in the list, to please do so.

The form of these announcements is left entirely up to those making them, but certainly simple listings are fine, more elaborate presentations are also useful (with blurbs, quotes, etc.). I know many also appreciate the discounts offered over the list — though I for one tend to wince when I see them, because when you do the math, you realize that they also involved a significant loss for the presses making them.

This brings up a more general question on the list, which Joel and I have been discussing in response to notes we have received from list participants. Some of these issues are easy to address: for example please do not send messages over the list that would more appropriate to be sent to one or two individuals (and of course I am not referring to those messages sent out to whole list inadvertently, since many of us make such mistakes from time to time). Also, please do resend the whole announcement to which you are responding; it can be useful to include some edited excerpts, but better just the new message than a resending of the entire previous message. And of course No Attachments should be sent to the list.

The more general issue is harder to address, since generalization spoils the point. Some of the posts I most enjoy are short and often funny responses to previous posts — so any general comment about "chat" messages would miss a problem I do see. Yet, some short posts would probably be better off backchannel or consolidated into longer, more substantial messages.

Joel and I will be sending out the Welcome Message again soon, as it is the end of the month. I hope that all list participants will reread this message when it is posted.

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**Re: Hannah Weiner notes**

10 Nov 1998

*The Hannah Weiner memorial had taken place days earlier at St. Mark's; still too much inside it to write about it, Bernstein sets down the order of the program as its own commemoration and promises the fuller account for later.*

| *Thanks to those who have so far given reports on Hannah Weiner*

Thanks to those who have so far given reports on Hannah Weiner: A 70th Birthday Memorial Tribute, which was held on Saturday, Nov. 7, at the Parish Hall of the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in NYC, from 4:15 to 7:30. For now, I just want to post a full list of the participants, and the order of the program, as a way of commemorating this event. I hope, at some later point, to say more (I feel much too much inside the event still to write about it in detail now). But on behalf of Lee Ann Brown, Andrew Levy and myself (the organizers) we want to thank all these participants and also to the many people who came, and especially the Poetry Project, and in particular Marcella Durand, Ed Friedman, John Fisk (who made a complete audio recording of the event) and Anselm Berrigan for their help.

Andrew Levy Charles Alexander Bruce Andrews Abigail Child Maria Damon Tina Darragh Lewis Warsh Kenneth Goldsmith Slides presented by Lee Ann Brown Carollee Schneemann with slides Bob Harrison Michael Heller Maurice Finegold (Hannah's brother) Phill Niblock mid-70s film of Hannah Weiner reading her work Henry Hills's 1982 film Plagiarism, with Weiners, Bernstein, Andrews, & Sherry Peter Inman Jackson Mac Low (for himself and Anne Tardos) Sharon Mattlin Nick Piombino Joan Retallack Barbara Rosenthal James Sherry Ron Siliman Fiona Templeton Tod Thilleman Bob Perelman Alan Davies Lee Ann Brown Charles Bernstein Brown and Bernstein: concluding two-voice reading from The Clairvoyant Journal

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*Between the memorial and the year's reckoning fell a two-word post — free poetics — that meant only the list had jammed at its daily limit; but the phrase named the argument December could not let go of, over who the list was for and who got to fill it.*

**Free Poetics**

28 Nov 1998

*As the list's tone coarsened through the autumn, Bernstein steps in — not against any single post but against a general coarsening, posts big on attitude and thin on thought. It is the moderator, reluctantly, raising his voice.*

I am not writing to dispute an assertion or tone in any specific post, though I have several in mind, but because I am concerned that the tabloidization of the recent list is discouraging people from participating who don't want to enter into such a

fray. By tabloidization I mean persistent posts that are big on attitude but little else; that are more focussed on generating attention than provoking thought. Maybe I am just sticking my hand against the wind, to feel the breeze; that is, I realize that some of what I am concerned about here is part of the structure of the listserve environment. But technology is not destiny and I am convinced that the group of people subscribed to this list can edit themselves in a way responsive to what this list might aspire to be. I am not writing this to provoke a round of defensive remarks — I understand that every specific I might give would be open to question, no doubt reflects my misunderstanding of the underlying issues, or simply reflects my disagreement with another perspective, etc. I am, of course, expressing my preference, with the understanding that, as list moderator, that preference needs to be articulated to the list more forcefully than I have generally been willing to in the past.

For this list is moderated, as all the subscribers now. Joel and I are reluctant to intervene in any given exchange, or about any given post, because I believe that free and open and even intemperate exchange is a fundamental feature of dialogue. Disagreement is always welcome. But the viability of this space requires a greater level of care in what is posted than has been evident in some — indeed a small but visible minority — of the posts in the recent past, where self-proclaimed "cheap shots" and "name calling" end up dominating the space, creating more spectacle and than conversation. Heavy attitude is fine at times, but I am finding that while I can tolerate a heavy diet of it, I am losing my patience for it.

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## ***Freedom Is Never Free***

04 Dec 1998

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*His cryptic two-word post weeks earlier had only been an attempt to unlock a list jammed at its daily limit; the fallout sent him back to first principles. At length, Bernstein defends the value of editing in the age of the Internet — the moderated list as a habitable room, not an unlimited feed — and closes on his six-year-old son Felix. Of the year's essays, this is the creed stated whole.*

A couple of weeks ago I got a note from a friend on the list (yes I still do have some friends on the list) who asked me why the messages had stopped coming. I quickly checked to see what the story was and I discovered the list was locked because over 50 messages had been sent that day. I sent out a message to free the locked posts, but I sent it to the list rather than listserve. Thus my cryptic post of a couple of weeks back: Free Poetics. But the response to that message made me aware that I had not been active enough in exercising the editorial functions of the list. My attention was simply elsewhere, although I continued to read the list.

The Poetics List is by its nature limited and it can't reflect the desire of all its participants, for as has been well articulated by others, the direction that some of the subscribers might wish to take the list will drive others away from it: \*it has already has\*. The alienation of many subscribers who for me constitute a core constituency for us is an issue that those of involved in maintaining the list are necessarily more concerned about than some list participants. This has been an issue that has come up in this and every year since the list was started in late 1993 and this is something like the reply I have given in those earlier instances: I may well be mistaken about this, but it has been a founding principal of the list and one I have stated more than any other one except the centrality of announcements of readings and publications for the list.

Indeed, in 1995, when the list had only 200 subscribers, I made the point this way: "I am interested in continuing to explore what formats and styles of posting encourage, rather than simply allow, participation in this 'virtual uncommunity'. The volume of messages is certainly a useful measure of list activity; but volume itself may be an obstacle for some to participate, just as it may encourage others."

A year or two later I put it this way: "The paradox is that in an attempt to be open and nonexcluding one can end up excluding those who are unable to handle the volume: people are drowned out rather than kept out until Dreamworks Interactive, Inc., guides us and we asphyxiate."

In any case, I do not feel obliged to let those who post the most or are the most belligerent in their posts determine the direction of the Poetics List. However, I, along with my collaborators, are reading and considering any and all suggestions we get frontchannel but also, significantly, backchannel.

I am making no claim as to what is right in all cases; I am rather asserting the particular editorial parameters of this specific Internet project, and indeed my own editorial judgment (in cooperation with those who share responsibility with me for the list). Others will surely want to create different lists with different focuses and different limits, but it seemed to me worthwhile at this time to try to reassert the values of the list to which those of who organized it and maintain it are committed.

This is a private list. No one is required to participate, no one is guaranteed a right to participate. Its function, structure, and aims are determined by its editors. I believe in the value of editing and I believe this value does not increase in the age of the Internet, but, if anything, increases. Editorial decisions are open to question; they may be wrong or misguided. The lack of editorial intervention is also a form of editing, subject to dispute.

This is and has always been a moderated list, albeit lightly moderated; the very minimal intervention combined with maximum maintenance (thanks, Joel!) is not to limit the range, anarchy, feistiness, good or bad manners of posts—but rather to allow space for such exchanges to continue. The parameters of this list does not include absolute right of anyone subscribing to it to send out unlimited messages; indeed, one of the very few ground rules for the list states just the opposite. I am very reluctant to express this in the number of posts per day or even week, because back and forth at any given moment is one of crucial features of the list. However, we ask that those participating in this forum stick to a general sense of limit as measured, over longer periods of time. When, in the judgment of those of working on the list, this limit has been exceeded, a polite message, emphasizing that the issue is volume of posts not content, may be sent out; this should suffice for anyone wishing to participate in the list. In the history of the list, I believe we have sent a request to decrease the volume of posting to only four people among the possibly 1000 who have subscribed at one time or another. When a subscriber responds to such \*multiple\* requests by increasing the frequency of their posting, then it is our obligation to recognize that the structure we have set up is not working in this one instance and to act accordingly.

I want a Poetics List that I can read straight through, not the only the posts I'm likely to like, but the one that annoy or irritate or surprise or baffle me. I want a list where the folks subscribed don't set their filters (automatic or manual) to delete posts from those people they feel have already heard enough from (or otherwise use their delete button more than their view button). I may be the only one on this list who has attempted to read all the posts that have been sent to it from the day the list was started. Maybe this makes me a bad judge maybe lists are condemned to cycles of always new readers who stay on till they have had enough. But that's not the kind of list I want.

Maybe I'm imposing reading values based on print journals or "real time" conversation and dialogue onto a new and different medium. Maybe I'm just holding onto an impossible ideal, against all odds, and against those who feel that the instant gratification of being able to post not just as much as you want (\*which has never been limited\*) but also as often as you want is a fundamental value of the list. The Internet, we all know, offers much more information that we can take in. I want a list that is not just another example of too much unfiltered, unconsidered product; that can be quiet, even silent, some days, and noisy others that doesn't follow the imperative of the more the better, since the space is "free and unlimited".

Electronic space is neither free or unlimited because our lives are neither free or unlimited.

The economy of the list is affected by who posts more or less, what tones they use, who is scared off and who is egged on, who has the time to read it and write to it — and who doesn't and perhaps feels unable to post because never able to get the end of the last series of posts before the topic has flown on to something else. My temperament may indeed be contrary to this medium: I seek containment, a space I feel I can inhabit, that is slow as much as fast, kind as much as unkind. A space I can think in and a space I want to go for conversation. These expectations are unreasonable and perhaps that is the site of the conflict here: for I want a list that articulates limits rather than imposes them by volumetric default. And I want to bring this about by self-reflective engagement of all those participating. This may not be the way some of you see these issues, but I invite those interested to stick with me in this electronic experiment.

I don't propose to stop the list or to change its structure. I propose to stick with it, pretty much as it has been these past several years. \*No one has been deleted from this list,\* but those of us running the list reserve the right to limit the number of posts that subscribers can send and, from time to time, to make editorial comments on posts that have been sent.

Last night when I got home my son six-year old son Felix said to me, "I wish everyone in the whole school lived in the same building". Thinking of the Poetics List, I can't say I feel the same way. But I do wish we were all in the same conversation. I want to work for that, because I know it won't be easy to get there. It never has been.

Charles Bernstein David Gray Professor of Poetry and Letters Poetics Program  
Department of English 438 Clemens Hall State University of New York Buffalo,  
NY 14260 [redacted] fax: [redacted]

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc> <http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/bernstein>

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## ***Impeach or Censure (Was: Concerns)***

08 Dec 1998

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*December's quarrel borrowed its title from the impeachment then filling the news. Kent Johnson had charged the editors with silencing the list's heaviest posters — Henry Gould, Gabriel Gudding; Bernstein answers line by line that the issue was volume and never content, and that no post on this list had ever been censored.*

The unhappy have fewer rights but bigger ones. Bruce Andrews at KGB Bar reading last night.

\* [Quoting Kent Johnson's post earlier today]:

*I wrote in a post yesterday (the one with the barely believable title "My one post for December"), that the real issue in this whole affair has nothing to do with numbers as*

*the consensus has painted it. Or how could it really have to do with numbers if, as I pointed out, Henry— poster numero uno— averaged only a fraction more than one post per day for the whole month of November.*

This is untrue.

The situation here is based on a correspondence on this matter with the subscriber going back \*many months\*. We have written to this subscriber numerous times in the past. For example, near the end of March of this year, the subscriber was informed that while the two other most frequent posters had 27 messages, or an average of one per day, his were already at twice that number (total for that month alone: 61). I could go on detailing this correspondence but I haven't because I considered it private. At a certain point, you realize that polite requests for cooperation are not working. I think those who want to turn this matter into something ideological are doing a great disservice to all the people involved here.

The choice we made was the best option we had if we were indeed serious about keeping limits on postings. Going back to Kent Johnsons accusation, one might wonder how even such a formidable crew as those of at Poetics List Central could have known, before the end of November, what the total posts would be for this month. We are not clairvoyant. Kent Johnson chose not to consider the more obvious conclusion that the total posts for November might have been different if we had not ever so politely asked a couple of our beloved frequent posters to observe an often repeated list ground rule about overposting to the list. As it happens, all of the amazing (I think) four people in the history of the list we have ever written to gently request that they might consider consolidating their posts have been written to because — I realize it defies belief — they were — stop for a second to take this in — \*posting too much\*, more than anyone else. NOT THE CONTENT OF THEIR POSTS! If a subscriber to the list makes unambiguously manifest that she or he has no intention of abiding by the basic ground rules of the list, then those responsible — not only \*to\* the list but \*for\* the list, I would add — need to act fairly and generously but also decisively. This is no more than a cliché of List Management 101.

*He and Gabe Gudding— Gudding have been told (and I ask to be corrected if I'm wrong), that their posts are to now be reviewed and judged before they may appear.*

You are wrong. Gabriel Gudding's subscription status has never been changed and his ability to post to the list directly is the same as all 600 plus current list subscribers. In future, you might want to ask Joel or me before posting such misinformation to the list. In your Sunday post you also claimed that Henry Gould had be "86d" from the list. This is also wrong, as anyone reading my post from Friday would be aware.

\*

There was no improper relation.

I did not ask anyone to lie.

The assumption that those of us who are spending considerable time and energy providing this service are somehow guilty of something — lets assume that and find the crime later! — seems to me, um, er, counter-productive. (But I know: Tis far nobler to tear down those institutions weve established than find ways to support them.)

\*

I realize I have an apology to make to the list. Many of those who were most active on this list, and most cared about it, have urged me to do something to make it readable, and make it habitable, again. They spoke of the list being dominated by a few men (yes gender is an issue) whose tone tended to be harsh or scolding and that when they did post their posts were either ignored or treated derisively. They responded to my inaction has been to leave the list or stop reading it.

Their contributions are very much missed.

But no fanfare was made about these folks, who felt very much pushed out by the volume of posting, by the often hectoring tones of many posts on this list and also what they described to me, over and again, as the squandering of the list space by posts that would have been better sent backchannel. I hesitated to act, for one thing because I was committed to having the list be as minimally moderated as possible — and for this I probably should be held accountable, even censured. But I also knew that even the tiniest amount of editorial intervention on this list, on the most unassailable grounds, and in strict compliance with the stated policies of the list in the Welcome Message, would be subjected to a firestorm of protest.

\*

The fact is — I realize again this must be shocking to a few of you — that \*no post has ever been censored on this list\* and that the only complaints we have received about censorship concern those who post more than anyone else on the list. There is an irony here if you want to find it.

\*

The few men who post most frequently on this list, who dominate the discussion, are not the ones being silenced.

\*

Like several others who have recently address this issue, my concern about the list is not focused exclusively on the needs and rights of those who want to post in

an unlimited way. Rather than lament that one person, who has posted more to this list, I suspect, than anyone in the history of the list, has chosen to leave the list rather than restrict the number of his posts, I lament the dozens and dozens of people who have told me they felt pushed off the list by the exactly the problems that we have been trying to address in the past few weeks, by exactly the hubris expressed in several recent posts: that to post more than anyone else, to try to dominate the tone of the list, the psychic release involved in being belligerent — is an unimpeachable right and that anyone who tries to interfere with that right will be defamed in one way or another. People rarely make list announcements about the signing off the list of this \*legion of others\*, or publicly laments their absence, but each of these departures has been as important as the one resignation that has been focused on recently.

\*

The tendency a very few list members to assume and broadcast the worst about the minimal list moderation that we do is, perhaps, expectable. However, it is not only my sense but also the strongly voiced opinion of most people I speak to that the list needs more editing not less — \*surely, some people have other ideas about lists\*, but the point is not necessarily to always follow the least line of resistance, although that would certainly make for less flak.

Indeed, as I've noted, I have been inundated with complaints by one person after another that if the editors of the list can't create a better and more readable environment, people will stop reading it. Of course, there are others ready to replace them, who don't share these concerns — that may be the heart of the issue — whose list is it? It seems only common sense that you won't see multiple posts from people who find it an inhospitable place to post because they are most likely to shy away from the predictable stock responses out of the macho training camp: if they can't take it let them unsub, if they can't stand the heat let them keep quiet, how dare they censure my right to speak by questioning me, etc. The real sympathy must go to those "bad boys" who show their mettle by refusing to respond to even the most reasonable requests of the list editors. I have a fairly thick skin, but not thick enough. I hope my skin never gets that thick.

\* In any case, the idea that most people support the abdication of any editing or moderation of the list is exactly the opposite of what I hear — it's that idea of what the list is that has driven away more people than I care to name. We —and it's not just me — are committed to making editorial and indeed aesthetic judgments as an integral part our list ownership: that is the foundation for the list. Such judgments mean making choices with which some people, even very vocal people, will disagree with. That's reasonable and understandable. \*But our choices are

not arbitrary or motivated by the desire to suppress any one tone or point of view, but rather to foster an environment which will enable greater participation.\*

The editors of the Poetics List make very few editorial suggestions directly to subscribers: it almost never happens. In the history of the list this has occurred maybe three or four times to check extended chat, maybe a couple of times to reconsider tone, and the few instances of asking folks to consolidate messages, already mentioned. For myself, I have been reluctant to post critical remarks about other posts on the list because I felt, as list owner, that such remarks might take on more significance than I would intend. That is, for all these years I have avoided making any unnecessary interventions on this list \*of any kind\* — front channel or back channel.

\*

In my experience, the Poetics List has been among the most open poetry institutions I have encountered. In one sense, it is not as open as a newsgroup or an chat list because some constraints are put in place. Without these constraints, however, the range and depth of contributions would be, I believe, diminished; many of the people on this list would depart post haste, and without fanfare. Nor would there be anyone now involved willing to maintain the list. The openness of the Poetics List is a product of its mission, as stated in the Welcome Message in terms both aesthetic and structural. So its openness is framed by the terms of the specific project for which it was designed. I mistyped something in my last post, so let me rewrite it now: in the age of the Internet, I believe more editing not less is required. Those who are philosophically against moderated or edited or private lists should work to create the kinds of lists they want and show those of us who are skeptical that we are wrong. But debunking this list for its editorial commitments seems to me misguided and does not serve the cause of openness. This list cannot fulfill all the desires for all who would like to be its members. No list can. Yes, this list reflects my editorial, philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic judgments, tastes, predilections, commitments. Anyway I hope it does, as best I can make it. I have asked too many people to hang in with this list (in too many cases unsuccessfully), too many people to join the list, too many people to take the chance to post something, etc., for that not to be the case.

\*

Do to my own time limitations, I cannot spend all the time some of the people on this list seem to need to respond to questions of list management. For example, I will not be able to spend much more time this week on the list and will be away from any computer access for part of the week. Changes in the list management are in process, and as soon as these can be finalized, we will get back to you. In

the meantime, I hope all of you will understand that my time for this project has simply run out.

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## **Re: MLA Poetry Event**

15 Dec 1998

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*Ostensibly an MLA-week notice — a Hejinian, Scalapino, and Bromige reading, a cash-bar book party for his own Close Listening — it opens instead in unfeigned delight at David Bromige's My Poetry, just posted to the list.*

| *One of the highlights of the MLA convention later this month in San Francisco*

One of the highlights of the MLA convention later this month in San Francisco is surely the Lyn Hejinian, Leslie Scalapino, and David Bromige reading, organized by Burton Hatlen. Not to be missed. It was a treat to read David's "My Poetry" just now on the list: a work I have been totally amazed by since I first read it and David is quite right that "My Poetry" is exemplary of the sort of writing I had in mind in my comments in Chicago the other night.

Anyway, back to the MLA: by a cruel quirk of fate, the Poetry Division cash bar and book party is at the same time as the reading and while conflicts are endemic to these conventions, this one is particularly unfortunate.

The Poetry Division cash bar and book party follows a reading and conversation with Adrienne Rich, which takes place Monday Dec. 28, 3:30-4:45. The Cash Bar goes from 5:15-6:30. Both events are in Plaza Room A, San Francisco Hilton. The book party is for Rich's new collection *Midnight Savage* (Norton) and for *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, which I edited (Oxford Univ. Press), *Imagining Language*, ed. Steve McCaffery and Jed Rasula (M.I.T. Press), and *Poems for the Millennium*, vol. 2, ed. Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris (Univ. of California Press). Rich and all the editors will be present.

Since the Rich reading ends at 4:45, perhaps those attending the Bromige/Heninian/Scalapino reading can come by Plaza Room A at that time, and hang out till 5:15, when the reading starts, since it takes place very nearby (Franciscan Room A). I think most of us will be there then, and hopefully at least sample copies of the books will be there too — even if we have to wait for them to set up the bar. Oxford tells me they will be offering *Close Listening* at a 50% discount at the party (eg: \$10). If the book selling is not in place by 5:15, I will take orders and have any books ready, signed by any and all present, by the time the reading is over.

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is .....  
.....

(from The Tablets)

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The funeral will be held this Sunday at Bayport Funeral Home, 683 Montauk Highway [REDACTED] 11:30-1 Visiting 1pm Service for further information contact Charles Morrow at [REDACTED]

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## ***Bollingen Prize in Poetry***

12 Feb 1999

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*Robert Creeley — Buffalo colleague and presiding elder of the Poetics Program — had just taken the Bollingen; the herald could not resist ringing the bell.*

Hear ye, here ye, all of the Poetics List:

I am happy to announce that Robert Creeley has been awarded the 1999 Bollingen Prize in Poetry (which is given every other year). Congratulations, Bob!

Charles Bernstein

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## ***Goodbye, Paul (Paul Schmidt 1934-1999)***

21 Feb 1999

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*Paul Schmidt, whom he had known and admired since the mid-eighties, was the great English voice of Khlebnikov and Rimbaud; here Bernstein sets down the loss plainly and names the scourge that took him.*

Very sad to find an obituary in the NY Times today for Paul Schmidt, who I got to know in the mid-80s and very much admired. Of his work, I think primarily of Paul's three-volume translation of Khlebnikov, published by Harvard University Press (the final, long delayed, third volume of the poems came out in 1997) — because that work was so important to me, and I had the chance to talk to Paul about it. But he is equally known for his libretti, his own poems, and his translation of Rimbaud, among many other projects.

Paul was 65 years old and in many ways at the height of his career. Here is yet another instance of that unspeakable horror that continues to plunder our culture and haunt its survivors. His death can't help but bring to mind the generations of poets (and artists and nonpoets and nonartists) ravaged by this scourge called AIDS.

—Ch.B.

\*\*\*\* Here is the Times's Obituary:

Paul Schmidt, Translator, Poet and Actor, Dies at 65

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

NEW YORK — Paul Schmidt, a librettist, translator, poet, teacher and actor who collaborated with many major avant-garde theater artists, died at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center on Friday. He was 65.

The cause of death was complications of AIDS, said his brother Jim.

Schmidt was known best for translating the complete works of Rimbaud and the plays of Chekhov. He also devoted many years to translating the complete works of Velemir Khlebnikov, a little-known Russian poet who died of malnutrition in 1922 at the age of 37. A production of Khlebnikov's play "Zangezi," first seen in Los Angeles in 1986 and directed by Peter Sellars (it was later staged at the Brooklyn Academy of Music) was one of Schmidt's several notable collaborations with leading experimental directors.

Another was his libretto for "Alice," an adaptation of Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass," which was a high point of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival in 1995.

A collaboration with the director Robert Wilson and the composer Tom Waits, "Alice" was praised by The New York Times for elucidating "an international theatrical style in which Minimalism, German Expressionism, Japanese kabuki and American pop bump up against one another in a grand, eye-catching pageant."

Schmidt's libretto was described as capturing "a strain of late-19th-century romantic lyricism and drawing it out with a graceful literary refinement."

For the Wooster Group's 1990 theater piece, "Brace Up!," Schmidt supplied a translation of Chekhov's "Three Sisters" that incorporated dance sequences and video, and he also appeared in the production. It was one of many small roles he played on the stage. For JoAnne Akalaitis' 1989 production at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis of Jean Genet's five-and-a-half-hour, 100-character play "The Screens," he created the text out of three versions the playwright had left behind.

Other playwrights whose works he translated for theater productions include Gogol, Brecht and Marivaux. "Black Sea Follies," his original play about Stalin and Shostakovich (with music by the composer) was presented by Playwrights Horizons and the Music Theater Group in 1986.

Schmidt was born in Brooklyn and attended Colgate and Harvard, where he wrote his dissertation for his doctorate in Slavic languages on the influential

Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold. While at Harvard, he became involved with a now-legendary circle of friends who produced plays at the Agassiz Theater in Cambridge in the summers.

The group included the actors Lindsay Crouse, Tommy Lee Jones, John Lithgow, Kathryn Walker, Stockard Channing (to whom Schmidt was married for seven years) and the director and writer Tim Mayer, whose collected poems and plays he edited under the title "Running From America."

From 1958 to 1960, he served in the U.S. Army as a member of Army intelligence. From 1967 to 1976, he taught Slavic languages at the University of Texas in Austin. He published two volumes of poetry, "Night Life" and "Winter Solstice" (both 1996, Painted Leaf Press).

A collection of Rimbaud translations with photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, titled "A Season in Hell," was published in 1997 (Little, Brown).

In addition to his brother Jim, he is survived by three sisters, Mary Kay Murray, Margaret Sand and Anne Schmidt; another brother, Thomas, and his friend, Mark Bennett.

February 21, 1999 (c) The New York Times

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## ***Creeley on Bronk***

*25 Feb 1999*

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*William Bronk, the Stevens-haunted recluse of Hudson Falls, had died; Bernstein relays Creeley's memorial for the EPC's obituary pages — a friendship begun in Cid Corman's Origin at the close of the forties.*

Robert Creeley wrote this for the EPC's obituary pages (<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/documents/obits/>), where it will shortly appear.

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### **William Bronk's Passing**

Although one saw him but rarely, there was a strong sense of bond between us as two who had begun together back at the close of the 40s, in Cid Corman's Origin. We had a mutual friend, a little older than I was — as was Bill as well — Samuel French Morse, a friend also of Cid Corman's, by way of Gordon Cairnie's transforming Grolier Book Shop in Cambridge. I was trying to start a little magazine and Bill had sent me some poems (at Sam's suggestion), which were printed in Origin, when the magazine I intended fell apart.

Much has been said about William Bronk's relation to Wallace Stevens. There is certainly an active sense of parallel, particular in the pace, the reflective rhetoric,

and in the use of pronouns. But Stevens is a much lighter poet, if that's the word, letting thought be both way in and way out, a play of mind rather than its adamant conviction. It was not surprising when Stevens converted at last to Catholicism. Bronk's Protestant determination never changed.

I recall those early poems had often a humor, neither droll nor necessarily relieving. It was a humor of situation, that one was in this world indeed, just so. Bill thought about it all his extraordinary life. In that he was very like Emily Dickinson, seemingly alone yet compact with existence, flooded with insistent intelligence and proposal. One notices how particularly his poems return, loop, rather, about their factors of statement. "Here" is the only place he ever was.

Our first meeting was at a reading I'd had in New York, and he came up to introduce himself just after, but really to tell me with a look of real consternation, that he would never have imagined I'd read my poems as I did, stuttering, seeming almost in pain — why? I had no answer. He read his own thoughtfully, firmly, considering. When, a few years ago, he was unable to attend a festival we were both to be at, a tape of his reading was provided, and so I sat with others listening to that dependable, quiet voice speak through the lines of an age old human wondering. Why indeed, I thought — it was a good question.

Back home, I called him to tell him all had gone well, and we mused a bit on life, on what it had been to be poets. As he said, one had never thought of it as a "career" or as any such. One did it simply. Charles Olson valued him quite probably more than any other of his contemporaries — it was the measure of intelligence he constituted, the address of his means to the given world. Finally, there was no one else quite like him, so large in his singleness, so separate yet enclosing. One will not see his like again.

Robert Creeley Buffalo, N.Y. February 25, 1999

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## **Richard Foreman**

27 Feb 1999

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*Richard Foreman, founder of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater, had thrown open his working scores for any director to plunder and remake; Bernstein points the room to the site.*

Richard Foreman's newest play, Paradise Hotel, is running through April 4 in New York and is highly recommended. But I wanted here to call attention to his new website

<http://www.foreman.ontological.com/>

While this site has some general information about Foreman's theater and information about the current production, what is most interesting, and very unusual, is that Foreman has put up many of his unedited/uncorrected texts (scores of pages) and he is offering them up to theater directors to make their own plays — encouraging them to create contexts, characters, to reorder the lines or cut according to the needs of the performance. In any case, the texts make from great reading — and in their present form many resemble, perhaps are, poems.

Charles Bernstein

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### ***Post from Dubravka Djuric (fwrđ)***

30 Mar 1999

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*Dubravka Djuric — poet, translator, editor of Pro Femina, once a Poetics Program Fellow in Buffalo — was writing from Belgrade as NATO's bombs began; at her request Bernstein forwarded the diary, and the war walked into the room.*

Dubravka Djuric is a poet and translator and journalist living in Belgrade, who among many projects is an editor of Pro Femina. She also a good friend (Dubravka and her husband the philosopher and art historian Misko Suvokovic, spent a semester in Buffalo some years ago as Poetics Program Fellows). Dubravka asked me to pass along this post if I thought it would be of interest to the list (she notes that the names of the days of the week may be wrong). A few days ago, Dubravka posted a statement to the list from the Belgrade feminist peace activist Lepa Mladjenovic. —Charles Bernstein

*monday: i was in the center of the city seeing some friends. people already start talking about bombing. i heard comment 'we will be occupied as macedonia, bosnia and croation' didn't comment it. i stop commenting because it doesn't have any sense. we all think what we want to think. thursday: all day spent in front of tv, reading newspaperaers and was nervous and paralyzed. wednesday: decided do go to visit some friends who work in presses and to give them new issue of pro femina magazine that appeared few days earlier. on my way to the center first impression was that the town had very few people on streets, which is unusual. belgrade is full of people specially because so many refugees become its citizens, you could hardly walk through streets they were so full of people and crowded with cars. my friends kept talking about bombing, about buying enough food. again on streets, i could feel fear in the air. belgrade was city of ghosts. went to NUNS (office of independent journalist association, also pro femina is there) met friend who told me about veran matic (b 92 is publisher of pro femina). all around could feel fear. in the evening sirens. we could hear few detonations. spent some time behind tv, but not much information till 21 hours, then some confused one. during the night sirens, but we continued to sleep. saturday: went to downtown. few people on the street. went to buy food twice. supermarket was full of people who buy food and didn't comment on anything. you could feel fear on their faces. at night we were in darkness. few detonations near my*

husband's and my place. then we went in bed. friday: went to downtown. more people on streets, more cars. the atmosphere calmed. people walked. went to NUNS to pick up the some books. met friends who spoke about what might happened. at quarter past four heard sirens. jumped into the bus. look to the people on the street who just continued to walk normally, back home. all afternoon was on line with miskó replying to friends from slovenia, croatia, usa that we are ok. friends from belgrade and novi sad called and we called then. words of courage, and deep worrying. people are scared how long this could last, what could happen. the experience is that all our lives are in danger. and i think about people, many of them our friends and close relatives, in croatia and bosnia during the war... forwarded a message from friends written by belgrade feminist peace activist lepa mladjenovic . went to bed around 22. i couldn't sleep, and suddenly detonations. we all went downstairs, whole city was in darkness. heard detonations for about 20 minutes, somewhere relatively near us. scared. spent few minutes outside in yard. but didn't see anything. around 4 in the morning another siren, one detonation. continued to sleep.

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thanks all friends who are continually in contact by e mail with us!

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## **April is the cruelest month for poetry ....**

01 Apr 1999

*It was the first of April and National Poetry Month was upon them; Bernstein points to his own standing dissent from the celebration — the heresy the next post would gleefully take up.*

The University of Chicago Press website is currently featuring a piece of mine called "Against National Poetry Month as Such". It's at <http://www.press.uchicago.edu>.

Charles Bernstein

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## **Re: April is the cruelest month for poetry ....**

02 Apr 1999

*David Antin, godfather of the talk poem, wrote back to endorse the heresy with relish; Bernstein passed the reply along.*

| David Antin sent me this reply to "Against National Poetry Month as Such".

David Antin sent me this reply to "Against National Poetry Month as Such". He said it would be OK to pass it on to the list. —Charles Bernstein \*\*\*

from DAVID ANTIN:

Hi Charles — I'm with you all the way. Antipoetry month in the midst of which, taking a cue from Geraut de Borneilh, I propose a TROBAR CLUS week in which no one shall be allowed to commit a transparency. For that week all poetic efforts

must have the opacity of wood or steel and equal weight. Truly CONCRETE POETRY cast in concrete or cast in iron with texts only on the underside, so that they must be lifted to be read. I am myself planning a poetry piece in cast glass (really), but fortunately placed underwater to diminish visibility. Perhaps I can claim a dispensation for its submergence. In any case it will be at the bottom of a pond if my grant comes through. Hard to find if not to finally see. So you can see (sic) I'm with you all the way. I also suggest POEM BARRERS laid across public roads, so they can IMPEDE traffic. POETIC PITS in sidewalks and walkways. POETIC LADDERS from which all but the top and bottom rung are removed. POETIC ELEVATORS from which all power must be CUT OFF so that they can only be moved by hand. WHISPER PERFORMANCES permitting only poetry performances conducted in whispers only in large auditoriums, where the first fifteen rows of seats must remain empty. Other suggestions are welcomed.

Best

David

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*Spring and midsummer pass with little set down here — a new  
Postmodern Culture, a routine outage or two — before August returns  
him, again, to the work of mourning.*

## **Rudy Burckhardt (1914-1999)**

04 Aug 1999

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*Rudy Burckhardt, the Swiss-born photographer and filmmaker long a fixture among New York's poets and painters, had drowned himself in a Vermont pond; Bernstein remembers the films and the wry, saving books.*

Rudy Burckhardt died on Sunday, drowning himself in a pond at his country house in Vermont. Rudy was a filmmaker and photographer, perhaps best known for his now-classic shots of New York's midtown area. In New York, he was an active presence both for independent filmmakers and poets, attending showings and readings. In fact, I last saw Rudy in June at Henry Hills's show of new films and video at Anthology Film Archive. Indeed, Burckhardt's films are among the great works of American independent cinema.

Rudy has a number of books, but I recommend most *Mobile Homes*, edited by Kenward Elmslie and published by Elmslie's Z Press in 1979. The wry autobiographical commentary in the book is a talisman against both sentimentality and earnestness.

Some web snap shots:

images: <http://www.3w-art.com/burckhardt/buz2002.jpg>  
[http://www.creview.com/images/365\\_610\\_1.jpg](http://www.creview.com/images/365_610_1.jpg)

and a commentary by Greg Masters, with a bit of an interview, and two pictures of Rudy: <http://www.artomatic.com/~gmasters/fortheartists.htm/burckhardt.htm>

Charles Bernstein

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## ***Talk's Riding***

07 Aug 1999

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*The debut issue of Tina Brown's Talk had handed Laura (Riding) Jackson the tabloid treatment — the homewrecker, the witch, the woman who simply quit poetry — and got her wrong. Bernstein rises to set the record straight, restoring the fifty years of prose the piece had erased and naming the misogyny in its handling of a difficult woman.*

I wonder if anyone else in Poetics List Land noticed that in the premiere issue of Talk magazine, just out, there is a piece on Laura Riding, detailing her close encounter with Schuyler Jackson and family in 1939? It's remarkable that Riding gets such a big spread, with a full page picture, in this magazine, but regrettable that only a few lines of her writing are included. More surprising, and unfortunate, is the impression given by the article that (Riding) Jackson stopped writing and settled down to become a housewife for the last fifty years of her life. The piece says she never wrote poetry again after meeting Jackson, but fails to note the voluminous "prose" that constitutes her later work, thus wiping out all reference to The Telling, Rational Meaning and her other essays of the 50s-80s. The article also says that Riding stopped writing poetry as a direct result of the break-up of Jackson's family, not only ignoring (Riding) Jackson's extensive commentary on this issue in her later work, but also ignoring the many premonitions of this renunciation of poetry in her earlier work. Thus, one of Riding's most significant aesthetic and philosophical positions is reduced to bathos. Of course, this article is not about Riding's work but about one of the most notorious events in her life, here given full tabloid treatment (but it's worth noting that there is nothing new in this piece; it is pretty much a recycling of previously reported facts, even the "spin" is old). The author at one point says something to the effect that many poets are crazy — the Blakes sitting naked in a tree, Pound's speeches on behalf of Mussolini, and Riding's "witch"-like break up of the Jacksons. There is also a description of Riding as being "hooked-nose" and unattractive, in contrast to the handsome Robert Graves. The piece ends with the suggestion that feminists are likely to lead any revival of interest in Riding but that, unlike Dickinson and Plath, she may not be a good role model for "womankind", since she is a two-time homewrecker. (Presumably suicide is more suitable for the woman writer than the sort of intellectual and social aggressivity of "hook-nosed" Riding.) I should note that I am recounting this from memory as I

do not have a copy of the magazine at hand. But I believe I am conveying the drift. And the part I dislike most: here I am talking about TALK, right according to plan.

Charles Bernstein

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## ***João Cabral de Melo Neto (1920-1999)***

*22 Oct 1999*

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*João Cabral de Melo Neto, the austere Pernambucan master whom Elizabeth Bishop had Englished, had died at seventy-nine; Bernstein marks the loss and, with Horácio Costa and Régis Bonvicino, turns two of the poems into English that same afternoon.*

João Cabral de Melo Neto died last week. He was 79 years old. One of the most important Brazilian poets of the postwar generations, Cabral continues to exert a strong influence on many younger Brazilian poets. He was remembered at a celebration for Haroldo de Camposs seventieth birthday at Yale this past weekend and certainly the two poets suggests the enormous range of Brazilian poetry in the past fifty years. As Régis Bonvincino writes to me about Cabral: Along with Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Murilo Mendes, Cabral is considered the best poet of Brazilian Poetry born in the 20's.

Cabrals Selected Poetry: 1937-1990 is published by Wesleyan, and includes the well-known translation of his work by Elizabeth Bishop. This afternoon Horacio Costa and I translated two poems of Cabral that I wanted to post to the list, with Régis adding some changes by email to the first.

— Charles Bernstein

### Psychology of Composition (VII)

Its mineral the paper on which to write verse; verse that is possible not to make.

Mineral are flowers and plants, fruits, animals when in a state of words.

Mineral the horizon line, our names, those things made of words.

Mineral, at last, any book: because the written word is mineral, the cold nature of the written word.

(Tr. Ch.B., H.C. and R.B., based on the published translations of Djelal Kadir.)

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### The Last Poem

I dont know who sends me poetry nor whether Who would call it that.

But who who may be, who that Who (myself, my sweat?),

be it woman, landscape, or the no that needs fill the void,

to make, for example, the crutch that I made walk the left soul,  
to Whom should be given the inglorious burden I ask: my last poem  
sent, as a poem perverse, antilyric, made into antiverse.

(Tr. Ch. B. and H.C., based on the published translations of Djelal Kadir.)

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## ***Re: up with down!: Correction***

22 Oct 1999

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*Steve Ellis had passed along a secondhand story; Bernstein needed two words to deny it.*

| *Re: Steve Ellis's second hand story in a recent post:*

Re: Steve Ellis's second hand story in a recent post:

'tain't so.

Charles

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## ***Jackson Mac Low / Tanning Prize***

22 Nov 1999

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*Jackson Mac Low — chance-operator and, by Creeley's citation, the most defining of American experimentalists — had won the Academy's hundred-thousand-dollar Tanning Prize; Bernstein relays the news as a vindication of the difficult the list existed to defend.*

Jackson Mac Low Wins 1999 Tanning Prize

\$100,000 for Mastery in the Art of Poetry

New York, November 3, 1999--The Academy of American Poets today announced that Jackson Mac Low has been selected as the recipient of the 1999 Tanning Prize. The \$100,000 award recognizes outstanding and proven mastery in the art of poetry. The judges for this year's Tanning Prize were Frank Bidart, Robert Creeley, Sharon Olds, Marjorie Perloff, and John Yau.

Jury chair Robert Creeley writes of Mr. Mac Low's poetry:

"Jackson Mac Low is a poet of great heart and abiding faith. His poetry has long been recognized as the most defining of American experimentalism, both with respect to text and to performance. It is the genius of his art to make poetry again enactment, to make its materials words and syntax, and all the human echoes each must carry a resonating, perceptive pattern reaching far beyond the enclosure of imagined subjects or intent. Patient, enduring, selfless, he has made substance of our language in ways that reveal its own initiating authority, proving its sounds a song, its progress a transforming revelation.

Commenting on the jury process of this year's Tanning Prize, Creeley reports,

The poets our jury considered were a significant range from all character of background and practice, professional commitment and cultural circumstance. It is the great virtue of our country's poetry that it is plural, poetries, rather than an abiding, singular hierarchy or one settled condition of practice. In awarding the prize to Jackson Mac Low, we sought to honor not only a great master of the art in its most inventive and resourceful character, but to recall also that American poetry itself defines such a tradition as he exemplifies, fosters insistently the experimental, seeks always to expand the parameters of its activity and relationships.

Jackson Mac Low was born in Chicago in 1922. He is a poet and composer and a writer of performance pieces, essays, plays, and radio works. He is also a painter and multimedia performance artist (often with his wife, Anne Tardos). Author of twenty-six books, his works have been published in many anthologies and periodicals and read publicly, exhibited, performed, and broadcast in North America, Europe, and New Zealand. Mac Low's recent publications include the books *Bloomsday* (1984), *French Sonnets* (1984, second ed. 1989), *The Virginia Woolf Poems* (1985), *Eight Drawing-Asymmetries* (1985), *Representative Works: 1938-1985* (1986), *Words and Ends from Ez* (1989), *Twenties: 100 Poems* (1991), *Pieces o' Six: Thirty-Three Poems in Prose* (1992), *42 Merzgedichte in Memoriam Kurt Schwitters* (1994), and *Barnesbook* (1995) and the compact disc (with Anne Tardos and seven instrumentalists) *Open Secrets* (1993). Mac Low has taught at many schools, notably the Naropa Institute, Schule für Dichtung in Vienna, Bard College, and Brown University. His previous awards include fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, CAPS (New York State), PEN, the Guggenheim Foundation and the New York Foundations for the Arts.

The Tanning Prize was established in August 1994 by a gift of \$2 million to the Academy from the painter Dorothea Tanning. The previous recipients of the award are W. S. Merwin, James Tate, Adrienne Rich, and A.R. Ammons.

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## **Ed Dorn 1929-1999**

15 Dec 1999

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*Edward Dorn, the Black Mountain student who made the American West his subject and Gunslinger his monument, had died at seventy; Bernstein relays James Campbell's Guardian obituary of a poet who stayed, on principle, at the fringe.*

This obituary for Ed Dorn

\*by James Campbell\*

appeared in The Guardian on Tuesday December 14, 1999 and on The Guardian website:

<http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/obituaries/story/0%2C3604%2C114039%2C00.html>

Edward Dorn

Poet rooted in the imagery of the dispossessed, of working-class America and the mythology of the wild west

The American poet Edward Dorn, who has died aged 70, had a loyal readership in Britain, despite having published little in this country for almost 25 years. He was grouped with the Black Mountain poets -named after the progressive college in North Carolina - but unlike Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan, the leading "black mountaineers", was not a teacher at the college, only a student.

His poetry also stood apart from theirs in being rooted in working-class politics and a sense of wild western myth. A list of a few of his many titles gives a hint of the territory he occupied: Hands Up! Idaho Out, High West Rendezvous, and the most famous of them, Gunslinger.

Dorn was born in the prairie town of Villa Grove, Illinois, on the banks of the Embarras river, and was brought up between there and Michigan. The wanderlust was in his blood. He never knew his father. His mother was of Dutch ancestry, and his grandfather worked on the railroad. Of his home town, he said: "The first thing you're preoccupied with is how to exist. If you stayed, you had to have a pretty specific reason - you couldn't just stay."

Dorn's means of escape was through education: first, at the University of Illinois, and then, in 1950 and again in 1954, at Black Mountain College. He was taught there by Charles Olson, author of the Maximus Poems, a sprawling work in the manner of Ezra Pound's Cantos and William Carlos Williams's Paterson. Olson inspired Dorn to conceive of geography as the American subject, the one from which all other subjects derived, and indeed Dorn's first published book (1960) was called What I See In The Maximus Poems.

He even went to live in the fishing town of Gloucester, which forms the background to Olson's vast poem, and wrote poems of his own there, published as From Gloucester Out. Like several of Dorn's books, it was first published in London, in 1964.

His early poems were explicitly about working people: truck drivers, small farmers, hunters. Among the earliest poems he published was The Rick Of Green Wood (1956), a lyrical verse with an undertone derived from the English ballads,

about a meeting with a woodcutter: "I don't/ want a rick of green wood, I told him/ I want cherry or alder or something strong/ and thin, or thick if dry, but I don't/ want the green wood, my wife would die."

Despite the advanced notions about life and art which he encountered at Black Mountain, and his later attempts to write a poetry of ideas, Dorn's sympathies were always with the dispossessed. In *The Debt My Mother Owed to Sears Roebuck*, he wrote of "the dust of the fields/ in her eye, the only title she ever had to lands. "

Dorn's verse was inclined to be loose in structure. He could say, without blinking, that there was little difference between poetry and prose, and even between poetry and talk. His "talk" lacked the economy of other speaking-voice poets - such as Allen Ginsberg at his best, or the minimalist Robert Creeley, who was Dorn's examiner at Black Mountain College.

But he was right to stay true to his themes and his poetic voice. At the end of the 1960s, he made his peace with the cowboy, and began the poem which was to make his name and grant him a status equal to that of his older teachers.

*Gunslinger I & 2* was published in Britain by the late, lamented Fulcrum Press in 1970. It showed Dorn in a new mode, hip and humorous, combining the iconic figure of the old west with concepts drawn from his readings in philosophy and science. Just to stop his epic - there were to be four books in all - from getting too serious, he gave the gunslinger of the title a talking horse, who was apt to roll a joint in the middle of a conversation, introduced a character called "I" in addition to the first-person narrator, and put all his characters at the service of a cabaret owner called Miss Lil.

Dorn's relationship with England began when he arrived to teach at the University of Essex as a Fulbright lecturer in 1964. His first marriage ended in divorce and he married an Englishwoman, Jennifer Dunbar, with whom he collaborated on several projects. He soon made friends among the standard-bearers of England's alternative literary scene, such as the poets Tom Raworth and JH Prynne (to both of whom he dedicated his book *The North Atlantic Turbine*), Tom Pickard, who ran the Morden Tower in Newcastle, and the publisher Stuart Montgomery, of Fulcrum Press.

England, Dorn said, "set me on a new course," but his politics sometimes tempted him to take a hammer to England's class system. In the long poem, *Oxford*, he wrote: "The woman opposite/ by no act other than Murder/ is permitted existence." When he used the same blunt instrument on his own country - "the thorn in the throat of our national hypocrisy" etc - the result was effective neither as poetry nor as rabble-rousing.

Politics and poetics were in a state of constant interplay in Dorn's work. The function of the poet in America, he said, was to "stay as removed as possible from all permanent associations with power". As for the institutional prizes, such as the National Book Award and the Pulitzer, his words were: "Who cares?"

At a reading in London in late 1998, Dorn, clearly ill, gave a strange, mesmerising performance, which was somewhere between poetry, stand-up comedy and personal tragedy. He prefaced each poem with a long introduction, straying easily from the point, and then, just as he had the audience chuckling, would burst into tears for no apparent reason.

The overall impression was of an almost unbearable sensitivity. He treated the listeners in the hall as he might have done a group of friends invited to his home, and this too could be seen as part of his aesthetic. He once joked that he knew "almost exactly how many readers I have, and I even know a large percentage of them personally".

Although populist in politics, Dorn was a cult writer whose natural home was on the fringe. Gunslinger would have baffled the "chunky westerner" of whom he wrote in *Home On The Range*, or the cowboy who sings "Yi Yi" in *Vaquero*, another early poem. While in his early days he too worked by turning his hand to whatever came along, from the mid-1960s onwards he earned his living as a university teacher in Kansas, Chicago, San Francisco and Boulder, Colorado, among other places.

Dorn was remarkably prolific, turning out chapbooks, pamphlets, magazines and books which merged into other books. Between the years 1968-72, for instance, he published almost 20 titles of poetry, fiction and non-fiction. With Prynne and others, he issued *Bean News*, in which journalism and poetry, fact and forgery overlapped. More recently, he was engaged in *Languedoc Variorum: A Defence Of Heresy And Heretics*, a long poem with a running prose commentary, which Etruscan Books, in Devon, have been planning to publish in 2000.

His novel, *By The Sound*, appeared in 1971, and his *Collected Poems* in 1983. In 1996 his *High West Rendezvous* was published, and this year saw the appearance of *Sun Unwound*, translations with Gordon Brotherstone of Latin American poetry.

Dorn's wife Jennifer, and their son and daughter, survive him, as does his first wife, and his stepson, stepdaughter and son from that marriage.

£#149; Edward Dorn, poet, born April 12 1929; died December 10 1999

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## 2000

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### ***Lita Hornick***

24 Jan 2000

*Lita Hornick's Kulchur magazine and its press were among the vehicles that carried the New American Poetry through the 1960s and after; an obituary line in the Times, spotted by Susan Bee, is the occasion, and he passes it to a room better able than he to fill in the history.*

Susan (Bee) just now pointed out to me a notice in the obituary listing in today's NY Times that Lita Hornick had died. I have no information about her death except this, but I do know Lita Hornick, who was the publisher of Kulchur magazine and Kulchur, both of which made a vital contribution to the poetry of the 60s through 80s, publishing many outstanding poets and collections by poets in the "New American Poetry" traditions. I hope others on this list will fill in on the history of Kulchur and Lita Hornick herself, who was an extravagant character, and the author of one collection of poems.

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### ***Query from Carolee Schneemann***

13 Feb 2000

*Carolee Schneemann, the artist, wanted a half-remembered line traced — so the puzzle comes to the list, which loves a source-hunt.*

Carolee Schneemann ask if anyone on the list can help locate the source of this quotation (more or less accurate):

"The proper result of a successful revolution is the contentment of our cats."

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### ***Shadowtime***

20 Mar 2000

*Shadowtime — Brian Ferneyhough's opera on the life and death of Walter Benjamin, for which Bernstein wrote the libretto — was still two years from its Munich premiere; here the first section of it reaches a stage, at the 92nd Street Y, and he lays out the occasion in full.*

The first performance of sections of "The Doctrine of Similarity" will be on March 28, 8pm, at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan, featuring the Arnold Schoenberg Choir, with Maurizio Pollini.

The Doctrine of Similarity is a section from Shadowtime, an opera by Brian Ferneyhough for which I wrote the libretto. Shadowtime was commissioned by the Munich Biennale and will have its premiere in 2002. The Doctrine of Similarity is the first section of the opera to be performed.

Here are some excerpts from the Program Notes:

Shadowtime is based on the life and work of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). In its eight sections, the opera explores some of the major themes of Benjamin's work, including the nature of language, the possibilities for a transformational leftist politics, and the role of materiality in art.

The Doctrine of Similarity consists of eight short movements for a 48-voice chorus and six instruments. Each of the movements reflects on the nature of history, time, and translation/transformation — all central preoccupations for Benjamin. The title comes from an essay by Benjamin in which he considers the ways that the physical sounds of language echo or mimic the primordial structures of the cosmos. In the work, various numeric patterns create reverberations within and between the text and music.

In terms of musical structure, the theme of temporality is explored by the use of canon forms throughout the work. In the section called "Indissolubility, the concern with the temporal is represented by the choice of a multiple, palimpsestic parody of a late medieval motet from the Montpelier Codex. The libretto extends these investigations through the use of linguistic translations and displacements. While the text may roam in time, space, and content, it returns ever and again to the knotted dead end situations of life in extremity where Sometimes / you burn a book because / It is cold / and you need the fire / to keep warm / and / sometimes / you read a / book for the same reason.

The libretto for "The Doctrine of Similarity" is forthcoming in West Coast Line. The score has just been published by Edition Peters (No. 7564).

The line-up for the March 28 performance:

Maurizio Pollini, Piano  
Juliane Banse, Soprano  
Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Mezzo-Soprano  
Michael Schade, Tenor  
Russell Braun, Baritone  
Steven Schick, Percussion  
Rolf Schulte, Violin  
Aleck Karis, Piano  
Alan Kay, Clarinet  
Jean Kopperud, Bass Clarinet  
Dennis Smylie, Contrabass Clarinet

SCHUBERT "Nachthelle," D. 892

SCHUBERT "Coronach (Totengesang der Frauen und Mädchen)," D. 836

SCHUBERT "Ständchen," D. 920

SCHUBERT Gesänge aus Wilhelm Meister, D. 877

SCHUBERT "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern," D. 714  
SCHUBERT "Psalm 92, Lied für den Sabbath," D. 953  
FERNEYHOUGH "The Doctrine of Similarity" (World Premiere - Commissioned  
by The Carnegie Hall Corporation: Libretto - Bernstein)  
SCHOENBERG De profundis (Psalm 130), Op. 50b  
SCHOENBERG Friede auf Erden, Op. 13

Pre-concert lecture starts at 7:00 PM with Ara Guzelimian.

More information: <http://www.carnegiehall.org>

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## ***Re: Republics of Reality: 1975-1995***

14 Apr 2000

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*Sun & Moon was at last gathering seven of Bernstein's out-of-print early books into a single volume; the occasion turns him, characteristically, from his own book toward Douglas Messerli, the publisher who had printed the first of them.*

Republics of Reality: 1975-1995 contains seven out-of-print books and one new sequence:

Parsing (1976) Shade (1978) Poetic Justice (1979) The Occurrence of Tune (1981) Stigma (1981) Resistance (1983) The Absent Father in "Dumbo" (1990) & the new set: Residual Rubbernecking (1995)

Since SHADE was Sun & Moon Press's first book (side-stapled, with a "brushed" photograph by Susan Bee on the cover), this publication provides the perfect opportunity to thank Douglas Messerli for all his work on behalf of so many poets and writers (including myself!).

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\_\_\_\_\_ Doulgas Messerli [REDACTED] sent this post to the list:

*Sun & Moon Press would like to announce the publication (finally) of REPUBLICS OF REALITY: 1975-1995 by Charles Bernstein. The book is priced at \$14.95 (376 pages).*

*You can purchase this book directly from Sun & Moon (at my e-mail mailto:[REDACTED]) for a 20% discount, if you mention the PUBLISHERS WEEKLY review in your order.*

*The new issue of PUBLISHERS WEEKLY contains a starred review (representing a book of "outstanding quality"): \*At once the most paradoxically controversial and popular, accessible and most difficult of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets, Bernstein is also the writer of that group who strove early on to experiment with the extremes of its newly minted methods. ... the volume as a whole presents as many promises as it does relevant problems, as many beauties as it does strange new imaginings.*

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## ***Doug Oliver (1937 -- 2000) (FWD from Anselm Hollo)***

22 Apr 2000

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*Doug Oliver — British poet, husband of Alice Notley, author of The Infant and the Pearl — had died in Paris; Anselm Hollo's forwarded notice brings the first word, and carries one of Oliver's own poems with it.*

| From: [REDACTED] Date: Sat, 22 Apr 2000 13:09:50 EDT Subject: Doug Oliver

PARIS: After a protracted illness, poet Doug Oliver passed away last night, surrounded by his children (from first marriage); his brother; and wife, Alice Notley. Edmund and Anselm Berrigan were still en route to Paris - they are there now.

The funeral (cremation) is on Thursday. There will be a memorial meeting at the British Institute in Paris on Thursday evening. There will also be a tribute at the Cambridge (UK) Conference on Contemporary Poetry next weekend.

OUR GENERATION (For Steve Carey)

I hear the birds of Kenya singing as I write this for Steve Carey who liked recorded bird song as I do, the cassette shrill, a door falling-to on squeaky hinges. Steve: a grating laugh of one who was buff-crested, sulphur chested, lost like me in distant islands of sound in sonophilia for Kenyas and Britains and native American woode, with its double-toned wood thrush. Our own generation as its song. Calls of 'Will be!', 'Will be!', like a Wilbye madrigal, every generation in hope of its many-coloured men and women. And the fish-eagle's magical feet snatch silver fish from gold-breeding lakes at all dawns, as we snatch syllables from standstill moments and lift that sound, a moment isolated, into sunlight.

Douglas Oliver 1937 — 2000

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## ***Re: Douglas Oliver: Independent Obit***

02 May 2000

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*A week on, the fuller account: Nicholas Johnson's Independent obituary of Oliver, relayed by way of Simon Pettet — the whole life set down at length, from Ferry Press to the one Paris room of his last illness.*

Simon Pettet passed this obituary on to me. It is by Nicholas Johnson and appeared in The Independent \*\*\*\*

DOUGLAS OLIVER (1937-2000)

THE WORK of the poet Douglas Oliver remains an anomaly in late 20th-century English poetry. Spanning 35 years, it reveals a contrary nature; erudite, self-taught and dignified, defiantly old-fashioned if not Blimpish. He was a poet, but no less a novelist; lecturer, journalist and translator - exilic researcher, inventor of forms. His writings investigated the instability of language, pitched against the

language of political and social upheaval, grief and human vulnerability. While possessing an English register, often formal, his poetry works in larger contexts. *The Infant and the Pearl* (1985), his most celebrated poem, satirised the reductive values of Thatcherism.

She was wearing a pearly suit, not silver-rose pink, since sadly we seemed to be sharing a black and white world. But the bearing of the front passenger meant a man for the media to deal with delicately: a Joseph for dreaming and descrying dreams in the eye of his leader.

Oliver was born in 1937, in Southampton, and brought up in Branksome, next to Bournemouth, the youngest of three children. His Glaswegian father was an insurance manager. Home was Browning Avenue, a dilapidated 19th-century cliffside estate built for Sir Percy Shelley, son of the poet. Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in Bournemouth in the 1880s, became one of Oliver's heroes, an instructor in "how to wrestle with the presbyterian background in a way which restores honour to the parents". Stevenson's house (Shelley's manor), King's Park, where Douglas and his brother Brian watched boxing matches, and Christchurch harbour, where he studied sea and shore birds, were childhood haunts. The immediacy of childhood never left one, he believed, and was used by boxers, priests and politicians to gain power over their opponents' identity. He researched such vocations avidly; they were his prey but he was also subject to them. Bournemouth School, a grammar, was not happy for him and he did not stay beyond O levels. Following National Service as an RAF accountant, he went into journalism, first in Coventry, then in Cambridge, where he became a staff reporter on the *Cambridge Evening News*. His first wife, Janet Hughes, a primary schoolteacher, whom he married in 1962, is memorialised in the opening phrase of his collected poems, "You know I'm working Jan." They had three children, Kate, Tom and Bonamy.

The poet J.H. Prynne, responding to Oliver's review of his second book, *Kitchen Poems* (1968), welcomed Oliver in Cambridge to a new clan, poets with shared empathies and raucous night lives. Oliver is remembered as a ferocious and unprincipled player of the board game *Diplomacy*; sharp at poker too. He researched in philosophy, witchcraft and theology, but remained a journalist, with a privately disturbing family life.

*Oppo Hectic* (1969; from "o poetique"), his first book, was published by Andrew Crozier's Ferry Press. Ferry would consistently publish Oliver between 1969 and 1985. *Oppo Hectic*'s 24 poems and discrete pieces fused Pop Art, post-Victoriana ('Flesh-blue birds / two men sit on / khaki rocks / eating birds gannets . . . Guillemot fry-up / with guano and dry seaweed fuel . . How long a feast? dodo bell-name remorse / laughter peals / more guillemot guillemot') and domestic poem

into something both erudite and witty. The wit verged on satire, came naturally and was not played for laughs.

So my word, love, attaches to the lining of his oyster mouth; we'll let him prosper it. Then Tom will announce, one day: My father's dead. You're my father.?

Tom, who was born with Down's Syndrome, died before his second birthday in 1969. His presence became a constant motif, centring around the notion of 'harmlessness' in many of his father's subsequent books. In the *Cave of Suicession* (1974) was set in Suicide Cave, an abandoned lead mine in Derbyshire's Peak District. Oliver slept there for many nights over a period of months to achieve proximity to his subject, which drew in his dead son. Cave was reproduced as he had typed it in the dark, mistyped, the typos subverting a razor-sharp narrative, creating working contrasts between surfaces and their durability.

A Now write for me the story of a man who acts so badly that I cannot be his oracle, who lives with these failures w don continually reminding him of what he cannot do; and then write me the tale of how he yet does something worthy of me.  
Q How shall I write this? A By living it; that rule has not changed.

Oliver's first novel, *The Harmless Building* (1973), was set in a town on the south coast of England, one late August afternoon, the twin objects of Donald's ambition were both asleep, the baby in the carrycot upstairs in a room of that Georgian museum building, and Uncle Richard in an armchair in his Victorian house only a mile or two away. A train crashes. The idiosyncrasies of a dysfunctional family are portrayed through bereavement and catastrophe. This colourful work, its frequent incidents owing more to concepts of sixth sense and premonition than the subconscious, also deferred to French Structuralism. Oliver was fluent in French, having left Cambridge for Paris to work as translator for Agence France-Presse in the late Sixties. Stylistically, *The Harmless Building* prefigured the early films of Peter Greenaway:

In the park, late-abled seagulls circled overhead, calling ? Jacques Lacan, Jacques Lacan?, without giving further details.

Oliver returned to England in 1972, to Brightlingsea, where he read Literature at Essex University. He was offered a post there on his graduation day having achieved the most distinguished BA in the university's history. He taught part-time for five years, becoming close to the critic Herbie Butterfield and, important to the latter part of his life, two poets from New York, Ted Berrigan and Alice Notley. He composed *The Diagram Poems* (1979) in Essex from syndicated reports on the Tupamaros guerrillas in Uruguay, empathising with the Robin-Hood-style bandits. He cast a searching light on the indistinct politics of revolutionary violence and its barbaric suppression.

The early 1980s were marked by nervous illness, of which psoriasis was only one manifestation. This period saw a rekindled interest in boxing, in counterpoint to Jainism (the respect of every living creature, a belief to which he devoutly kept). Peter Ackroyd, when at *The Spectator*, would despatch him to Italy to review boxing matches. In 1982 he took a lectureship at the British Institute in Paris, teaching French pupils. Exhausting ferry crossings each weekend back to England and further work that took him as far as Haiti and Grenada strained his marriage and separation ensued.

The *Infant and the Pearl* was based on the 14th-century alliterative poem *Pearl*. He created a somnambulist voyage in a car with Margaret Thatcher and various cabinet ministers. Melancholy, deftly rhymed, seeing further ahead than the drive, *Infant* is more than an allegory on power:

The hills, though, were free, free of disorder, hills of privilege, of prerogative governance, a regime arising from the ruins of order: lording it over the lean shires; once the same Britain, now they were Britain's border.

In 1987 *Kind*, his collected poems, was published, dedicated to his son. In the same year his correspondence featured in Iain Sinclair's novel *White Chapel*, *Scarlet Tracings*. Earlier published work featured in *A Various Art* (also 1987), an unusually precise anthology which paved the way for a new readership, and, three years later through Sinclair, his editor at Paladin, *Three Variations on the Theme of Harm*. Nineteen eighty-seven was significant, too, for his renewing his friendship with Alice Notley. Her husband, Ted Berrigan, had died four years earlier. Oliver and Notley married. They settled in New York. His later work evokes the friendship with her sons Edmund and Anselm Berrigan, today also poets.

Oliver worked as a computer programmer in a cancer hospital and as a contact tracer for HIV patients. *Penniless Politics* (1991), set in New York, was a photocopied text Sinclair, as 'Hoarse Commerce', published in 150 copies and received unusual attention for a fugitive publication. 'What was the shock like,' asked Howard Brenton in *The Guardian*, reading T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* when it was published in 1922? I think I know. I've just read Douglas Oliver's epoch-making long poem *Penniless Politics*. I never thought I would read anything like it in the 1990s. *Penniless Politics* sets the literary agenda for the next 20 years. Further media coverage followed, and *Bloodaxe*, not known in 20 years for recognising experimental poetry, reissued the book in 1994.

In 1992 Notley and Oliver settled in Paris, where Oliver resumed teaching at the British Institute. Three years later they both read at Mike Goldmark's 'Return of the Reforgotten' event at the Royal Albert Hall in London alongside Allen

Ginsberg, Sorley MacLean and Denise Riley. From 1996 to 1998 Penguin, Talisman in the United States and Etruscan Books published variants on Oliver's ongoing projects. The Shattered Crystal, still to be published in full, partly derives from his friendship with Gisèle Celan- Estrange, the Romanian poet Paul Celan's widow. Oliver read this on his final visit to England ? at the London festival For the Locker and the Steerer in March last year. A handful of rich, yet sparse, works like 'Well of Sorrows in Purple Tinctures', 'The Oracle of the Drowned', 'The Heron' and the sequence 'What Fades Will Be' also retain an evanescent quality where phrases and cadences flicker much like the ghosts Oliver became increasingly haunted by.

Douglas Oliver was emotionally telepathic, gentle and almost devout. He was generous with his time and his advice; he did not believe there were no answers, but neither did he insist upon them. He was publicly supportive of writers half his age like D.S. Marriot and Helen Macdonald. He researched the run-down banlieues of Paris for his novel cum autobiography Whisper Louise, a dialogue with the 'Red Virgin' of the Paris Commune of 1871, Louise Michel. Last month Brian Oliver proof-read Whisper Louise's final chapter, while his brother's body gave way to cancer. His last walks in the city he loved were walks to stave off pain. His last four months showed courage and concern for others, as he lay in bed in his and Alice's one room unable to stand because so much of his spine had been cut away. I retain an abiding image of Doug Oliver, when I last saw him in December, psoriasis bleached out of his face by chemotherapy, ever blackbird-like; surrounded by books, papers, collages and coins. His last book, A Salvo for Africa, reflecting from a purely European perspective on the future of Africa, some 10 years in the gestation, was published four weeks ago.

Nicholas Johnson

Douglas Dunlop Oliver, writer: born Southampton 14 September 1937; married 1962 Janet Hughes (two daughters, and one son deceased; marriage dissolved 1987), 1988 Alice Notley; died Paris 21 April 2000.

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### ***Milton Kessler (1930-2000)***

02 May 2000

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*Milton Kessler had taught at Binghamton since 1963 and published quietly across four decades; Bernstein marks his death with the books and a late poem, one of them printed in Sulfur's final issue.*

Milton Kessler, Poet and Professor of English at SUNY-Binghamton (since 1963), died April 17, 2000 at the age of 69.

His books included: *The Grand Concourse* (Binghamton, NY : MSS paper book, 1990) *Sailing too Far* (New York:: Harper and Row. 1973) *Woodlawn North*, preface by Elizabeth Bishop (Boston : Impressions Workshop, 1970) *A Road Came Once*, frontispiece by Ben Shahn (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1963)

Milton Kessler has a poem in "The Final Issue" of *Sulfur* (45/46), which is just out. Here is an excerpt:

Walk to the epicenter of leaves on grass  
struggle to keep carrying heavy bones  
as I must each biblical day  
    far from any bench  
and without breath   Exhale   Expire

.....

I failed to find help in the tools of poetry. When asked  
    what was wanted,  
        fell into deafness—rain.  
Pain became  
    frozen reason

To make up for the years without you, reader, I hug suffering and illness which comfort me like the shoulders of a sweet roll at Reznikoff's ..... How can I leave you, reader, just having found you again in your corner-seat, empty pages shaking.

But I have an appointment with sleep. No rimes left for subway souls. ....

(from "New Month")

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## **Compendium Books**

14 Jun 2000

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*Compendium, the Camden bookshop that had for years been the one London rack where British and American small-press poetry could actually be found, was closing; Paul Quinn's appeal, relayed here, wonders aloud whether anything can be done.*

I received this message from Paul Quinn in London. Those wishing to express their support for Compendium can write to Mike Hart, although Paul notes that international support may well have no impact on the fate of this great bookstore.

Mike Hart's address is: Compendium Books 234 Camden High Street London NW1 8QS U.K.

—Charles Bernstein \_\_\_\_\_ Forwarded Letter from Paul Quinn: Compendium books of Camden town in closing in September. This shop has, I would argue, a vital role in British culture where small press material is

concerned. It is just about the only place where small press poetry etc can be encountered and read on the racks. I have lost count of the number of poets and writers I first encountered there ... in its estimable poetry section. The closure will mean that small press poetry will only be distributed here by private mailing lists etc. — all well and good, but it removes the possibility of those who aren't already committed to this kind of material (THE crucial audience, I'd argue) coming across it. Mike at Compendium has been equally dedicated to stocking the best American and British small press poetry. There is literally no where else that goes much beyond the usual big publishers. Maybe it's just a sign of the times and nothing can be done, but I thought I'd at least alert those who might have an interest. A vital connection between international innovative poetries is about to be lost.

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## **Letter from New York**

03 Jul 2000

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*One of his periodic omnibus dispatches from New York — an obituary joke, an anniversary, a shelf of recommendations, and the deadpan schemes threaded between them. The genre is his own: the list as commonplace book.*

In memorium Walter Matthau (Matuschanskayasky) (1920-2000)

Matthau comes up significantly in Aram Saroyan's novel *The Street*, which is mostly about New York in the 60s; it's a novel in which Clark Coolidge figures prominently. Matthau was Aram's father-in-law from the time he was 15. There is a classic Jewish joke, one version of which is told about Jack Lemmon and Matthau. In the middle of a movie shoot, Matthau slips on the icy street and takes a bad fall. There is much alarm. An ambulance is called and Matthau's head is propped up by an improvised pillow. Lemmon bends down and asks, "Walter, are you comfortable?" — "I make a good living."

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The Fourth of July is not only the 100th birthday of Louis Armstrong; it is also the day, in 1983, Ted Berrigan died; he was 49 years old. The good news is that Berrigan's *The Sonnets* will be reprinted this Fall by Penguin, in an expanded edition, with a introduction by Alice Notley and source notes for some of the poems.

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While previously announced on the Poetics List, I want to recommend for any of you who may have missed it:

THIS STORY IS MINE: Little Autobiographical Dictionary of Elegy, the English version of Emmanuel Hocquard's CETTE HISTOIRE EST LA MIENNE: Petit dictionnaire autobiographique de l'elegie (NOTES, 1997), in a wonderful translation by Norma Cole Available from SPD and also from the publisher Instress, PO Box 3124, Saratoga, CA 95070 US\$4. Checks to Leonard Brink.

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new and in progress:

[www.henryhills.com](http://www.henryhills.com)

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While it's not new, I just discovered that the issue of New Observations edited by Susan Bee and Mira Schor, called *\_Ripple Effects: Painting and Language\_* is on line, complete: <http://plexus.org/newobs/113/> This includes statements and work by Christian Schumann, Amy Sillman, David Reed, Jane Hammond, Rochelle Feinstein, Julia Jacquette, Pamela Wye, Kay Rosen, David Humphrey, Kenneth Goldsmith, Faith Wilding, Lucio Pozzi, Richard Tuttle, Tom Knechtel, and the editors.

What is new, just announced in fact, is *\*M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists' Writings, Theory, and Criticism\**, edited by Susan Bee and Mira Schor and due out from Duke in December. Full contents and other info at Duke web site — <http://www.dukeupress.edu> (go to *\*Search\** then type in M/E/A/N/I/N/G (with slashes) in title box)

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### Conference Blues

*If you're a doctor, you can get your way paid to a conference in Hawaii by a drug company — I think choosing to become a professor of literature entails recognizing what it will cost you — but it shouldn't cost us the right to complain about it, should it?*

This is why I support legislation that would allow licensed poets to prescribe drugs. We need to stop complaining about our plight and begin to work on developing initiatives that will put poets more directly in the economic mainstream.

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Hey! Yo! conferees! returning from Maine spill the beans for your fellow listees

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As part of his new anthology of 20th century American poetry from Oxford, Cary Nelson has been editing a series of excellent author pages for poets included in the anthology. Loss Glazier is now in the process of linking these pages to

relevant EPC author pages. Take a look:  
<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/index.htm>

Meanwhile, the new two volume Library of America anthology of American Poetry is out and it is terrific, panoramic collection, well worth getting. I am planning to use the anthology in my undergraduate class in the Fall. The table of contents for volume one and two, respectively, are at: <http://www.loa.org/volume.jsp?RequestID=140&s=toc> <http://www.loa.org/volume.jsp?RequestID=143&s=toc>

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The new issue of TLS (6/30/00) features Paul Quinn's "Letter from Buffalo", which, in addition to a discerning consideration of the city, includes a discussion of the Poetics Program at UB as well as the EPC. \_\_\_\_\_

Two new books from the Press of the State University of New York

LISTENING TO READING Stephen Ratcliffe  
<http://www.sunypress.edu/sunyp/backads/html/c45038.html>

POETIC EPISTEMOLOGIES Gender and Knowing in Women's Language-Oriented Writing Megan Simpson  
<http://www.sunypress.edu/sunyp/backads/html/c44457.html>

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For some time I have wanted to write a brief comment on \*Unquell the Dawn Now\* by Robert Kelly and Schuldt, which is most notable for Kelly's magnificent homophonic translation of Holderlin's "Am Quell der Donau". At a translation conference at Barnard a couple of years ago, Kelly noted that he wanted to do a completely non-comic homophonic translation, partly to show that this approach to translation doesn't need to be funny. MacPherson & co. has published an elaborately produced, color-coded, mutlipart edition, with a range of translation versions beyond Kelly's initial homophonic. All in all a valuable book for those interested in alternative modes of translation, or for that matter interest in Holderlin's poem. Full description at <http://www.mcphersonco.com/document/unquell.html>

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Edmond Jabes, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop:

"The ladder urges us beyond ourselves. Hence it's importance. But in a void, where do we place it?"

— Charles Bernstein

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## ***Ursule Molinaro (192?-2000)***

12 Jul 2000

*Ursule Molinaro — novelist, translator from four languages, and, to those who knew her, a numerologist — had died; Bernstein relays Raymond Federman's note to Ronald Sukenick, one writer's memory of another too little read.*

I forward here a message I received from Raymond Federman — a note he sent to Ron Sukenick, Editor of the American Book Review. I am sending this to the list with Raymond's permission. I haven't been able to locate her year of birth.

*charles this is what I wrote to ron today about ursule*

*Ron*

*I just learned that Ursule Molinaro died today — she was one of us — a real writer who refused to compromise. She was also a fine artist. But for me she will remain one of the most astute numerologists. One evening in a restaurant in the village [I think Marianne Hauser was there too — another one of our great cotemporaries] Ursule deciphered for me the numbers in my name and she told me the whole story of my life - -past present future. She was not read enough. But perhaps now she will be.*

*I feel sad. I don't know why really. I didn't know her that well.*

*I read her some.*

*I hope ABR will make mention of her changing of tenses*

*you may even print my little statement above about her as an homage to her.*

*Federman*

*from McPherson and Co's online catalog, followed by a list of books they publish <http://www.mcphersonco.com/authors/umolinar.html>:*

*Ursule Molinaro is the author of thirteen novels, a number of widely produced one-act plays, three volumes of non-fiction, and hundreds of short stories. Her novels and stories have been published in England, France, and Japan, as well as the U.S. Recipient of awards and fellowships from the McDowell Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the PEN American Center, Ms. Molinaro also translates from four languages, including works by Hermann Hesse, Dino Buzzati, Nathalie Sarraute, Phillipe Sollers, Uwe Johnson, Rheinhard Lettau, Audiberti, and films by Jean Luc-Godard and Agnes Varda. She is also an artist (her paintings and collages appear on her McPherson titles), dramatist, translator, and acrosticist. Ursule Molinaro lives in New York City with her cat, Owlbear.*

*Contemporary Authors gives this bibliography:*

*POETRY*

*Rimes et raisons, Regain (Monte Carlo), 1954. Mirrors for Small Beasts, Noonday, 1960.*

*NOVELS*

*L'Un pour l'autre, translation from the English manuscript by Edith Fournier, Julliard (Paris), 1964, manuscript published as The Borrower: An Alchemical Novel, Harper*

(New York City), 1970. *Green Lights Are Blue: A Pornosophic Novel*, New American Library (New York City), 1967.

*Sounds of a Drunken Summer*, Harper, 1969.

*The Autobiography of Cassandra, Princess and Prophetess of Troy*, Archer Editions Press (Danbury, CT), 1979.

*Positions with White Roses*, McPherson (New Paltz, NY), 1983.

*The New Moon with the Old Moon in Her Arms: A True Story*

*Assembled from Scholarly Hearsay*, Women's Press Ltd. (London), 1990, McPherson (Kingston, NY), 1993.

*Power Dreamers: The Jocasta Complex*, McPherson, 1994.

*COLLECTIONS Encores for a Dilettante*, Braziller (New York City), 1978. *Bastards: Footnotes to History* (two short stories; illustrated), Treacle Nightschool for Saints, Second Floor, Ring Bell: 11 Short Stories, Archer Editions Press, 1981. *Thirteen: Stories*, McPherson, 1989. *A Full Moon of Women: 29 Word Portraits of Notable Women from Different Times and Places*, Dutton (New York City), 1990.

*NONFICTION The Zodiac Lovers*, Avon (New York City), 1969. *Life by the Numbers: A Basic Guide to Learning Your Life through Numerology*, Morrow (New York City), 1971.

*PLAYS The Abstract Wife*, Hill & Wang (New York City), 1961. *Breakfast Past Noon* (one-act), published in *New Women's Theatre*, Random House (New York City), 1977.

Also author of one-act plays *The Engagement*, *After the Wash*, and *The Sundial*, all published or produced; author of unpublished and unproduced plays "The Mine" (one-act), "Antiques" (one-act), "The Great Emancipation," and "The Happy Hexagon."

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## ***Fwd: Ernst Jandl in translation(s)***

19 Jul 2000

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*Ernst Jandl, the Austrian concrete poet whose work was long thought untranslatable, died as Burning Deck was printing this very experiment in translating him many ways at once — Bernstein among the translators.*

This announcement just in from Burning Deck Books:

Burning Deck is pleased to announce volume 4 of DICHTEN= (a series of translations of current writing in German)

ERNST JANDL reft and light *Selected Poems with Multiple Versions* by American Poets ed. Rosmarie Waldrop Poems, 112 pages, offset, smyth-sewn ISBN 1-886224-34-x, original paperback \$10 Publication Date: October 15, 2000

Jandl's poems are so engrained in the German language that they are impossible to translate. This volume presents an unusual experiment: not one, but several adaptations are given for each German poem, so that the original is encircled by

multiple English analogues. The responses range from close imitations to freewheeling versions that continue Jandl's thinking into other semantic areas.

Ernst Jandl was born in 1925 in Vienna. In German-speaking countries he is regarded as the main representative of concrete poetry. \_To jandl\_ has become a verb. He began publishing poems in 1956 and quickly attracted attention as the wittiest and most exuberant of experimental poets, with a knack for uncovering the comic potential in discrepancies between sound and spelling, in clichés, mispronunciations, dialect etc. He has not only explored the limits of language in his visual and sound poems, but has written powerful political commentary by playing with *Auslander-deutsch*, the kind of pidgin German spoken by foreign workers.

He translated Gertrude Stein, Robert Creeley's *The Island*, and John Cage's *Silence*.

Among his many prizes in both Austria and Germany are the Georg-Trakl-Preis (1974), Georg-Buchner-Preis and Grosser österreichischer Staatspreis (both 1984).

It is with great sadness that we learned of Ernst Jandl's death while this book was being printed.

The translators include Charles Bernstein, Lee Ann Brown, Norma Cole, Tina Darragh, Ray DiPalma, Rachel Blau Duplessis, Kenward Elmslie, Anselm Hollo, Paul Hoover, Gale Nelson, Julie Patton, Ray Ragosta, Joan Retallack, Brian Schorn, James Sherry, Cole Swensen, Craig Watson, Marjorie Welish, John Yau, and others.

Distributors: Small Press Distribution, 1341 Seventh St., Berkeley, CA 94710  
 [REDACTED] ; 1-800/869-7553 <http://www.spdbook.com> Spectacular  
 Diseases, 83b London Rd., Peterborough, Cambs. PE2 9BS, England

<http://www.durationpress.com/Burning> Deck

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## ***LOLLIPOP & Bonvincino***

*18 Aug 2000*

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*Two small-press pointers he thought worth passing on — a new British little-press listing and the home page of the Brazilian poet Régis Bonvincino.*

In the spring, Bill Griffiths, Bob Trubshaw, and Peter Finch inaugurated this List of Little Press Publications. Worth a visit for information about UK small press poetry and for an interview with Allen Fisher.

<http://www.indigogroup.co.uk/llpp/>

Also, I recommend this link to the home page of Brazilian poet Regis Bonvincino, a bit of which is in English:

<http://sites.uol.com.br/regis/home.htm>

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*So the year emptied toward its end — a job line, two gallery notices, a  
Leicester conference programme, then the long silence of November —  
before December's posts reconvened the room, as ever, among its dead  
and its conference schedules.*

### ***h.c. artmann (fwd)***

07 Dec 2000

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*H.C. Artmann, the Austrian poet and shape-shifting man of letters, had died in Vienna at seventy-nine — busy to the last teaching his pupils to render Asterix into Viennese; Jerome Rothenberg asked that the news reach the list.*

Jerome Rothenberg asked me to pass this on to the list.

From: "Ide Hintze" [REDACTED]

our dear friend - the poet, revolutionary and gentleman - h.c. artmann died december 4 late at night in his viennese appartement at the age of 79. he was in quite good shape during his last months. he hasn't seen hospitals for months. he was very busy teaching his internetclass ("translating asterix and obelix into viennese"). a sudden heart attack ...

statement of the school (in German):

<http://www.sfd.at/ausgabe/pages/hcartmann.htm>

h.c. artmann's class (in German): <http://www.sfd.at/akademie/db/artmann/news/>

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## **2001**

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### ***Creeley on Corso***

19 Jan 2001

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*Gregory Corso, the youngest and most feral of the Beats, died in January; here Bernstein gives the room over to Robert Creeley — an elder who had known him from the start — and then to Corso's own voice.*

*Gregory Corso died last night (January 17), happily in his sleep in Minnesota. He had been ill for much of the past year but had recovered from time to time, saying that he'd got to the classic river but lacked the coin for Charon to carry him over. So he just dipped his toes in the water.*

*In this time his daughter Sherry, a nurse, had been a godsend to him, securing him, steadying the ambience, just minding the store with great love and clarity. He thought she should get Nurse of the Year recognition at the very least.*

*There's no simple generalization to make of Gregory's life or poetry. There are all too many ways to displace the extraordinary presence and authority he was fact of. Last time we talked, he made the useful point that only a poet could say he or she was a poet — only they knew. Whereas a philosopher, for instance, needed some other to say that that was what he or she was — un(e) philosophe! — poets themselves had to recognize and initiate their own condition.*

*There are several quick websites that help recall him now. One gives a brief biography and discussion of a few of his poems:*

[http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/corso/corso.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/corso/corso.htm)

*Another, more usefully affectionate, is taken from Ed Sanders' The Woodstock Journal. It was Lawrence Ferlinghetti who had suggested last summer that a spate of respects might help cheer Gregory in his illness — and that they were certainly well merited:*

<http://www.woodstockjournal.com/corso.html>

*A third, which includes some previously noted, is The Museum of American Poetics. There's a 'streamable' video available there of Gregory reading at Naropa , if you can get the sound clearly:*

<http://www.poetspath.com/corso.html>

*Lots of us propose to be poets but who finally stakes all, or just takes all, as being that way? In my life time only Robert Duncan could be his equal in this way. It was honor indeed to have had his company.*

*RC, Buffalo, January 18, 2001*

\*\*\*

*The Whole Mess ... Almost*

*I ran up six flights of stairs to my small furnished room opened the window and began throwing out those things most important in life*

*First to go, Truth, squealing like a fink: "Don't! I'll tell awful things about you!" "Oh yeah? Well, I've nothing to hide ... OUT!" Then went God, glowering & whimpering in amazement: "It's not my fault! I'm not the cause of it all!" "OUT!" Then Love, cooing bribes: "You'll never know impotency! All the girls on Vogue covers, all yours!" I pushed her fat ass out and screamed: "You always end up a bummer!" I picked up Faith Hope Charity all three clinging together: "Without us you'll surely die!" "With you I'm going nuts! Goodbye!"*

*Then Beauty ... ah, Beauty — As I led her to the window I told her: "You I loved best in life ... but you're a killer; Beauty kills!" Not really meaning to drop her I immediately ran downstairs getting there just in time to catch her "You saved me!" she cried I put her down and told her: "Move on."*

*Went back up those six flights went to the money there was no money to throw out. The only thing left in the room was Death hiding beneath the kitchen sink: "I'm not real!" It cried "I'm just a rumor spread by life ..." Laughing I threw it out, kitchen sink and all and suddenly realized Humor was all that was left — All I could do with Humor was to say: "Out the window with the window!"*

[↑ Contents](#)**Ramez Qureshi, 1972-2001 (fwrđ from Gary Sullivan)**

22 Mar 2001

*Ramez Qureshi was a young critic and poet of ferocious reading, lately arrived among these people and quickly beloved by them; Gary Sullivan sent the news that he had died by his own hand at twenty-eight, and Bernstein could do little but pass it on.*

It is with great sadness and utter shock that I pass on this note just in from Gary Sullivan. I am sending out as a separate post a letter from his sister to our list, which Gary also forwarded to me.

I corresponded by email with Ramez and had some lively discussions with him at readings, as well as avidly reading his reviews and essays. (A quick search on Google.com came up with a number of his pieces.)

This is the place to quote a poem, to console or maybe add some perspective.

Maybe later.

Charles Bernstein

*Hello everyone,*

*I have some very sad news to report. Ramez Qureshi, who many of you will know from this list as well as from his critical writing and poetry on various online & in print magazines, passed away last Saturday night, apparently by his own hand, although the details at this time are still not entirely clear. He was 28.*

*I first "met" Ramez online, in response to a call in 1999 I put on the list for the first issue of Readme. He wrote asking if I'd be interested in a review of J.H. Prynne's Poems. I was thrilled that someone wanted to write about Prynne, and was curious about who Ramez was: Who would brave a review of Prynne's Poems? So, I begged him to send it, which he did. It was a brilliant review, obviously the product of careful reading and a real love of the work. I was amazed that I was going to get to publish it. Ramez continued to send me reviews, essays and poetry (he wrote on Armand Schwerner, Stuart Merrill, Mark Rothko), and I began to see his work popping up in some of my favorite online and in print journals: How2, Lagniappe, Jacket, Rain Taxi, Riding the Meridian, Cauldron & Net, Lynx: Poetry from Bath, where he wrote about Barbara Guest, Johanna Drucker, John Cage, Tom Raworth, Nick Piombino, Michel Foucault ... as well as, less frequently, publishing his own poetry. It was clear that he lived for poetry — for writing in general — was a voracious, careful, loving and diverse reader, and though he kept most of it to himself, a prolific and engaging poet. (His uncle Rafique Kathwari, a poet himself, said that despite the fact that he and Ramez talked often about poetry and writing, Ramez never showed him any of his poetry.)*

*In a post of his from November of 1999, Ramez said: "Marjorie Perloff was wrong. I 'need' poetry." I don't think I've personally met anyone for whom this was more true.*

*I didn't know at first that Ramez lived in the New York area ... not until I got an email message from him asking for directions to a reading. I was shocked to find out that he'd never been to the Poetry Project before, especially when he told me that he had*

*spent most of his life in Westchester County, just north of the city. Soon, Ramez began coming to more events, and on occasion Nada & I would get a call from him, and we'd either hang out before and or after this or that event. When we heard that certain poets would be reading soon, we began to assume that Ramez would be calling, or that we might see him at the reading.*

*Once, Nada and I had dinner with Ramez and his sister Sofie, who was about to move from New York City to San Francisco to study environmental science. I think at that time, Ramez had gotten into Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, and was very excited by the prospect of getting to study with Douglas Messerli and (I think) Leslie Scalapino. But, days before he was set to move, he decided against it. I later asked him why, but he said that he had just decided to stay in New York and study computer programming. I was taken aback by this, and began to slowly realize that leaving and being away from home must have meant much more for him than most. I knew that Ramez had suffered from chronic depression, and once when he was supposed to meet up with me & Nada to see Clark Coolidge & Michael Gizzi read he didn't show up, and called later from a hospital, saying that he had "gotten sick." But I didn't know the whole story until talking with Sofie and Ramez's friends & other family after the prayers and burial this Tuesday. I'm beginning to realize now just how much poetry meant to Ramez, and how much his fairly recent entry into the world of letters, his acceptance by the various magazines that he read and returned to, meant to him. I realized that it meant a lot to his friends and family, too.*

*Sofie has asked me to forward a letter she has written to the everyone here about just that. She's also asking for help in locating all of Ramez's work in publication. If you published anything of Ramez Qureshi's, or if you corresponded with him, please get in touch with her.*

*Ramez was not only one of the most brilliant people I've ever met (I felt like the laziest reader in the world hanging out with him, he could quote from so much), he was also the sweetest. He will be greatly missed.*

Gary Sullivan

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## ***Ramez Qureshi, 1972-2001 (fwrđ from Sofia Qureshi)***

22 Mar 2001

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*Sofia Qureshi did not know the list, but her brother had lived in it; here she writes to the strangers among whom Ramez had found his community, to thank them — and Bernstein sets her letter down without a word of his own.*

Dear Poetics Listserv,

You don't know me but I know you. About three years ago you became a vital part of my brother's life. Since then Ramez not only read and contributed to the listserve but through it was exposed to a whole new social world of (un)like minded artists, both online and in New York City. He began going to more readings, meeting other poets and getting his work exposed. In his excitement, he would forward me your poetry and other postings, especially those of Alan

Sondheim, which, quite frankly, I didn't 'understand.' However what my family and I did understand is that the listserve brought meaning and community into Ramez's life. Struggling with 'mental illness' (diagnosed as bipolar) for the past eight years, Ramez led a more solitary life than most. There aren't many spaces in society for people surviving with 'mental illness,' which in turn fostered my brother's alienation. And so these days while most folks seem to want to escape from community, my brother needed this space to escape to community. And although we could never keep the pace of his passions, the listserve and its repercussions gave us a way to share in his life, which in the internality of his hallucinations, depressions, manias, paranoia and brilliance was often elusive.

Inevitably conversations with my brother would turn to politics, me being the supposed 'concrete activist' and him the 'academic leftist.' In these conversations he used to question the role of poetry. Not knowing too much about poetry(ies), I would say things like "The role of poetry is to utter the un-utterable; to open up spaces of consciousness and resistance; to language oppressions; to re-language histories and spaces of resistance; to shift contexts; to create community; to rethink grammars of action. And of course to inspire." Perhaps. But in his death I realized the obvious; my brother's passion for poetry: reading, writing, theorizing, discovering and most importantly relating with others who shared these passions, in whatever virtual manner, kept him alive for the past eight years. Quite literally and with no exaggeration.

So I want to thank you for creating community and keeping poetry and my brother, Ramez, alive.

With tremendous gratitude,

Sofia M. Qureshi

p.s. I am in the process of collecting his online and print work (poetry and reviews) and would appreciate any leads. Please write to me at: [REDACTED]

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*The spring and early summer survive, in this archive, mostly as announcements — a digital-poetry festival, books back in print, an appeal on behalf of poets in need — and have gone to the appendix. The list's own voice returns with the summer.*

## **Re: poets in film**

25 Jun 2001

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*A thread on poets and film; Bernstein points it toward Henry Hills and moves on.*

Henry Hills has made a number of films with poets. His web site is well worth checking out:

<http://www.henryhills.com/>

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## **Hannah's visions**

06 Jul 2001

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*Hannah Weiner was the poet who saw words — on foreheads, in the air — and wrote down what she saw; a question about the neurology of it had reached the list, and Bernstein takes it up on her terms rather than medicine's.*

Hannah Weiner's papers, including manuscripts of all unpublished writings, are in the Special Collection at UCSD. A useful index to the Weiner's papers at UCSD is available at

<http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/findaids/literary/weiner>

Hannah refers to Julian Jaynes's book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, in her writing, but I don't otherwise recall her discussing "Western" neurobiology; certainly she was interested in "chakras", "auras" and related mind-body concepts, including native American ideas of consciousness and would certainly have been aware of the full range of "psychological" and "scientific" thinking about consciousness, from William James and Semyon Kirlian onward. (As far as I know, Hannah had no neurological testing, though reading her work is a useful test of the reader's neurological pathways and possibly may help to expand them, which surely was what Hannah viewed as a value for poetry.)

Charles Bernstein

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## **Leevi Lehto website**

03 Sep 2001

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*Leevi Lehto, the Finnish poet and translator, had opened English pages on his site — among them a homophonic bout with Mallarmé that Bernstein had a hand in; he sends the room the address.*

The Finnish poet Leevi Lehto has recently added to the English interface to his web site, which has much new and interesting material, some generated from a reading Leevi, Arakadii Dragomochenko, and I gave in Helsinki on August 2, 2001, as part of an evening entitled "Language West and East" at Villa Kivi.

Enter at <http://www.leevilehto.net/english.asp>

First you will find a link to "The Four Salutes", our attempt to find a poetry equivalent of the "Three Tenors". This starts with the text of Mallarmé's poem. "Salut" and a RealAudio reading in French by the young Finnish translator, Tommi Nuopponen. Next is my quasi-homophonic version of "Salute", text and

audio. This is followed by Tommi's homophonic Finnish translation "after" the Mallarme poem, read by Leevi. Next is Tommi's Finish translation of my Mallarme lyric. You can listen to the sound files poem by poem or together, as we did them in performance.

Next up is the text of my poem "Sunset Sail"; followed by "Iltaruskopurjehdus", Leevi's Finish translation; followed by Tommi's "Sail the Eveningbreak", his English translation of Leevi's Finnish translation of "Sunset Sail".

Finally, there is an audio file of an excerpt from Arakadii Dragomochenko's reading, in Russian, probably the only audio file of Arkadii on the web. And there are photos too.

The rest of the site is devoted to Leevi's work. I'd especially recommend his digital poem "Ääninen 2.0 beta", which generates an unlimited number of syntactical sonnets from a fixed pool of 2500 words from his (print) collection of sonnets, "Ääninen". Readers can control a number of parameters in the generation of the new sonnets.

Charles Bernstein

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## ***Translation, Chinese-English in particular***

11 Sep 2001

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*The list had turned to the difficulties of translating Chinese; Bernstein, who had edited a Chinese poetics feature for boundary 2, points to it and to the journal's new issue — posted, as it happened, on the morning of the eleventh.*

Yunte Huang, in addition to SHI, also edited a section of poetics by contemporary Chinese poets for \*99 Poetis/1999\*, a special issue of boundary 2 I edited a couple of years ago, and which is still available (info at <http://www.duke.edu/web/dupress/b2.html>). The poets included are Che Qianzi, Hunag Fan, Yi Cun, Lan Man, as well as the manifesto of the "Original Poets".

Perhaps this is a good time to announce that the new issue of boundary 2 (28:2, Summer 2001) has a substantial Poetics cluster, including my conversation with Geoffrey O'Brien on the Library of America anthologies of 20th century American poetry, Rob Wilson on Pamela Lu's \*Pamela: A Novel\*, Kathryne Linberg "Depejorating 'Uplift' and Re-centering Race Poetry: Lorenzo Thomas's \*Extraordinary Measures\*, Keith Tuuma's "Way Out in the Center: John Matthias", Michael Davidson's "X Marks the Spot: Laura Moriarty's \*Nude Memoir\* and Jena Osman's \*The Character\*", and Daniel O'Hara's "The Pen Shop of Thomas Kinsella".

Charles Bernstein

## ***It's 8:23 in New York***

*11 Sep 2001*

---

*This is the first of Bernstein's September dispatches, written the day itself, from the city as he walked back into it across the bridge.*

What I can't describe is how beautiful the day is in New York; clear skies, visibility all the way to the other side of wherever you think you are looking.

Or looking away.

After the long and strange Odyssey back from LaGuardia airport this morning, I went to a jammed local upper west side coffee shop. A family was eating, deciding, loudly, whether to get the chicken or tuna salad; the mother expressed great disappointment that there was no skim milk. The coffee shop was packed and the mother said, "Well, it's OK, at least we're not in a rush right now and after all the restaurant probably has more people now than they are used to handling."

Outside, two guys with work boots and cell phones strapped to their waist yelled toward the coffee shop, "I can't believe these fucking people are sitting in a cafe when the city is being blown up."

I can't imagine Manhattan without those two towers looming over the south end. As I was walking across the 59th Street bridge I couldn't stop thinking of that Simon and Garfunkel song named after the bridge, "Feeling Groovy" ("Life I love you ... all is ... ").

It was hard not to feel like it was a movie and one with an unbelievable plot at that. All the airports closed; the Pentagon bombed; four commercial jets hijacked on suicide missions. The Queensborough bridge was overflowing with people streaming out of Manhattan, a line as wide as the bridge and as long as Manhattan itself. If you looked out to the left, there was a big plume of smoke over downtown Manhattan. You couldn't see that the Towers were not there.

And it didn't seem possible that this had happened either.

Even with all the people streaming out, and the small clutch of us walking back to the island.

The FDR drive below us was empty, with just the occasional emergency vehicle. The UN Secretariat building looked naked, vulnerable. Why wouldn't a plane smash into that while we walked across the East River.

The skies unnaturally clear of airplanes, though every once in a while you hear the ominous swoop of a jet overhead, presumably military. Once in Manhattan, the entrance to the bridge was mobbed. But walking west, people were quietly

hanging out on street corners. Most of the avenues were cleared of traffic, except for the sirens or an ambulance or fire truck racing downtown.

While the phones are not working very well (so much of NYC communication is streamed through the World Trade Center), the email is working fine. There are notes of disbelief and worry from people from all over, especially Europe. My friends Misko and Dubravka from Beograd write and I remember their emails when their city was under fire. And various friends we just saw on our recent trip.

As I was walking home, about half a mile from our apartment, I stop by the storefront hair salon of Andrew, who lives upstairs in our building. I had been trying for a couple of hours to get Susan on the phone, to see if she had picked up Felix at school. But neither the cell or land phones were working. When I saw Andrew he said Susan and Felix had just walked by and were heading home. He said he was going to stay open just because he thought people would want to have him there, standing in front of his shop.

At about 6, Felix, Susan and I walked down to the Hudson. I wanted to see New Jersey, to see the George Washington Bridge. The sun gleamed on the water. The bridge was calm. Folks were bicycling and rollerblading. The scene was almost serene; just five miles from the Trade Center.

Uncanny is the word.

What I can't describe is the reality; the panic; the horror.

I keep turning on the TV to hear what I can't take in and what I already know. Over and over. I don't find the coverage comforting but addictive.

This could not have happened. This hasn't happened.

This is happening.

It's 8:23 in New York.

—Charles Bernstein

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## ***Today is the next day of the rest of your life***

*12 Sep 2001*

---

*The day after; Bernstein keeps writing, in fragments, from a neighborhood beginning to count its dead.*

all of a sudden tonight the smell of burning plastic pervades our apartment, making eyes smart. is it something in the building? no, a neighbor explains, that's the smell coming from downtown.

\*

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge calls; she's OK, hanging in a couple of blocks from the epicenter. I say to her I have trouble imagining what is going on. She says, oh you can imagine it all right, from the movies. You just can't conceive it.

\*

I see Andrew, the hairdresser, in the lobby of our building. He says things were on and off today; several appointments were no shows.

"Maybe they're not coming back."

\*

A friend in Berkeley asks me how things are going and I write back. The reply is immediate: "automated response". It is entirely blank.

\* We drop Felix off at a friend's across from his school on 77th and Amsterdam. The fire station on the block, which we pass every day, is empty, with piles of flowers in the doorway. A wave of terror sweeps over us; after all, 200 to 300 firefighters have died. Later in the afternoon, I come to pick Felix up and there are ten or twelve firemen in front of the firehouse, calmly, so it seems, washing the two fire trucks parked in the middle of the street. It's a relief to see them.

Then we hear that nine of the thirty men stationed there perished.

\*

The most frequent analogy is to Pearl Harbor, though the London blitz might also be mentioned. I keep thinking of something else, not something that happened but something I expected to happen. In the 50s, we were trained to prepare for a nuclear attack on Manhattan. In elementary school we had drills in which we were marched into the halls and all the window and door glass was covered with wood. The events of yesterday seem to finally play out that fear.

\* A psychologist friend is on extra duty though the weekend. Those at the edge are going over it.

"I may be paranoid but there really are people out to get me."

\*

"It's a bit ominous," a friend writes, "the way the politicians are speaking about talking with one voice."

— I am just trying to get by talking with no voice.

\*

Many of the officials on TV say we will come out of all this stronger.

But it won't be the same we.

Stronger or not.

\*

Jerry and Diane Rothenberg come by. We finish off the bottle of "reserve" Stolly I bought just a few weeks ago at the Moscow airport "duty free".

\* for Patrick

give nothing evil to oppose and it will crash the program

\*

the image is greater than the reality

the image can't approach the reality

the reality has no image

\*

our eyes are burning

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### ***a short essay from Larry Kearney***

15 Sep 2001

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*In the days after, Larry Kearney wrote out a hard, unsparing argument about brutality and what we permit ourselves; with his leave, Bernstein forwards it to the list.*

Larry Kearney sent this to me and, with his permission, I am sending it on to the list.

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*It has always seemed to me that there were simple, demonstrably true statements to be made.and, from an early age, I poked around in my head looking for them.*

*That it isn't possible to take pride in anything you were born with - that seemed clear. The almost class-distinctions made between a good athlete, say, and a good thinker, or artist, struck me as stupid and dishonest, even though I would have liked to be able to feel superior to the kids who had physical grace, and weren't paralyzed by self-consciousness.*

*That it wasn't good to be cruel was another early and visceral perception, but like the majority of humans I wrapped it up in a bundle of subjunctives and put it away for special occasions.*

*In the seventies, when I was drunken and useless, my concerns became obsessive and I found myself trying desperately to make some sense of what was wrong, and to justify my own inane, deadened response.*

*In the middle of it all, I wrote a simple declarative poem that noted that the insincere artist increases the volume of human misery by making evil attractive.*

*It wasn't quite the point, though it didn't miss by much, and now in the grip of a misery so intense that I can barely bring myself to write this stuff down, I'd like to change the perception, and offer it.*

*I think the new one is simply and demonstrably true, which makes it the heard voice of the soul and pretty much the closest the mind comes to God.*

*Simply enough, it's that brutality (the use of power to degrade and to wound) is the essence of social misery, and that increasing the acceptability of brutality, whether through self-indulgence, evasion, or outright lie, is criminal.*

*I can think of no human reality which it is necessary to rise above other than brutality. I can think of no human misery - personal, political, economic - to which it is not central.*

*I am not the purist I was once, and I understand the difficulties of existence well enough to say that perhaps the best anyone can do is to try to pass on less misery than he or she has received.*

*But in the matter of brutality, which masquerades as passion, and righteousness, and justice, and world-weary acquiescence, and ironic distance, there is no possible gradation of acceptance.*

*Brutality is evil, and the evil is not of the universe.*

*When I was drunk, I was a savage with a bleeding heart. I savaged my family and myself as I brooded on the pain of being human, and the terrible claustrophobia of being locked in one's own head.*

*The truth is that I was brooding on my own betrayal of my own truths, and my compensatory, self-pitying attraction to fatality and irrevocability.*

*I'm sorry for those years, and the pain I inflicted on others is as real to me now as the chair I sit in, the air I breathe.*

*If I don't dwell on it, or in it, it's because it only has one function, and I honor that as best I can. It reminds me not to do it anymore inflict, degrade, avoid, hide, lie, widen the scope of the brutal, and add to the misery of children.*

*I'm not always successful, and every once in a while I can see in my four year old son's face that something I've said angrily is going to stay with him, like a bad dream.*

*And my heart falls through the floor much as it always did, though now I don't run away and hide. I notice, and try to never do the same thing again.*

*At the onset of the Gulf War, I wrote an editorial and sent it to our major newspaper. At its center was the proposition that it's wrong to set fire to children.*

*I got a phone call about it, from upper editorial regions, and I was told that while it was a terrific piece of work, the paper couldn't print it even if we hadn't been at war.*

*'Why not?' I thought, and the whole of the skeleton of what we allow ourselves came slowly into view.*

*It couldn't be printed because it impinged on what we allow ourselves.*

*We don't think of war as setting fire to children because it would inhibit us when we want to go to war. We're brutal when we feel like it, particularly when there's an outside brutality to justify and permit..*

*Is there anyone who doesn't know that brutality engenders brutality? I can't imagine there is.*

*Is there anyone not damaged by the vagaries of genetics and chemistry who hasn't wanted to be loved and have love accepted? Sometime?*

*Is there anyone who can argue that it's acceptable to set fire to children?*

*We all have our reasons - the damaged are damaged deeply, and they do terrible things, and the helpless are brutalized terribly, and they do terrible things, and the lost and the bruised and the grieving don't know what to do to make their feelings go away, and they do terrible things.*

*But are there any of the sane who are willing to stand up and say "It's would be a good and proper thing to set fire to a child today."*

*We know. We know that it's wrong, and we know that the brutal engenders the brutal, and we know that the brutal degrades and humiliates, and hurts like hell.*

*But we allow ourselves. Because it's convenient, and because tomorrow, we think stupidly, it will all be over.*

*But it never is. Because a human being who has been violated, and had brutality enter his flesh like steel, has lost the deepest sense of self and its last dignity - "I can protect my children, I can."*

*Brutality leaves an empty being who is capable of inflicting his own loss on others. When her does, they become capable.*

*And through all this the real criminals are, as always, those who haven't been brutalized. Those who have had what they needed and never been violated and rest content in the illusions of power.*

*It isn't the anguished, tortured or merely blank serial killer who's the a great criminal - it's the unanguished, untortured, balanced man of parts who allows himself. Because it's convenient, because it seems to perpetuate his power.*

*Stupidity isn't the problem - the major brutalities of the century have been inaugurated and executed by men of considerable intelligence. Ignorance is part of the problem, but ignorance largely inflicted by those who have the chance to not be ignorant. But pass it up for convenience, for good times.*

*The problem is that we allow ourselves to inflict, though we would not be inflicted upon. And that when we have been inflicted upon, we allow ourselves those actions which will insure that it will never stop, ever, but go streaming away in front of us like the endless blood of the innocent, our one endless resource.*

*Is this God's fault?*

*Is this what we want to say when asked, "Why did you set fire to that child who only wanted to be loved, really?*

*That God did it?*

[↑ Contents](#)***a letter from Samuel R. Delany (fwd)****15 Sep 2001*


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*Samuel R. Delany — Chip to his friends — wrote to Bernstein from Philadelphia after reading the dispatches; his long reply, part reportage and part warning against the retaliation already gathering, Bernstein forwards entire.*

& this from Samuel R. Delany ...

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Sept 13, 2001

Dear Charles— I read your two messages on the Buffalo poetics list-serve.

Just to get another articulate first hand account from someone whose voice I recognized was wonderfully calming. Many, many thanks.

Things are . . . more or less fine down here in Philadelphia. To say that people are shaken is, of course, an understatement. I left New York at seven on Monday night, and the bus, after a very slow exit from the city, skimmed along the upper Jersey shore at Weehawkin, while I gazed across the river at the twin towers and the rest of the Manhattan skyline and thought about how passively beautiful it was . . . Then next morning, when I was walking down the impersonal pale-yellow ninth floor corridor of Anderson Hall (site of the Temple English Department) to my office, 955, I heard pudgy gray-bearded Dan O'Hare saying to another professor, "... crashed a 747 into the World Trade Center . . ." and I thought: Of course, this is a joke or a description of a film—and laughed.

But, with that odd grin with which, today, we recount the unbelievable, Dan turned to me: "No, I mean it. Ten minutes ago—it was on the news!"

I exclaimed, "What . . .!" with, I'm afraid, the same mindless grin.

Moments later, in her sandals and earth-colored shift, tall, make-up-less, Elayne Tobin stepped out of her office.

I turned to her. "Did you hear—someone just crashed a 747—" that's what, by then, we had been told—"into the World Trade Center!"

"What?" she said. "Oh, you're kidding me—" She pulled back.

"No I'm not," I said. "This is for real."

At which point, Dan, who, apparently, as he stood in the doorway, was getting the report we could not hear from a radio inside, said: "Two of them! One into each tower. One tower's completely gone. The other's on fire!"

"Oh, my God!" Elayne said. "No. No, I can't process this!" She turned, and started quickly down the hall—and thus began a day of confusion, fear, and upset, here at the University.

Yes, I've lost the transition material. But only seconds later, I remember little Jena Osman looking up and saying to me, This is unbelievable! I mean, this is unbelievable . . . ! Then, I turned into Graham and Bruce's office (the two graduate students whose door is directly across the alcove from mine), where Howard Stern and Robin Quivers were coming over the little cubic, silver-plastic radio at the back of Bruce's desk, and over about three minutes I heard them go from joking to realizing this was for real. Mow 'em all down, wipe 'em out, was one of the phrases that I recall from Stern's jeremiad.

By the time my ten o'clock class met, we'd had the reports from the Pentagon added to it all. While we were sitting there, discussing it all, Alexander (the tall, good looking black kid who sits toward the back of the class) Belton's cell-phone rang. He took it out, and in a moment we got another up-date. Seconds after the class was over, and I got back through the cinderblocked stair well, from the Annex into Alexander Hall, and turned into a large room where someone had a TV (not on cable: the picture was black and white and snowy), where I watched the smoke pouring out of the pentagon, and then saw—for what, over the last three days, now seems the first of hundreds of times—the two towers, one, then the other, smoking, imploding, collapsing.

It was World Peace Day—

Only months ago America and Israel—arrogantly; for however much one disapproves of how things are being carried out, it would seem that there is still some onus on the participants to sit it out and keep articulating their objections (even if, or especially if, it seems to be just an Israel-bashing session, though even their own objections to the characterization of "Zionism" as an inherently racist philosophy don't seem to make into that)—walked out on the Racism Conference in South Africa—

How long ago did our government decide not to "publicize" the murder of two million people in Rwanda, for fear someone might want us to get involved—

I love America passionately. What an odd and simple thing to say. Yet something such as this makes me incredibly aware of it. It's a beautiful and wonderful country in so many, historically fabulous ways—ways that it would take fables to make comprehensible to Tocqueville and Proudhon and even Marx. Its people \*and\* its government are extraordinary in endless documentable ways. There is no justification for the horror that this is—not represents, but is. Still, the one thing I am sure of, is that while the media keeps naming this a "cowardly attack,"

those who did it—however misinformed they might be—thought of it as a "brave defense" against the forces of Imperialism. Until our government understands that, there will be no possibility of peace, because both sides can only speak past one another in a field of such misunderstanding.

To date there is no general traffic to and from Manhattan.

I've got my hypertension medicine for the next several weeks.

I now know, of course, that it was a 767 and a 757 (not two 747s) that crashed into the towers: I have the whole CNN chronology, from 8:45am till 2:00 pm, cut out and pasted in my journal.

Stories keep coming in, such as from my friend John Castro, in Brooklyn, who heard about the first strike, ran up on the roof, and Sawdisbelieving—the second plane fly into second tower. . . . There was all this smoke. And for little while, you couldnt see anything—then, the smoke blew away. And one of the towers was gone . . .!

The morning of the 11th, perhaps six or seven hours before the towers were struck, Vince Czyz (who read for us last year at the Wednesdays at Four program) wrote me the following e-mail:

Yesterday walking out of the gym where I work out a mere twice a week (20 minutes on that stationary bike rounds out the workout), I was feeling quite good, it was about 5 pm, sunny, warm not hot. Just as I stepped out of the gym, there was a sort of muffled thunder and the sort of concussion that makes your chest hum some. I thought, Oh, those Turks. Fireworks again. Here, there are firework displays if there is a marriage, if a team wins, if someone loses his virginity . . . all right, I exaggerate, but they're common here. I thought nothing more of it.

Coming out of my apartment in Taksim about 15 minutes later, I saw cop cars rushing about, ambulances peeling down the road, lights flashing, sirens wailing and I saw ordinary motorists doing about 150 mph in Taksim Square with hazard lights on and horns blowing. I saw a crowd of people gathered in the Square and I wondered what was going on. But as I was late for a private lesson and my students are paying me about \$25 an hour, I hurried into the metro.

The thunder turned out to be a bomb, which killed the woman carrying it and two policemen. It happened a few hundred meters from where I was but I was more than shielded by all the buildings in between.

"It is, as far as I know, the first lethal bomb blast in Taksim, the center of Istanbul, in about nine years and very close to the site of that one. We did have one in Sisli, a mile or so from Taksim, about a year ago, and although cops were targeted, only the bomber was killed.

Vinces message goes on to mention the names of possible groups responsible names that, fifteen hours later, would be relatively familiar to all of us, if they weren't already: . . . the Turkish Hezbollah. Possibly the Kurdish Workers Party? Unlike the Middle East, it's often the case that no one claims responsibility. I think the military's gonna reprise anyway.

And a day later, my friend Robert Morales phones to tell me ... that the streets are deserted: Times Square at four in the afternoon looked more like what it usually does at one AM on Monday morning and pretty much every movie house in the city is packed, with all but no seating in no matter what the film. Apparently there's nothing to do but watch TV or go to the movies . . .

Tom Besio, estranged husband of the artist Who drew *\*Bread & Wine\**, and who works out of his and his wife's loft on Church Street as an acupuncturist, was out on the balcony doing exercises, when he heard the first plane swoop by, looked up, and saw it strike. He and a dozen others, coming out on the grilled fire escapes that front that swing-out picture windows, stared at the smoking tower until the second plane struck. At that point, apparently, everyone watching realized it was *\*not\** an accident and turned and fled the building, the neighborhood . . . !

On the 11th, phone calling in and out of the city was, of course, almost impossible. I know this (in my case) from twenty-five, thirty-five calls with all lines busy. Once when I was out of the office, Dennis managed to get a call through to me and leave a message on my machine. Did I cuss *\*my\**-self out for going to the bathroom just then . . . ? Finally, around four-thirty, I got two calls through.

Dennis tells me my sister is all right, though the city is basically under marshal law.

Second day information: Well, we live on a block (in Manhattan) with a police precinct at the other end, and so are cordoned off with yellow tape. Phalanxes of officers roam around. Anyone who lives on the block has to show name-and-address ID to get back into our building, so Dennis and John Del Gaizo both report.

This morning at breakfast, here in Philadelphia, at a little place called Logan's about two blocks from where I live on Spruce Street, I listened to a local policeman tell a tall thin, and a small butterball of a waitress that a bizarre burglar is loose in the neighborhood. (Is it connected to the general confusion or not? No one knows.) Since yesterday morning, he has committed over ten burglaries in a three block area. At the last place he robbed—since no one was home—he stayed long enough to take a shower before he left. Indeed, in Philadelphia the visible police force on the street has doubled overnight, and

there is much talk of possible looting and similar unrest even here—though the city is sunny and leaves chatter over the red-brick streets of Center City.

I'm supposed to be in the city this weekend (to have dinner with a scholar visiting from Germany), but I wonder whether things will be back to normal enough for me to return. My very intelligent daughter tells me that I should get Dennis down here, rather than going back to him. But, the truth is, I feel as if I have abandoned my city, my home—and that I have some sort of duty to be there, indeed, if just as a witness.

Wednesday night, I went to a bar on South Street where I often have dinner—Manny Browns. Four of the six televisions that they have in the back, where I eat, were replaying the disaster. Robert M. had pointed out that there are dozens, if not hundreds of video tapes of the incidents, beginning to end, from practically every conceivable angle. At this point, I feel like I have seen them all, several times through. Only as I was leaving Brown's to go home through the neo-punk piercings and tatooings of South Street, did it strike me: The media was, whether on purpose or not, trying to make it seem as if there had been dozens on dozens of attacks. The effect was kind of like the fantasia of atom bombs going off to the melody and lyrics of "We'll Meet Again . . ." at the end of *\*Dr. Strangelove.\**

Back at my Spruce Street apartment, last night at three in the morning, I woke with a strangely persistent memory of the first time—twenty-odd years ago—I had flown back to New York and the plane had crossed over lower Manhattan, en route to LaGuardia. I'd looked down out the oval plastic window to see that great steel-and-glass tuning-fork, sticking up above all the surrounding buildings and thought: My God, remember when, in the thirties, that plane rammed the Empire State building? Those would be so *\*easy\** to hit! Some suicidal, psychotic pilot . . . Some crazed terrorist . . . The thought was so appalling I shoved it down, as one does, but last night it emerged and lay there for me to look at—and breathe deeply over. It made me wonder how many other people had thought the same thing in twenty-odd years.

The other thought that came to me, so strongly, to make me choke and blink: (I may go back on it, but right now I doubt it):

If we kill *\*single\** Arab civilian in retaliation for this, then—given what was just done to us, and after having experienced and watched and listened to its effects on all the radically innocent men and women whose lives have been shattered, so many of them forever—we will have started the horrible, horrible process that could, in some out-of-touch minds, come close to justifying what was done. (Because it says, yes, when you have been enraged and made to suffer, striking

out and killing innocent people is all right. And isn't that the essence of terrorism, no matter who does it?) And we mustn't do that.

This is rushed and, indeed, is a version of a letter I'm sending to a number of people. (Should you feel like forwarding it, please do.) But for all that, I send my most personal and specific

Love to you, B., and the kids,

—Chip

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## ***Aftershock***

*16 Sep 2001*

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*The last of the September dispatches; days on, the horror hardening into the grammar of the everyday — the closed subway lines, the flags, the distance that will not close.*

Thursday night it started to pour. The piercing thunder claps echoed over Manhattan. We all woke up with a start and couldn't find the way back to sleep.

Andrew tells us the story of a British man who showed up on time for his hair cutting appointment, 4pm, Tuesday. He had been on an upper floor of the Trade Center when the jet hit.

By mistake I first wrote "Word Trade Center."

Tuesday morning I rouse my friend Stu from a profound slumber to tell him what has happened to the twin towers. — "They're ugly," he says, after a pause, "but they're not that ugly."

In the last few days, everyone I know seems to need to be in touch with everyone else. At first, it was mostly calls and emails from outside the U.S. Now there is steady stream local calls: where were you when, how are you feeling now. Every story is riveting, from the ones where the people were alone watching live TV to the many who watched the events unfold, how to put it?, live and in person. Those who saw the towers collapse, who saw the people jumping, were seared in a way the rest of us have been spared.

A visceral need to lash out, to strike down, to root out, to destroy in turn for what has been destroyed, seems to grip so many, grips part of me. When a co-worker expresses just this sentiment, someone complains to her, "Don't you think we need to find out who is responsible before we do anything?" She shrugs: not necessarily.

It's as if the blasts occurred dozens of time, the actual blasts being obliterated by the constant replay.

I feel like I am going through those stages in an unwritten book by Kubler-Ross: first denial, then manic fascination, then listlessness, then depression. Now denial again.

I can't get the film out of my mind. You know, the one in which a crackerjack team of conspirators meets in an abandoned hanger and meticulously plots out the operation on a blackboard. Synchronize watches! This image stands in the way of what occurred in the way that a blizzard stands in the way of the sky.

Out of the blue, flags everywhere.

Things I do everyday like make airplane reservations on the phone are now fraught with an unwanted emotional turbulence.

In some ways the blasts are a natural disaster, like an earthquake or volcanic eruption. Though we might wish to fight it, human beings and what they do are also a part of nature.

The "letter" trains are mostly running but I always think in terms of IRT, BMT, IND. Well, the A is OK from 207th to West 4th but the C's down; the D now ends at 34th. The E's canceled service below West 4th indefinitely. As to my local trains, no service on the 2 & 3 and the 1 stops at 34th.

After the initial crash, an official period of panic set in. During this time, all bet's were off. We were told to expect anything, any target next. This period of official panic has set the tone for the days after and may have a more profound effect than the events.

Now, Sunday, it's cold for the first time. The summer is over.

I bomb you bomb he/she/it bombs we bomb you bomb they suffer

We're ugly, but we're not that ugly.

&, hey, Joe, don't you know —

We is they.

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(September 13-16)

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## ***Marjorie Perloff Hits the Number***

*28 Sep 2001*

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*Marjorie Perloff, the critic who did more than any other to champion this poetry, turned seventy; amid the dispatches, Bernstein permits the room a birthday's lightness.*

Today is Marjorie Perloff's 70th birthday.

Is today, Marjorie Perloff's 70th birthday.

Marjorie Perloff's 70th birthday today is.

Perloff's 70th birthday is today, Marjorie.

70th birthday, today, Marjorie Perloff's is.

Birthday is today, 70th, Marjorie Perloff's.

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Happy Birthday, Marjorie!

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### **Allen Curnow (1911 -2001)**

28 Sep 2001

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*Allen Curnow was the presiding poet of New Zealand letters; Bernstein had met him through his son Wystan — a friend to this list, who had just posted the news — and answers the death with two of the father's poems.*

I had the great fortune to meet Allen Curnow in Auckland, in the mid-80s, when I was visiting Wystan, who wrote to this list, a few days ago, of his father's death.

In his memory, here are two of his relatively early poems (with a couple of links below):

#### WILD IRON

Sea go dark, dark with wind, Feet go heavy, heavy with sand, Thoughts go wild,  
wild with the sound Of iron on the old shed swinging, clanging: Go dark, go heavy,  
go wild, go round, Dark with the wind, Heavy with the sand, Wild with the iron  
that tears at the nail And the foundering shriek of the gale.

(from *Island and Time*, 1941)

& this one's for you, Wystan —

(I suppose all of us in New York are wishing, like you father — "That the salt winds  
which scattered us blow softer")

#### ELEGY ON MY FATHER

Spring in his death abounds among the lily islands, There to bathe him for the  
grave antipodean snows Fall floodlong, rivermouths all in bloom, and those  
Fragile church timbers quiver By the bourne of his burial where robed he goes No  
journey at all. One sheet's enough to cover My end of the world and his, and the  
same silence.

While in Paddington autumn is air-borne, earth-given, Day's nimbus nearer  
staring, colder smoulders; Breath of a death not my own bewilders Dead calm

with breathless choirs O bird-creation singing where the world moulders! God's poor, the crutched and stunted spires Thumb heavenward humorously under the unriven

Marble November has nailed across their sky: Up there, dank ceiling is the dazzling floor All souls inhabit, the liliated seas, no shore My tear-smudged map mislimned. When did a wind of the extreme South before Mix autumn, spring and death? False maps are dimmed, Lovingly they mock each other, image and eye.

The ends of the earth are folded in his grave In sound of the Pacific and the hills he tramped singing, God knows romantically or by what love bringing Wine from a clay creek-bed, Good bread; or by what glance the inane skies ringing Lucidly round; or by what shuffle or tread Warning the dirt of miracles. Still that nave

He knelt in puts off its poor planks, looms loftier Lonelier than Losinga's that spells in stone The Undivided Name. \_Oh quickening bone Of the Mass-priest under grass Green in my absent spring, sweet relic atone To our earth's Lord for the pride of all our voyages, That the salt winds which scattered us blow softer. \_

(London, November 1949)

For the obituary in New Zealand Herald, go to <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/storydisplay.cfm?thesection=news&thesubsection=&storyID=219315>

The Curnow entry in the Oxford Companion to New Zealand literature is at <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/nzbookcouncil/writers/curnowa.htm>

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## ***Report from Liberty Street***

*02 Oct 2001*

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*Three weeks on, Bernstein links his written account of a walk to the ruined blocks, and stops — uncharacteristically — to thank the room, and the two who had kept the list running through the worst of it.*

"Report from Liberty Street" is my account of a recent visit to the southern tip of Manhattan. The link will take you to the web pages of the University of Chicago Press.

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/News/911bernstein.html>

Let me take this opportunity to thank so many of you for your posts to the Poetics list over the past three weeks. It has been necessary company for me and I know many others. Also to thank Chris Alexander for service over and beyond the call and the same thanks again to Tim Shaner. I also want to say that I appreciated the

notes of those who have written me over this time in repose to my Poetics posts  
(or just to check in).

Charles

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## **ON RECEIVING NEWS OF THE WAR**

07 Oct 2001

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*The bombing of Afghanistan had begun; Bernstein answers the news not in his own voice  
but with Isaac Rosenberg's, a poet the last war would kill before it ended.*

### ON RECEIVING NEWS OF THE WAR

Snow is a strange white word.  
No ice or frost  
Has asked of bud or bird  
For Winter's cost.

Yet ice and frost and snow  
From earth to sky  
This Summer land doth know.  
No man knows why.

In all men's hearts it is.  
Some spirit old  
Hath turned with malign kiss  
Our lives to mould.

Red fangs have torn His face.  
God's blood is shed.  
He mourns from His lone place  
His children dead.

O! ancient crimson curse!  
Corrode, consume.  
Give back this universe  
Its pristine bloom.

Cape Town. 1914

Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918)

[from The Collected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg: Edited by Gordon Bottomley &  
Denys Harding (1977), Chatto & Windus Ltd.]

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## Nicholas Zurbrugg

17 Oct 2001

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*Nicholas Zurbrugg was a tireless scholar and impresario of sound poetry, performance, and the postmodern arts across three continents; word of his sudden stroke reached Bernstein from a student, and he relays it to the many who knew him.*

I have just received the very sad news of the sudden death of Nicholas Zurbrugg, from his student and friend at DeMontfort University, Nagy Rashwan.

*Dear Charles: It is my sad duty to inform you that Nicholas Zurbrugg suffered a massive stroke and passed away last night. It has been very hard for me to accept as you can imagine. I am unable to contact many of his friends in America and in Canada. Thank you very much, Nagy.*

Nicholas Zurbrugg was the Director of Centre for Contemporary Arts and the editor and author of many books on performance art, multimedia, Beckett, Burroughs, Baudrillard, sound poetry, electronic arts. For a long while he taught in Australia, where he edited Stereo Headphones.

For more information, you can start at his university home page

<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/Faculties/HSS/English/Staff/zurbrugg.html>

I expect we will have more on Nick on this and other lists, from his many friends in the UK, US, Canada, and Australia. He was an exuberant man, and enthusiast for the art that he dedicated his life to supporting. He will be missed.

Charles Bernstein

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## JR@70

14 Dec 2001

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*Jerome Rothenberg — poet, translator, anthologist of *Technicians of the Sacred* — turned seventy, feted at St. Mark's; Bernstein, among the organizers, gave the introduction and prints it whole: a reckoning of the ethnopoetic project and the collage imagination behind it.*

On Wednesday night, a celebration in honor of Jerome Rothenberg's 70th birthday was held at the Poetry Project of St. Mark's Church in New York, organized by Ed Friedman, Pierre Joris, Steve Clay, Charley Morrow and myself. Among those who performed were David Antin, Judith Malina & Hannon Reznikov, Sten Hanson, Alison Knowles, Carolee Schneemann, Jackson Mac Low and Anne Tardos, Nicole Peyrafitte, and Robert Kelly. In addition a clip was shown from Eleanor Antin's film, "The Man Without a World," with Rothenberg as dancing exorcist. The night ended with a reading/performance by Jerome Rothenberg.

I had the pleasure of introducing Jerry.

Charles Bernstein

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Today we come together to celebrate the life and work of one of the grandest, most animating spirits in the recent history of American poetry. Born on December 11, 1931, to a Yiddish-speaking family, educated at the City College of New York, professor at SUNY-Binghamton and UCSD, Jerome Rothenbergs work spans poetry and poetics, translation and editing, performance and activism, to each of which he continues to bring an unbridled exuberance and an innovators insistence of transforming the given state of affairs.

How then, in a few words, can we touch on the full range of Rothenbergs poetic project?

In 1979 Rothenberg wrote: "My passion is to maintain and shore up what comes to us as a larger human memory, and to preserve as far as possible —and not in a museum sense—the real, continuous and localized cultures, the diversity that still exists in the world: to thwart by all means possible the other process toward homogenization of cultures into a single monoculture."

In the late 60s and early 70s, with his ground-breaking anthologies *Technicians of the Sacred* and *Shaking the Pumpkin*, as well as *America: A Prophecy* (coedited with George Quasha), Rothenberg insisted on the immediate (rather than simply historical or anthropological) relevance of the "tribal" poetries of Native Americans (on both American continents), Africans, peoples of Oceania. This was a concerted assault on the primacy of Western high culture and an active attempt to find in other, non-Western/non-Oriental cultures, what seemed missing from our own. Moreover, the "recovery" of Native American culture by a Jewish Bronx-born first generation poet-as-anthologist (in Rothenberg's words —"a jew among / the indians") whose aesthetic roots were in the European avant-garde implicitly acknowledges our domestic genocide. This gesture cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing that it functions as a way of recovering from the Second War by refusing to cover over the genocide that has allowed a false unity to the idea of American Literature. Rothenberg's anthologies present a polycultural America of many voices in a way that explicitly rejects Eurosupremacism from within a European perspective — that is, dispensing with the demagogic rejection of Europe as such in favor of idealized "America".

Here's Rothenberg in *Shaking the Pumpkin*, anticipating what is now a central tenant for our multicultural poetics: "For a period of twenty-five years, say, or as long as it takes a new generation to discover where it lives, take the Greek epics out of the undergraduate curricula. & replace them with the great American

epics. Study the Popul Vuh where you now study Homer, and study Homer where you now study the Popul Vuh — as exotic anthropology, etc."

I want especially to note how much this proposition has actually come to pass, much to chagrin of many keepers of that older permiflame that refuses to go out because it was never lit.

As Rothenberg writes in one of his poems

"but the ACADEMY OF DADA knows not the least green vales of England nor knows cathedral bells ding dong it is the first academy without a book ...

Dada knows not but knows each is his own Dada each wears a Dada hat that shines like Dada Symphonies & Dada ice-creams ... (he cries) "to free the forces of poeis from "the gods of power" ... "

A key to Rothenbergs poetics is his ethically charged imagination of collage as both a social and aesthetic principal. This is at the heart of his great anthologies, including the most recent collaboration with Pierre Joris, *Poems for the Millennium*. The syncretic is for Rothenberg is the alternative to the dogmas of religion and the banalities of literature-as-lobotomy. Rothenbergs work, resolutely situated in the zone not of hieratic but of the secular, offers no easy comfort to a the new spiritualism that constantly reinvents itself in and as American poetry. For Rothenberg, ritual without innovation and disruption, just as spirituality in the service of fixed religious doctrine, is a barrier to the sacred. As he writes in a 1983 talk, I am in fact anti-religion as a fixed & inflexible set of beliefs. At the same time I find the strongest response to a tyrannical form of religion may come from the arena of religion itself from the language of religion in a kind of glorious clash of symbols. I am in that sense a religious collagist more specifically, as a poet, an anti-religious collagist. As a state-of-mind, it may amount to much the same thing.

Extending this principal of collage to the social space of poetry, he writes the value of poetry is not the making of single, isolated masterpieces but of a larger work in common. And, indeed, this larger work is common can be seen as the link between Rothenbergs poetry, poetics, anthologies, and translations.

What has come to us, then, at ground-zero, Rothenberg writes in the 1983 talk, is the ecological and economic crises now upon us The threatened wilderness is in our minds as well in our homes and in our language. We are all endangered species, & the exploration of the depth of our endangerment some of us have called the work of the new wilderness.

Poets are seismographs of the psychic realities that are not seen or heard in less sensitive media; poems chart or graph realities that otherwise go unregistered.

And they do this more in the minute particulars of registration than any idea of subject matter would otherwise suggest.

Consider Rothenberg's 1968 working of a Tibetan source:

"a man without lips who is speaking who sees without eyes a man without ears who listens who runs without legs"

— and we might add, in these dark times, a line from another Rothenberg poem of the same period:

"But that which weeps is the mind."

Our minds still weep but tonight also celebrate.

In thanks for his lifelong vigilance to the human crisis that is, that can never be, only a crisis of the human, in thanks for his lifelong commitment to the syncretic imaginary of human cultures, we welcome this beloved son on New York City, this child of the Bronx, to St. Marks church and say, separately and together, together but separately

Happy-----Birthday-----Jerry

-----Happy Birthday! -----

-----Charles Bernstein <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein>

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## 2002

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### ***Raworth's Breakfast Comix***

29 Jan 2002

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*Tom Raworth — the quickest reader in England and among its most restless draughtsmen — had been posting comic strips and doodles to the web; Bernstein points the room toward them.*

Breakfast Comix 1: <http://tomraworth.com/cover.html>

Breakfast Comix 2: <http://tomraworth.com/cover2.html>

... particularly recommend from Tom Raworth's "doodles":

<http://tomraworth.com/doodles.html>

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## **Re: Trivia HOT and NOW**

17 Feb 2002

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*A trivia thread had been running hot; Bernstein reminds Joel Kuszai, deadpan, that its ephemera were already coursework.*

joel, keep in mind that I assigning some of these files in my classes!

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## **John Wieners (1934-2002)**

02 Mar 2002

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*John Wieners — the Boston poet whose Hotel Wentley Poems made naked feeling a discipline — had died that day; here Bernstein marks it while the loss was still only hours old.*

There is an audio file of John Wieners reading "A poem for Painters" from The Hotel Wentley Poems (1958) at Joel Kuszai's Factory School site. The sound starts out pretty shaky, but the reading of "A poem for Painters" brings out all that is great in Wieners ... all that is already acutely missed, even in these few hours since his death.

<http://www.factoryschool.org/content/poetry/wieners/wieners.ram>

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from "A poem for Painters"

[6] ... This nation is so large, like our hands, our love it lives with no lover, looking only for the beloved, back home into the heart, New York, New England, Vermont green mountains, and Massachusetts my city, Boston and the sea. Again to smell what this calm ocean cannot tell us. The seasons. Only the heart remembers and records them in the words of works we lay down for those men who come to them.

7.

At last. I come to the last defense.

Note My poems contain no wilde beast, no lady of the lake no music of the spheres, or organ chants,

yet I know by these lines I betray what little given me.

One needs no defense. Only the record of a man's struggle to stay with what is his own, what lies within him to do.

Without which is nothing, And I come to this, knowing the waste, leaving

the rest up to love and its twisted faces my hands claw out at only to draw back from the blood already running there.

Oh come back, whatever heart you are left. It is my life you save.

[text based on Wiener's performance on this recording]

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*The spring's traffic was mostly the machinery of the art — a screening, a Barnard conference on Stein, a new book out of the Tuttle collaboration — and has been routed to the appendix. What Bernstein set down in his own hand that year tended, more often than not, to come for the dead.*

## **Allen DeLoach**

07 Apr 2002

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*Allen DeLoach — the Buffalo poet, editor of Intrepid, and tireless tape-recorder of the reading scene — had died; this is Robert Creeley's tribute, which Bernstein forwarded to the list.*

Allen DeLoach was a solid worker in the proverbial vineyard, a great survivor, a great heart. For years at UB he was the primary tape-recorder(er) of readings and other action — much like his New York elder, the poet Paul Blackburn, had been. DeLoach's journal INTREPID (1964-1972?) brought writers as various as Walter Lowenfels and Diane DiPrima to the common reader of the time and his anthology, *A Decade & Then Some*, collecting the active writers of the Lower East Side whom he had published, became a landmark for the era he shared with such abiding scribes as Ed Sanders, Gregory Corso, William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg. The British critic Eric Mottram was also a close friend until his death. As and when the literary annals of Buffalo for the past 50s years are writ, Allen DeLoach will be a primary reference for the work that got done, including very much his own. Salve, most generous old friend!

—Robert Creeley

\*\*\* DELOACH - Allen W., social worker, writer

[Buffalo News 4/6/2002]

Allen W. DeLoach, a social worker, educator, writer, editor and filmmaker, died Thursday (April 4, 2002) in his Kenmore home after a lengthy illness. He was 62. An employment counselor for 17 years for the Erie County Department of Social Services, he retired in 1997 because of failing health. A 1971 graduate of the University at Buffalo, DeLoach also was a member of the founding faculty of Empire State College and served as an assistant professor at the college for several years. In addition, he was a tireless promoter of local arts and writing organizations, including the Niagara-Erie Writers and the Artists Gallery of Western New York, which he served as a director. In the 1950s and early 1960s, DeLoach lived on the Lower East Side of New York City, where he associated with hundreds of writers and poets, including Allen Ginsberg. He later remembered many of them in a book titled "The East Side Scene." During that period, he helped usher in the beat movement in poetry and literature. As a writer, editor

and publisher, he published about 40 books of poetry, prose, journals, anthologies and photographs. Born in Jacksonville, Fla., DeLoach completed pre-engineering studies at the University of Florida, Gainesville. He served in the Marine Corps and later in the Marine Corps Reserves. He left Jacksonville in 1959 and, with \$2 in his pocket, hitchhiked to New York City to become a writer. He is survived by his wife, the former Janet Burden; two sons, Allen and Karsten, both of San Francisco; a brother, Robert of Macon, Ga.; a sister, Patricia Young of Alabama; eight stepchildren; and 17 stepgrandchildren. Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. Monday in Greco Funeral Home, 2909 Elmwood Ave., Kenmore.

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## **Remembering Chassler (fwr)**

04 May 2002

*Joseph Holland Chassler — poet and cartoonist, known to nearly everyone simply as Chassler — had died that January; Barbara Barg asked Bernstein to carry word of the memorial, and he does so plainly.*

Barbara Barg asked me to pass this on to the last. I do so with sadness. Chassler (as most of us called him) died in January.

-----Obscurity Lasts Forever—a memorial for Joseph Holland Chassler—poet, philosopher, kind soul. Remembering Chassler through his writings, cartoons and drawings, tales of his life and performance of his songs by the band Channeling Chassler. Sat. May 11th, 2pm at The Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery between Bleecker and Houston, across the street from CBGB's.

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## **Re: Why poets should ignore academic criticism**

08 May 2002

*The thread had proposed, in its title, that poets ignore academic criticism altogether; Bernstein — who has an essay inside the book — answers sidelong, pointing to a volume on remaking the English curriculum from within.*

Those interested in this thread may find this book of interest:

Beyond English, Inc. : Curricular Reform in a Global Economy Edited by David B. Downing, Indiana University of Pennsylvania Claude Mark Hurlbert, Indiana University of Pennsylvania Paula A. Mathieu, Boston College

Boynton/Cook/0-86709-517-2/2002/272 pp/ Paper Availability: In Stock List Price: \$25.00

more information and a pdf file of the introduction at <http://www.heinemann.com/product/0517.asp>

Contents: 1. English Incorporated: An Introduction, David B. Downing, Claude Mark Hurlbert & Paula Mathieu I. Disciplinary Revision and Curricular Reform

for the 21st Century 2. Beyond Disciplinary English: Integrating Reading and Writing by Reforming Academic Labor, David B. Downing 3. "A Blow Is Like an Instrument:" The Poetic Imaginary and Curricular Practices, Charles Bernstein 4. Corporate Textbook Production, Electronic Resources, and the Responsible Curriculum, Deborah Holdstein 5. Accountability and the Conditions for Curricular Change, Richard Ohmann II. The Curricular Politics of Local, Regional, and National Differences 6. Excavating the Ruins of Undergraduate English, Bruce Horner, Kelly Latchaw, Joseph Lenz, Jody Swilky & David Wolf 7. "No Chains Around My Feet, But I'm Not Free:" Race and the Western Classics in a Liberal Arts College, Pancho Savery 8. A Symposium on "What Will We Be Teaching?: International Revisions in University Level English Curricula," David Stacey, Claire Woods & Rob Pope 9. Curriculum for Seven Generations, Derek Owens III. Places of Writing in the English Curriculum 10. Concentrating English: Disciplinarity, Institutional Histories, and Collective Identity, Amy Goodburn & Deborah Minter 11. Changing the Program(s): English Department Curricula in the Contemporary Research University, James Seitz 12. Composition and Rhetoric, Inc.: Life After the English Department at Syracuse University, James Zebroski IV. New Missions: The Impact of Technology, Service, and the Vocationalizing of Higher Education 13. Technological Imbalances: The English Curriculum and Distance Education, Joyce Neff & Juanita Comfort 14. The Great Work: Recomposing Vocationalism and the Community College English Curriculum, Daniel Collins 15. Service Learning as the New English Studies, Ellen Cushman 16. Collaborative Learning Networks: A Curriculum for the 21st Century, James Sosnoski, Patricia Harkin & Ann Feldman Afterword, Paula Mathieu & Claude Mark Hurlbert

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## **Philip Whalen (1923-2002)**

26 Jun 2002

*Philip Whalen — Beat by company, Zen abbot by vocation, a poet of glancing off-hand grace — had died in San Francisco that day; Bernstein carries the Poetry Center's notice, poem and bibliography, to the list.*

*i.m. Philip Whalen*

*October 20, 1923, in Portland, Oregon — Jun 26, 2002, San Francisco, California*

*\* \* \**

*HYMNUS AD PATREM SINENSIS*

*I praise those ancient Chinamen*

*Who left me a few words,*

*Usually a pointless joke or a silly question*

*A line of poetry drunkenly scrawled on the margin of a quick*

*splashed picture - bug, leaf,  
caricature of Teacher  
on paper held together now by little more than ink  
& their own strength brushed momentarily over it*

*Their world & several others since Gone to hell in a handbasket, they knew it -Cheered  
as it whizzed by -& conked out among the busted spring rain cherryblossom winejars  
Happy to have saved us all.*

*—from *Memoirs of an Interglacial Age*, 1960, The Auerhahn Press, San Francisco*

\* \* \*

*Several recordings of Philip Whalen reading his work, from 1955 to 1988, are  
documented in The Poetry Center's American Poetry Archives, including outtakes  
from the NET series USA: Poetry, produced November 10, 1965 in San Francisco by  
KQED television's Richard O. Moore.*

*His books include....*

#### POETRY

*Three Satires, privately printed, 1951.*

*Self Portrait from Another Direction, Auerhahn Press, 1959.*

*Memoirs of an Interglacial Age, Auerhahn Press, 1960.*

*Like I Say, Totem Press, 1960.*

*Hymnus ad Patrem Sinensis (broadside), Four Seasons Foundation, 1963.*

*Three Mornings (broadside), Four Seasons Foundation, 1964.*

*Monday in the Evening, Pezzoli [Milan], 1964.*

*Goddess (broadside), Auerhahn Press, 1964.*

*Every Day, Coyote's Journal, 1965.*

*Highgrade: Doodles, Poems, Coyote Books, 1966.*

*T/o, privately printed, 1967.*

*The Invention of the Letter: A Beastly Morality Being an Illuminated Moral History for  
the Edification of Younger Readers, Carp & Whitefish Press, 1967.*

*Intransit: The Philip Whalen Issue, Toad Press, 1967.*

*On Bear's Head, Harcourt and Coyote Books, 1969.*

*Severance Pay, Four Seasons Foundation, 1970.*

*Scenes of Life at the Capital, Grey Fox, 1971.*

*The Kindness of Strangers: Poems 1969-1974, Four Seasons Foundation, 1976.*

*Prolegomena to a Study of the Universe, Poltroon Press, 1976.*

*Decompressions: Selected Poems, edited by Donald M. Allen, Grey Fox, 1978.*

*Enough Said: Poems 1974-1979, Grey Fox, 1981.*

*Heavy Breathing: Poems 1967-1980, Four Seasons Foundation, 1983.*

*Canoeing Up Cabarga Creek: Buddhist Poems, 1955-1986, Winson (Berkeley, CA), 1996.*

*Overtime: Selected Poems, (Edited by Michael Rothenberg) Penguin Books (New York, NY), 1999.*

#### PROSE

*You Didn't Even Try (novel; also see below), Coyote Books, 1967.*

*Imaginary Speeches for a Brazen Head (novel; also see below), Black Sparrow Press, 1971.*

*Off the Wall: Interviews with Philip Whalen, edited by Donald Allen, Four Seasons Foundation, 1978.*

*The Diamond Noodle, Poltroon Press, 1980.*

*"You Didn't Even Try" and "Imaginary Speeches for a Brazen Head" (reprint in one volume of Whalen's two novels), Zephyr Press, 1985.*

*Two Novels, Zephyr Press (Somerville, MA), 1985.*

===== Steve Dickison, Director The Poetry Center & American Poetry Archives San Francisco State University 1600 Holloway Avenue ~ San Francisco CA 94132 ~ vox [REDACTED] ~ fax [REDACTED]  
<http://www.sfsu.edu/~poetry> ~ ~ ~

Lâ taltazim hâlatan, walâkin  
durn bî-llyâly kamâ tadûwru  
Don't cling to one state  
turn with the Nights,  
as they turn

~Maqâmat al-Hamadhâni (tenth century; tr Stefania Pandolfo)

~ ~ ~

Bring all the art and  
science of the world, and  
baffle and humble it with  
one spear of grass.

~Walt Whitman's notebook

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### **posting announcements to the list**

02 Aug 2002

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*The list had grumbled again that it was becoming a bulletin board of self-promotion; here Bernstein defends the announcements not as a nuisance to be tolerated but as the founding purpose of the thing.*

<html> I suppose we all have our preferences on what we would like to see on this list, but just as valuable as the posts of the type I think ought to be posted is

the fact of what is posted. In any case, this list has always encouraged the posting of announcements for publications, web sites, and&nbsp; readings and there is nothing more useful than those posts nor anything more fundamental to the founding mission of the list. Call them advertisement if you like, but if the product in question is poetry edited or written by a member of the list, or readings organized or given by list members, then I want more of that not less. One of the great advantages of the listserv format is that it provides an inexpensive way for participants to exchange information about publications and performances. This is not a secondary function, a form of questionable &quot;self-promotion&quot;, but the very heart of what this list is for.<br><br> I also always appreciate lists of recommended reading (books or on web). <br><br> Charles Bernstein<br><br> </html>

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## **Myung Mi Kim**

06 Aug 2002

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*Myung Mi Kim — poet of the fractured line and the divided tongue, of Under Flag and Commons — was joining the Buffalo Poetics Program; Bernstein announces the hire and hands the introduction to R. D. Pohl.*

The Poetics Program at SUNY-Buffalo is delighted to announce that Myung Mi Kim will be joining our Core Faculty this Fall. She joins Ming-Qian Ma, who came to the faculty of the Poetics Program this past Fall. More information on the Poetics Program , which is part of the Department of English, at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/poetics>.

As a welcome to Buffalo, R. D. Pohl had written a good introduction to Myung's work for the Buffalo News. Bob Pohl has a monthly poetry page in the News, with articles, listings, and poems — a very unusual, but very welcome, feature for a daily newspaper.

Charles Bernstein

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No stranger to a strange land

Myung Mi Kim is joining the faculty at the University at Buffalo.

By R.D. POHL Special to The News 8/4/2002

"I am the perpetual foreigner at the door of the demand to specify the purpose of (my) talk (what is it good for?)," Myung Mi Kim told attendees at a recent poetry conference, "how to evoke a poetics that does not capitulate to terms sanctioned and policed by the prevailing, dominant discourses invested in 'the point of the talk.' It is not the certitude of truth content, but it's permeations that attract,

avulse and engender acts of speaking. (This) talk, if in relation to the task of writing, cannot proceed by argument; it proceeds by enactment - the something made and the process of something being made."

This pointed comment at the outset of Kim's presentation indicates a great deal about her work.

Among leading contemporary American poets, she may be the one most committed to rendering what she has referred to as the "infinitesimally divisible moment," as a unit of expression.

In her four collections of poetry, she has developed a brilliant, if challenging, contrapuntal style consisting of phrases, images, sentence fragments, snippets of dialogue and quotations from other texts drawn together not so much by some sort of overarching narrative logic as by a deeper emotional thematic closer, by way of analogy, to the way musical composers are commonly believed to work.

Later this month, Kim will leave her Northern California home and teaching position at San Francisco State University to join the faculty of the University at Buffalo as the newest addition to the Poetics Program.

Despite her West Coast roots, she is no stranger to UB, having visited here twice on residencies for the Poetics Program's Wednesdays at 4 Plus Series.

Born in 1957 in Seoul, South Korea, Kim came to the United States with her family at age nine.

In "Under Flag," her award-winning first book of poems originally published by Kelsey Street Press in 1991, she captured the confusing circumstances of her upbringing in authoritarian Cold War era South Korea and the culture shock of sudden total immersion into a new language, consumer society, and the ideology of 1960s era America through the eyes of a pre-adolescent.

"Must it ring so true/ So we must sing it," she wrote in the fractured, discontinuous yet oddly lyrical style that would come to define her work, "The slide carousel's near burn-out and yet/ Flash and one more picture of how we were meant to be."

Conversely, the volume's title poem worked by juxtaposing lists of military equipment and fragmented descriptions of its usage with a child's conception of borders and national identity.

The concepts of citizenship, gender, and process of naturalization were the focus of another passage: "Who is mother tongue, who is father country?" wrote Kim in what became the volume's most quoted line.

If many readers accepted the abstracted, non-narrative techniques of "Under Flag" as perfectly suited to the material, Kim's continued refinement of these strategies in her subsequent volumes met at least initially with some resistance.

In her second volume, "Bounty," originally published in 1996 by Chax Press, she explored a constellation of gender related themes including birth and motherhood without resorting to the construction of a narrative subject (an "I" or "she") to which all the disparate material she brought to the text could cohere.

No doubt the omission was intentional and offered in some sense as a critique of confessional poetry and other misuses of the ego in Western literature, but it also suggested a distanced, almost clinical approach to the material of intimate experience.

Kim's 1998 volume "Dura" (Sun & Moon Press) is a single, book-length poem examining the legacy of Korean immigrant women in late 20th century America. Reading through her work, one is reminded of what the late Donald Barthelme said about his own minimalist short stories. "Fragments are the only form I trust," he once told an interviewer.

Kim prefers the philosopher Adorno's more elaborate formulation: "The fragment is that portion of the totality of the work that opposes totality."

The University of California Press published Kim's fourth collection of poems, "Commons," earlier this year.

Like much of her earlier work, the poems in this volume are symphonic -dealing in major and minor themes like agriculture and the development of plant life right alongside various accounts of vivisection, polemics for Third World debt relief and expositions on how various glyphs and phonemes contribute to the act of speech.

The book's fifth and final section, "Pollen Fossil Record," consists of a kind of appendix and amplification of Kim's current thinking about her work and poetry in general.

In describing the scope of the current work, she writes: "COMMONS elides multiple sites: reading and text making, discourses and disciplines, documents and documenting. Fluctuating. Proceeding by fragment, by increment. Through proposition, parataxis, contingency-approximating nerve, line, song."

One of the functions of poetry, she concludes, is "to mobilize the notion of our responsibility to one another in social space."

To this end, she sees "poets as agents for the most arduous, the most dangerous cause there is: to love the other, even before being loved."

## White Box Closure: Hoax

14 Sep 2002

*A prank site had outfitted John Ashcroft and Tom Ridge as connoisseurs of a new Cultural Bureau of Homeland Security; Bernstein, having plainly enjoyed it, confirms for the credulous that no such office exists.*

The Homeland Security Cultural Bureau site is a hoax.

Otherwise, we would actually have an attorney-general who said this in an interview with "Director-General" of HSCB, on the HSBC site —<http://www.hscb.org/> —

*HSCB -Carolyn Parker Mayes: So can you tell us more about the more recent discussions, which led to the formation of Cultural Bureau of Homeland Security?*

*Atty Gen. John Ashcroft: Well Tom Ridge and I are avid painters and we share a passion for the arts. Our wives have even started an art collection with several other member of the Presidents cabinet, we purchase works and rotate them among one another's homes. We have attended a few Broadway shows, we attend the opera regularly, La Traviata is my absolute favorite, so yes, we generally just share an interest in the arts. When we were meeting more casually over a few intimate dinners, shortly after his appointment as the Director of the Office of Homeland Security, I told Tom about my passion for linking culture and politics.*

*And we agreed, which great civilization has not used its culture to form a mark on the history of the world. Which Empires did not further their cause directly through the use of cultural attachments, whether they be architecture, poetry, sculpture, painting? We agreed on all of these matters, so it was a question of convincing our President and despite what many may think, President Bush is very much inclined towards the arts. Of course, he does not have the sophisticated interest in color or the contours of the figure that Tom Ridge and I share, he goes much more for Hollywood, and popular music like Britney Spears, but nevertheless, he recognizes that Elvis did as much for spreading out the tentacles of America, or Jackson Pollack for giving a face to freedom against Communism, as any our great politicians of the time.*

...

*HSCB -Carolyn Parker Mayes: Well, we have arrived at the end of our interview, it was a great one at that. Despite our meanderings into many areas, I think our readers will appreciate your candid responses and I look forward to more online chats like this in the future.*

*Atty Gen. John Ashcroft: Likewise! I just want to add something for any of the young readers out there. Follow your dreams and if you have a passion for painting like I did, think about it less as some subversion or division from normal patriotic life. On the contrary, realize that you can also paint such lovely things as flags for example, as Jasper Johns did, or military portraits or scenes, as some great painters of the past and present like Leon Golub, Anselm Kiefer, and Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier have done. In short, culture can service this great nation if used in an acceptable fashion, one*

*which recognizes the beauty and power of the all mighty God and the power that he has vested in this blessed land, good night and thank you!*

The official site for the Department of Homeland Security is <http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/>. There are no references to Leon Golub on this site, alas.

White Box's web site is: <http://www.whiteboxny.org/>

For further, you may wish to note the appointment of Abe Golam, Director of the Office of Political And Economic Insecurity at [http://www.usdept-arttech.net/release\\_06\\_14\\_02.html](http://www.usdept-arttech.net/release_06_14_02.html). Not a minute too soon, either.

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## ***Poetry in the News Again***

22 Nov 2002

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*A Canadian's appointment as Parliamentary Poet Laureate had briefly put verse in the papers; this is poetry in the papers as Bernstein preferred it — a deadpan sports-page parody in which recruiting poets is a scandal and theory the contraband, and which never once breaks character.*

**\*\*Colleges Tightening Oversight of Parties for Poetry Recruits\*\***

by Mike Freakman

Buffalo, Nov. 22 (AHP2 News) — After a series of embarrassing incidents and criminal investigations involving alcohol and theory at recruiting parties for coveted high school poets in recent years, some universities have begun to rewrite the rules for entertaining recruits and are tightening their oversight.

These generally unofficial parties will reach a peak over the next few weeks as hundreds of high school prospects visit major poetry colleges for two days, trying to decide where to enroll next fall. Some university officials, who had been criticized for failing to supervise the parties, acknowledge that they felt compelled to take action after being embarrassed by misbehavior associated with recruiting parties.

Earlier this year, for example, the University of Alabama was placed on probation by the National Collegiate Poetry Association (N.C.P.A.) for violations that included inviting theorists onto campus to entertain high school poets at parties. A poetry recruit on an official visit to the University of Florida was initially charged with plagiarism and disorderly thinking two years ago for an incident that occurred after he attended a party with heavy theory.

At the University of Michigan, a coveted high school senior was entertained by Michigan poets with alcohol and theorists in a Detroit hotel suite six years ago.

When the university learned about the party, Michigan's president felt compelled to apologize to the recruit's parents.

At Michigan State University, visiting high school prose poets were entertained by theorists at a Detroit nightclub and other recruits taken to a casino, where they practiced writing chance-derived works, leading the N.C.P.A. to put the prose poetry program on probation for two years in 1998.

With the image of college poetry having been tarnished in recent years by a number of incidents in which poets were charged with plagiarism and copyright infringement, some critics contend that recruiting parties have become a particularly insidious part of the problem.

"These parties are a major problem," said Thames Dumberthanthat, president of the University of Michigan from 1988 to 1996. "And I can't say for certain, but I think they are a problem at a number of universities, mainly because these are high school kids away from home and there is a total lack of supervision and structure. I was shocked when I heard about how they were handled. They basically turn these kids loose and hope a great poem will come out."

Though the parties are usually unofficial, they are often part of high school poets' N.C.P.A.-sanctioned two-day visits to campuses. The high school seniors usually get to meet critics and poets, go to readings, and attend classes. At night, they are usually entertained by college poets hoping to impress them.

Recruiting parties can be harmless fun, but they can also cross the line. Players sometimes provide wine and theory to visiting high school seniors, according to interviews with former poets, critics, law enforcement officials and prose writers who have attended recruiting parties. Sometimes, too, these people say, the older poets arrange for recruits to have access to poems by George Bowering and David Bromige. "These kids are not prepared for the effect of this kind of poetry, which is provided without any historical context or information about the importance of Canadian national identity for both poets," said Dan Joyisme, President of the League for Poetic Improvement.

While the parties carry some legitimacy as part of university-sanctioned campus visits, they are seldom supervised by university officials and often take place off campus. As such, critics say, these parties carry murky expectations for those who attend, often in a raucous atmosphere with sensibilities dulled by wine or metaphor. "The long range problem," said Mr. Dumberthanthat, "is that poetic intoxication will lead these young people to think of poetry as a free pass to avoid serious pursuit of college athletics." He noted that colleges with Division I poetry programs often lowered athletic standards for top poets in an effort to keep them enrolled.

In the past, many university officials have argued that they were not responsible for misbehavior that occurred late at night in unofficial settings. But many law enforcement officials, community officials and leaders of poetry improvement groups contended that the colleges were at fault for failing to properly supervise poets and their high school guests.

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## ***Another South (from University of Alabama Press)***

12 Dec 2002

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*For years Bernstein and Hank Lazer had been building a list at Alabama — the Modern and Contemporary Poetics series — a book at a time; here he presents its newest, an anthology insisting the avant-garde keeps a home below the Mason-Dixon line.*

Below this short note is the the announcement for the most recent volume in the Modern and Contemporary Poetics series that I edit with Hank Lazer. We've been sending announcements of our series titles to the list for several years and now have a web site that give information about each of the books:

<http://www.uapress.ua.edu/authors/poetics3.html>

Recent books include *Telling It Slant: Avant-Gard Poetics of the 1990s*, edited by Mark Wallace and Steven Marks; Rachel Tzvia Bok's *Led by Language: The Poetry and Poetics of Susan Howe*; the long-awaited paperback edition of Nathaniel Mackey's essays, *Discrepant Engagement*; *We Who Love to Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics*, edited by Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue; Juliana Spahr's *Everybody's Autonomy*; essay collections by Lorenzo Thomas and Kathleen Fraser; Loss Glazier's *Digital Poetics*; and *Architectural Body* by Madeline Gins and Arakawa. Not to mention our Objectivist collection: Mark Scroggins's *Louis Zukofsky and the Poetry of Knowledge* and the DuPlessis/Quatermain anthology of essays.

Amidst all this, it's a pleasure to announce ANOTHER SOUTH, which is filled with vibrant language and unexpected forms by many poets whose work I am just getting to know. The anthology is all the more interesting because of its imagining of regional poetic work in terms of affiliation and noncentric connectedness.

-----  
Another South Experimental Writing in the South Edited by Bill Lavender  
Introduction by Hank Lazer

"An upstart collection, and it's high time." —C. D. Wright, author of *Deepstep Come Shining*

This collection gathers the best work of flourishing but often-neglected avant-garde southern poets, who collectively represent a new direction of southern writing that is at once universal in its appeal and regional in its flavor. The selected writers are working in forms that are radical, innovative, and visionary, employing devices such as syntactical disjunctions, formal revolutions, or playful typography.

Focusing on poets currently residing in the South, the anthology includes both emerging and established voices in the national and international literary world. From the invocations of Andy Young's "Vodou Headwashing Ceremony" to the blues-informed poems of Lorenzo Thomas and Honoree Jeffers, from the different voicings of John Lowther and Kalamu ya Salaam to the visual, multi-genre art of Jake Berry, David Thomas Roberts, and Bob Grumman, the poetry in *Another South* is rich in variety and enthusiastic in its explorations of new ways to embody place and time. These writers have made the South lush with a poetic avant-garde all its own, not only redefining southern identity and voice but also offering new models of what is possible universally through the medium of poetry. Hank Lazer's introductory essay on "Kudzu textuality" contextualizes the work by these contemporary innovators. Like the uncontrollable runaway vine that entwines the southern landscape, their poems are hyperfertile, stretching their roots and shoots relentlessly, at once destructive and regenerative. In making a radical departure from nostalgic southern literary voices, these poems of polyvocal abundance are closer in spirit to "speaking in tongues" or apocalyptic southern folk art—primitive, astonishing, and mystic.

Contributors: Ralph Adamo Sandy Baldwin Jake Berry Holley Blackwell Dave Brinks Joel Dailey Brett Evans Skip Fox Jessica Freeman Bob Grumman Ken Harris Honorée Fanonne Jeffers Marla Jernigan Joy Lahey Bill Lavender Hank Lazer Jim Leftwich John Lowther Dana Lisa Lustig Camille Martin Jerry McGuire Thomas Meyer A. di Michele Mark Prejsnar Randy Prunty Alex Rawls David Thomas Roberts Kalamu ya Salaam James Sanders Christy Scheffield Sanford Lorenzo Thomas Stephanie Williams Andy Young Seth Young

Bill Lavender is Coordinator of the Low Residency MFA Program at the University of New Orleans, proprietor of Lavender Ink press and author of *Guest Chain* and *Look the universe is dreaming*. Hank Lazer is Professor of English at The University of Alabama and author, most recently, of *Days*.

304 pages, 6 x 9 ISBN 0-8173-1241-2, \$26.95 paper ISBN 0-8173-1240-4, \$54.95 cloth

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## 2003

### ***IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN***

28 Jan 2003

*A documentary on Maya Deren was touring the country, and Bernstein — for whom her  
 films were close kin to the New American Poetry — sent the room to see it, unable to resist  
 marking the reels not to be missed.*

IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN A FILM BY MARTINA KUDLACEK

January 24-February 6, 2003 ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES (New York) 32 East  
 2nd Street (at 2nd Ave) [REDACTED]

Highly recommended! Deren has close connection with "The New American  
 Poetry" and Martina Kudlacek does a wonderful job providing a personal and  
 aesthetic context for her work (great interviews with Brackage, Mekas, Malina, et  
 al) but also in presenting substantial excerpts from the films. Beautifully edited  
 by Henry Hills.

COMING SOON TO

Market Arcade in Buffalo, NY January 31-February 6

U.C.S.B. in Santa Barbara, CA February 9 2003 [REDACTED]

Harvard Film Archive in Cambridge, MA February 14-19 [REDACTED]

International House in Philadelphia, PA February 19-23 [REDACTED]

Offscreen at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA February 23

With *IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN*, documentary filmmaker Martina Kudlacek has fashioned not only fascinating portrait of a groundbreaking and influential artist, but a pitch-perfect introduction to her strikingly beautiful and poetic body of work. Crowned "Fellini and Bergman wrapped in one gloriously possessed body" by the L.A. Weekly, Maya Deren (née Eleanora Derenkovskaya) is arguably the most important and innovative avant-garde filmmaker in the history of American cinema. Using locations from the Hollywood hills to Haiti, Deren made such mesmerizing films as *AT LAND*, *RITUAL IN TRANSFIGURED TIME*, and her masterpiece, *MESHES OF THE AFTERNOON*, which won a prestigious international experimental filmmaking prize at the 1947 Cannes Film Festival. Starting with excerpts from these films, *IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN* seamlessly and effectively interweaves archival footage with observances from acolytes and contemporaries such as filmmakers Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, dance pioneer Katherine Dunham, and Living Theater founder Judith Malina. With an original score by experimental composer John Zorn.

more information on the film and about rentals — <http://www.zeitgeistfilms.com/current/mayaderen/mayaderen.html>

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## ***Leslie Fiedler (1917-2003)***

*30 Jan 2003*

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*Leslie Fiedler — author of *Love and Death in the American Novel*, scourge of the genteel, and a fixture of the Buffalo English department for four decades — died at home in the city; Bernstein records the loss of a senior colleague and lets Fiedler's own vita do most of the speaking.*

Leslie Fiedler died yesterday afternoon at his home in Buffalo.

"I was born in Newark, New Jersey on March 8, 1917.... I was educated in the public schools of Newark, was granted a BA from New York University (Heights) in 1938, an MA from the University of Wisconsin in 1939, and a Ph.D. from the latter institution in 1941. I have done post-doctoral work at Harvard in 1946 and 1947 and studied at the Japanese Language School (University of Colorado) during 1943 and 1944.

"I served as a Japanese Interpreter with the United States Navy from 1943 through 1945. During that time I was in Hawaii, Guam, Iwo Jima, China and Okinawa.

"I was a member of the staff at Montana State University from 1941 to 1963.... Since 1964 I have been Professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo, serving as Departmental Chairman from 1974 to 1977.

"I have lectured widely before audiences at universities and colleges throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, England, Italy, Tunisia, Ireland, France, Germany, Japan, India, Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Brazil, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, Israel, Venezuela and Korea."

Fiedler's books include:

An End to Innocence: Essays on Culture and Politics, Beacon Press, 1955. The Art of the Essay, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1958; revised edition 1969. No! In Thunder: Essays on Myth and Literature, Beacon Press, 1960. Pull Down Vanity and Other Stories, Lippincott, 1962. The Second Stone: A Love Story, Stein and Day, 1963. Waiting for the End, Stein and Day, 1964. Back to China, Stein and Day, 1965. The Continuing Debate, (with Jacob Vinocur) St. Martin's Press, 1966. Love and Death in the American Novel(revised) Stein and Day, 1966. The Last Jew in America, Stein and Day, 1966. The Return of the Vanishing American, Stein and Day, 1968. Nude Croquet and Other Stories, Stein and Day, 1969. Being Busted, Stein and Day, 1970. The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler, Stein and Day, 1972. The Stranger in Shakespeare, Stein and Day, 1972. Published as five paperback volumes, 1973: An End to Innocence No! In Thunder Unfinished Business To the Gentiles Cross the Border, Close the Gap The Messengers Will Come No More, Stein and Day, 1974. In Dreams Awake: Anthology of Science Fiction, Dell, 1976. A Fiedler Reader, Stein and Day, 1977. Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self, Simon and Schuster, 1978. The Inadvertent Epic, Canadian Broadcasting Company, 1979. Olaf Stapledon, Oxford University Press, 1982. What Was Literature?, Simon and Schuster, 1982. Fiedler on the Roof: Essays on Literature and Jewish Identity, Godine, 1991. Tyranny of the Normal, David Godine, 1996. Love and Death in the American Novel (reprint), Dalkay Archive Press, 1998.

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## ***Panic (How to Be Happy)***

31 Jan 2003

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*Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysterical Theater had been avant-garde theatre's long-burning home fire for thirty-five years, and Foreman was newly an EPC author; here Bernstein plays impresario and talks up the latest.*

Now playing in New York & not to be missed:

## Panic (How to Be Happy)

written and directed by Richard Foreman

"He goes where no man has dared to go. Let's all join the misfit club"

"This play is like the sacred text of a forgotten people — everything is in it — therefore protect yourself by wearing the transparent blinders with which you have been provided — oh — forgive me — I see you are already wearing them!"

from the press release:

For his 35th anniversary production, *Panic (How To Be Happy)*, Richard Foreman goes for broke with 75 minutes of total madness.

In *Panic (How To Be Happy)*, a band of eccentric desperados tries to provoke self-enlightenment through ritual sex, magic, mountain climbing, and convulsive dancing as they invoke "The Old Man of the Mountain" who bestows gifts amidst multiple catastrophes.

The music of Mahler, Schoenberg and Punk Rock, punctuated by howling wolves, echoes between the Carpathian peaks, as madness and mysticism amazingly dissolve into an ocean of frenzied love

The exotic cast features Tea Alagic, Robert Cucuzza, Elina Lowensohn and DJ Mendel (Mendel and Cucuzza both appeared in Foreman's *Permanent Brain Damage*) and the usual assortment of dwarves. \_\_\_\_\_

*Panic (How To Be Happy)* began performances at the Ontological Theatre at St. Mark's (131 East 10th Street on Thursday, January 9th and continues through Sunday, April 13th.

Admission: \$20 (Students: \$15) Reservations: [REDACTED] Website: <http://www.ontological.com> Running Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes. No intermission

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Sign up for the Ontological Mailing List. (Note Ontological is starting their mailing list from scratch due to a computer crash!). Send you email address to:

[REDACTED].

& check out Richard Foreman's new EPC home page: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/foreman/>

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## **Persian Poetry**

08 Feb 2003

---

*A young Iranian poet had been writing to him; on the edge of a war with the region, Bernstein hands the room the gift of that correspondence — a short shelf of Persian poetry online.*

Over the past several months I have been corresponding with a young Iranian poet, Payam Fotouhiyehpour. He has alerted me to several interesting web sites for Persian poetry (in English), which I thought would be of general interest to the list:

Persian classic literature: <http://www.omphaloskepsis.com/ebooks> Rumi, Ferdowsi, Jami, Saadi and the Attar in English in full-text e-book format, from Aimes, Iowa

Modern Persian poetry: <http://www.art-arena.com/Poetry.htm>

Official website of Ahmad Shamlu: <http://www.shamloo.com/> "He is more than a poet for Iran. He is a national (not governmental) poet in Iran. For us like Neruda for Chile or Lorca for Spain," Fotouhiyehpour tells me.

Forugh Farrokhzad's Open Forum Web Site: <http://www.forughfarrokhzad.org/aboutus.htm> From the website intro: "An extremely small number of Iranian women have achieved anything in Iran outside of the home without dependence upon a relationship with a man or male patronage. The best known among them is the poet Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967), the most famous woman in the history of Persian literature." The site appears to originate in San Diego.

Fotouhiyehpour himself has a blog, in Persian of course: <http://payamfotouhiyehpour.persianblog.com/> I asked if I might mention this and he noted that it would not be of much use, given the language barrier. He also said he was going to put up a link to the Poetics List.

Charles Bernstein

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## **Signs of the Times**

16 Feb 2003

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*The great February 15th march had filled New York's streets against the coming war; Bernstein came back not with a manifesto but with a connoisseur's list of the best placards.*

Just to add to the list of favorite signs at yesterday's demonstration in New York, where a lively band of us, many from this list, joined together, under a Poets Against the War banner, at the 59th Street Bridge and walked the few blocks to the rally (it was cold!):

\*Axis of Unilateralism\* \*Make Poetry Not War\* \*Duct and Cover\*

The last one I think I'll use as a title to a poem. Perhaps a variation on the first two might be:

\*Make Love Not Unilateralism\*

If I had gone to the trouble to make a sign, it might have said:

\*We march to defend the honor of France\*

But maybe that's why I didn't make a sign. And besides, we weren't allowed to march.

Duck tape did come in handy for those of us who have started to keep a roll on our persons at all times: wrapping the feet with duck tape kept them a bit warmer and made us feel we were contributing to the anti-war effort.

By the way, I notice that my two attempts to post to the Poets against the War site have failed, so I will paste in below the one I sent last week.

Charles Bernstein

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\*A Poem Is Not a Weapon\*

for/after Tom Raworth

[this poem removed for inspection and verification.]

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## ***Fwd: Clark/Shaw Arrest***

*20 Feb 2003*

---

*Lytle Shaw and Emilie Clark, poets of the list, spent a night in the cells for taping Paul Chan's Baghdad photographs to a lamppost — Emilie seven months pregnant; Bernstein relays their account and adds nothing, because it needs nothing.*

### *Account of the Clark/Shaw Arrest*

*Many friends have asked for more details about our spending the night in jail for taping up flyers last Thursday, February 13. So we wanted to offer a description of what happened.*

*First of all, the flyers we were putting up were images of daily life in Baghdad taken by Paul Chan. As many of you know, Chan was in Baghdad in December and January as part of the Iraq Peace Team, a project of Voices in the Wilderness. Last Thursday night about fifty people met to pick up 8.5 x 11-inch copies of Chan's photos and begin posting them around Manhattan. The goal, of course, was to particularize and humanize our soon-to-be victims.*

*At about 11:20pm, three plain-clothes cops (two men, one woman) in a converted taxi approached us at the corner of Mercer and Prince where we were in the process of*

taping a poster to a metal lamppost. (We were not using wheat paste). After flashing their badges, they asked if we had permission to poster and what we were putting up. Their next question was if we were going to the march on Saturday. We were told that postering was a "quality of life infraction" and that we would have to go to the station. We explained that Emilie was 7 months pregnant and asked if it was possible (since we both had our drivers<sup>1</sup> licenses) for them to write us tickets instead. They refused. We were cuffed, and put in the taxi-cab, and taken to the first precinct, on Varick. They explained that this was just a "procedure" and that it would only take an hour or so.

At the station we waited in our separate cells for about two hours while they fed our information into their computer system. During this period five NYPD officers were more or less continually involved processing our arrest. At around 1:30am they announced that because their fingerprinting machine was not functioning they would have to take us to a different precinct for the fingerprinting. We were led out of the cells again, cuffed, packed back into a car, and driven to a precinct in Chinatown. Here Lytle was put back in a cell while Emilie was fingerprinted and vice versa. The fingerprinting machine did not work well and Emilie's fingers were rolled over and over again, sprayed with Windex, and then pressed yet again. The officer appeared to be having a hard time with the machine. No one offered to help him; and he didn't seek help. This process took about an hour, after which we were again cuffed, led out to the car and driven back to the first precinct.

They explained that after our information was sent to Albany it would take about an hour and so long as we didn't have any warrants, we could be let go with a court date. But at 5 am we were still locked up, with no information. Eventually (just after 5) Lytle's clearance came through. Emilie's, however, did not. And they could not tell us why. Only after repeated questions were we finally told that Emilie's finger prints had not been legible (though the machine approved or rejected each print at the time of its initial printing, and this was the reason it had taken so long in the first place). Emilie, we were told, would have to be taken to yet a third precinct and fingerprinted again. At this point we began to protest our treatment. Emilie had a bloody nose and was feeling weak and sick. She is, to say it again, seven months pregnant, and so staying up all night in a piss-soaked cell is just not a good idea. The only water she received was sent in by her brother, Andrew (who had been postering with us and was, now, luckily, waiting outside).

We asked, again, if we could have a paper ticket written. But they refused again. This time Emilie was taken alone to "Transit," a police station in the ACE station at Canal. Andrew and Lytle followed on foot. They then waited for Emilie for two more hours while the police re-printed Emilie and then cuffed her to a chair, while her information was sent, again, to Albany. At just before 7am Emilie was released.

This, then, is the basic narrative of what happened. But it's important to mention that this entire time we were being worked on by the police in a variety of ways and it's as much what they said (as the base fact of our incarceration) that gives a picture of how they wanted to intimidate us.

They wanted to talk. Having locked up a pregnant woman and kept her awake all night, they now wanted to appeal to what they supposed would be her protective, maternal instincts. They offered the friendly advice not to go to the march on

*Saturday, February 15. This, they all thought, would not be a good place for a pregnant woman. They expected violence. Mace was mentioned. They stressed that 8,000 cops would be there. They also emphasized that many of them would be rookies and suggested that they would be looking for violence. They said they wouldn't want to read our names in the deaths column of the newspaper. When Emilie was escorted to the bathroom, the female cop again laid into her about the danger of going to the protests while pregnant.*

*They also mentioned terrorism: they'd heard there might be suicide bombers at the rally. (The logic in this one was stunning: just as Americans begin to manifest large-scale public dissent for the murdering of Iraqis and Afghanis, the U.S.-based Al Qaeda cells from those countries would specifically seek out that constituency for staging its first suicide bombing in the U.S.). We're all exasperatedly familiar with how this larger threat of terror has been played, again and again, as a way to shut down civil rights. In these last statements we saw it in its most reduced and illogical form.*

*Both of us are physically okay, though extremely angry.*

*We hope to organize a presence at our March 13 court date and will be in touch as that develops.*

*Once again, thank to all of you who have shown us your support over the last week.*

*Lytle Shaw and Emilie Clark*

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## ***Enough!***

*10 Mar 2003*

*As war loomed, poets were everywhere being pressed to turn their work into plain anti-war message; at the Bowery Poetry Club launch of Rick London and Leslie Scalapino's anthology *enough*, Bernstein came to argue the opposite. This is the polemic in full — the occasion demanded a case, and he made one about what such pressure costs the art itself.*

### **Enough!**

(Presented at the *\_enough\_* reading and launch at the Bowery Poetry Club on March 9, 2003. \*\*\* *\_enough\_*: an anthology of poetry and writings against the war, ed. Rick London and Leslie Scalapino [Oakland: O Books, 2003])

In these difficult times, let us not draw away from our poetics in an attempt to redress the ominous possibilities of future U.S. government policies or the onerous effects of current government policies. As poets, we need to pursue our own forms of ethical and aesthetic response rather than engage in the sort of pronouncement by fiat and moral presumption of President Bush and his partisans.

In his "State of the Union" message on January 28, 2002, Mr. Bush said, "America's purpose is more than to follow a process; it is to achieve a result." This statement alone provides sufficient evidence to oppose his policies. What our America stands on, its foundation, is a commitment to process over results, to

finding by doing, to thinking by responding. Solutions made outside of an open-ended process compound whatever problems we face.

If this statement does not seem forceful enough, if it appears too uncertain or insufficiently categorically, so be it. If we are to talk of "poets" against the war, then what is it in our poems — as opposed to our positions as citizens — that does the opposing? Perhaps it might be an approach to politics, as much as to poetry, that doesn't feel compelled to repress ambiguity or complexity nor to substitute the righteous monologue for a skeptic's dialogue.

At these trying time we keep being hectored toward moral discourse, toward turning our work into digestible messages. This too is a casualty of the war machine, the undermining of the value of the projects of art, of the aesthetic.

Art is never secondary to moral discourse but its teacher.

Art, unregulated by a predetermined message, is all the more urgent in a time of crisis. Indeed, it is a necessary response to crisis, exploring the deeper roots of our alienation and offering alternative ways not only to think, but also to imagine and indeed to resist.

A decade ago, just after the previous Persian War, Leslie Scalapino, the convener of today's session, sent *\_Dead Souls\_*, a series of searing indictments of that war, to a number of newspapers, who declined to publish, as editorial matter, a kind of writing they found inaccessible. But the task for poetry is not to translate itself into the language of social and linguistic norms but to question those norms and, indeed, to explore the ways they are used to discipline and contain dissent.

Poetry offers not a moral compass but an aesthetic probe. And it can provide a radical alternative to the outcome-driven thinking that has made the Official Morality of the State a mockery of ethical thinking and of international democratic values.

We all saw the effect of outcome-driven thinking in Florida during the Fall of 2000, when the Republican National Committee launched a unilateral, anti-democratic campaign, capturing the state power of the executive branch from the winner of the popular vote for President. To achieve their goal, Mr. Bush and his partisans had to turn against their own espoused belief in states' rights. In the course of their righteous zeal to win at any cost, the Bush faction turned against the will both of the Supreme Court and the electorate of the State of Florida. The prestige and integrity of the United State Supreme Court was collateral damage to Mr. Bush's determined insistence that ends justify means. The Supreme Court, which we once thought of as a guarantor of liberty, was exposed as a tool of the ultra-right wing agenda of the Republican National Committee. This past week, we have seen this same Supreme Court rule that 50 years of incarceration is not

cruel and unusual punishment for a string of three petty crimes. Once again, we see the contempt the Chief Justice, Mr. Rehnquist, and his Star Chamber cohorts, Justices Scalia and Thomas, have for the shared meaning of our common language, shared meanings that are the foundation for the system of laws to which we have given consent through the Bill of Rights to the Constitution.

"Unilateralism" is not just the course the Executive Branch is pursuing, with disastrous consequence, in foreign policy, but also the policy it pursues domestically, in its assault on our liberties, on the poor, and indeed on our aspirations for a democratic society.

So I come here this afternoon, to the Bowery Poetry Club, to say, with all of you, ENOUGH!

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## **Re: N H Pritchard**

25 Mar 2003

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*Pritchard had come up on the list — a Black experimental poet of the 1960s Umbra circle whose concrete-and-sound work had all but vanished from the record; Bernstein, lately at work on him for an anthology of the overlooked, shares the essay and makes the case for the recovery.*

| *I wrote a piece on N.H. Pritchard for Overlooked*

I wrote a piece on N.H. Pritchard for Overlooked, a anthology of "overlooked" poems now in production. It will accompany a couple of Pritchard's poems that I selected. But since his work has come up on the list now, I thought I would send out an excerpt from my prefatory essay.

\*\*\*\*\*

I found N. H. (Norman) Pritchard's *The Matrix: Poems 1960-1970* at the Ark, a used book store on the Upper West Side of Manhattan just a few years ago. It is an elegant clothbound book with a large photo of Pritchard, featuring his elegant handlebar moustache he looks a bit like a soulful Salvador Dali staring, eerily, from the front cover (or is it from the great beyond?). The book was published by Doubleday in 1970 but the only sustained references I know to Pritchard's work are A. L. Nielsen's immensely useful discussion in his 1997 *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism* and a much earlier essay by Lorenzo Thomas, "The Shadow World: New York's Umbra Workshop & Origins of the Black Arts Movement," published in *Callaloo* in 1978. (Nielsen mentions a 1992 essay by Kevin Young, "Signs of Repression: N. H. Pritchard's *The Matrix*.")

*The Matrix* is a strikingly designed volume, composed of 71 poems in three parts, mostly visual or "concrete" poems, which are at the same time "sound" poems. It is one of the most interesting works of its kind from this period of American

poetry. Nielsen mentions the connection to scat, a jazz vocalist's style of intoning "vocables" (vocal sounds not immediately processed as words), while Thomas notes the connection with the "vocal styles and tones" of African languages. Pritchard hops, skips, and jumps with his syncopated words, creating spaces inside words in a way that makes one word many. It's a rhythmic concatenation that relies on multiplicity and ambiguity. When I first read these poems I realized Pritchard was a perfect example of the "ideolectical," about which I write in "The Poetics of the Americas." The ideolectical is meant to suggest a synthesis of dialect and idiolect, centering on the use of nonstandard words and syntax—whether invented or based on the vernacular.

The opening page of *The Matrix* gives virtually all the information I know about Pritchard: Born in New York City in 1939, graduated from NYU, published in *Umbra* (a crucial magazine of the Black Arts movement), *The New Black Poetry*, as well as *The East Village Other*. He also performs his poetry on the 1967 *Broadside* album, compiled by Walter Lowenfels, *New Jazz Poets*. The bio ends with a notice that he teaches a workshop at the New School and is Poet-in-Residence at Friends Seminary.

Subsequently, I found a copy of his second book, *Eecchhooeess*, published by NYU Press in 1971. The book continues the complex, often letter-for-letter linguistic, visual, and sound play of *The Matrix*. Taken together, Pritchard's two books anticipate several of the formally inventive techniques that would gain greater circulation in the U.S. later in the 70s, though his work is almost never referenced in these contexts because, within a few years of these two books, the work seemed to disappear from the poetry horizon. (I recognize the circular reasoning here: lack of reference erases, the erased are not well enough known to reference; after all, the work was out there to find.)

Other traces of Pritchard: a magnificent, very short piece on a 1999 album by Bill Dixon, playing with Tony Oxley, entitled "Quadro Di N.H. Pritchard"; I am listening to it now and the majestic space between each note seems to open up a universe inside the one we so often think we are living in. The album is called *Papyrus* and it reminds me about what is not yet lost in our vast trove of paper and digital archives: if only we know were to look or how to read what we find.

Over time, in which we are all lost, some words, or almost words, jolt us, jam us, join us, as this from *EECCHHOOEESS*:

junt

mool oio clash brodge

cense anis oio

mek me isto plawe

—Charles Bernstein <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/new.html>

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## **Montages Against the War**

25 Mar 2003

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*In the spirit of John Heartfield, who once aimed photomontage at the Nazis, he forwards a compilation of montages against this war.*

<http://winstars.free.fr/english/bush.html>

Being a large compilation of Montages Against the War, many already familial, some new, which I post in the spirit of John Heartfield.

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## **Richard Caddel (1949-2003)**

01 Apr 2003

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*Richard Caddel — British poet, Basil Bunting scholar, and with his wife Ann the engine of Pig Press — had died suddenly of infection; Bernstein passes on Peter Quartermain's note and Caddel's own plain account of why he ever began.*

I have just received this tremendously sad note from Peter Quartermain —

"I'm sorry to tell you that Richard Caddel died this morning at 11.45 UK time. He had a sudden and massive infection."

\*

In a statement on his home page, Ric writes:

"I started reading and writing poems for the excitement of physical impact of words joined together (though I doubt I'd have named it so then) and when that ceases to surprise and amaze me, to be a path of discovery, I'll stop."

Born in Bedford July 13th 1949 (John Clare's birthday); grew up in Gillingham, Kent. Studied music in Newcastle 1968-71; worked in Durham University Library 1972-2000. Retired due to ill-health (leukaemia). Married Ann in 1971; son Tom (1976-1995); daughter Lucy born 1978. Ran Pig Press with Ann 1972-2000; helped run Morden Tower readings (Newcastle) 1973-4; initiated Colpitts readings (Durham) 1975. Director of the Basil Bunting Poetry Centre, Durham University, since 1989. ([http://www.dur.ac.uk/basil\\_bunting\\_poetry\\_centre/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/basil_bunting_poetry_centre/)).

Together with Peter Quartermain, he is the editor of the anthology *Other: British and Irish Poetry* since 1970 (Wesleyan University Press).

Recent books: *Magpie Words: Selected Poems 1970-2000*. 2002, West House Books, Sheffield, 192pp. *Monksnailsongs* (with Tony Baker). 2002, Wild Honey

Press, Bray, Eire [in press]. For The Fallen. 2000, Wild Honey Press, Bray, Eire. 44pp. Underwriter. 1998, Maquette Press, Beaworthy. 2nd ed. 1999, Poetry New York, New York. 16pp. Larksong Signal. 1997, Shearsman, Plymouth. 64pp.

Richard Caddel's BEPC home page:  
<http://www.soton.ac.uk/%7Ebepc/poetcadd.html> His Durham University home page: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/r.i.caddel/>

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## ***Re: On looting the National Museum of Iraq***

14 Apr 2003

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*In the war's first days the National Museum of Iraq was looted while U.S. forces stood by and Donald Rumsfeld waved it off; extending Steve Vincent's post, Bernstein takes up the outrage that had run through that weekend's People's Poetry Gathering.*

| *I want to extend Steve Vincent's comments about the looting of the National*

I want to extend Steve Vincent's comments about the looting of the National Museum of Art in Baghdad. Many of us echoed the news during this weekend's poetry festival in New York, The People's Poetry Gathering: it was a theme, a cry, a lament through much of the proceedings. Abdellatif Laabi called it, quite rightly, it a "crime against culture." Adding insult to injury are the unbelievably callous remarks of Donald Rumsfeld, quoted by Steve —I say unbelievably even though my threshold for what I believe the Bush regime will say is constantly being reset to the south side of decency, in the direction of, indeed, crimes against culture. A friend at the proceedings mentioned to me that she planned to do a performance in which she stamped on the American flag. But I would say otherwise: Donald Rumsfeld and George Bush are the ones trampling the flag. If we condemn this totally predictable and preventable, can we say with some literal accuracy barbaric?, act, which occurred as a direct result of U.S. government actions and policy, we condemn it, also, in the spirit of an America, our America, that we must now struggle all the harder to reclaim from those who have cut out its heart and sold it in noncompetitive bids to Halliburton and the other members of the hooded brotherhood of the Axis of Unilateralism.

"Now is the time for your tears."

Charles Bernstein [<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/new.html>]

This is the report from the today's Chronicle of Higher Education:

Looting of Antiquities in Iraq Outrages Scholars

By DANIEL DEL CASTILLO

The looting and destruction of priceless artifacts in Iraq's premier museum over the weekend outraged scholars worldwide. They said that the loss or damage of

tens of thousands of objects in the National Museum of Iraq could forever hurt the understanding of Babylonian, Sumerian, and Assyrian civilizations.

Many of the museum's staff members wept upon seeing the devastation. Nabhal Amin, the deputy director, told reporters, "They have looted or destroyed 170,000 items of antiquity dating back thousands of years. ... They were worth billions of dollars."

Ms. Amin and other scholars blamed the U.S. military for not protecting the museum.

"It was completely avoidable," said McGuire Gibson, one of the world's leading scholars on Mesopotamia and a professor at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. "I thought I had gotten assurances that the building would be safeguarded. I have been talking to the military since January 24th, and we supplied them with a list of more than 5,000 archaeological sites, which they've been putting on their maps. They know where those locations are."

A spokesman for the U.S. Department of Defense declined to comment on Sunday on how individual sites would be protected. "The mission of the forces has not changed over all since this operation began," the spokesman said. "Where those locations that are safe and secure to conduct noncombat operations exist, we are making the transition. But I can't talk to any specific location — it's impossible to know the situation on the ground except for the commanders that are there, who have to make that call."

The loss at the National Museum was particularly devastating since it contained not only its own collections but artifacts from smaller museums around the country in a deliberate effort to centralize and protect the objects from the onslaught of war.

"It's nothing short of a total disaster. It's certainly the worst thing that has ever happened to a museum in the Middle East," said Eckhart Frahm, a professor of Assyriology at Yale University. Mr. Frahm, who has worked in Iraq, said the losses for scholarship were incalculable, especially given that tens of thousands of cuneiform tablets were stolen or destroyed before they had been cataloged or deciphered.

"It wasn't just what was in the showcases, but everything in the basement, very little of which had been published or properly examined," he said.

A livid Mr. Gibson, who has spent 34 years working in Iraq and heads the American Association for Research in Baghdad, was frustrated and perplexed at how a tragedy of such a cultural magnitude could unfold, especially when other archaeological sites have been relatively protected.

"It's the equivalent of if the U.S. Army had been sitting outside the Cairo Museum and let it be looted by a mob, or if they had been in Athens and let a mob loot the Athens Archaeological Museum," he said.

In an effort to focus international attention on the crisis, a group of scholars of Mesopotamia and the Near East has written a petition to the United Nations, urging measures for the safeguarding of Iraqi cultural heritage now and after the war. The petition, which had more than 260 signatures as of Sunday night, is scheduled to be presented to the United Nations today.

"'Mesopotamia' designates the land where human beings first built cities, organized complex states, formulated elaborate religious beliefs, invented writing, developed sophisticated visual and literary expression, articulated measures for maintaining law and justice," the petition reads. "Destruction of Iraqi cultural heritage will result in devastating and irrecoverable losses to human civilization, and to participate in or allow such destruction may inflame resentment and anger throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East. We believe, as is also recognized by the people and government of Iraq, that the ancient cultural heritage of the Iraqi people is at least as vital to their future as oil reserves are to their country's economic survival."

Koïchiro Matsuura, the director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or Unesco, issued a rare emergency statement on Saturday emphasizing "the urgent need to preserve collections and a heritage considered to be one of the richest in the world."

Mr. Matsuura contacted the American and British authorities in Iraq and urged them to take immediate measures to assure military protection for the National Museum in Baghdad and another important museum in the northern city of Mosul, as well as other Iraqi cultural institutions and archaeological sites.

Unesco has also alerted Interpol and countries bordering Iraq, requesting that they respect and enforce the 1970 Unesco Convention prohibiting the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property. Mr. Matsuura has called upon a variety of cultural, academic, and commercial institutions to join forces with Unesco "in a comprehensive mobilization so that stolen objects should not find their way to acquirers."

Outside of Baghdad, other collections important to scholars have also been damaged. The University of Mosul last week had its rare-books collection stolen, along with hundreds of ancient Arabic manuscripts, as the city fell into chaos. To no avail, clerics used the loudspeakers of the city's mosques, urging looters to respect the religious and cultural heritage of the documents.

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## Nina Simone (1933-2003)

21 Apr 2003

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*Nina Simone had died; Bernstein marks it with nothing but the refrain she made unbearable, Ne me quitte pas, four times over.*

Ne me quitte pas Ne me quitte pas Ne me quitte pas Ne me quitte pas

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<http://www.boscarol.com/nina/index.htm>

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## TED JOANS (1928 - 2003)

11 May 2003

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*Ted Joans — Beat and surrealist, jazz-poet, the man who chalked Bird Lives across New York when Parker died — was gone; Bernstein relays the news and his companion's wish that the sidewalks now carry Joans's own name.*

I received this message last night —

*From: "T. Paul Ste. Marie" [REDACTED] Subject: TED JOANS - 1928 - 2003 -a request from his partner, Laura Corsiglia TED JOANS 1928-2003 Beat Generation jazz/surrealist poet and friend Ted Joans passed away of natural causes in his Vancouver apartment on Wednesday May 7th. I have spoken with his daughter, Darlene and his long time companion, artist Laura Corsiglia. Laura is overwhelmed and exhausted as well as heart broken right now, and has no energy to expend she did request something from us, though& When I asked what the poetry community may do to help out, Laura and I spoke of having a memorial reading in celebration of Ted's life in the near future (we will begin planning this at a later date), but on a more immediate note, Laura requested this, based on the action Ted took when his friend Charlie Parker died: GRAB SOME SIDEWALK CHALK OR CHARCOAL AND WRITE "TED JOANS LIVES!" EVERYWHERE YOU CAN! Ted had written "Bird Lives" all across the streets of New York, and this, Laura felt would be a wonderful way in which to celebrate Ted's life! GRAB THE CHALK AND START WRITING!!! Best, T.Paul*

Here is some basic info on Ted Joans, from [www.beatmuseum.org](http://www.beatmuseum.org):

Ted Joans Born: July 4, 1928 Place of Birth: Cairo, Illinois Ted Joans was born Theodore Jones on July 4, 1928 on a riverboat in Cairo, Illinois. His father, a riverboat entertainer, put him off the boat in Memphis at age twelve and gave him a trumpet. He is a painter, a trumpeter, and a jazz poet. His jazz poems are collected in a book called "Black Pow-Wow." He earned a degree in Fine Arts from Indiana University, and in 1951 joined "the Bohemia of Greenwich Village, USA." He has since recited his poems in coffeehouses in New York and in the middle of Sahara Desert. He has lived in Harlem, New York, Bloomington, Indiana, Haarlem, the Netherlands, and even Timbuktu. His books include: · Funky Jazz Poems · Beat Poems · All of T.J. and No More · The Truth · The Hipsters (a book of collages) · The Truth · Afrodisia · A Black Pow Wow of Jazz

Poems His work is characterized by black nationalism, or a black consciousness, a strong rhythm, and a musical language and sensibility closely linked to the blues and most importantly to best of the avant-garde jazz. His style is associated with the oral tradition of African-American writing but also to the Beat Generation. Joans, along with Kerouac, Corso, Ginsberg, and Amiri Baraka began their poetic careers in the artistic haven of Greenwich Village in the late fifties and early sixties. Joans, though, has expanded his work and embraced more serious jazz-inflected sounds, and Black Power.

\*\*\* for more information, see the Ted Joans page at <http://recollectionbooks.com/siml/library/JoansTed/joans1.htm>

and Jack Foley's review of his Selected at <http://www.ishmaelreedpub.com/foley2.html>

\*\*\* Joans's papers are at UC-Berkeley: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/LDO/bene54/joanspapers.html>

— Charles Bernstein

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## ***The Rumsfeld Tablet***

13 May 2003

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*At a Poets House lament for the sacked Baghdad museum, Bernstein read from Armand Schwerner's The Tablets — that mock-scholarly reconstruction of a Sumerian find — and then unveiled a fresh excavation of his own, freshly recovered from beneath Paul Wolfowitz's residence.*

Last week, Cecilia Vicuna asked me to read from Armand Schwerner's *\*The Tablets\** (Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, 1999) at an event she was organizing at New York's Poets House on May 12 to protest, and lament, the looting of the Baghdad museum, and other cultural sites. Schwerner's *Tablets* is based on a scholar/translator's reconstruction of a set of Sumero-Arkkadian clay tables from 4,000 years ago, as Schwerner frames the poem, which is, nonetheless, entirely his own creation.

The event opened with a presentation by Marc Van De Mierop, of Columbia University, in which he speculated that the destruction of artifacts that took place in Iraq last month was part of an American program to wipe out the cultural past of Iraq. I presented an alternative, equally dark, speculation: that the destruction might not be the result of a deliberate American campaign to target Iraqi antiquities but rather a product of the brutal indifference to culture, foreign and domestic, that has been the hallmark of the current Executive Branch of the U.S. government.

The evening consisted largely of readings in translation of contemporary Iraqi poets, almost all poets in exile. Schwerner, who was born in Belgium in 1929 and came to the U.S. a decade later, is also a poet of exile, but one who became an American poet; indeed, a native American poet, if you believe, as I do, that exile is a native, indeed foundational, experience for American poetry.

A few days after I received Cecilia's invitation, something odd occurred. I received an email from a trusted confederate in the Washington, D.C. area, that a new Tablet had been discovered in the subbasement level below the residence of Paul Wolfowitz. Startling news. Although we can't yet be sure of authenticity of the Tablet and our verification team has not been given enough time with the Tablet to verify it preliminary evidence suggests that this Tablet is the work of Donald Rumsfeld and that it was composed between April 10 and 12. After reading Schwerner's "Tablet II", I gave the first public reading of the "Rumsfeld Tablet":

[illegible]

++ ++++++missing part+++++  
+++++ ++++++missing part+++++  
+++++ ++++++missing part+++++  
+++++ ++++++missing part+++++  
+++++ ++++++missing  
part+++++ ++++++  
+missing part+++++

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*After the spring's steady drumbeat of war and elegy, the year's traffic  
thins almost to silence — Bernstein's posts leap the summer and most of  
the fall, surfacing only to mark one August death and, at the very end, to  
laugh.*

## **Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003)**

16 Aug 2003

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*Haroldo de Campos — a founder of Brazilian concrete poetry and, to Bernstein, one of the  
great poets of the Americas — died in São Paulo; the notice is brief and unadorned.*

Haroldo de Campos died today. He was one of the great poets of the Americas and a defining figure for Brazilian poetry. A large collection of his work, translated by Sergio Bessa and Odile Cisneros, is forthcoming from Northwest University Press.

Haroldo's home page is <http://www.uol.com.br/haroldodecampos/>

Charles Bernstein

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## ***pretty good***

03 Dec 2003

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*The famous Google bomb of 2003, pointed out while it still worked: search the phrase, press  
the lucky button, and be told the weapons could not be found.*

do a Google search for

"weapons of mass destruction"

and use "I'm feeling lucky" button if or just pick the first item.

(this procedure will not work for too long, it's a "now" thing.)

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## **2004**

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## ***Agamben's letter to Le Monde***

18 Jan 2004

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*Giorgio Agamben had just cancelled a New York University course rather than submit to the fingerprinting newly demanded of foreign visitors; Dominique Fourcade sent Bernstein the letter, and Bernstein sent it on to the room — a philosopher's refusal passing hand to hand.*

Dominique Fourcade sent me Giorgio Agamben's letter to Le Monde immediately after it appeared; several days later the story of Agamben cancelling his NYU class (on Walter Benjamin, in part) was covered in the Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/17/education/17professor.html>). Here is a translation of the letter, provided by "truthout" (<http://www.truthout.org>)

\*\*\*\*\*

Le Monde (French text at <http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3232,36-348677,0.html>)

Saturday 10 January 2004

Giorgio Agamben

The newspapers leave no doubt: from now on whoever wants to go to the United States with a visa will be put on file and will have to leave their fingerprints when they enter the country. Personally, I have no intention of submitting myself to such procedures and that's why I didn't wait to cancel the course I was supposed to teach at New York University in March.

I would like to explain the reasons for this refusal here, that is, why, in spite of the sympathy that has connected me to my American colleagues and their students for many years, I consider that this decision is at once necessary and without appeal and would hope that it will be shared by other European intellectuals and teachers.

It's not only the immediate superficial reaction to a procedure that has long been imposed on criminals and political defendants. If it were only that, we would certainly be morally able to share, in solidarity, the humiliating conditions to which so many human beings are subjected.

The essential does not lie there. The problem exceeds the limits of personal sensitivity and simply concerns the juridical-political status (it would be simpler, perhaps, to say bio-political) of citizens of the so-called democratic states where we live.

There has been an attempt the last few years to convince us to accept as the humane and normal dimensions of our existence, practices of control that had always been properly considered inhumane and exceptional.

Thus, no one is unaware that the control exercised by the state through the usage of electronic devices, such as credit cards or cell phones, has reached previously unimaginable levels.

All the same, it wouldn't be possible to cross certain thresholds in the control and manipulation of bodies without entering a new bio-political era, without going one step further in what Michel Foucault called the progressive animalization of man which is established through the most sophisticated techniques.

Electronic filing of finger and retina prints, subcutaneous tattooing, as well as other practices of the same type, are elements that contribute towards defining this threshold. The security reasons that are invoked to justify these measures should not impress us: they have nothing to do with it. History teaches us how practices first reserved for foreigners find themselves applied later to the rest of the citizenry.

What is at stake here is nothing less than the new "normal" bio-political relationship between citizens and the state. This relation no longer has anything to do with free and active participation in the public sphere, but concerns the enrolment and the filing away of the most private and incommunicable aspect of subjectivity: I mean the body's biological life.

These technological devices that register and identify naked life correspond to the media devices that control and manipulate public speech: between these two extremes of a body without words and words without a body, the space we once upon a time called politics is ever more scaled-down and tiny.

Thus, by applying these techniques and these devices invented for the dangerous classes to a citizen, or rather to a human being as such, states, which should constitute the precise space of political life, have made the person the ideal suspect, to the point that it's humanity itself that has become the dangerous class.

Some years ago, I had written that the West's political paradigm was no longer the city state, but the concentration camp, and that we had passed from Athens to Auschwitz. It was obviously a philosophical thesis, and not historic recital, because one could not confuse phenomena that it is proper, on the contrary, to distinguish.

I would have liked to suggest that tattooing at Auschwitz undoubtedly seemed the most normal and economic way to regulate the enrolment and registration of deported persons into concentration camps. The bio-political tattooing the United States imposes now to enter its territory could well be the precursor to what we will be asked to accept later as the normal identity registration of a good citizen in the state's gears and mechanisms. That's why we must oppose it.

Translated from Italian to French by Martin Rueff. Translation from French to English: Truthout French language correspondent Leslie Thatcher

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Giorgio Agamben is a philosopher and professor at the University of Venice and New York University.

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## ***Gil's Shadow***

*06 Feb 2004*

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*Gil Ott — poet, and the editor whose Singing Horse Press and magazine Paper Air had given so many of these writers an early cover — had just died; Bernstein, who had seen him in the ward a week before, sets it down plainly.*

We remembered Gil Ott last night at the Chax Press reading in Chelsea. He cast a big, dark, deep shadow over the event. At times like this I am reminded that shadows are the foundation of imagination.

Charles Alexander, Chax's editor and publisher, came to New York to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of his press but also his new collection, near or random acts, which is, as it happens, Gil's last Singing Horse Press release and at the same time the first book in the new life of the press, under the very capable hands of Paul Naylor.

I am glad I got to see Gil last week at the University of Pennsylvania hospital intensive care unit. Bob Perelman and I went on Tuesday afternoon. Gil was miraculously self-possessed, engaged with the conversation, ironic, barbed. If my eyes had been closed I imagine I could have been across the street, chatting in my office; there was little in his voice that reflected the grim intensity of the surroundings or his physical circumstances. Gil spoke of his forthcoming book, *The Amputated Toe*, from Kyle Schlesinger's Cuneiform Press as his "last" book and wondered if Kyle knew it was his last. Bob and I offered an alternative meaning to last: "you mean your most recent book." Then Gil told us the story of how anxious Franco Beltrametti had been for Gil to bring out his Singing Horse book, though Beltrametti never explained to Gil that he was dying, that this was to be his last book (which, indeed, he did see before he died). Then Gil said, "Let's talk about something else."

Gil also spoke of how extraordinary his prolonged life had been, the gift of living without his own kidneys for a quarter of a century. He said he was one of the longest surviving members of that class of early kidney transplant patients and almost all we know of Gil and his work as a poet, editor, organizer, has been in the period of grace provided by his renal subversions.

My first memory of Gil is walking down Spring Street in the late 1970s, going east from the Ear Inn, in the year or so after an unsuccessful transplant. Like Ron Silliman, I remember how slow he walked, how cumbersome and heavy his body seemed. And how, just a year later, he came into a new life and new sense of physical and cultural possibility, after his first successful transplant.

I remember Paper Air: the Mac Low issue and Taggart issue especially. And I remember Artifice of Absorption, my essay-in-verse, which was first published as an issue of Paper Air in 1987 and which may have been part of Gil's turn from magazine to book publishing. This was Gil and my first experiment with producing a book directly from a computer file. There were so many errors that crept in that the process itself seemed to be insisting on a level of textual impermeability well beyond the desires of author and publisher.

But no number of anecdotes will bring Gil back from the dead: Gil, father of a daughter just the age of my son (11), life companion to Julia Blumenreich, friend to so many of us.

Dead poets have one trick left: they live in our ears, in our minds, in our personal hereafter.

Charles Bernstein 2.5.04

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## ***King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe***

16 Feb 2004

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*Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater was Bernstein's kind of stage; here, before a new Foreman play aimed squarely at the war and the Bush imperium, he makes the case for the difficult stage as satire's best weapon.*

Richard Foreman's new play provides one of the best aesthetic articulations of the possibility for poetry against the war, and specifically the Bush presidency (imperium in Foreman's vision). Hilarious and disturbing, the play marks a move outward from Foreman's recent series of brooding, introspective "traumaspiels", to coin a word for Foreman's particular mode of overlaid sound/sense/sight/movement. This is poetry in motion .. against the war, against the surface coherences that mask the lies that fuel the war. The fantasy, Foreman shows, is not on the stage at the Ontological Hysteric Theatre, nor in our poems, but in the ping-pong between conquest and impotence in the virtual minds of our loss Leader. The genre is satire but it's an ontological satire, a satire of the psychic (blank) spaces that explode in our brains the better to numb our proprioception. Unblind your mind at Foreman's "King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe".

"King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe" Written and Directed by Richard Foreman Starring Juliana Francis, Jay Smith, and T. Ryder Smith **\*\*LIMITED SEATING\*\*** NOW through April 18 Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday at 8:00 pm Students \$15, others \$20 All Saturday tickets \$25 Ontological @ St. Marks Church 131 East 10th Street Reservations at [REDACTED]

For more information, including reviews of "King Cowboy Rufus" from the New Yorker, The New York Times, and the Village Voice, visit Foreman's EPC home page: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/foreman>

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## **Re: King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe**

19 Feb 2004

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*Following his own notice, Bernstein recalls the day-long 1987 conversation with Foreman — near the time he was writing Artifice of Absorption — now posted at Ubuweb.*

Richard Foreman and I met in his SoHo loft one morning in October 1987. We talked all day — about his influences, his conception of play writing and the theater, and in particular his relation to poetry. It was around the time I was writing "Artifice of Absorption", so some of the ideas from that work come into the conversation as well — "frustration and paradise". Our conversation was originally published in TDR in its Fall, 1992 issue. We have now made this available at Ubuweb.

[http://www.ubu.com/papers/foreman\\_interview.html](http://www.ubu.com/papers/foreman_interview.html)

Charles Bernstein

"King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe" Written and Directed by Richard Foreman through April 18 (Reservations at [REDACTED]) <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/foreman>

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## **Carl Rakosi (1903-2004)**

25 Jun 2004

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*Carl Rakosi, the last of the Objectivists, had died at a hundred; Bernstein follows Michael Heller's word with Tom Devaney's notice.*

Following up on Michael Heller's post about the death of Carl Rakosi, I attach a notice from Tom Devaney.

For more more on Rakosi, see his Modern American Poetry page — [http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m\\_r/rakosi/rakosi.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/rakosi/rakosi.htm)

\*\*\*\*\*forwarded post from Tom Devaney\*\*\*\*\* Poet Carl Rakosi died yesterday afternoon at the age of 100, after a series of strokes, in his home in San

Francisco. He was with his family and they were reading Mark Twain and listening to music when he died.

He was a friend of the Writers House and a personal friend as well.

Carl Rakosi's 99th birthday celebration at the Kelly Writers House on October 30, 2002 (an audiocast) <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~wh/rakosi.html>

The introduction from our October 30, 2002 audiocast: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~wh/crakosiintro.html>

Two days ago (Wed. June 23) I posted three poems by Mr. Rakosi on the PhillySound Blog: <http://phillysound.blogspot.com/>

All best,

Tom

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*The list fell quiet through the election-shadowed autumn; December  
broke the silence with a run of deaths.*

### **Christophe Tarkos (1964-2004)**

02 Dec 2004

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*Christophe Tarkos, the propulsive French poet whose selected writing Roof had carried into English, was dead at forty; Bernstein marks the loss briefly and turns at once toward the work.*

I am sorry to pass on the sad news of the death, on November 30, of Christophe Tarkos, the energetic and performance-oriented French poet who did so much to enliven new French poetry over the past decade. Christophe, who had been ill for several years, was 40.

Stacy Doris & Chet Weiner edited a selection of his writing for Roof Books (2001): *Ma langue est poétique, Selected Writing*.

Our poetry has suffered a blow. But Tarkos's work already shows a means for recovery.

Charles Bernstein

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### **Jackson Mac Low (1922-2004)**

08 Dec 2004

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*Jackson Mac Low — a friend, and one of the century's true inventors of chance and system in poetry — died that morning; Bernstein answers with Mac Low's own light.*

Jackson Mac Low

a signal force in 20th century poetry

died this morning

\*

Let me choose the kinds of light to light the passing of my friend .... [the] black light of absence ... revelatory light that is no light the unending light of the realization that no light will ever light your bodily presence again

Now your poems' light is all The unending light of your presence in the living light of your voice

(from 32nd Light Poem for Paul Blackburn)

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## ***Re: Hannah Weiner's Early and Clairvoyant Journals***

16 Dec 2004

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*UCSD had put some five hundred pages of Hannah Weiner's manuscripts online; Bernstein — long a champion of her clairvoyant, large-sheet writing — salutes the library without walls.*

I want to thank UCSD's Archive for New Poetry, which is part of the Mandeville Special Collections Library, and especially Matthew Peters, Lynda Claassen, and Rob Melton, who have provided an extraordinary on-line archive of Hannah Weiner's writing. Patrick Durgen has been the overall editor of the project, and it is another example of his superb and much appreciated work on Weiner's papers. Be sure to read his introductory essay.

UCSD has now made available about 500 pages of Weiner's ms, mostly writing that has not yet been published, but including the ms of her best-known book, *The Clairvoyant Journal*.

You can view this new digital archive of Weiner's manuscripts at —<http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/m504/5/index.html>

This digital initiative is a model of how libraries can make their one-of-a-kind mss holdings available, a true library without walls. I know Hannah, if she were alive, would be pleased to be on the cutting edge one more time.

For those interested in Weiner, be sure to visit her EPC author page: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/weiner> which also includes a link to the UCSD digital mss. In the meantime, I am planning to complete the e-book publication of the Angel Hair edition of *The Clairvoyant Journal* by late Spring (about one-third of the book is already on-line at the EPC, along with sound files of here performances of the work).

If you want to check out one page of the digital ms collection for starters, try <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/m504/5/m504b10f13-38L.html>

## Charles Bernstein

*The Archive for New Poetry at the University of California at San Diego is pleased to announce the publication of an online edition of performance artist / poet Hannah Weiner's Early and Clairvoyant Journals, edited by Patrick F. Durgin. Although long recognized as an influential text, the larger Clairvoyant Journal project has never seen the light of day. This edition includes three of the four early journals (excluding The Fast, which remains in print from United Artists). These early journals document the development of Weiner's notion of "clairvoyance" as well as the literary form she became known for in recent memory, "large-sheet poetry" (aka, "clair-style"). The Clairvoyant Journal itself is published in its entirety (181 pages in length). And all the texts are presented as high-quality scans of the original typescripts, giving the reader the opportunity to appreciate the visual impact of "large-sheet poetry." Durgin's critical introduction provides a new contribution to the growing list of writings focusing on the considerable achievement of Weiner's work in the 1970s. <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/m504/index.html>*

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**Re: Guardian obit for Jackson Mac Low**

21 Dec 2004

*Charles Alexander had wondered which Ian Tyson collaborated with Mac Low; the Guardian had confused a book artist with a folk singer, and Bernstein — mid-elegy — cannot resist the correction.*

| *In response to Charles Alexander's question about which Ian Tyson*

In response to Charles Alexander's question about which Ian Tyson: that's a funny mistake in the Guardian review.

It's not Ian Tyson, the Canadian folk singer from "Ian and Sylvia" (aka Mitch of "Mitch & Mickey" in *\*A Mighty Wind\**?), but Ian Tyson the British book artist (see, e.g., <http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/newsrel/arts/IanTyson.asp>) who had collaborated with Jackson.

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**2005****Robert Creeley (1926-2005)**

30 Mar 2005

*Robert Creeley — Bernstein's friend and, at Buffalo, his co-conspirator; the presiding elder of the whole enterprise — had died that morning in Texas. There would be time to say more; here there is only the first, faltering word, and one of Bob's own poems.*

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Robert Creeley, this morning, as the sun rose over Odessa, Texas, where he was on an extended visit. He was with his wife, Penelope, and his two youngest children, Hannah and Willie.

There will be time to say much more. For now those who knew him, through his work or as part of his life, will live this day in his honor and in his shadow.

As Bob would say, Onward!; but I, for one, falter.

Charles Bernstein

### The Way

Somewhere in all the time that's passed was a thing in mind became the evidence, the pleasure even in fact of being lost so quickly, simply that what it was could never last.

Only knowing was measure of what one could make hold together for that moment's recognition, or else the world washed over like a flood of meager useless truths, of hostile incoherence.

Too late to know that knowing was its own reward and that wisdom had at best a transient credit. Whatever one did or didn't do was what one could. Better at last believe than think to question?

There wasn't choice if one had seen the light, not of belief but of that soft, blue-glowing fusion seemed to appear or disappear with thought, a minute magnesium flash, a firefly's illusion.

Best wonder at mind and let that flickering ambience of wondering be the determining way you follow, which leads itself from day to day into tomorrow, finds all it ever finds is there by chance.

from \*If I Were Writing This\*

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## ***New@PennSound***

*03 May 2005*

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*PennSound was barely five months old; cataloguing its newest sound files, Bernstein is building the archive that will outlast every argument on the list.*

Since our launch on January 1, we have added many new files, and continue to do so on a weekly basis. We are developing a fully functioning catalog, but this will take at least one more year. We are also beginning to create links to author sound files from EPC author pages. In the meantime, we have installed a quick search feature, which, combined with our "singles" index, will help to locate most of our files.

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/>

Recent additions to our "featured authors" include a selected poems of John Wieners and Fanny Howe, and readings by Lyn Hejinian, Adrienne Rich, Barrett

Watten, Norman Fischer, Robert Creeley, Myung Mi Kim, and talks by Ron Siliman and Leevhi Lehto.

On our "Series" pages, in addition to the new Studio 111 shows, we have added "Poetic Brooklyn," produced by Susan Brennan, which features readings by Anja Mutic, Matvei Yankelevich, Arielle Greenberg, Vijay Sheshadri, Julien Poirier, and Filip Marinovic.

Also at "series", we have added a new season of Cross Cultural Poetics, Leonard Schwartz's radio interviews/readings. New programs feature Robin Blaser, Meredeith Quartermain, and Peter Quatermain, from Vancouver; Richard Seiburth, who talks about, and reads from, his extraordinary translation of Buchner's *Lenz*; and John Taggart on "Peace on Earth". Other programs feature Trevor Joyce, Khaled Mattawa, Rodrigo Toscano, Charles Borkhuis, Russell Banks, Joseph Donahue, Albert Mobillio, John O'Leary, Wang Ping Stacy Doris, Ed Foster, Nada Gordon, Maxine Chernoff, Rita Wong, Wang Ping, Mark Wallace, and more.

We have also just launched PennSound/Classics, with readings of Pope and Swift by John Richetti and David Wallace reading Chaucer.

I also want to recommend a marvellous Rockdrill CD series of selected poems, from Birkbeck (UK) \*Robert Creeley: 'I Know a Man', poems 1945-1975 \* Robert Creeley: 'Just in Time', poems 1976-1998 \* Lee Harwood: 'The Chart Table', poems 1965-2002 \* Tom Raworth: 'Ace', poems 1966-1979 \* Tom Raworth: 'Writing', poems 1980-2003 \* Jerome Rothenberg: 'Sightings', poems 1960-1983 \* Jerome Rothenberg: 'Seedings', poems 1984-2003 You can order these from Carcanet's web site: go to <http://www.carcanet.co.uk/search2.html> and put "rockdrill" in the title box

Charles Bernstein

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## ***Recommended Summer Reading***

26 May 2005

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*Recommended reading was an old list custom; Bernstein revives it with a season's worth of new poetry, and a nudge to the lurkers to answer in kind.*

An old custom on the Poetics List is recommended reading (with our without commentary). I thought to mention some recently published poetry-related books here, posted with the hope of getting more lists — especially —from this lists legion & loyal lurkers.

The Yale Anthology of Twentieth Century French Poetry, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Yale)

Paul Celan , Selections, ed. Pierre Joris (University of California Press)

George Buchner, Lenz, tr. Richard Sieburth (Archipelgo Books)

Bernadette Mayer, Scarlet Tanager (New Directions)

Ann Lauterbach: Hum The Night Sky: Writings on the Poetics of Experience (both from Viking)

Mary Rising Higgins, )cliff TIDES(( (Singing Horse)

David Antin, I Never Knew What Time It Was (University of California Press)

Meredith Quartermain, Vancouver Walking (NeWest Press)

Stephane Mallarme, A Tomb for Anatole — Paul Auster's translation just reissued by New Directions, & new tr. by Patrick McGuinness from Carcanet

Rod Smith, The Music of Honesty (Roof)

Amy King, Antitdotes for an Alibi (BlazeVox)

Tan Lin, BlipSoak01 (Atelos)

Mark Morris, The Cafe at Night (Roof)

Joao Cabral de Melo Neto, Education by Stone, tr. Richard Zenith (Archipelago Books)

Michael Palmer, Company of Moths (New Directions)

Craig Dworken, Strand (Roof)

H. L. Hix, Shadows of Houses (Etruscan)

Jena Osman, An Essay in Asterisks

Bill Griffiths, The Mud Fort (Salt)

Geoff Young, Fickle Sonnets (Fuck a Duck c/o the Figures)

Hank Lazer, The New Spirit (Singing Horse)

Phillip Foss, The Ideation (Singling Horse)

Two essential guides to contemporary Canadian poetry, both ed. Pauline Butling & Susan Rudy: Poet's Talk (conversations with Kroetch, Marlatt, Moure, Brand, Baker, Derksen, and Wah), from University of Alberta Press; and Writing in Our Time: Canada's Radical Poetries in English (1957-2003), from Wilfrid Laurier University Press

&

The Allen Fisher Triple Jubilee: Gravity (Salt) Entanglement (The Gig) Place (Reality Studios)

-----URL's for most of these presses are listed in the epc.buffalo.edu's alpha list. Make your dollars count: buy directly from the presses or independent bookstores & not from the chains or/of Amazon.

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## ***Re: Recommended Summer Reading***

07 Jun 2005

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*The lists kept coming; this is Bernstein's own second installment, longer than the first.*

| *Recommended Summer Reading, II*

Recommended Summer Reading, II

Barbara Guest, *The Red Gaze* (Wesleyan University Press)

Douglas Messerli, ed., *The PIP Anthology of World Poetry of the 20th Century*, vol. 5: *Intersections: Innovative Poetry of Southern California*, with provocative intro.by Messerli

Will Alexander, *Exobiology as Goddess* (Manifest Press) José Lezama Lima, *Selections*, ed. & intro. Ernesto Livon-Grosman (University of California Press)

Juliana Spahr, *This Connection of Anyone With Lungs* (University of California Press)

Norman Fischer, *Slowly but Dearly* (Chax)

Maria Damon & Miekal And, *pleasureTEXTpossession* (Zasterle) Boisterous and engaging collaboration culminating in a visual tour de force, "E.n.t.r.a.n.c.e.d"

Keith Waldrop, *The Real Subject: Queries and Conjectures of Jacob Delafon with Sample Poems* (Omnidawn)

Thomas Fink, *After Taxes* (Marsh Hawk Press)

Pablo Picasso, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz & Other Poems*. ed. & tr. Jerome Rothenberg & Pierre Joris (Exact Change)

Amelia Rosselli , *War Variations*; tr. Lucia Re & Paul Vangelisti, afterword by Pier Paolo Pasolini (Green Integer)

Douglas Messerli, *First Words* (Green Integer)

Jerome Rothenberg, *Translations and Variations* (Wesleyan)

Adrienne Rich — *The School Among the Ruins* (Norton)

Chris Tysh, *Cleavage* (Roof)

Charles Alexander, *near or random acts* (Singling Horse)

Louise H. Forsyth, ed., *Nicole Brossard: Essays on Her Work* (Guernica Editions)

Leslie Scalapino, ed. War and Peace (O Books)  
Taylor Brady, Yesterdays News (Factory School)  
Michelle Leggott, Milk & Honey (New Zealand University Press)  
Elizabeth Treadwell, Chantry (Chax)  
Merril Gilfillan, Small Wonders (Qua Books)  
James Longenbach, The Resistance to Poetry (University of Chicago) me  
Leslie Scalapino and Judith Goldman, ed. War and Peace 2 (O Books)  
Peter Gizzi, Periplum and Other Poems (Salt)  
Gilbert Sorrentino, New and Selected Poems: 1958-1998 by (Green Integer)  
Rodrigo Toscano, To Leveling Swerve (Krupsay) Kenneth Goldsmith, The Weather (Make Now)  
Ted Greenwald, The Up and Up (Atelos)  
Mark Wallace, Temporary Worker Rides the Subway (Green Integer)  
Bernadette Mayer, Indigo Bunting (Zasterle Press)  
Eileen Tabios, I Take Thee, English, for My Beloved (Marsh Hawk)  
David McAleavy, Huge Haiku (Chax)  
Lev Rubinstein, Catalog of Comedic Novelties, tr. Philip Meters and Tatiana Tulchinsky (Ugly Duckling Presse)  
Phillip Foss, The Ideation (Singing Horse)  
Jen Bevin, Nets (Ugly Duckling)  
Ron Silliman, Under Albany (Salt Publishing)  
Jonathan Skinner, Political Cactus Poems (Palm Tree Press)  
Paul Auster, Collected Prose (Picador)  
Ravi Shankar, Instrumentality (Cherry Grove Press)  
Sasha Steensen, A Magic Book (Fence Books)  
Steve Benson, Open Clothes (Atelos)  
Heidi Lynn Staples, Guess Can Gallop (New Issues Press / Western Michigan University Press)  
Gerald Bruns, The Material of Poetry: Sketches for a Philosophical Poetics (University of Georgia Press)

Dimitri Prigov, 500 Drops of Blood in an Absorbent Medium, tr. Christopher Mattison (Ugly Duckling Press)

Peter Jaeger, Ekhardt Cars, (Salt Publishing)

Paul Celan, Threadsuns, tr. Pierre Joris (Green Integer)

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Toward the Open Field: Poets on the Art of Poetry 1800-1950, ed. Melissa Kwansy (Wesleyan University Press)

Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000, ed. Jon Cook (Blackwell)

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NOTE ALSO Our new books from the University of Alabama Modern and Contemporary Poetry Series —

Abigail Child, This is Called Moving: A Critical Poetics of Film (just out this week)

Peter Middleton, Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry

Aldon Nielsen, Integral Music: Languages of African-American Innovation

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## ***Creeley's Ligeia***

11 Jun 2005

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*Three months after Creeley's death, Bernstein turns to a curiosity from the shelf — Bob's 1992 libretto after Poe, made into a Granary book with Alex Katz.*

Bob Creeley wrote the libretto for Ligeia in 1992, prompted by a composer then studying in Rochester. (They didn't know each other very well.) Bob proceeded to write the libretto according to his own always considerable lights, inspired by the Poe story. The libretto didn't turn out to be something on which the composer wanted to work. That was OK with Bob, though, since he was happy with his text as it was and content to imagine some future setting.

He ends his note to the Granary edition by saying: "It was my own thoughts that such 'music' might be complexly realized in this modest translation of Poe's classic story to the inevitably transforming stage."

The libretto was first published in TO magazine (from Philadelphia) in the Summer 1995 issue.

This is what is on the Granary Books web site (a few coding errors corrected) — <http://www.granarybooks.com> —

Robert Creeley and Alex Katz, *Ligeia: A Libretto*. New York. Granary Books. 1996. 13 1/4" x 6 1/2"; Letterpress. 135 copies. 35 hors commerce, 100 for sale.

Originally published in 1838, Edgar Allan Poe's engaging short story *Ligeia* "invites a diversity of readings and one feels confidence in making a determination for one's own necessary uses" (Robert Creeley). Here, the material has been translated into an operatic context, Mr. Creeley's first libretto.

He excerpts from Poe's narrative in brief: "the narrator/hero meets the exceptional *Ligeia*, is captivated by her, marries her, and becomes entirely influenced by her commanding powers of intellect and beauty. Then she dies harshly, resistingly. And then, after a brief time, the hero remarries, and the cycle is almost immediately repeated without seeming resistance, which leads to the intense conclusion, the recreation of *Ligeia* in the corpse of the Lady Rowena." (from "A Note on *Ligeia*" by Mr. Creeley.)

*Ligeia: A Libretto* makes use of the emphasized pattern of Poe's narrative. His vocabulary, rhythms and rhetorical emphasis also inform Mr. Creeley's compositional strategy. Ultimately, however, one is left with a new and unique work here beautifully transformed for the stage.

Alex Katz has made the set design drawing for staging and costume toward the eventual production of *Ligeia*. Designed and printed by Philip Gallo. Bound by Jill Jevne. Signed by Mr. Creeley and Mr. Katz.

ISBN: 1-887123-11-3. \$500.

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## ***Close Listening / WPS1***

28 Jun 2005

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*Close Listening* was Bernstein's new radio program for WPS1 — another machine for the voice, after *LINEbreak* and *Studio 111*; here he lays out the first ten shows.

*Close Listening* is a new radio show I am doing for WPS1 (<http://wps1.org>), in association with PennSound, similar in format to the ongoing *Studio 111* series at Penn (and an extension of *LINEbreak*).

The shows have just begun to broadcast on WPS1; the first 10 shows are also now available, to preview, at PennSound:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Studio-111.html>

Edition #1: Tracie Morris Reading Tracie Morris reads recent work and performs several sound poems. Morris is one of the preeminent performance poets in the U.S.. She is the author of *Intermission* and has give performances throughout the US and in Europe and Africa. Morris, who lives in Brooklyn, is completing a

doctorate in the Performance Studies program at NYU. Over the past several years she has taught at Sarah Lawrence College, SUNY-Purchase, Naropa, Queen College, and the Center for Worker Education. She is a Fellow at Cave Canem, the national organization supporting African-American poetry. In the Fall, Morris will be teaching at Eastern Michigan University. She lives in Brooklyn.

Edition #2: Tracie Morris Interview Tracie Morris in conversation with Charles Bernstein on the genesis of her sound poetry, on the status of the performed poem on the politics of poetic form, on her start as a slam poet, on Brooklyn, and on living performatively (with a shout out to J. L. Austin).

Edition #3: Tan Lin Reading Tan Lin gives an ambient reading of his recent work 7 Controlled Vocabularies: sit back, relax, breathe deeply. Lin is the author of Lotion Bullwhip Giraffe, published by Sun & Moon in 1996 and BlipSoak01, published last year by Atelos Press. Lin's installations and performances have been presented in galleries and poetry spaces in New York and around the country. He teaches English at New Jersey City State University. Lin lives in Manhattan, in the shadow on Pennsylvania Station.

Edition #4: Tan Lin Interview Tan Lin in an ambient conversation with Charles Bernstein about originality, boredom, appropriation, performance, art, teaching, T.S. Eliot, his Chinese parents, and his infant baby.

Edition #5: Nick Piombino Interview Nick Piombino in conversation with Charles Bernstein on blogging, on the poet's career, on competition and hierarchy, and on appreciating art through the temporary suspension of judgment. Nick Piombino is the author of Poems, Boundary of Blur, Theoretical Objects, Light Street, and Hegelian Honeymoon. A practicing psychoanalyst, Piobmino's blog, Fait Accompli, can be accessed at [nickpiombino.blogspot.com](http://nickpiombino.blogspot.com). He lives in Brooklyn.

Edition #6: Ted Greenwald Reading New York native Ted Greenwald reads some of his best-known poems from Common Sense along with new works. Greenwald is the author, most recently, of The Up and Up, from Atelos Press. His many other books of poems include Word of Mouth, You Bet!, Common Sense, and Jumping the Line.

Edition #7: Erica Hunt Reading Erica Hunt performs some of her recent poetry. Hunt has published three collections of poems Local History, Arcade, and Piece Logic. She is also the president of the Twentieth-First Century Foundation, a foundation that supports black community change.

Edition #8: Erica Hunt Interview Erica Hunt in conversation with Charles Bernstein on how poetry can (and can't) fix a broken world, on poetry as social and community praxis, on identity poetics, and on jazz. Hunt has published three collections of poems Local History, Arcade, and Piece Logic. She is also the

president of the Twentieth-First Century Foundation, a foundation that supports black community change.

Edition #9: Pierre Joris Reading Pierre Joris reads recent poems. Joris is the author of *A Nomad Poetics*, a collection of essays and *Poasis*, a collection of his poems, both from Wesleyan. He is also the translator of Paul Celan and Pablo Picasso, and editor, with Jerome Rothenberg, of *Poems for the Millennium* the major anthology of innovative world poetry.

Edition #10: Pierre Joris Interview Joris in conversation with Charles Bernstein on nomadic poetics, translation, writing in the "other" tongue, international poetics, and Abdelwahab Meddeb's *The Malady of Islam*. Joris is the author of *A Nomad Poetics*, a collection of essays and *Poasis*, a collection of his poems, both from Wesleyan. He is also the translator of Paul Celan and Pablo Picasso, and editor, with Jerome Rothenberg, of *Poems for the Millennium* the major anthology of innovative world poetry.

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Studio-111.html> <http://wps1.org> \* for new additions to PennSound go to our updated "New" page: <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/new.html>

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## ***Lorenzo Thomas (1944-2005)***

04 Jul 2005

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*Lorenzo Thomas — of Umbra, and a capacious voice for the poetry of the Americas — died on the Fourth of July; Bernstein lets the date itself carry the tribute.*

Lorenzo Thomas, a radiant voice of, and for, the poetry of the Americas, died this morning, on the Fourth of July. His life and work is something to celebrate today.

August 31, 1944 (Republic of Panama) — July 4, 2005 (Houston)

..... It was in those days musicians started dancing Didn't have to touch their instruments. In fact, they couldn't even stop the music playing It was so much sadness in the world --- from "Back Ordered Tears" from *\_Dancing on Main Street\_* (2004)

More on Lorenzo Thomas at his new EPC author page —<http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/authors/thomas/>

Charles Bernstein

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**Re: Experimental Irish poets?**

19 Jul 2005

*Someone had asked after experimental Irish poetry; fresh from the SoundEye festival in Cork, Bernstein maps the terrain — Joyce, Walsh, Healey, Squires — and the small presses keeping it alive.*

| *Trevor Joyce has provided a useful list of Irish poets*

Trevor Joyce has provided a useful list of Irish poets and poets with Irish connections. Not surprising, since Joyce is a central figure not only in supporting new poetry in Ireland but also connecting poets in Ireland to those with whom they have affinities in the UK and US. It is a good thing that Joyce, Maurice Scully, Randolph Healey, and others, have worked so hard to create these connections, since Irish poets working outside the convenient and narrow markers of dominant styles have a hard time getting their work known in their own country and beyond — and for that matter finding each other.

When I was in Cork recently for the SoundEye poetry festival, it was a pleasure to reconnect with Catherine Walsh, whom we had invited to Buffalo in the early 90s and who remains a favorite poet of mine. I highly recommend her books — *Short Stories*, *Pitch*, and *Eatortha & Making Tents*. (Walsh co-edits *hardPressed Poetry* press with her husband, the poet Billy Mills: <http://gofree.indigo.ie/~hpp/frame.html>.)

The good news I heard at Cork is that Wild Honey Press is going to be doing a new, large collection of Walsh's work. This will add to the already substantial set of books published by Randolph Healey at Wild Honey. Healey's work with Wild Honey is a classic case of a poet with very limited support managing to do major cultural work. The Wild Honey website is at <http://www.wildhoneypress.com/>

I would also recommend Healey's 2002 collection from Salt Publishing, *Green 532* — about which I wrote a few words at the time of publication — **\*\*If poetry can sometimes be the right thing for the right reason, then Randolph Healey's *Green 532* has all les mots justes — just notes — to shake the tale loose from the tribe and dance with it. Lurking, like a lark, somewhere between "reflection and shadow", these poems are cosmological forays into the "fragile, transitory, precarious" uncertainty that underlies our ability to respond.\*\***

I first encountered the work of Geoffrey Squires at his Cork reading. I immediately picked up his collection from Wild Honey — *Untitled and Other Poems 1975-2002*. The line that first caught my ear was "a deep immobility even in things that can be moved" but then, quick upon: "liquidity of noise that one almost see" & "the broken refracted light". These spare yet somehow lushly dark, epistemologically searching poems suggested, at first, a fusion of William Bronk and Merrill Gilfillan. The lines noted are from *Landscape & Silences* (originally

published by Dublin's New Writers' Press in 1996), in which Squires creates a poem that distends time; that is, slows it down so much that it thickens in the ear. Reading further, I am stuck by Squires's uncanny ability to use the lyric as fault line for the intersection of perception and consciousness. Also to note: most of his poems are serial (in the sense of Oppen's Discrete Series); seriality in this work is linked both to Squire's immanent ecopoetics and suffused phenomenology.

Trevor's Joyce's list of Irish and Irish related poets posted to Poetics is at [http://listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?](http://listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0507&L=poetics&D=1&O=D&F=&S=&P=24372)

[A2=ind0507&L=poetics&D=1&O=D&F=&S=&P=24372](http://listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0507&L=poetics&D=1&O=D&F=&S=&P=24372)

& indeed, CA Conrad is right — Simon Cutts is a terrific book artist; his "Vinyl" show was the backdrop to the SoundEye Festival. See more at Cutts's and Erica Van Horn's Coracle Press website — <http://www.coracle.ie>

Charles Bernstein

-----<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/shadowtime/LCF.html>

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound>

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/new.html>

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## ***Xul Solar***

25 Jul 2005

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*A Times piece on Xul Solar sends Bernstein back to Buenos Aires and the modernist he loves — painter, inventor of languages, kin to Khlebnikov and Schwitters.*

There is an excellent article on Xul Solar in today's NY Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/25/arts/design/25sola.html>

Solar (1887- 1963) is one of the greatest modernist painters & poets of the Americas and it was thrilling to see his major retrospective show at MALBA with Ernesto Grosman and Susan Bee, when we were all in Buenos Aires last month.

An excellent introduction to his work by Cecilia Vicuna is available on-line in English : <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article.php?lab=XulSolar>

While the MALBA show is mainly of his great watercolors, and indeed he is known primarily as a visual artist, Solar was also one of the most significant practitioners of ideolectical modernism, along with Khlebnikov, Schwitters, and others. One of this two invented languages, "Pan Criollo" is a synthesis of Portuguese and Spanish, you might say the esperanto for South America. He also invented a "Pan Lingua," more along the lines of zaum, with its VVV base inflected by mathematics and astrology.

Grosman — who is now teaching at Boston College — edited a Roof Books anthology of the Argentine poetry magazine, XUL, edited by Jorge Perednik (among others). The magazine, from the 1980s, took its name and inspiration from Xul Solar. Both the Roof Book English as well as all the original issues of the magazine are now on line at <http://www.bc.edu/research/xul/>

For more information about Xul Solar: <http://www.xulsolar.org.ar/>

Charles Bernstein

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*What remained of the year the edition has routed elsewhere — a Katrina appeal, an opera revival, a school's prospectus; the reading year closes here, in high summer, still under Creeley's shadow.*

## 2006

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### ***Recommended Reading (I): Reznikoff and Riding***

03 Jan 2006

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*The first of a season's worth of recommended-reading dispatches — Bernstein as bibliographer of the overlooked, here gathering the newly reset Reznikoff and a shelf of Laura Riding he would keep returning to.*

The Poems of Charles Reznikoff: 1918-1975, ed. Seamus Cooney (Boston: Black Sparrow/David Godine), 2005. Reprints the 2-vol 1989 Black Sparrow edition, but the text is reset and repaginated, there are a few corrections, the notes have been revised, there is a new biographical chronology, and Reznikoff's short and key essay, "First, there is the need" has been appended. Full review of this book at: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

\* There are several new books of interest by and about Laura Riding:

Elizabeth Friedmann, *A Mannered Grace: The Life of Laura (Riding) Jackson* (New York: Persea, 2005)

The *Laura (Riding) Jackson Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Friedmann, (New York: Persea, 2005): a thoughtfully selected and substantial sampler of the full range of the work, including the full text of *The Telling*, & about 40 pages of the poems (I would have preferred to see more).

Laura (Riding) Jackson, *Under the Mind's Watch: Concerning Issue / Of Language, Literature, Life / Of Contemporary Bearing*, ed. John Nolan and Alan J. Clarke (Oxford & Bern: Peter Lang, 2005). A collection of unpublished essays from the 60s and 70s, assembled by (Riding) Jackson, the most substantial collection from this period apart from *Rational Meaning*.

Laura Riding, *Mindsapes: Poemas, Selected*, translated into Portuguese, and introduced by Rodrigo Garicia Lopes (Sao Paulo: Editora Iluminuras, 2004). 150 pages of the poems in bilingual facing pages, followed by a short section of commentary by Samuels, Friedmann, Jacobs, Nolan, Rothenberg/Joris, Clark, Bernstein, Billitterri/Friedlander.

Charles Bernstein

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## ***Riding (Jackson) & Stein***

05 Jan 2006

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*Where he sorts modernism into two waves and sets Riding firmly in the second — friend to Stein early, then, late and bitter, her sharpest prosecutor.*

\*The Telling\* (30pp.) is included in the \*The Laura (Riding) Jackson Reader\*. That work remains of great importance to me too. I don't know about any other plans for other (Riding) Jackson publications. Despite her early connection to (and friendship with) Stein, Riding rightly viewed her work in sharp contrast to Stein's. In some ways it is one of the clearly demarcation of the difference of what I call first- and second-wave modernism; Riding is certainly one of the most striking poets of the second-wave (as indeed are Reznikoff, Zukofsky, and Riding's friend Hart Crane, etc.). Riding (Jackson) first discusses Stein, quite brilliantly, in \*Contemporaries and Other Snobs\* (1928). Later in her life her comments become more reductive and bitter. One particularly unpleasant example, "The Word Play of Gertrude Stein," is in the new collection of later writings, \*Under the Mind's Watch,\* where (Riding) Jackson says that Stein's writings "were early products of a pathological condition." Nonetheless, as with all of (Riding) Jackson's work, her "witness for the prosecution" approach is incisive in its delineation of certain philosophical and aesthetic (you might even say theological) fault lines for modernist (and contemporary) poetry.

Charles Bernstein <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>  
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein>

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## ***Re: Riding (Jackson) & Stein***

05 Jan 2006

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*Asked who exactly was prosecuting whom, he answers with the paradox he prizes: the poet turned against poetry itself.*

| What is meant by "witness for the prosecution" in Charles' paragraph? Who is prosecuting whom? What is prosecuting what?

For (Riding) Jackson, after 1938, the "crime" would be poetry, or poetic artifice, including her own. There is not greater Prosecutor.

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## ***Recommended Reading (II): Antin, Bergvall, Ledebur, Lehto, Mancini***

10 Jan 2006

*More dispatches from the shelf he tends — talk poems, radical translation, a Finnish news-feed sorted into dawn: the international avant-garde as Bernstein reads it.*

David Antin, *\*john cage uncaged is still cagey\** (San Diego: Singing Horse Press, 2005). Two talk poems from 1989, which start as a response to Cages Silence. With an introduction, *Start Making Sense*, by Kenneth Goldsmith.

Caroline Bergvall, *\*Fig\** (Cambridge, UK: Salt, 2005). Listen to the glissade, as meaning slides into sound, sound to sense, sense to action. Working at the borders of poetry, installation, performance, and translation, Caroline Bergvalls *Fig* is conceptually astute and structurally shimmering. From figuration (imagine) to figure (articulate) to fig (object): a pleasure for eye, ear, mind.

Benedikt Ledebur, *\*ÜBER/TRANS/LATE/SPÄT\** (Paris: Onestar Press, 2001). A key new work of radical translation. Ledebur, an Austrian poet, has produced a series of deformative translations of poems by Dickinson, Auden, Blake, Rimbaud, Villon, and Mallarmé. On the verso pages, he has created a series of poems using a procedure of erasure similar to Ronald Johnsons *Radi os* and Jen Bervins *Nets* (for Shakespeares sonnets), except that Ledebur will often do several versions of a single poem. On the recto, he translates these poems (which are in English and French) into German. Interspersed are provocative passages on the poetics of translation from Antoine Berman, Nelson Goodman, Roland Barthes, and others, which operate not as explanation but as an integral part of this exploratory work.

Leevi Lehto, *\*Päivä\** (Helsinki: Kirja kerrallaan, 2004). In Finnish, and inspired by Kenneth Goldsmith's *Day*, Lehto has sorted, alphabetically by sentence, the entire Finnish News Agency feed for August 20, 2003. *Päivä* is organized news in the pursuit of that most elusive elixir, the new. Now it is dawn, now night, now noon. This day never ends. *Päivä* shows the fly the way out of the flybottle. Full PDF of the book, and sample English translation, at <http://www.leevilehto.net/paiva>.

Donato Mancini, *\*Ligatures\** (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2005) Brilliant typographic design in two extended visual poems *Graphically Classified Alphabet* and *Starfield Series* are standouts; also intriguing: *Writing for the First Time: 22 baby mesostics*. *Canadian Pataphysics Is Dead! Long Live Canadian Pataphysics!*

Charles Bernstein <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein>  
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

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### ***Favorite Poetry Readings: RSVP***

15 Jan 2006

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*A summons to the room — lurkers expressly included — to name the readings that mattered, poetry weighed for once as performance rather than page.*

Thinking of poetry as performance, but not necessarily separating the poem from its performance, I would appreciate it if Poetics subscribers (\*lurkers alert!\*) would provide a list of the poetry readings that you most valued over the past few years. If possible (though hardly necessary!), please provide a description of the style of performance or performances and also discuss what you particularly valued about the reading or readings.

Charles Bernstein

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### ***Samuel Greenberg***

16 Jan 2006

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*A small book sends him on the champion's usual errand: rescuing a poet all but lost — Greenberg, dead at twenty-three, the buried source Hart Crane mined.*

Funny or like stereo ... Last month I send a tiny piece on Samuel Greenberg to CA Conrad, for his list of "neglected" poets; something I had written in response to the small book mentioned below. So I was pleased to see Ron Silliman write about Greenberg on his blog today —

Samuel Greenberg, *Self Charm: Selected Sonnets & Other Poems*. ed. Michael Carr and Michael Smith Cambridge: Katalanché Press, 2005

Greenberg was born in Vienna in 1883 and died in 1917. An immigrant, he came to New York's Lower East Side when he was seven and went to school only until the seventh grade. He died of TB at 23. Unpublished in his own lifetime, Greenberg is primarily known as an important source for Hart Crane, whose "Emblems of Conduct" is a pastiche of Greenberg's work. A second-wave "ideoloectial" modernist, Greenberg practiced a radical form of sprung lyric — a wild, sound-wracked, syntactic syncretism that verges on the abstract and the rhapsodic, which I associate with Crane and Hopkins, but might also be described as a cross between Leo Gorcey reciting Shakespeare and the poetical works of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. In the postwar period, I'd point to Joseph Ceravolo's *\*Fits of Dawn\**, many of the works of Clark Coolidge and J. H. Prynne, Kenneth Koch's *\*When the Sun Tries to Go On\**, the early poems of David Marriott

... well, the list could go on. Just published — a tiny book in a tiny edition — is *\*Self Charm: Selected Sonnets & Other Poems\**. The editors have carefully noted the erratic spelling and punctuation of Greenberg's poems, which had been slightly regularized in earlier publications; for example, restoring the hanging comma in the last line of "Enigmas": "Mine eye lids shut, I fell into unfelt realms,". Greenberg, whose holograph manuscripts are at the Fales collection at NYU, has been fortunate in finding these remarkable editors, and Michael Smith has assembled a stunningly good web site for Greenberg: <http://logopoeia.com/greenberg/>

Charles Bernstein

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### ***Recommended Reading (III): Cadiot & Fourcade***

24 Jan 2006

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*Two from the French this time — Cadiot's savage comedy and Fourcade's meditation folded, unbearably, around the leash in the Abu Ghraib photographs.*

Olivier Cadiot, *\*Colonel Zoo\**, tr. from French by Cole Swenson (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2005). Cadiot's paranoid imaginary turned into a tour de force of prose as mapping not consciousness but repetition-compulsion: male hysteria at its most exquisitely funny or maybe savagely exquisite. Dystopian humanism. A knock-out French theatrical adaptation of the work was presented in New York in November, directed by Ludovic Lagarde and performed with maniacal craft by Laurent Poitrenaux. All in all one of the best realizations of poets theater I have ever seen; in a league with Mac Wellmans Terminal Hip and Fiona Templetons Youthe City.

Dominique Fourcade: *\*en laisse\**; *\*sans lasso et sans flash\**: *\*éponges modèle 2003\** (Paris: P.O.L., 2005). The seed work of these three interconnected (or triangulated) books is Fourcade's reflection on the leash (laisse) or lasso in the Abu Ghraib photographs; the middle book centers on a painting from the late 1950s by Simon Hantaï, *Écriture Rose*. Lyric and reflection, commentary and lament.

Charles Bernstein <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>  
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein>

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## **Barbara Guest (1920-2006)**

16 Feb 2006

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*Word came the afternoon after, from her daughter; Bernstein marks the loss of Barbara Guest by lending her again the tribute he'd paid her living, and letting the bibliography stand as its own long praise.*

Barbara Guest died last night in Berkeley. I got the news this afternoon from her daughter Hadley. For now, I want to recast some remarks I made on the occasion of Guest receiving the Frost Medal of the Poetry Society of America in 1999:

I want to thank Barbara Guest for a lifetime of poetry for which we, as readers, have been unprepared — to thank her for continually testing the limits of form and stretching the bounds of beauty, for expanding the imagination and revisioning — both revisiting and recasting — the aesthetic. For we are still unprepared for Guest: she has never quite fit our pre-made categories, our expectations, our explanations. She has written her work as the world inscribes itself, processurally, without undue obligation to expectation, and with a constant, even serene, enfolding in which we find ourselves folded.

Guest's work seeks neither recognition nor acknowledgement but that a fair realism may awake in us as we read, inspired not by the author but by the whirls and words and worlds that she has enacted in these numinous works:

The Location of Things (Tibor de Nagy, 1960) Poems: The Location of Things, Archaics, The Open Skies (Doubleday & Company, 1962) The Open Skies (1962) The Blue Stairs (Corinth Books, 1968) Moscow Mansions (Viking, 1973) The Countess from Minneapolis (Burning Deck, 1976) Seeking Air (fiction) (Black Sparrow, 1977; reprint, Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1997) The Türler Losses, (Montréal: Mansfield Book Mart, 1979) Biography (Burning Deck, 1980) Quilts (Vehicle Edition, 1981) Herself Defined: The Poet H. D. and Her World (biography) (Doubleday & Company, 1984) Fair Realism (Sun & Moon Press, 1989) Musicality (1988) Defensive Rapture (Sun & Moon Press, 1993) Selected Poems (Sun & Moon Press, 1995) Quill Solitary, Apparition (The Post-Apollo Press, 1996) Seeking Air (reprint) (Sun & Moon Press, 1997) Etruscan Reader VI (with Robin Blaser and Lee Harwood)(1998) Rocks on a Platter (Wesleyan, 1999) If So, Tell Me (Reality Street Editions, UK, 1999) The Confetti Trees (Sun & Moon, 1999) Symbiosis (Berkeley: Kelsey Street Press, 2000) Miniatures and Other Poems (Wesleyan University Press, 2002) Forces of Imagination: Writing on Writing. (Kelsey Street Press, 2003) Durer in the Window: Reflexions on Art (Roof Books, 2003) The Red Gaze (Wesleyan University Press, 2005) —Charles Bernstein \_\_\_\_\_

\*Strings\*

Wings of glass in high up floating

stave of time, or weight, ceilingless and  
of crystal time  
measured, measure of  
pulls own weight, and dainty  
protest,  
plucked instrument, voiceless hum.  
—from

\*If So, Tell Me\* (1999)

-----More information on Barbara Guest at  
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/guest/> <http://jacketmagazine.com/bio/guest-b.html>  
<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Guest.html>

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## ***Recommended Reading IV: Poetry & Pedagogy***

18 Feb 2006

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*Answering a teacher's question about where the other poetries fit the workshop, he points to the Retallack-Spahr anthology — the case for teaching the difficult, made at book length.*

In response to Janet McAdams "Query: 'Other' Poetics & the Creative Writing Workshop," I recommend Juliana Spahr & Joan Retallack's crucially informative anthology, years in the making, which has just been published. Juliana posted an announcement about this last month, but it is worth repeating.

POETRY AND PEDAGOGY The Challenge of the Contemporary Edited by Joan Retallack and Juliana Spahr NY Palgrave 2006  
<http://www.palgrave-usa.com/catalog/product.aspx?isbn=1403969124>

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\* Why Teach Contemporary Poetries?—Joan Retallack & Juliana Spahr \* Experimental Poetics and/as Pedagogy—Alan Golding \* FFFF Falling with Poetry: The Centrifugal Classroom—Lynn Keller \* Reading for Affect in the Lyric—Charles Altieri \* )Writing Writing(—Jonathan Monroe \* New World Studies and the Limits of National Literatures—Roland Greene \* What Hawai'i's "Local" Poetry Has Taught Me about Pedagogy—Morris Young \* Post-literary Poetry, Counter-performance, and Micro-poetries—Maria Damon \* The Difficult Poem—Charles Bernstein \* Deformance and Interpretation—Lisa Samuel and Jerome McGann \* Nourbese Philip's "Discourse on the Logic of Language"—Mark McMorris \* The Didactic—Lytle Shaw \* Stages of Encounter with a Difficult Text—Lyn Hejinian \* "My Susan Howe," or, "Howe to Teach"—G. Matthew Jenkins \* Language as Visible Vapor—Jim Keller \* Teaching Kimiko Hahn's The Unbearable

Heart —Juliana Chang \* "Gumshoe Poetry"—Jena Osman \* A Case for Poetry in the Foreign Language Classroom—Hiram Maxim \* Sex Dolls, Mice, and Mother's Suitcase—Derek Owens \* Creative Wreading: A Primer—Charles Bernstein \* Understanding Alternative Poetries—Harryette Mullen \* He Has More Than One Ear—Diane Glancy \* Notes Towards Exploding "Exploding Text: Poetry Workshop"—Bob Holman \* Some Places to Find New Poetries and Pedagogies \* Notes on Contributors

\* note: this book is available only in cloth, and an expensive cloth at that. while this certainly goes against the orientation and preference of the editors, there is some chance for a paper edition if there are strong sales on the cloth. this is one to request your local or university library purchase.

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<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

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*Between the winter's reading-lists and the summer, the list thinned to notices — readings, forums, a Zukofsky launch — and Bernstein's own postings grew scarce; the room in 2006 speaks, for long stretches, mostly in announcements.*

## **Re: Brazil Conference / Sunday Breakfast Links**

11 Jun 2006

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*Steve Vincent had asked after the Brazilian series on poetry in wartime; Bernstein, its last visitor, reports back on where the essays and responses might be found.*

In answer to Steve Vincent's question about the series "Poetry in a Time of War and Banality," taking place in Brazil: each participant is making a separate trip to Brazil for readings and discussions. I will be the last visitor (going at the end of this month). Régis Bonvicino does plan to gather the essays written in response to the "proposal" in his magazine, *Sibilia*, but that will be in Portuguese. As you noted, I have posted Régis Bonvicino's & Alcir Pécora's proposal at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog/> and you will also find there a link to Leevi Lehto's very interesting and extended response (in English), taken from his web site: <http://www.leevilehto.net/default.asp?a=5&b=3&c=6> If other materials from the series become available in English, I will be sure to post them at the EPC.

Charles

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## ***Doping Scandal Rocks Poetry***

30 Jul 2006

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*The deadpan turned loose at full length: a mock news wire in which poetry contests test for performance-enhancing drugs, and an eleven-year-old swears off reading. Bernstein's satire of the prize economy, played perfectly straight.*

**\*\*Doping Scandal Rocks Poetry\*\***

by Mike Freakman

July 30, New York (AHP2 News Service) The poetry world has been rocked by recent revelations that several of the most prestigious national poetry contest winners in 2005 and 2006 were written with the aid of performance-enhancing drugs.

Over the past decade, poetry contests have emphasized our openness to all participants, with the promise that each manuscript is judged on its merits along, said Guadalupe Maximino Glumstein, the Chancellor of the International Poetry Contests Federation (IPCF). Doping is a huge step backward in our efforts, since it gives an unfair competitive advantage to those who are willing to do anything, including risk long-term damage to their bodies and minds, in order to write the best poem.

The IPCF advocates testing for performance-enhancing drugs as a prerequisite for national book publications, slam competitions, as well a poetry contests. Poets that violate IPCF rules would be ineligible for prizes or anthologies for penalty periods of one year for first offenders to eternity for repeat offenders. Poets that comply with IPCF guidelines get a sticker to affix to all their publications certifying their poems as doping-free.

Unless we want poetry to sink back into the margins of society, we must assure readers that poets produce their work with their own sweat and imagination. When we teach a poem to a young person in a school setting, to inspire and instruct, we need to be able to say that anyone can aspire to write a poem as good as this. We cant afford to send a message that doping is necessary to write the best poems. We have to have an even playing field.

Several leading poets were asked to comment on the scandal but refused to talk on the record, for fear of provoking IPCF investigations of their conduct. Unlike the use of doping in track and cycling, poets often use poetry-performance-enhancing drugs to cause temporary physical and mental impairment or paralysis, in order to hyperactivate their imaginative capacities. The practice has been shown to cause a number of long-term physical and mental maladies.

But 11-year old Daisy Threadwhistle of Incontrobrogliaria, New Jersey, was eager to speak on the record. Ms. Threadwhistle said she was very disappointed when a

poem from her school reader was removed when its author tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs. The Moon Is My Revenge, Venus My Soldier of Midnight was my favorite poem this year. I feel cheated. I don't think I want to read any more poems. In early 2006, IPCF introduced a battery of blood and psychological tests to detect poetic doping. An IPCF study group is now investigating whether the use of certain computer programs and search engines also should be banned from poetry.

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### ***Re: new device/widget for creating/authoring digital poetry***

12 Aug 2006

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*His running curiosity about what the machine can do to a poem — here the poetry cube and a fifteen-minute write-a-thon that records every keystroke for playback.*

I just tried out Jason Nelson's "poetry cube." A couple of nights ago, I participated in Quick Muse's new 15-minute write-a-thon. The idea is that you are given a quotation and asked to respond with a poem. All your keystrokes are recorded & can later be played back via "poematic," a "poem recording and playback" system devised by Fletcher Moore; there is also a separate file of the "final" poem. Results at <http://www.quickmuse.com>.

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### ***Creeley in darkness and light***

17 Oct 2006

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*An October storm crippled Buffalo the weekend it gathered to mourn Creeley; kept away himself, Bernstein relays how the conference carried on by whatever light it could find.*

From what I have heard, from several people who were at the Buffalo Creeley conference, the events went on, sometimes in make-shift locations, in spite of the storm and its devastation.

Over half the houses and business in the Buffalo region lost their power — and many, perhaps as many as 200,000, were still without power as of early this evening. The schools in Buffalo and the suburbs are expected to be closed throughout the week. The storm, coming before the leaves had fallen, caused extensive damage to the trees, many of which, if not most, lost branches, which crashed into the power lines and roadways.

On Friday, the UB campus had to be closed due to the weather conditions, one of the few times the campus has ever been shut down. (The campus is about 14 miles from downtown Buffalo and on Friday the city and county declared a state of emergency, banning all but essential traffic from the roadways.) The airport lost power during the first day of the storm and was closed Friday.

As I heard the story, the conference participants made the best of it, commandeering a meeting room in their downtown hotel and carrying on as best they could. As far I know, Saturday's events took place at the church, as scheduled, since the church did have electrical power.

The hotel where the conference participants were staying did have electrical power and there were no problems with the group returning home safely on Sunday.

It was a great disappointment to me — and many others — not to be able to get to conference. But I think most of the scheduled speakers/readers were there & continued on as best they could — forming a pool of light against a surrounding darkness.

For those who managed to come together on this past woe-beset Buffalo weekend, I do believe Bob Creeley was celebrated and mourned.

Charles Bernstein

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## **devolution**

16 Dec 2006

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*A statistic about what freshmen once wanted from college turns him toward his own late-'60s cohort — and a caution against reading any generation off its mediated trends.*

| "In 1970, 79 percent (of college freshmen) said their goal was developing a meaningful philosophy of life. ..."

A somewhat different perspective on one kind of "philosophy of life" by a few folks in "my generation" is offered in a review I wrote of *\*Sing a Battle Song: Poems by Women in the Weather Underground Organization\**, which was originally published in 1975 and just reissued by Factory School. The review had just appeared in the December/January issue of the Brooklyn Rail and is on their web site but also posted at: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog/#12-15-06>

Personally, I found many of my classmates of the late 60s/early 70s a troubling group who would not hold up well in terms of many of the values usually attributed to the "60s," or in terms of the ethical and political values of many of today's undergraduates. But then I am prone to be troubled. Conversely, I spend a good deal of time with undergraduates and find many of them seriously confronting the issues they face, not only as best they can but also admirably. I prefer, that is, to think anecdotally and critically, and in terms of socio-historical context, rather in terms of massed mediated lifestyle "trends," which in terms of "the 60s" was mostly (and continues to be) disinformation and for the current generation is a form of institutionally fomented despair and pacification.

Charles Bernstein

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**2007**

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***New M/E /A/N /I/N /G -- Feminist Art: A Reassessment***

*04 Feb 2007*

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*M/E/A/N/I/N/G was the art journal Susan Bee — the painter he was married to — had co-edited with Mira Schor since 1986; here its fourth online number reassesses feminist art across three generations, the youngest of them his and Bee's daughter, Emma Bee Bernstein.*

M/E /A/N /I/N /G Online #4 <http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/meaning/04/> (February 2007)

Feminist Art: A Reassessment

Edited by Susan Bee & Mira Schor

A forum including writing and images by artists and art historians from three generations

Irina Aristarkhova, Susan Bee, Emma Bee Bernstein, Johanna Burton, Ingrid Calame, Maura Coughlin, Bailey Doogan, Johanna Drucker, Carol Duncan, Mary Beth Edelson, Joanna Frueh, Vanalyne Green, Mimi Gross, Susanna Heller, Janet Kaplan, Tom Knechtel, Judith Linhares, Lenore Malen, Ann McCoy, Adelheid Mers, Robin Mitchell, Carrie Moyer, Beverly Naidus, Rachel Owens, Sheila Pepe, Nancy Princenthal, Carolee Schneemann, Mira Schor, Joan Snyder, Anne Swartz, Faith Wilding, and Barbara Zucker.

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/meaning/04/>

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***Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)***

*06 Mar 2007*

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*Baudrillard — theorist of the simulacrum, of hyperreality and the disappearance of the real — had long been a touchstone for the difficult art Bernstein defended; he forwarded the wire notice the day it came.*

French philosopher Jean Baudrillard dies

The Associated Press

March 6, 2007 [] PARIS: Jean Baudrillard, a French philosopher and social theorist known for his provocative commentaries on consumerism, excess and what he said was the disappearance of reality, died Tuesday, his publishing house said. He was 77.

Baudrillard died at his home in Paris after a long illness, said Michel Delorme, of the Galilee publishing house.

The two men had worked together since 1977, when "Oublier Foucault" (Forget Foucault) was published, one of about 30 books by Baudrillard, Delorme said by telephone.

Among his last published books was "Cool Memories V," in 2005.

Baudrillard, a sociologist by training, is perhaps best known for his concepts of "hyperreality" and "simulation."

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### ***Nancy Shaw (1962-2007)***

*17 Apr 2007*

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*Nancy Shaw was a founder of Vancouver's Kootenay School of Writing and, at forty-four, far too young to be memorialized; Bernstein passed on the notice with a word of his own.*

Christine Stewart wrote to me last night that Nancy Shaw had died. I asked her to send me a brief obituary notice, which I am forwarding to the list. All who knew Nancy will join Christine and me, and the Kootenay School of Writing poetry community, in raging against her death but also celebrating her poetry, poetics, and contribution to the world our poetry collectively makes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nancy Shaw born May 24th, 1962, died early Monday morning April 16th, 2007. A founding member of the Kootenay School of Writing in Vancouver, Shaw authored *Affordable Tedium* (Tsunami 1991) and *Scoptocratic* (ECW Press 1992). She also collaborated on several chapbooks with Catriona Strang, including *Busted* (Coach House Books 2001, <http://www.chbooks.com>.) and most recently *Cold Trip* (Nomados 2006). In addition, Shaw was a visual artist, curator and wrote for various art catalogues.

A service will be held in Vancouver at St. Andrew's-Wesley Church, 1022 Nelson Ave. at 1:00 PM, Saturday April 21, 2007. Instead of flowers, please donate to the BC Cancer Fund.

I should have been listening  
To every word you sang  
Rapt pious chant [from *Cold Trip*]

Other publications include:

"McLuhan, or Modernism in Reverse Glenn Wilmot" *Canadian Journal of Communication* Volume 21, No. 1. 1999. <http://www.cjc-online.ca/viewarticle.php?id=511&layout=html>

"The Method is the Message: Rethinking McLuhan Through Critical Theory" Canadian Journal of Communication Volume 24, No. 1. 1999. <http://www.cjc-online.ca/viewarticle.php?id=510&layout=abstract>

Alan Gilbert to Nancy Shaw, Notes on Cultural Poetics. Open Letter Eleventh Series, No. 3, Fall 2001 <http://slought.org/files/downloads/publications/openletter/03a.pdf>

"Cloning Scapegoats Martha Stewart Does Insider Trading" Social Text 21.4 (2003) 51-67 [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/social\\_text/v021/21.4shaw.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/social_text/v021/21.4shaw.html)

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## **MLA / Poetics**

24 May 2007

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*The Modern Language Association had asked him to define poetics for its own Introduction to Scholarship — an official commission handed to poetry's most practiced antagonist of the official. He used the platform, characteristically, to unsettle the profession's faith that clarity is a fact of nature rather than a rhetorical effect.*

Just out from the MLA —Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures (3rd Edition)

more info at <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

from my essay on "Poetics":

The profession is best that professionalizes least.

The sociologist C. Wright Mills got this just right when he wrote, "The aim of the college, for the individual student, is to eliminate the need in his life for the college; the task is to help him become a self-educating man. For only that will set him free."

—

Art students used to be told that the fundamental requirement for drawing or painting was to accurately render figures. But this confused one modality of representation with the entire process of visual aesthesis. It might have been better to say: you can't draw if you can't see. Correlatively, we might say, you can't write if you can't think. Scholarship requires poetics.

Paratactic writing, thinking by association, is no less cogent or persuasive than hypotactic exposition, with its demands that one thought be subordinated to the next. Poetics reminds us that the alternate logics of poetry are not suited just for emotion or irrational expression; poetics lies at the foundation of all writing.

Poetry is a name we use to discount what we fear to acknowledge.

The accurate documentation of information used in a work is a vital principle of scholarship. Similarly, scholarship requires a writer to consider challenges to her or his views: but this too often is assumed to mean considering challenges to the content of what is being said while ignoring challenges to the style and form. The importance of poetics for scholarship is not to decree that anything goes but rather to insist that exposition is an insufficient guarantor of reason. Poetics makes scholarly writing harder, not easier: it complicates scholarship with an insistence that the way we write is never neutral, never self-evident.

Clarity in writing is a rhetorical effect not a natural fact. One man's eloquence can be another's poison; one woman's stuttering may be the closest approximation of truth that we will ever know.

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## ***Re: I'm Not There***

01 Dec 2007

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*The thread was on Todd Haynes's Dylan film, which Aldon Nielsen had been cooler on. Here is Bernstein off the poetics clock and at the movies — appreciative, digressive, and wry to the last frame.*

| *I saw \*I'm Not There\* last night and liked it very much.*

I saw \*I'm Not There\* last night and liked it very much. But then, unlike Aldon, I've liked the other Todd Haines's films I've seen, the early one on Karen Carpenter and, especially, \*Far from Heaven\* (his tribute to Douglas Sirk). His new film stuck me as one of the most aesthetically and conceptually original films I've seen recently. It's uneven, sure; but it's exploratory. I'd think of it in conjunction with long-time favorites like \*Pennies from Heaven\*. The send-ups of the Scorsese documentary were hysterical, bringing to mind *The Mighty Wind*. And while Baez was great in the Scorsese film, the (Julianne Moore) caricature here was quite funny (and it reminded me of the *National Lampoon* parody years back: "Pull the Trig-rows Neg-rows, we're with you all the way/ Just across the Bay"). The Pat Garrett/Billy the Kid segments were a bit lugubrious, though I like the Peckinpah film, so I appreciated the gesture. The Allen Ginsberg avatar figure (in the Felliniesque sequence) was interesting maybe most just because it was \*there\* (and in that segment of the film the Dylan avatar figure was in "being there" mode as well). And as Stephen Baraban notes the (Bunuel-like) sequence before the Christ figure was more substantive. Also, Haines does good by Charlotte Gainsbourg and Richie Havens. I thought the most interesting Brechtian motif was the the preteen African-American hobo/"Woody Guthrie" sequences (as played by Marcus Carl Franklin).

As we were leaving the Lincoln Square theater #2, Ed Koch was standing in an alcove, accompanying himself on the Jew's harp.

He was singing "Master of War."

Off key.

Charles Bernstein

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

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## ***Will Alexander fund [fwd]***

03 Dec 2007

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*Will Alexander — one of the most singular imaginations in American poetry — was ill and without means; friends organized a fund, and Bernstein relayed the appeal, adding the practical correction that mattered.*

"we interact as presence within presence as spirit twice its equal in spirit so that a range of beasts burns between us" Will Alexander, Exobiology as Goddess

Dear Poetry Community,

Will Alexander, one of our most original and energetic lights, is ill with cancer.

[http://www.greeninteger.com/pipbios\\_detail.cfm?PIPAuthorID=7](http://www.greeninteger.com/pipbios_detail.cfm?PIPAuthorID=7)

The last few months have seen Will in and out of County USC, and otherwise unable to maintain his teaching and reading schedule. Will was freelancing, so his resources to financially cope with this situation are exhausted.

We are collectively asking you to help fund Will's living expenses while he is in treatment and working on recovery. Sheila Scott-Wilkinson, Will's long-term partner, is acting as Will's primary caregiver and financial manager. She and Will have opened a special joint checking account to receive these monies. Checks can be addressed to 'Sheila Scott-Wilkinson', and mailed to the following address:

Sheila Scott-Wilkinson 400 South Lafayette Park Place, #307 Los Angeles, CA 90057

Love and Peace,

Thérèse Bachand Jen Hofer Andrew Joron Harryette Mullen Diane Ward

-----N.B. : use the address \*here\*, not Poets in Need, for contributions for Will Alexander.

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## **PEPC Library: New Resources**

13 Dec 2007

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*Another deposit in the archive he was forever building — the PEPC library at Penn — this time L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E ephemera and out-of-print rarities, posted for anyone with a connection and an interest.*

Some new resources at the PEPC Library  
<http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/contents.html>

Bruce Andrews & Charles Bernstein, eds, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Lines (1988) [pdf, theory/praxis by Weiner, Drucker, McCaffery, Inman, Grenier, Mandel, Siliman, Hejinian, Benson, Howe, eds.]

Susan Bee & Jerome Rothenberg, Burning Babe (Granary Books, 2005) [pdf, complete book]

Bob Cobbing, Sockless in Sandals (1985)

Robert Kelly, Earish (homeophonic translations of Paul Celan)

Daniil Kharms, two short works from Today I Wrote Nothing

@ PEPC Library: <http://writing.upenn.edu/pepc/contents.html>

PLUS The Yellow Pages ads: complete outtakes  
<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Bernstein-YP2.html>  
-----<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog>

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*From here the archive keeps only a scattering — a book, a death, a fund appeal a year. The list Bernstein built had become, in its long dusk, mostly the channel through which he still spoke to it.*

## **2008**

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### **Scalapino: It's go in horizontal**

17 Apr 2008

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*Leslie Scalapino's Selected had just appeared, and Bernstein — a long, loud advocate of her uncategorizable work — sent word of the readings, his own endorsement folded in among Fanny Howe's and Creeley's.*

Leslie Scalapino will read from her new book

It's go in horizontal: Selected Poems 1974-2006

Readings at UC San Diego; University of Chicago; City Lights in SF; & Tucson, Arizon

San Diego: April 22nd, Tues at 7:00 pm at the San Diego Museum of Art in Balboa Park on Laurel St. April 23rd, Weds at 4:30 on the UCSD campus in the Visual Arts Performance Space (Warren College).

University of Chicago: Reading is on Thurs April 24th at 5:30pm—Rosenwald 405, 1101 E. 58th Street. Lecture titled POETICS is on Friday April 25th at 2:00pm, Rosenwald 405, 1101 E. 58th Street.

Tucson, Arizona: Saturday May 3rd—A poem-play at 1:00pm and reading at a separate venue, The Drawing Studio, at 4:00pm.

San Francisco: City Lights Book Store in San Francisco. Reading is Thurs May 8th at 7:00pm, 261 Columbus Ave near Broadway. Leslie Scalapino is reading with Denise Newman whose new book from Apogee Press is titled Wild Goods.

It's go in horizontal /Selected Poems 1974-2006 by Leslie Scalapino University of California Presa 246 pages. ISBN 978-0-520-254662-6 \$16.95 Order from [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu) or call 1-██████████

Fanny Howe "This is a superb and important contribution to philosophy, theology, psychology, and the science of knowing. To have the selection here now, to be able to see the whole trajectory in one volume, is to experience a revolutionary moment."

Robert Creeley: "...this work is not apart from its thinking and/or composition... I find the whole work to be a deeply engaging preoccupation with, and articulation of, what life might be said, factually, to be. But not as a defined subject, nor even a defining one—but as one being one. That is an heroic undertaking, or rather, place in which to work/write/live. Its formal authority is as brilliant as any I know."

Charles Bernstein: "Leslie Scalapino's poems probe politics, perception, and desire, creating hypnotically shifting coherences that take us beyond any dislocating devices into a realm of newly emerging consciousness. This work, which defies categorization, is essential for contemporary poetry."

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*Only this reading notice survives from 2008 in the archive. In December the Bernsteins lost their daughter, Emma Bee Bernstein; the list, all but silent that year, did not speak of it here.*

## 2009

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## ***Ugly Ducking Presse: fund raising letter***

18 Dec 2009

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*Ugly Duckling Presse — the Brooklyn shoestring house whose board he'd joined near its start — needed money to make its year, and he made the case the only way he would: with a song lyric for an epigraph and a wink for a close.*

The best in town, the best, the best The best in town Not a quack, not a quack, not a waddle or a quack But a glide and a whistle and a snowy white back And a head so noble and high . . . —Frank Loesser

I was honored to join the board of Ugly Duckling Presse near to its start. It struck me at the time as one of the best small presses I had ever encountered. Over the years I think that has become apparent to just about anyone who pays attention to such things – and I know that's true of you out there in virtual reality.

Here's the thing (you've heard it before): for Ugly Duckling to survive and thrive, it needs the financial support of those who share my commitment to its remarkable and necessary work.

Subscriptions: <http://uglyducklingpresse.org/subscriptions.html>

UDP has recently announced its 2010 "Full Presse Subscription." The editors note that "this is going to be one of the Presse's most ambitious years yet, with more than 25 titles planned, including new poetry by emerging and established authors, artist books, works in translation, new titles in the Lost Literature series, and more."

UDP's Full Presse "basic" subscription is a great deal at \$150, which covers the cost of production and postage. Subscriptions are limited to 200 per year, to guarantee that all subscribers receive the hand-made chapbooks and ephemera in addition to the "regular" books. While the basic subscription gets the books out, which is the whole point of UDP, this basic subscription is not a donation. I hope you will consider becoming a "Supporting Subscriber" (\$250) or joining the "Collector's Circle" (\$1,000). By contributing at one of these levels, you receive the full subscription package while making a tax-deductible contribution to the Presse. The editors note that supporting contributors "will be acknowledged on our donor list and invited to a UDP cocktail reception, to be held in Spring 2010, a unique opportunity to meet writers, editors, designers, and board members. Collector's Circle subscribers will also receive a one-of-a-kind book, written and designed by the UDP collective, and will be credited in our print catalog."

UDP also welcomes cash donations <<http://uglyducklingpresse.org/donate.html>>, which can be sent via the link or to the press by mail. All contributors will be added to UDP's list of supporters.

And hey!: it's not really an ugly ducking. It's a swan.

Yours, truly,

Charles Bernstein

for UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE at the Old American Can Factory 232 Third Street,  
#E-002 Brooklyn, NY 11215

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**2010**

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### ***All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems from FSG***

28 Feb 2010

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*Thirty years of work, gathered at last by Farrar, Straus and Giroux — a trade house's embrace of a poet who had made his name against the mainstream. The blurbs run from Ashbery to John Zorn; the milestone speaks for itself.*

All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems of Charles Bernstein Farrar, Straus and Giroux (on sale March 2) (300 pp.)

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/books/all-the-whiskey/>

All the Whiskey in Heaven brings together some of Charles Bernstein's best work from the past thirty years, an astonishing assortment of different types of poems. Yet, despite the distinctive differences from poem to poem, Bernstein's characteristic explorations of how language both limits and liberates thought are present throughout. Modulating the comic and the dark, structural invention with buoyant sound play, these challenging works give way to poems of lyric excess and striking emotional range. This is poetry for poetry's sake, as formally radical as it is socially engaged, providing equal measures of aesthetic pleasure, hilarity, and philosophical reflection. Long considered one of America's most inventive and influential contemporary poets, Bernstein reveals himself to be both trickster and charmer.

"Charles Bernstein's poems resemble each other only in being unexpected. Simultaneously mad, tragic and hilarious, they seem written to illustrate the truth of his lines: 'things are / solid; we stumble, unglue, recombine.' All the Whiskey in Heaven is a vast department store of the imagination." —John Ashbery

"Charles Bernstein uses words as a surgeon uses a scalpel. He strips away the skin and cuts to the bone to reveal reality and—ultimately—to heal. This essential collection from 30 years of cutting edge work will confirm Bernstein as our true poet laureate—the voice of a new generation." —John Zorn

"For more than thirty years Charles Bernstein has been America's most ardent literary provocateur. This long-needed selection of his poetry gives us a new perspective on his work, for it shows us that the many forms he has worked in

over the years are in fact a single form, the Bernstein form, and it is unique, the product of an imagination unlike that of any other contemporary writer. His poems challenge you to think in unaccustomed ways. They address public matters, private matters, poetic matters—in other words, all that matters most. And, good Lord, can they ever make you laugh” —Paul Auster

“Charles Bernstein is our ultimate connoisseur of chaos, the chronicler, in poems of devastating satire, chilling and complex irony, exuberant wit, and, above all, profound passion, of the contradictions and absurdities of everyday life in urban America at the turn of the twenty-first century. From such early underground classics as “The Klupzy Girl,” to the mordant verbal play of “The Lives of the Toll Takers,” to the great meditation on 9/11 called “Report from Liberty Street” and the deeply personal ballads and elegies of recent years, Bernstein’s much awaited *Selected Poems* displays a formal range, performative urgency, and verbal dexterity unmatched by other poets of his generation.” —Marjorie Perloff

“A perfect introduction to the adventure that is Charles Bernstein’s work. But even for those of us who have known his irrepressible inventiveness and engaged humor from the individual books it is a boon to see here the full range of his exuberant ingenuity in battling sclerosis of word, mind—and poetry.” —Rosmarie Waldrop

“This wonderful book confirms Charles Bernstein’s position as the pre-eminent American poet of mental activity—delineating not simply the mind as it registers stimuli, but the more radical commitment to mind as a machine that constantly invents totally new moves and strategies in the daily battles of perception. All the *Whiskey in Heaven* captures 30 years of ground breaking and revelatory work.” —Richard Foreman

#### Previews

Bookforum Feb./March 2010 “... a rousing selection from thirty years of work ... Bernstein deftly shifts moods and tones, but a sense of urgency and a hard-won clarity are in evidence throughout this volume.” —David O'Neill

Publisher's Weekly 2/20/10 starred review This gathering of 30 years worth of work by the prominent L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poet and essayist offers a rigorous critique of the art of poetry itself, which means, among other things, a thorough investigation of language and the mind. Varied voices and genres are at play, from a colloquial letter of complaint to the manager of a Manhattan subway station to a fragmentary meditation on the forces that underlie the formation of knowledge. Bernstein's attention to the uncertainty surrounding the self as it purports to exist in poetry—“its virtual (or ventriloquized)/ anonymity—opens fresh pathways toward thinking through Rimbaud's dictum that “I is another.” In

addition to philosophical depth—which somehow even lurks beneath statements like “There is nothing/ in this poem/ that is in any/ way difficult/ to understand”—a razor-sharp wit ties the book together: “You can’t/ watch ice sports with the lights on!” These exhilarating, challenging poems raise countless essential questions about the form and function of poetry. (Mar.)

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bernstein/blog/>

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## ***S/N: NewWorldPoetics***

15 May 2010

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*Institution-builder to the last, he launched this hemispheric quarterly with Eduardo Espina — the poetries of the Americas carried both ways across the border, in English and in Spanish.*

S/N: NewWorldPoetics <http://www.snnnewworldpoetics.com/>

is a quarterly journal dedicated to the poetries of the Americas and to South/North [S/N] dialog. In each issue we will publish poetry and poetics in English or Spanish translation, introducing North American readers to Latin American poetry and vice versa. Our commitment is to a poetics of invention and exploration. This also defines our approach to translation, which we see not as an expedient but as an art form in itself. S/N will present work that challenges received conventions about poetry and poetics – but not necessarily in the predictable ways of the avant-garde, bohemian, or dissident. The poetry and poetics we present is meant to open up new understandings of poetic invention and formal exploration, in works that are as wild and unpredictable as Our Americas.

S/N: NewWorldPoetics es una revista cuatrimestral dedicada a la poesía y poéticas de las Américas, como asimismo a promover el diálogo entre Sur y Norte [S/N]. En cada número publicaremos poemas y poéticas en traducción al inglés o español, presentando a los lectores de Norte América la poesía de América Latina, y viceversa. Nuestro compromiso es con las poéticas de invención y exploración. Esto también define nuestra concepción de la traducción, a la cual no vemos como una simple mediadora sino como una forma de arte por sí misma. S/N presentará obras que desafían las convenciones pre-existentes sobre la poesía, aunque no necesariamente a la manera predecible de las vanguardias, la bohemia, o la disidencia. La poesía y poéticas que publicaremos están pensadas y concebidas para inaugurar nuevos entendimientos de la invención poética y de la exploración formal, en obras que son tan salvajes e impredecibles como Nuestras Américas.

Charles Bernstein & Eduardo Espina, editors

## Issue One

Essays / Ensayos Charles Bernstein Roberto Echavarren Eduardo Espina José Kozer Heriberto Yépez

Poetry / Poesía Carlos Germán Belli Régis Bonvicino Robert Creeley Oliverio Gironde Tan Lin Harryette Mullen Tom Raworth

Interview / Entrevista Marjorie Perloff Enrique Mallen

116pp., 8x10", color

S/N: subscribe: <http://www.snnewworldpoetics.com/>

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### **Leslie Scalapino (1944-2010)**

29 May 2010

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*Two years after he sent word of her readings, Leslie Scalapino was dead at sixty-six. Founder of O Books, traveler, tireless maker of unclassifiable work — Bernstein posted the long obituary and let her own lines have the last word.*

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/scalapino/obit.html>

“Scalapino makes everything take place in real time, in the light and air and night where all of us live, everything happening at once.” — Philip Whalen

Leslie Scalapino passed away on May 28, 2010 in Berkeley, California. She was born in Santa Barbara in 1944 and raised in Berkeley, California. After Berkeley High School, she attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon and received her B.A. in Literature in 1966. She received her M.A. in English from the University of California at Berkeley in 1969, after which she began to focus on writing poetry. Leslie Scalapino lived with Tom White, her husband and friend of 35 years, in Oakland, California.

In childhood, she traveled with her father Robert Scalapino, founder of UC Berkeley's Institute for Asian Studies, her mother Dee Scalapino, known for her love of music, and her two sisters, Diane and Lynne, throughout Asia, Africa and Europe. She and Tom continued these travels including trips to Tibet, Bhutan, Japan, India, Yemen, Mongolia, Libya and elsewhere. Her writing was intensely influenced by these travels. She published her first book *O and Other Poems* in 1976, and since then has published thirty books of poetry, prose, inter-genre fiction, plays, essays, and collaborations. Scalapino's most recent publications include a collaboration with artist Kiki Smith, *The Animal is in the World like Water in Water* (Granary Books), and *Floats Horse-Floats or Horse-Flows* (Starcherone Books), and her selected poems *It's go in horizontal / Selected Poems 1974-2006* (UC Press) was published in 2008. In 1988, her long poem way

received the Poetry Center Award, the Lawrence Lipton Prize, and the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. Her plays have been performed in San Francisco at New Langton Arts, The Lab, Venue 9, and Forum; in New York by The Eye and Ear Theater and at Barnard College; and in Los Angeles at Beyond Baroque.

In 1986, Scalapino founded O Books as a publishing outlet for young and emerging poets, as well as prominent, innovative writers, and the list of nearly 100 titles includes authors such as Ted Berrigan, Robert Grenier, Fanny Howe, Tom Raworth, Norma Cole, Will Alexander, Alice Notley, Norman Fischer, Laura Moriarty, Michael McClure, Judith Goldman and many others. Scalapino is also the editor of four editions of O anthologies, as well as the periodicals *Enough* (with Rick London) and *War and Peace* (with Judith Goldman).

Scalapino taught writing at various institutions, including 16 years in the MFA program at Bard College, Mills College, the San Francisco Art Institute, California College of the Arts in San Francisco, San Francisco State University, UC San Diego, and the Naropa Institute.

Of her own writing, Scalapino says “my sense of a practice of writing and of action, the apprehension itself that ‘one is not oneself for even an instant’ – should not be,’ is to be participation in/is a social act. That is, the nature of this practice that’s to be ‘social act’ is it is without formation or custom.” Her writing, unbound by a single format, her collaborations with artists and other writers, her teaching, and publishing are evidence of this sense of her own practice, social acts that were her practice. Her generosity and fiercely engaged intelligence were everywhere evident to those who had the fortune to know her.

Scalapino has three books forthcoming in 2010. A book of two plays published in one volume, *Flow-Winged Crocodile* and *A Pair / Actions Are Erased / Appear* will come out in June 2010 from Chax Press; a new prose work, *The Dihedrons Gazelle-Dihredals Zoom* will be released this summer by Post-Apollo Press; and a revised and expanded collection of her essays and plays, *How Phenomena Appear to Unfold* (originally published by Potes & Poets) will be published in the fall by Litmus Press.

Her play *Flow-Winged Crocodile* will be performed in New York at Poets House on June 19th at 2pm and June 20th at 7pm by the performance group *The Relationship*, directed by Fiona Templeton and with Katie Brown, Stephanie Silver, and Julie Troost. Dance by Molissa Fenley, music by Joan Jeanrenaud, and projected drawings by Eve Biddle. This production is co-sponsored by Belladonna\* and the Poetry Project.

There will be a memorial event for Scalapino at St. Mark's Poetry Project on Monday, June 21st.

A Zen Buddhist funeral ceremony will be conducted by Abbott Norman Fisher in about a month with the arrangements in a subsequent announcement. Tom requests that in lieu of flowers, Leslie's friends consider a charitable donation in her memory to: Poets in Need, PO Box 5411, Berkeley, CA 94705; Reed College for the Leslie Scalapino Scholarship, 3203 Southeast Woodstock Boulevard, Portland, OR 97202-8199; The AYCO Charitable Foundation, PO Box 15203, Albany, NY 12212-5203 for the Leslie Scalapino-O Books Fund to support innovative works of poetry, prose and art; or to a charitable organization of their choice. Condolence cards may be sent to Tom & Leslie's home address, 5744 Presley Way, Oakland, California 94618-1633.

to make my mind be actions outside only. which they are.  
that collapses in

grey-red bars. actions are life per se only without it.

(so) events are minute — even (voluptuous)

--Leslie Scalapino

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## 2011

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### ***Attack of the Difficult Poems***

05 Apr 2011

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*The title was the thesis: a book-length defense of the difficult poem, from a poet who had spent a career refusing to apologize for hard art. Even the blurbs join the joke — Tan Lin's finds it unsuitable for every occasion and, "for everyone else: priceless."*

Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions Charles Bernstein / University of Chicago Press

April only: 30% off (\$18.20) if you order direct from University of Chicago (note: Amazon does not offer a discount on this title). order here: <https://cdcshoppingcart.uchicago.edu/Cart/CART.ASPX?ISBN=80226044774&PRESS=CHICAGO&PROMO=POET30>

"A superb poet and great inventor of poetry, Charles Bernstein dazzlingly invents the essay for poetry: professing in a gorilla suit and white tuxedo."—George Lakoff

"This is a smart and invigorating book that triumphantly demonstrates Charles Bernstein's goals and values. Those who want satire, those who want earnest

discussion, those who want information, those who want to get a sense of personality, those who want theory, those who want entertainment, even those who wish to be confirmed in their beliefs and those who wish to nurse their resentments, will all find something here.”—Daisy Fried

“I regret to inform you that Charles Bernstein’s *Attack of the Difficult Poems* is highly unsuitable (not suitable) for National Poetry Month. Not suitable for acceptance by the publications of the Modern Language Association or its affiliate, the Annual Convention. Not suitable for readers under the age of five. Not suitable for endorsement by the *Paris Review*. Not suitable for your average television sitcom. Not suitable for tenure. Not suitable for free distribution. Not suitable for variations in the ontological condition. Not suitable for readers of generic poetry. Not suitable for the MFA. For everyone else: priceless.”—Tan Lin

Charles Bernstein is our postmodern jester of American poesy, equal parts surveyor of democratic vistas and scholar of avant-garde sensibilities. In a career spanning thirty-five years and forty books, he has provoked us with writing that is unafraid of the tensions between ordinary and poetic language, and between everyday life and its adversaries. *Attack of the Difficult Poems*, his latest collection of essays, gathers some of his most memorably irreverent work while addressing seriously and comprehensively the state of contemporary humanities, the teaching of unconventional forms, fresh approaches to translation, the history of language media, and the connections between poetry and visual art.

Applying an array of essayistic styles, *Attack of the Difficult Poems* ardently engages with the promise of its title. Bernstein introduces his key theme of the difficulty of poems and defends, often in comedic ways, not just difficult poetry but poetry itself. Bernstein never loses his ingenious ability to argue or his consummate attention to detail. Along the way, he offers a wide-ranging critique of literature’s place in the academy, taking on the vexed role of innovation and approaching it from the perspective of both teacher and practitioner.

From blues artists to Tin Pan Alley song lyricists to Second Wave modernist poets, *The Attack of the Difficult Poems* sounds both a battle cry and a lament for the task of the language maker and the fate of invention.

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## ***Jerome Rothenberg @ 80: 6p, tonight (12/9) in New York***

09 Dec 2011

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*Jerome Rothenberg — anthologist of the world's poetries, from *Technicians of the Sacred* to *Poems for the Millennium* — was turning eighty, and Bernstein and Pierre Joris gathered three generations of his friends and collaborators to say so.*

Friday, December 9 ELEBASH RECITAL HALL CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue New York 6pm (sharp) to about 9:30pm

Poet, translator, editor, anthologist, Jerome Rothenberg is joined by friends and collaborators for an exploration of his influential work. Papers on, and celebrations of, Rothenberg's work will be presented by Susan Howe, Homero Aridjis, Carolee Schneemann, Ammiel Alcalay, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Anne Waldman, Bruce Andrews & Sally Silvers, Jeffrey Robinson, Pete Monaco, Charles Morrow, Anne Tardos, George Economou, Rochelle Owens, Al Filreis, Monica de la Torre, Ernesto Livon-Grosman, Nicole Peyrafitte, Lee Ann Brown & Tony Torn, Mark Weiss, George Quasha, Peter Cockelbergh, Ligorano-Reese, Danny Snelson, Diane Rothenberg, Hiro Sato, Ian Tyson, and others.

The evening will end with a reading by Jerome Rothenberg.

Organized and hosted by Pierre Joris and Charles Bernstein.

In conjunction with the event, Steve Clay, of Granary Books, will curate a retrospective exhibit of works by Jerome Rothenberg. Included will be examples of books and magazines with which Rothenberg was directly involved as editor/publisher such as Hawk's Well Press, Alcheringa, Poems from the Floating World, "Some/Thing" and New Wilderness Letter; the remarkable series of anthologies he edited from *Technicians of the Sacred* to *Poems for the Millennium*; selections from his more than 100 books and broadsides to an array of his collaborations with artists including Ian Tyson, Susan Bee and Arman. Charlie Morrow will also have an exhibit of his many audio collaborations with Rothenberg.

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## **2012**

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### ***Salt Companion to Charles Bernstein, ed. William Allegrezza***

10 Oct 2012

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*The critics had caught up: a whole Salt Companion of essays on his work, edited by William Allegrezza. There is a particular comedy in the arch-antagonist of the academy becoming its set text — and the blurbs, from Joris and Rothenberg, half-acknowledge it.*

388pp to expedite purchase the publisher recommends ordering from Amazon <http://tinyurl.com/8kr59gw>

“What we have here is the ideal Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Charles Bernstein: the coverage is wide, & all you need is “to be ready, not prepared.” You will not be asked to lounge on the couch as nobody remembers its colors, but the essays come in all colors, except sad. Enjoy, & then get back to the poems.” — Pierre Joris

“A major poet for our time — & then some — Charles Bernstein has emerged as a principal voice — maybe the best we have — for an international avant-garde now in its second century of visions & revisions. It is in celebration of this that the Salt Companion to his work appears here, to show him in a trajectory from an American-centered language poetry in the 1970s to an active & significant relation to a constantly renewing & expanding global poetry in which his singularity has played a vital role. What becomes clear in these pages is how his generosity of mind & spirit continues to enrich us all. ” —Jerome Rothenberg

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Some Nouns Donald Wellman 207

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## 2014

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### *the last posts*

23 Jan 2014

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*After twenty years, the first word that the end had come — seven of them, no ceremony.*

Yes: list is ending its long run!

[↑ Contents](#)

## **Onward!**

24 Jan 2014

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*The notes of farewell had begun to arrive; he answered them by thanking Amy King, who had kept the list alive through its last years, and by refusing, characteristically, to look only backward.*

I am grateful for the many notes posted here in response to the closing of the Poetics List. I want to thank, especially, Amy King, who has kept the list going for the past years with considerable dedication and effort: her generosity and acuity is appreciated. There seems considerable interest in starting something new to take up where this list has left off. And it must be new, to meet the demands of the present. Onward!

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## **The Last Post**

31 Jan 2014

---

*Here he closes the thing he opened in late 1993, when a listserv was itself a radical form and the web had no interface. Twenty years on — Facebook and Twitter having done what flaming and spam could not — he gives the list its history and its epitaph. It is the edition's last page, and he wrote it knowing so.*

The Poetics List is no longer active. Email delivery has been discontinued. Web archives will remain.

It has been over ten years since I left Buffalo; it is no longer viable for me to continue to sponsor this list. So, as of today, the Poetics List has been discontinued. We are maintaining and hope to improve, the list archive.

The Poetics List EPC page will continue to have current information on the archive: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/poetics/poeticslist.html>

And, as the old Poetics List has ended, a new one is beginning. Francesco Levato of the Chicago School of Poetics has started the Poetics List 2.0 — which has many features not possible to offer via the Liserv format: <<<<http://poeticslist.chicagoschoolofpoetics.com/>>>>

\*\*\*\*\*

I started the Poetics List in late 1993, just after I came to Buffalo and co-founded the Poetics Program and a little while before the founding of the Electronic Poetry Center. When the list began, a email-based discussion group was a radically new format. There was no web interface and no way to filter messages. Emails were read and written via on-line ascii systems. During the first six years of the list, a deep and wide ranging discussion developed among the few hundred of us actively participating. I asked that the list address not be publicized so that we could keep the discussion to those with shared interests and that the list not

become a general interest poetry forum. Much of the spirit of the early list was captured by Joel Kuszai, who edited Poetics@, for which I wrote the introduction. This ROOF book is available free in as epub, mobi, or pdf; or via Amazon. Or you can also explore the early Poetics List archive (1993-1996). <http://epc.buffalo.edu/poetics/poeticslist.html>

The list was unmoderated until 1999. At that time, many of us involved in early forms of social media were confronted by flaming, spam, and trolls — before having those words for them. While some people objected to our move to list moderation, an unmoderated list ended up driving away or silencing people I wanted to be part of our discussion while at the same time giving free reign to those hostile to the list's basic orientation (which, regrettably, I was far too slow to realize). A no-holds barred unmoderated offshoot of the Poetics List was started but didn't last long. (I take up issues around editing the Poetics List in an essay in "Electronic Pies in the Poetry Skies" in *Attack of the Difficult Poems* <<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/technocapitalism/poetic>>.)

In any case, the care free days of the early list were over before the new Millennium opened its eyes. By that time, the list had become a rare open forum for the discussion of, and exchange of information about, unconventional poetry and poetics: you didn't have to be at a bar in New York or a cafe in San Francisco, or to know anybody on a scene, or to be enrolled in a program: all you needed to participate was an active interest. So I was determined to keep the thing afloat and with the help of a succession of list moderators, we did, peaking at about 1500 subscribers, with many more readers via the web.

Like PennSound and the EPC, the Poetics List has been housed in a non-profit, non-commercial space with no advertising, no snooping on reader's or posters' web activity, and privacy of our subscriber email list. This building of noncommercial web space has been a foundational principal for all three sites. For many of the long-term participants of the Poetics List, it became a very personal space of friendship and exchange, argument and disagreement, as well a place to find or post information about new books and publications and web links. Participants relied on the list for contact with those with shared poetry interests and as a means of getting in touch with one another. It was a life-line.

The advent of user-friendly blog sites provided welcome access for poets to create new forums, key alternatives to what the list initially offered. In the last several years, Facebook and Twitter have, for many of us, made Listserv programs less significant.

Here is how I formulated the aims of the list, in consultation with Joel Kusai and Chris Alexander, starting about 2000:

<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<< Our aim is to support, inform, and extend those directions in poetry that are committed to innovations, renovations, and investigations of form and/or/as content, to the questioning of received forms and styles, and to the creation of the otherwise unimagined, untried, unexpected, improbable, and impossible. While we recognize that other lists may sponsor other possibilities for exchange, we request that those participating in this forum keep in mind the specialized and focused nature of this project and respect our decision to operate a moderated list. The Poetics List exists to support and encourage divergent points of view on innovative forms of modern and contemporary poetry and poetics, and we are committed to doing what is necessary to preserve this space for such dialog.

Please note that this list is primarily concerned with discussions of poetry and poetics. We strongly encourage subscribers to post information, including web links, relating to publications (print and internet), reading series, and blogs that they have coordinated, edited or published, or in which they appear. Such announcements constitute a core function of this list. Brief reviews of poetry events and publications (print or digital) are always welcome.

The Poetics List is not a forum for a general discussion of poetry or for the exchange of poems. Queries for contact information, messages intended for just a few subscribers, "flame" messages, and free-standing personal poems or journal entries will, in general, not be forwarded to the list.

Also, please note that the Poetics List is not a "chat" list and we discourage the posting of very short messages intended for only a few subscribers. Personal queries and off-topic submissions will not be posted.

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## Appendix — Announcements & Notices

*The readings, launches, new sites, and list-notices he sent — gathered here so the record of what he was doing is kept apart from what he was writing. 206 in all.*

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### 1994

- 12 Apr 1994 where are you?
- 23 Aug 1994 FROM: Joel Kuszai, "Re: poetry guerrilla" (rejected post)
- 25 Sep 1994 LIVE AT THE EAR (ad for CD)
- 21 Oct 1994 Listings

### 1995

- 13 Feb 1995 DIGEST option: how to get less messages
- 10 Jun 1995 Welcome to Poetics msg (revised)
- 23 Aug 1995 ACLA Call for Papers on Lit. betw. Phil & Cultural Studies
- 11 Sep 1995 French Poetry Festival
- 12 Nov 1995 The Hand of the Poet
- 12 Nov 1995 M/E/A/N/I/N/G
- 21 Nov 1995 Re: Orono Conference

### 1996

- 31 Jan 1996 from Douglas Messerli (fwrđ)
- 05 Feb 1996 Larry Eigner (1927-1996)
- 15 Feb 1996 Johanna Drucker & M/E/A/N/I/N/G
- 10 Apr 1996 Harper Conference Call
- 16 Apr 1996 Attention New Subscribers!
- 07 May 1996 Reading 5/17 NYC
- 17 Jun 1996 Equipage (UK) catalogue
- 08 Oct 1996 Creeley Festival
- 04 Nov 1996 Re: Literary Culture
- 12 Nov 1996 NEW ADDRESS FOR POETICS LIST

### 1997

- 16 Jan 1997 boundary 2 23:3
- 17 Jan 1997 New Listserv address
- 06 Feb 1997 Re: delays
- 03 Mar 1997 correction in Welcome message
- 12 Mar 1997 TINFISH (fwrđ from Susan Schultz)
- 08 Apr 1997 Boston Area Reading
- 11 Apr 1997 New York City Poetry Calendar
- 29 Apr 1997 Internation Subscribers
- 30 Apr 1997 NYC Reading
- 30 Apr 1997 LINEbreak in RealAudio
- 09 May 1997 LINEbreak in RealAudio
- 16 Jun 1997 More RealAudio
- 11 Sep 1997 Barnard New Poets Prize for 1998
- 16 Oct 1997 Philadelphia / NYC Readings
- 21 Nov 1997 Dia Reading / NYC
- 17 Dec 1997 New works on web

### 1998

- 01 May 1998 A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg - Thursday 5/14/98
- 21 May 1998 Black Lightning (forwarded announcement)
- 21 May 1998 Re: signing on
- 24 May 1998 Bonvicino in NYC

26 May 1998 Close Listening & for less  
 01 Jun 1998 Re: limits  
 17 Jun 1998 Re: Weiner's \_Code Poems\_  
 26 Jun 1998 Re: Boundary 2 / My Way  
 02 Jul 1998 Secret Location: Last Weeeks  
 09 Aug 1998 Russian festival of poetry (fwd)  
 10 Aug 1998 Writer on Line Interview  
 28 Aug 1998 Masha Zavialov email/Russain Poetry Festival (fwd)  
 18 Sep 1998 Segue/NYC Saurday reading series (fwd)  
 12 Oct 1998 Call for papers: Innovation and Experimentation in Contemporary Poetry American  
 12 Oct 1998 Gottlieb/Cartelli @ Zinc Bar (fwrđ)  
 16 Nov 1998 Olivier Cadiot in New York

## 1999

12 Jan 1999 My Way & Figuring the Word in New York  
 05 Feb 1999 Seminary Co-Op Interview  
 17 Mar 1999 More Listserv Technical Problems  
 27 Jun 1999 Poetics Program Announcements  
 03 Oct 1999 Whitney Performance @ EPC  
 17 Dec 1999 Dorn@EPC  
 31 Dec 1999 Subtext presents Jen Hofer and Bryant Mason on Jan. 5th

## 2000

04 Feb 2000 MLA Call: Worldwide Poetry on the Web  
 10 May 2000 Poetry Project Reading 5/24/00  
 04 Sep 2000 Barbara Guest  
 24 Sep 2000 (no subject)  
 02 Nov 2000 Paul Celan / New York panel

## 2001

22 Jan 2001 Andrews & Bernstein at NYU on Jan. 29  
 12 Feb 2001 Readings in Cambridge, New York, and at Middleton  
 13 Feb 2001 The M/E/A/N/I/N/G Book  
 12 Mar 2001 Call for MLA 2001 / Poetry and Pedagogy  
 19 Mar 2001 @People's Poetry Gathering: Panels / Manifestos  
 20 Mar 2001 Morianity and Berssenbrugge this Saturday in NYC

## 2002

06 Jan 2002 Reading With Strings / NYC  
 11 Jan 2002 MLA: Call for Papers  
 21 Feb 2002 Voix d'Ameriques Poetry Festival (Montreal)  
 20 Mar 2002 Jazz Lover's Paradise  
 14 Apr 2002 boundary 2 / poetry and poetics  
 15 Apr 2002 New Zealand EPC  
 17 Apr 2002 Hannah Weiner in MP3  
 12 May 2002 Something Wonderful May Happen  
 27 May 2002 Spahr & Bernstein -- live on tape  
 29 May 2002 Electronic Pies in the Poetry Skies  
 09 Jun 2002 LINEbreak on Resonance FM in London  
 09 Jul 2002 EPC News  
 15 Jul 2002 going nomail  
 26 Jul 2002 "Bad Language"  
 28 Oct 2002 My Home Pages

## 2003

19 Jan 2003 New Sounds on EPC  
 19 Jan 2003 New Sounds on EPC (correction)  
 26 Jan 2003 Fwd: Poets Against the War

30 Jan 2003 Poets Against the War: On line!  
 03 Feb 2003 Hannah Weiner's PAGE  
 06 Feb 2003 Robin Blaser @ EPC  
 09 Feb 2003 Poetry Plastique: On Line@EPC  
 18 Feb 2003 Peter Russell (1921-2003)  
 23 Feb 2003 Re: Poetry Plastique: On Line@EPC  
 17 Mar 2003 Listening Posts  
 02 Apr 2003 David Antin on the War  
 19 May 2003 Howe & Howe in New York June 3rd  
 17 Aug 2003 New@MyHomePages  
 27 Oct 2003 New@My Home Pages  
 03 Dec 2003 New@My Home Pages

## 2004

31 Jan 2004 A Conversation with Marjorie Perloff (from Fulcrum)  
 09 Feb 2004 Re: Interview with Susan Stewart  
 14 Feb 2004 World on Fire  
 15 Feb 2004 Live at Ear -- now in MP3  
 17 Mar 2004 Hannah Weiner's Clairvoyant Journal on line  
 24 Mar 2004 Veil, Language of Bouquets, Shadowtime  
 09 Jun 2004 new @ my home pages  
 24 Jun 2004 Louis Zukofsky Centennial Conference  
 30 Jul 2004 Killian on Orono -- from the archive  
 16 Aug 2004 Louis Zukofsky Centennial Conference  
 19 Aug 2004 Secular Jewish Culture/Radical Poetic Practice  
 30 Aug 2004 Elective Affinities Conference  
 08 Sep 2004 Robert Grenier, Norman Fischer, Ken Irby, John High in NY  
 12 Oct 2004 The Sophist  
 06 Nov 2004 Mills College Reading on 11/9  
 09 Dec 2004 Re: Jackson Mac Low (1922-2004)

## 2005

01 Jan 2005 PennSound  
 11 Jan 2005 The Gods Are Pounding My Head!  
 22 Jan 2005 Disfrutes  
 05 Feb 2005 Mac Low essay  
 05 Apr 2005 Creeley at EPC/PennSound  
 24 Apr 2005 Re: How Some Stand on ALLEN GINSBERG Today  
 02 May 2005 Studio 111  
 28 May 2005 Hero of the Local: Robert Creeley and the Persistence of American Poetry  
 08 Jun 2005 Notable Books  
 10 Jun 2005 Shadowtime  
 03 Jul 2005 WebLog: Recent Additions  
 10 Aug 2005 Secular Jewish Practice / Radical Jewish Poetry -- the video  
 18 Nov 2005 new on w e b l o g  
 26 Dec 2005 Robert Creeley on EPC and PennSound

## 2006

21 Jan 2006 Richard Foreman's ZOMBOLD!  
 22 Jan 2006 Valentine's Day at Smith College  
 24 Jan 2006 Tuttle Reading at Whitney  
 27 Jan 2006 Seeing Double: Feb. 7 - March 4  
 02 Feb 2006 For Nam June Paik  
 10 Feb 2006 Gary Sullivan's "Poetry Phone" on PennSound  
 17 Feb 2006 The Forward on Bee and Laufer  
 17 Feb 2006 Barbara Guest (1920-2006)  
 25 Feb 2006 BPC/Segue at PennSound 2005-2006  
 28 Feb 2006 Ginsberg singe Blake

07 Mar 2006 New @ PennSound  
 16 Mar 2006 Brooklyn Rail  
 19 Mar 2006 Listen Up (Tom Raworth)  
 26 Mar 2006 National Poetry Month all over again  
 04 Apr 2006 Shadowtime  
 15 Apr 2006 Bob Grenier / my reading at Temple  
 22 Apr 2006 Columbia Reading 4/25  
 24 Apr 2006 Ulla Dydo on Stein Scholarhip  
 01 May 2006 Notes on Marie Menken  
 12 May 2006 Plays on Words: First Night  
 19 May 2006 Mei-mei Berssenbrugge on Close Listening  
 01 Jun 2006 New on PennSound  
 04 Jun 2006 Night Air (NYC event)  
 11 Jun 2006 Sunday Breakfast Links  
 20 Jun 2006 French poet/artist collaborations at NYPL  
 08 Jul 2006 Mina Loy's visual art in NY  
 23 Jul 2006 Re: Duncan Ground Work  
 29 Jul 2006 The Passing of a Legend: Louise Bennett 1919-2007  
 14 Aug 2006 a few reviews  
 06 Sep 2006 Girl Man  
 27 Sep 2006 Girly Man in New York  
 04 Oct 2006 recommended books/ things to do in NY  
 16 Oct 2006 Richard Foreman's new blog  
 10 Nov 2006 Susan Howe Festival  
 21 Dec 2006 Re: MLA off-site poetry reading - updated list of readers

## 2007

16 Jan 2007 Girly Man -- 6:30pm today at CUE  
 26 Feb 2007 Maggie O'Sullivan's Body of Work  
 27 Feb 2007 Fwd: HOW2 SPECIAL ISSUE ON WOMEN AND ECO-POETICS  
 11 Mar 2007 Semina show  
 17 Mar 2007 Armantrout review in Sunday Times Book Review  
 25 Mar 2007 Lazer & Armantrout reading in LA on 3/27  
 31 Mar 2007 Elaine Equi Sunday Times review  
 08 Apr 2007 Pound on PennSound  
 22 Apr 2007 Some NY Spring Readings  
 30 Apr 2007 Curnow & Kuszai in NY  
 06 Jun 2007 Mo Pitkin's (NY) Reading  
 27 Aug 2007 Re: "This Feeling of Exaltation" John Ashbery's 80th  
 19 Sep 2007 Fordham (NYC) reading series

## 2008

23 Jan 2008 Amalgamated Writing Programs Launch Morally Repugnant Poets-and-Theorists Exhibit  
 17 Feb 2008 Dworkin/Bernstein reading at Columbia (NY) 2/21  
 12 Mar 2008 Discount Code for new Foreman play in New York  
 26 Apr 2008 Blind Witness: Launch & Performance May 5 (NY)  
 08 Jun 2008 Caroline Bergvall's Chaucer on Tuesday 7:30pm (NY)  
 28 Jun 2008 Recantorium & bachelor machines  
 11 Sep 2008 Palin/McCain and the Cult of Irresponsibility  
 08 Oct 2008 "Audacity of Mendacity" placards

## 2009

07 May 2009 Robin Blaser (1925-2009)  
 05 Jul 2009 Zolf at EPC & my early audio works  
 07 Oct 2009 Raymond Federman (1928-2009)  
 19 Nov 2009 Duke/boundary 2  
 11 Dec 2009 40% Discount on Radical Poetics and Secular Jewish Culture -- &-- essays on Oppen collection

30 Dec 2009 Selected Robin Blaser poems from The Holy Forest

## **2010**

11 Mar 2010 NY launch for All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems

07 Aug 2010 John Wieners EPC page

13 Dec 2010 North of Inventions: A Canadian Poetry Festival

14 Dec 2010 Dia NY reading on Thursday

## **2011**

13 Apr 2011 New "web log" address

13 Apr 2011 Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions

27 May 2011 Brooklyn launch for Attack of the Difficult Poems

09 Dec 2011 You Can't Evict an Idea: The Poetics of Occupy Wall Street

## **2012**

11 May 2012 (no subject)

03 Jun 2012 Poetics@, ed. Joel Kuszai: EPC Library epub edition

16 Jul 2012 Stein and Wittgenstein

## **2013**

30 May 2013 Berssenbrugge & Bernstein book party June 8 in NY

## **2014**

23 Jan 2014 Poetics List (1993-2014)

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## Appendix — A Complete Catalogue

Every message in the archive, in order. Reviews and essays are reproduced above; the rest — announcements, forwards, reading notices — are logged here so the record is complete. 586 in all.

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### 1994

05 Jan 1994 sander gilman's tree live and in person · *relayed forward*  
 15 Mar 1994 it's ascii but is is art or "Oubliez .Gif" · *relayed forward*  
 19 Mar 1994 Today at Notre Dame · *notice*  
 12 Apr 1994 where are you? · *announcement*  
 20 Apr 1994 prequel to long post · *essay*  
 20 Apr 1994 I Don't Take Voice Mail (long post) · *essay*  
 28 Apr 1994 Alan Sondheim's "The Start of It All" (forwarded) · *relayed forward*  
 30 Apr 1994 Re: Beatnik Bliss · *essay*  
 12 May 1994 Alberta on My Mind · *essay*  
 27 May 1994 I remember Joe Brainard · *essay*  
 05 Jul 1994 Warren Tallman / from Robert Creeley · *essay*  
 18 Jul 1994 repost for CF/ RE: In Si Dental Poetics · *reposted relay*  
 16 Aug 1994 mundanity · *essay*  
 16 Aug 1994 Provisional Institutions (long post/essay) · *essay*  
 23 Aug 1994 FROM: Joel Kuszai, "Re: poetry guerrilla" (rejected post) · *announcement*  
 25 Sep 1994 LIVE AT THE EAR (ad for CD) · *announcement*  
 21 Oct 1994 Listings · *announcement*  
 09 Nov 1994 from TONY GREEN /repost of bounced msg · *reposted relay*  
 03 Dec 1994 Guy Debord Commits Suicide · *essay*  
 06 Dec 1994 NEW: Ex-peri-mints · *essay*  
 06 Dec 1994 Experiments List · *essay*  
 26 Dec 1994 (no subject) · *notice*

### 1995

07 Jan 1995 Re: subscribing to Poetics list · *list-mechanics (welcome document)*  
 16 Jan 1995 Eric Mottram: In Memorium · *essay*  
 22 Jan 1995 Re: Address · *list-mechanics (bare reply)*  
 27 Jan 1995 Re: sign · *list-mechanics (subscription query)*  
 28 Jan 1995 Re: sign · *near-duplicate welcome document*  
 31 Jan 1995 Re: subscription · *near-duplicate welcome document*  
 13 Feb 1995 DIGEST option: how to get less messages · *announcement*  
 13 Feb 1995 from Charlotte Pressler (fwr): Little Mary Sunshine · *relayed forward*  
 19 Feb 1995 New from Sun & Moon · *essay*  
 03 Mar 1995 The List Itself · *essay*  
 03 Mar 1995 Hermit Crabs Don't Cry (Annals of Poetics 3/5/94) · *essay*  
 11 Mar 1995 (no subject) · *list-mechanics (deletion command)*  
 11 Mar 1995 WARNING: Poetry Area--Publics Under Construction {long post/essay} · *essay*  
 20 Mar 1995 Letter from Alan Loney (preface) · *essay*  
 27 Mar 1995 The List Itself · *essay*  
 11 Apr 1995 Dinner Is Served · *notice (dinner logistics)*  
 11 May 1995 The List Itself (2): How to Unsub and Other Stories · *essay*  
 06 Jun 1995 Warren Sonbert 1947-1995 · *essay*  
 07 Jun 1995 EFF Newsletter (fwr) · *relayed forward (EFF newsletter)*  
 08 Jun 1995 Warren Sonbert · *relayed forward (Bernheimer obituary)*  
 08 Jun 1995 note: previous Sonbert post is by Alan Bernheimer · *bare notice (attribution correction)*  
 10 Jun 1995 Welcome to Poetics msg (revised) · *announcement*  
 12 Jun 1995 Internet Censorship (Exxon/Gorton bill) · *relayed forward (censorship alert)*  
 16 Jun 1995 Think the Reverse · *essay*  
 23 Jun 1995 (no subject) · *list-mechanics (test)*

- 05 Aug 1995 Essays Wanted for College Literature's Special Poetry Issue (fwrđ) · *relayed notice (call for papers)*
- 10 Aug 1995 Electronic Book Review: Essays & Reviews Wanted (fwrđ) · *relayed notice (call for essays)*
- 12 Aug 1995 The List Itself · *essay*
- 23 Aug 1995 ACLA Call for Papers on Lit. betw. Phil & Cultural Studies · *announcement*
- 09 Sep 1995 agency (2) · *list-mechanics (misfire)*
- 10 Sep 1995 Agency (1) · *note*
- 11 Sep 1995 French Poetry Festival · *announcement*
- 12 Sep 1995 "Free Poetics" (Daily Message Threshold (50) exceeded for list) · *list-mechanics (list unlocked)*
- 18 Sep 1995 Distribution or Bust · *essay*
- 15 Oct 1995 Emerging Generation · *essay*
- 27 Oct 1995 You - the City NY Screening · *notice (screening)*
- 28 Oct 1995 Positions open at Wayne State University (fwrđ) · *relayed notice (job posting)*
- 5 Nov 1995 Giles Deleuze 1925-1995 · *relayed forward (wire obituary)*
- 8 Nov 1995 Baraka's 60th Birthday Celebration · *notice (event)*
- 12 Nov 1995 The Hand of the Poet · *announcement*
- 12 Nov 1995 M/E/A/N/I/N/G · *announcement*
- 18 Nov 1995 Ear Inn Readings Dec. & Jan. · *notice (reading series)*
- 21 Nov 1995 Re: Orono Conference · *announcement*
- 21 Nov 1995 Re: Steiniana · *essay*
- 21 Nov 1995 Jnl of Artists's Books (JAB) · *notice (recommendation)*
- 22 Nov 1995 Re: Steiniana {corrected}; shelflife · *essay*

## 1996

- 22 Jan 1996 ideolect · *essay*
- 31 Jan 1996 from Douglas Messerli (fwrđ) · *announcement*
- 31 Jan 1996 Ben Yarmolinsky's songs (catalog) · *notice*
- 01 Feb 1996 New Poetics Subscribers · *list mechanics*
- 01 Feb 1996 Ear Inn Readings Feb. & March · *notice*
- 02 Feb 1996 Bernadette Mayer Fan Club (charter member) · *essay*
- 05 Feb 1996 Larry Eiger (1927-1996) [long post] · *essay*
- 05 Feb 1996 Larry Eigner (1927-1996) · *announcement*
- 08 Feb 1996 Jack Foley on Larry Eigner · *essay*
- 09 Feb 1996 Poetics of the Extraordinary (fwrđ) · *relayed forward*
- 15 Feb 1996 !!How to!!Reply to::Re: ROOF BOOKS -- Special Offer · *list mechanics*
- 15 Feb 1996 Johanna Drucker & M/E/A/N/I/N/G · *announcement*
- 21 Feb 1996 Premonitions anthology (fwrđ) · *notice*
- 28 Feb 1996 New Subscribers · *list mechanics*
- 05 Mar 1996 Robert Duncan Fesitval · *notice*
- 09 Mar 1996 test · *list mechanics*
- 17 Mar 1996 Pound & Man at Yale · *essay*
- 22 Mar 1996 Re: reading Pound · *essay*
- 26 Mar 1996 Introjective Verse (reply to David Kellog) · *essay*
- 10 Apr 1996 Harper Conference Call · *announcement*
- 16 Apr 1996 Attention New Subscribers! · *announcement*
- 07 May 1996 Reading 5/17 NYC · *announcement*
- 31 May 1996 new M/E/A/N/I/N/G · *notice*
- 11 Jun 1996 Creely@70: A Celebration · *notice*
- 17 Jun 1996 Re: The Twentieth Century · *essay*
- 17 Jun 1996 Ekipage (UK) catalogue · *relayed by Bernstein*
- 17 Jun 1996 "He's So Heavy, He's My Sokal" (song) · *essay*
- 24 Jun 1996 LINEbreak@EPC · *essay*
- 13 Jul 1996 Pierre@50 · *note*
- 01 Aug 1996 Re: Spoken Word, LINEbreak, & the list · *essay*
- 01 Aug 1996 Fall Readings at UB · *notice*
- 09 Aug 1996 Speed and Hannah Weiner · *essay*
- 09 Aug 1996 Hannah Weiner bibliography · *bibliography*

11 Aug 1996 My Home Pages · *essay*  
 25 Aug 1996 Re: weiner again · *essay*  
 02 Sep 1996 Frank Kuenstler 1928-1996 · *essay*  
 22 Sep 1996 Helmut Heissenbuttel 1921-1996 · *essay*  
 27 Sep 1996 Barnard Translation Conference · *notice*  
 08 Oct 1996 Creeley Festival · *announcement*  
 13 Oct 1996 Conductors of Chaos · *essay*  
 04 Nov 1996 Re: Literary Culture · *announcement*  
 12 Nov 1996 NEW ADDRESS FOR POETICS LIST · *announcement*  
 15 Nov 1996 New and Improved Welcome Message · *list mechanics*  
 18 Nov 1996 New Poetics Archive Features · *list mechanics*  
 19 Nov 1996 Cave Art in the French Dordogne · *notice*  
 21 Nov 1996 Re: l%a\*n(g@u!a\_g#e · *essay*  
 22 Nov 1996 Ear Inn Reading Dec./Jan. (fwd) · *notice*  
 25 Nov 1996 Ripple Effects (announcement) · *notice*  
 01 Dec 1996 Experimental - Visual - Concrete (fwrdd) · *notice*

## 1997

06 Jan 1997 The Visual in Language · *essay*  
 06 Jan 1997 Re: To the Larks (incorporating "Riding") · *essay*  
 07 Jan 1997 Re: The Visual in Language · *essay*  
 08 Jan 1997 Re: Language in the Visual //Pound & the classics · *essay*  
 10 Jan 1997 turning left, turning right, tumbling (Re: Riding) · *essay*  
 11 Jan 1997 Recent Publications · *essay*  
 13 Jan 1997 Ripple Effects on line · *notice*  
 16 Jan 1997 boundary 2 23:3 · *announcement*  
 17 Jan 1997 New Listserv address · *announcement*  
 23 Jan 1997 Re: Marty Ehrlich · *essay*  
 31 Jan 1997 THE L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E BOOK (FWRD) · *notice*  
 31 Jan 1997 FRENCH WOMEN POETS (fwrdd) · *notice*  
 06 Feb 1997 Re: delays · *announcement*  
 10 Feb 1997 List Service Problems · *list-mechanics*  
 27 Feb 1997 Re: deletion & the politics of the list · *essay*  
 02 Mar 1997 Zukofsky Conference at UB (fwrdd from Robert Creeley) · *notice*  
 03 Mar 1997 correction in Welcome message · *announcement*  
 12 Mar 1997 TINFISH (fwrdd from Susan Schultz) · *announcement*  
 03 Apr 1997 Erica Hunt & Marty Erlich at Brandeis · *notice*  
 04 Apr 1997 Allen Ginsberg · *essay*  
 05 Apr 1997 Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) · *essay*  
 08 Apr 1997 Boston Area Reading · *announcement*  
 08 Apr 1997 Ginsberg Memorial · *notice*  
 10 Apr 1997 Re: LAURA NYRO (one child born to carry on, etc....) · *essay*  
 11 Apr 1997 New York City Poetry Calendar · *announcement*  
 11 Apr 1997 Re: Ginsberg and the Gap · *essay*  
 16 Apr 1997 Re: George Wills and the Imago of Alan Ginsbuerg in Victorian  
 Opera · *essay* England: The  
 23 Apr 1997 Welcome Message · *essay*  
 28 Apr 1997 Rational Meaning is now out · *notice*  
 29 Apr 1997 Internation Subscribers · *announcement*  
 30 Apr 1997 NYC Reading · *announcement*  
 30 Apr 1997 LINEbreak in RealAudio · *announcement*  
 09 May 1997 LINEbreak in RealAudio · *announcement*  
 12 May 1997 Re: Birthdate // what have I subscribed to? · *essay*  
 16 Jun 1997 More RealAudio · *announcement*  
 26 Jun 1997 Letter from Jackson Mac Low · *relayed forward*  
 24 Jul 1997 The 50 Limit · *essay*  
 15 Aug 1997 BERNADETTE MAYER (fwd) · *notice*  
 10 Sep 1997 Ear at HERE · *notice*

11 Sep 1997 Barnard New Poets Prize for 1998 · *announcement*  
 12 Sep 1997 Hannah Weiner (1928-1997) · *essay*  
 12 Sep 1997 Re: Hannah Weiner (1928-1997) · *essay*  
 22 Sep 1997 Peter Quatermain's new address · *relayed forward*  
 23 Sep 1997 HERE Poetry Readings (NYC) · *notice*  
 23 Sep 1997 Pseudonyms/Bad Addresses/Confidentiality/Knot · *essay*  
 30 Sep 1997 Re: Lyn Hejinian's essay "Rejection of Closure" · *essay*  
 07 Oct 1997 Archive at SF State in Jeopardy · *essay*  
 07 Oct 1997 Poetry Center Archives: Correction · *essay*  
 16 Oct 1997 Philadelphia / NYC Readings · *announcement*  
 03 Nov 1997 Wordrobe · *notice*  
 21 Nov 1997 David Ignatow (1914-1997) · *essay*  
 21 Nov 1997 Dia Reading / NYC · *announcement*  
 01 Dec 1997 SPD web site · *notice*  
 17 Dec 1997 New works on web · *announcement*

## 1998

06 Jan 1998 My Trip West · *notice*  
 19 Jan 1998 msg from Paul Zukofsky · *relayed forward*  
 11 Feb 1998 Reprinting material posted to Poetics · *essay*  
 15 Feb 1998 Civil Society, or Knot? · *essay*  
 20 Feb 1998 Re: Plath and Hughes · *Emma Bee Bernstein*  
 05 Mar 1998 Ronald Johnson 1935-1998 · *essay*  
 05 Mar 1998 Susan Bee's Show · *notice*  
 17 Mar 1998 Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word (Announcement) · *notice*  
 24 Mar 1998 Hilda Morley (1919-1998) · *essay*  
 27 Mar 1998 Ishihara/Reinfeld · *essay*  
 06 Apr 1998 Frank Kuensler reading · *notice*  
 21 Apr 1998 Re: hannah weiner queries · *essay*  
 24 Apr 1998 Olivier Cadiot NY reading · *notice*  
 26 Apr 1998 Cecilia Vicuna in Seattle · *notice*  
 26 Apr 1998 Frank Kuensler reading · *notice*  
 27 Apr 1998 Re: [Fwd: Re: Poetry at the White House, Anthologies] (fwd) · *essay*  
 01 May 1998 A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg - Thursday 5/14/98 · *relayed by Bernstein*  
 01 May 1998 Welcome Message · *essay*  
 21 May 1998 Black Lightning (forwarded announcement) · *announcement*  
 21 May 1998 Re: signing on · *announcement*  
 23 May 1998 Black Lightning · *notice*  
 24 May 1998 Bonvicino in NYC · *announcement*  
 26 May 1998 Close Listening & for less · *announcement*  
 01 Jun 1998 Poetics List Welcome Message · *near-duplicate repost*  
 01 Jun 1998 Re: limits · *announcement*  
 02 Jun 1998 Laura (Riding) Jackson Symposium · *notice*  
 17 Jun 1998 Re: Weiner's \_Code Poems\_ · *announcement*  
 26 Jun 1998 Re: Boundary 2 / My Way · *announcement*  
 02 Jul 1998 Secret Location: Last Weeeks · *announcement*  
 08 Jul 1998 Poetics List SHUTDOWN · *list mechanics*  
 10 Jul 1998 Al Cook · *essay*  
 23 Jul 1998 Re: Poetry Daily Website · *essay*  
 29 Jul 1998 Settling New Scores · *notice*  
 09 Aug 1998 Russian festival of poetry (fwd) · *announcement*  
 09 Aug 1998 Hannah Weiner Tribute · *notice*  
 10 Aug 1998 Writer on Line Interview · *announcement*  
 28 Aug 1998 Masha Zavialov email/Russain Poetry Festival (fwd) · *announcement*  
 28 Aug 1998 more on Russian poetry festival (fwd) · *relayed forward*  
 05 Sep 1998 QUERIES (CB and DS) · *essay*  
 15 Sep 1998 The Next Word (SUNY-Purchase show announcement) · *notice*  
 18 Sep 1998 Segue/NYC Saurday reading series (fwd) · *announcement*

- 19 Sep 1998 Beyond the Sun & Moon Sale · *essay*
- 12 Oct 1998 Call for papers: Innovation and Experimentation in Contemporary Poetry · *announcement* American
- 12 Oct 1998 Gottlieb/Cartelli @ Zinc Bar (fwrđ) · *announcement*
- 26 Oct 1998 Hannah Weiner Memorial Nov. 7 · *notice*
- 28 Oct 1998 java in NY: reading announcement (fwd) · *notice*
- 30 Oct 1998 java · *notice*
- 31 Oct 1998 More Announcements on the list, Please! · *essay*
- 10 Nov 1998 Re: Hannah Weiner notes · *essay*
- 16 Nov 1998 Olivier Cadiot in New York · *announcement*
- 17 Nov 1998 Cadiot: Corrected Time · *notice*
- 18 Nov 1998 (no subject) · *list mechanics*
- 28 Nov 1998 Free Poetics · *essay*
- 04 Dec 1998 Freedom Is Never Free · *essay*
- 08 Dec 1998 Impeach or Censure (Was: Concerns) · *essay*
- 15 Dec 1998 Re: MLA Poetry Event · *essay*
- 16 Dec 1998 MLA/Open to Public · *notice*
- 18 Dec 1998 (no subject) · *list mechanics*
- 18 Dec 1998 what is intention? · *essay*

## 1999

- 12 Jan 1999 My Way & Figuring the Word in New York · *announcement*
- 04 Feb 1999 Armand Schwerner (1927-1999) · *essay*
- 05 Feb 1999 Seminary Co-Op Interview · *announcement*
- 08 Feb 1999 UB MAIL / Poetics List DOWN · *list mechanics*
- 12 Feb 1999 Bollingen Prize in Poetry · *note*
- 21 Feb 1999 Goodbye, Paul (Paul Schmidt 1934-1999) · *essay*
- 25 Feb 1999 Creeley on Bronk · *essay*
- 27 Feb 1999 Richard Foreman · *essay*
- 12 Mar 1999 Impulsive Behavior · *notice*
- 17 Mar 1999 More Listserv Technical Problems · *announcement*
- 19 Mar 1999 Barnard Conference Schedule (fwd) · *notice*
- 30 Mar 1999 Post from Dubravka Djuric (fwrđ) · *essay*
- 01 Apr 1999 April is the cruelest month for poetry .... · *note*
- 02 Apr 1999 Re: April is the cruelest month for poetry .... · *essay*
- 07 Jun 1999 new PMC · *notice*
- 27 Jun 1999 Poetics Program Announcements · *announcement*
- 24 Jul 1999 List Down til Monday · *list mechanics*
- 04 Aug 1999 new EBR & other URLs (announcements) · *notice*
- 04 Aug 1999 Rudy Burckhardt (1914-1999) · *essay*
- 07 Aug 1999 Talk's Riding · *essay*
- 10 Aug 1999 riding poem · *back-channel aside*
- 20 Sep 1999 Rudy Burckhardt Memorial · *notice*
- 03 Oct 1999 Whitney Performance @ EPC · *announcement*
- 22 Oct 1999 João Cabral de Melo Neto (1920-1999) · *essay*
- 22 Oct 1999 Re: up with down!: Correction · *note*
- 22 Nov 1999 Jackson Mac Low / Tanning Prize · *essay*
- 30 Nov 1999 NYC reading 12/1 · *notice*
- 05 Dec 1999 New from ROOF books (fwrđ) · *notice*
- 15 Dec 1999 Ed Dorn 1929-1999 · *essay*
- 16 Dec 1999 MLA Events / Chicago 1999 · *notice*
- 17 Dec 1999 Dorn@EPC · *announcement*
- 31 Dec 1999 Subtext presents Jen Hofer and Bryant Mason on Jan. 5th · *announcement*

## 2000

- 16 Jan 2000 Remembering Lori Berenson · *relayed forward*
- 24 Jan 2000 Lita Hornick · *essay*
- 04 Feb 2000 MLA Call: Worldwide Poetry on the Web · *announcement*

- 13 Feb 2000 Query from Carolee Schneemann · *note*
- 29 Feb 2000 Texas-bound · *notice*
- 20 Mar 2000 Shadowtime · *essay*
- 03 Apr 2000 Susan Bee at A.I.R. (NYC) · *notice*
- 14 Apr 2000 Re: Republics of Reality: 1975-1995 · *essay*
- 22 Apr 2000 Doug Oliver (1937 -- 2000) (FWD from Anselm Hollo) · *essay*
- 25 Apr 2000 Poets House (NYC): May Events · *notice*
- 02 May 2000 Re: Douglas Oliver: Independent Obit · *essay*
- 02 May 2000 Milton Kessler (1930-2000) · *essay*
- 10 May 2000 Poetry Project Reading 5/24/00 · *announcement*
- 14 Jun 2000 Compendium Books · *essay*
- 03 Jul 2000 Letter from New York · *essay*
- 12 Jul 2000 Ursule Molinaro (192?-2000) · *essay*
- 19 Jul 2000 Fwd: Ernst Jandl in translation(s) · *essay*
- 16 Aug 2000 Buffalo mailserver down · *list mechanics*
- 17 Aug 2000 Poetics List Still on Hold · *list mechanics*
- 18 Aug 2000 LOLLIPOP & Bonvincino · *essay*
- 04 Sep 2000 Barbara Guest · *announcement*
- 17 Sep 2000 Job Opening at SUNY-Buffalo · *notice*
- 24 Sep 2000 (no subject) · *announcement*
- 15 Oct 2000 Susan Bee: New York Show · *notice*
- 27 Oct 2000 LANGUAGE/POETRY/ PERFORMANCE (UK) · *notice*
- 02 Nov 2000 Paul Celan / New York panel · *announcement*
- 07 Dec 2000 h.c. artmann (fwd) · *essay*
- 21 Dec 2000 @MLA: The Book as Object · *notice*
- 21 Dec 2000 Lyn Hejinian's Language of Inquiry and MLA panel · *notice*
- 21 Dec 2000 @MLA: Poetry Division Panels · *notice*
- 26 Dec 2000 MLA all over again · *list mechanics*

## 2001

- 19 Jan 2001 Creeley on Corso · *essay*
- 22 Jan 2001 Andrews & Bernstein at NYU on Jan. 29 · *announcement*
- 30 Jan 2001 Poetry Plastique Reading and Symposium (NYC) · *notice*
- 12 Feb 2001 Readings in Cambridge, New York, and at Middleton · *announcement*
- 13 Feb 2001 The M/E/A/N/I/N/G Book · *announcement*
- 12 Mar 2001 Call for MLA 2001 / Poetry and Pedagogy · *announcement*
- 19 Mar 2001 @People's Poetry Gathering: Panels / Manifestos · *announcement*
- 20 Mar 2001 Moriarity and Berssenbrugge this Saturday in NYC · *announcement*
- 22 Mar 2001 Ramez Qureshi, 1972-2001 (fwd from Gary Sullivan) · *essay*
- 22 Mar 2001 Ramez Qureshi, 1972-2001 (fwd from Sofia Qureshi) · *essay*
- 15 Apr 2001 E-Poetry 2001: A Digital Poetry Festival April 18-21 · *notice*
- 17 Apr 2001 Content's Dream (FWD from Northwester Univ. Press) · *notice*
- 23 Apr 2001 "All Things Considered" broadcast · *notice*
- 23 Apr 2001 fwd from Susan Bee/Mira Schor · *notice*
- 04 May 2001 Bed Hangings by Susan Howe and Susan Bee (FWD) · *notice*
- 17 Jun 2001 Poets in Need (fwd) · *relayed forward*
- 25 Jun 2001 Re: poets in film · *note*
- 06 Jul 2001 Hannah's visions · *essay*
- 03 Sep 2001 Leevi Lehto website · *essay*
- 11 Sep 2001 Translation, Chinese-English in particular · *essay*
- 11 Sep 2001 It's 8:23 in New York · *essay*
- 12 Sep 2001 Today is the next day of the rest of your life · *essay*
- 15 Sep 2001 a short essay from Larry Kearney · *essay*
- 15 Sep 2001 a letter from Samuel R. Delany (fwd) · *essay*
- 16 Sep 2001 Aftershock · *essay*
- 28 Sep 2001 Marjorie Perloff Hits the Number · *essay*
- 28 Sep 2001 Allen Curnow (1911 -2001) · *essay*
- 02 Oct 2001 Report from Liberty Street · *essay*

- 07 Oct 2001 ON RECEIVING NEWS OF THE WAR · *essay*
- 17 Oct 2001 Nicholas Zurbrugg · *essay*
- 30 Nov 2001 With Strings · *notice*
- 14 Dec 2001 JR@70 · *essay*
- 16 Dec 2001 Some MLA Poetry Events · *notice*
- 19 Dec 2001 Univ. of Alabama Press poetics series @ MLA · *notice*

## 2002

- 06 Jan 2002 Reading With Strings / NYC · *announcement*
- 11 Jan 2002 MLA: Call for Papers · *announcement*
- 29 Jan 2002 Raworth's Breakfast Comix · *note*
- 31 Jan 2002 Two shows at Yale (fwd) · *notice*
- 17 Feb 2002 Re: Trivia HOT and NOW · *note*
- 21 Feb 2002 Voix d'Ameriques Poetry Festival (Montreal) · *relayed by Bernstein*
- 02 Mar 2002 John Wieners (1934-2002) · *essay*
- 20 Mar 2002 Jazz Lover's Paradise · *relayed by Bernstein*
- 29 Mar 2002 Something Wonderful May Happen: Screening (NYC) · *notice*
- 29 Mar 2002 "The Poetry of Plays" (Barnard, NYC) · *notice*
- 07 Apr 2002 Allen DeLoach · *relayed by Bernstein*
- 14 Apr 2002 boundary 2 / poetry and poetics · *announcement*
- 15 Apr 2002 New Zealand EPC · *announcement*
- 16 Apr 2002 IN PARTS · *notice*
- 17 Apr 2002 Hannah Weiner in MP3 · *announcement*
- 04 May 2002 Remembering Chassler (fwd) · *essay*
- 05 May 2002 UC Press Cutbacks (from LA Times) · *relayed forward*
- 08 May 2002 Re: Why poets should ignore academic criticism · *essay*
- 12 May 2002 Something Wonderful May Happen · *announcement*
- 27 May 2002 Spahr & Bernstein -- live on tape · *announcement*
- 29 May 2002 Electronic Pies in the Poetry Skies · *announcement*
- 09 Jun 2002 LINEbreak on Resonance FM in London · *announcement*
- 26 Jun 2002 Philip Whalen (1923-2002) · *essay*
- 09 Jul 2002 EPC News · *announcement*
- 15 Jul 2002 going nomail · *announcement*
- 26 Jul 2002 "Bad Language" · *announcement*
- 02 Aug 2002 posting announcements to the list · *essay*
- 03 Aug 2002 M/E/A/N/I/N/G @ Artkrush.Com · *notice*
- 04 Aug 2002 More Mixed Up Books at Arthur Andersen (fwd) · *relayed forward*
- 06 Aug 2002 Myung Mi Kim · *essay*
- 31 Aug 2002 Régis Bonvicino in New York and Buffalo · *notice*
- 14 Sep 2002 White Box Closure: Hoax · *essay*
- 28 Oct 2002 My Home Pages · *announcement*
- 14 Nov 2002 Re: George Bowering appointed Parliamentary Poet Laureate · *relayed forward*
- 22 Nov 2002 Poetry in the News Again · *essay*
- 10 Dec 2002 Performance Series at Boesky Gallery NYC · *notice*
- 12 Dec 2002 Another South (from University of Alabama Press) · *essay*
- 12 Dec 2002 Nathaniel Mackey at the MLA · *notice*

## 2003

- 15 Jan 2003 Tom Raworth's Collected from Carcanet (fwd) · *notice*
- 19 Jan 2003 New Sounds on EPC · *announcement*
- 19 Jan 2003 New Sounds on EPC (correction) · *announcement*
- 26 Jan 2003 Fwd: Poets Against the War · *announcement*
- 28 Jan 2003 IN THE MIRROR OF MAYA DEREN · *essay*
- 30 Jan 2003 Leslie Fiedler (1917-2003) · *essay*
- 30 Jan 2003 Poets Against the War: On line! · *announcement*
- 31 Jan 2003 Panic (How to Be Happy) · *essay*
- 03 Feb 2003 Hannah Weiner's PAGE · *announcement*
- 06 Feb 2003 Robin Blaser @ EPC · *announcement*

08 Feb 2003 Persian Poetry · *essay*  
 09 Feb 2003 Poetry Plastique: On Line@EPC · *announcement*  
 16 Feb 2003 Signs of the Times · *essay*  
 18 Feb 2003 Peter Russell (1921-2003) · *announcement*  
 20 Feb 2003 Fwd: Clark/Shaw Arrest · *essay*  
 23 Feb 2003 Re: Poetry Plastique: On Line@EPC · *announcement*  
 09 Mar 2003 M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online #2 · *notice*  
 10 Mar 2003 Enough! · *essay*  
 16 Mar 2003 Poets / Poetry against Mr. Bush's War · *notice*  
 17 Mar 2003 Listening Posts · *announcement*  
 25 Mar 2003 Re: N H Pritchard · *essay*  
 25 Mar 2003 Montages Against the War · *note*  
 28 Mar 2003 Susan Bee @ A.I.R. Gallery · *notice*  
 01 Apr 2003 Richard Caddel (1949-2003) · *essay*  
 02 Apr 2003 David Antin on the War · *announcement*  
 14 Apr 2003 Re: On looting the National Museum of Iraq · *essay*  
 21 Apr 2003 Barbara Guest's Forces of Imagination · *notice*  
 21 Apr 2003 Nina Simone (1933-2003) · *note*  
 11 May 2003 TED JOANS (1928 - 2003) · *essay*  
 13 May 2003 The Rumsfeld Tablet · *essay*  
 19 May 2003 Howe & Howe in New York June 3rd · *announcement*  
 16 Aug 2003 Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003) · *essay*  
 17 Aug 2003 New@MyHomePages · *announcement*  
 27 Oct 2003 New@My Home Pages · *announcement*  
 03 Dec 2003 New@My Home Pages · *announcement*  
 03 Dec 2003 pretty good · *note*

## 2004

18 Jan 2004 Agamben's letter to Le Monde · *essay*  
 31 Jan 2004 A Conversation with Marjorie Perloff (from Fulcrum) · *announcement*  
 06 Feb 2004 Gil's Shadow · *essay*  
 09 Feb 2004 Re: Interview with Susan Stewart · *announcement*  
 14 Feb 2004 World on Fire · *announcement*  
 15 Feb 2004 Live at Ear -- now in MP3 · *announcement*  
 16 Feb 2004 King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe · *essay*  
 19 Feb 2004 Re: King Cowboy Rufus Rules the Universe · *essay*  
 17 Mar 2004 Hannah Weiner's Clairvoyant Journal on line · *announcement*  
 24 Mar 2004 Veil, Language of Bouquets, Shadowtime · *announcement*  
 31 Mar 2004 Controlling Interests · *notice*  
 09 Jun 2004 new @ my home pages · *announcement*  
 24 Jun 2004 Louis Zukofsky Centennial Conference · *announcement*  
 25 Jun 2004 Carl Rakosi (1903-2004) · *essay*  
 30 Jul 2004 Killian on Orono -- from the archive · *announcement*  
 16 Aug 2004 Louis Zukofsky Centennial Conference · *announcement*  
 19 Aug 2004 Secular Jewish Culture/Radical Poetic Practice · *announcement*  
 30 Aug 2004 Elective Affinities Conference · *announcement*  
 08 Sep 2004 Robert Grenier, Norman Fischer, Ken Irby, John High in NY · *announcement*  
 12 Oct 2004 The Sophist · *announcement*  
 29 Oct 2004 Tracie Morris and Charles Bernstein at Barnard, 11/3 (NYC) · *notice*  
 03 Nov 2004 Tracie Morris and Charles Bernstein at Barnard, 11/3 (NYC) · *notice*  
 06 Nov 2004 Mills College Reading on 11/9 · *announcement*  
 02 Dec 2004 Christophe Tarkos (1964-2004) · *essay*  
 05 Dec 2004 Re: Christophe Tarkos (1964-2004) · *relayed forward*  
 08 Dec 2004 Jackson Mac Low (1922-2004) · *essay*  
 09 Dec 2004 Re: Jackson Mac Low (1922-2004) · *announcement*  
 16 Dec 2004 Re: Hannah Weiner's Early and Clairvoyant Journals · *essay*  
 16 Dec 2004 Fwd: Treasury Department Lifts Publishing Restriction · *relayed forward*  
 21 Dec 2004 Guardian obit for Jackson Mac Low · *relayed forward*

21 Dec 2004 Re: Guardian obit for Jackson Mac Low · *essay*

## 2005

01 Jan 2005 PennSound · *announcement*  
 11 Jan 2005 The Gods Are Pounding My Head! · *announcement*  
 22 Jan 2005 Disfrutes · *announcement*  
 05 Feb 2005 Mac Low essay · *announcement*  
 30 Mar 2005 Robert Creeley (1926-2005) · *essay*  
 05 Apr 2005 Creeley at EPC/PennSound · *announcement*  
 24 Apr 2005 Re: How Some Stand on ALLEN GINSBERG Today · *announcement*  
 02 May 2005 Studio 111 · *announcement*  
 03 May 2005 New@PennSound · *essay*  
 11 May 2005 Joris wins PEN award for Celan translation · *notice*  
 22 May 2005 Fwd: Transliterations conference and project · *relayed forward*  
 26 May 2005 Recommended Summer Reading · *essay*  
 28 May 2005 Hero of the Local: Robert Creeley and the Persistence of American Poetry · *announcement*  
 07 Jun 2005 Re: Recommended Summer Reading · *essay*  
 08 Jun 2005 Notable Books · *announcement*  
 10 Jun 2005 Shadowtime · *announcement*  
 11 Jun 2005 Creeley's Ligeia · *essay*  
 28 Jun 2005 Close Listening / WPS1 · *essay*  
 29 Jun 2005 Basil King on Robert Creeley · *relayed forward*  
 03 Jul 2005 WebLog: Recent Additions · *announcement*  
 04 Jul 2005 Lorenzo Thomas (1944-2005) · *essay*  
 19 Jul 2005 Re: Experimental Irish poets? · *essay*  
 25 Jul 2005 Xul Solar · *essay*  
 10 Aug 2005 Secular Jewish Practice / Radical Jewish Poetry -- the video · *announcement*  
 08 Sep 2005 Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund at the Twenty-First Century Foundation · *relayed forward*  
 05 Oct 2005 Re: The anti-modernism of Seamus Heaney and Philip Hobsbaum · *relayed forward*  
 18 Nov 2005 new on weblog · *announcement*  
 25 Nov 2005 Blind Witness News (in New York) · *notice*  
 04 Dec 2005 SVA Critical Writing Program · *notice*  
 11 Dec 2005 Blind Witness News: Last Two performances · *notice*  
 26 Dec 2005 Robert Creeley on EPC and PennSound · *announcement*

## 2006

02 Jan 2006 Greenwood Enclopeadia (FWD) · *relayed forward*  
 03 Jan 2006 Recommended Reading (I): Reznikoff and Riding · *essay*  
 05 Jan 2006 M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online · *notice*  
 05 Jan 2006 Riding (Jackson) & Stein · *essay*  
 05 Jan 2006 Re: Riding (Jackson) & Stein · *essay*  
 10 Jan 2006 Recommended Reading (II): Antin, Bergvall, Ledebur, Lehto, Mancini · *essay*  
 13 Jan 2006 New @ M/E/A/N/I/N/G Online · *notice*  
 15 Jan 2006 Favorite Poetry Readings: RSVP · *essay*  
 16 Jan 2006 Samuel Greenberg · *essay*  
 21 Jan 2006 Richard Foreman's ZOMBOD! · *announcement*  
 22 Jan 2006 Valentine's Day at Smith College · *announcement*  
 24 Jan 2006 Recommended Reading (III): Cadiot & Fourcade · *essay*  
 24 Jan 2006 Tuttle Reading at Whitney · *announcement*  
 27 Jan 2006 Seeing Double: Feb. 7 - March 4 · *announcement*  
 02 Feb 2006 For Nam June Paik · *announcement*  
 10 Feb 2006 Gary Sullivan's "Poetry Phone" on PennSound · *announcement*  
 16 Feb 2006 Barbara Guest (1920-2006) · *essay*  
 17 Feb 2006 The Forward on Bee and Laufer · *announcement*  
 17 Feb 2006 Barbara Guest (1920-2006) · *announcement*  
 18 Feb 2006 Recommended Reading IV: Poetry & Pedagogy · *essay*  
 22 Feb 2006 Geoff Ward obit for Barbara Guest in The Independent · *notice*

25 Feb 2006 BPC/Segue at PennSound 2005-2006 · *announcement*  
 28 Feb 2006 Ginsberg singe Blake · *announcement*  
 06 Mar 2006 In March We Remember [NYC event announcement] · *notice*  
 07 Mar 2006 New @ PennSound · *announcement*  
 07 Mar 2006 Left Forum: Cooper Union (NY) March 10-12 · *notice*  
 16 Mar 2006 Brooklyn Rail · *announcement*  
 19 Mar 2006 Listen Up (Tom Raworth) · *announcement*  
 26 Mar 2006 National Poetry Month all over again · *announcement*  
 02 Apr 2006 Tracie Morris Journal at the Poetry Foundation · *notice*  
 04 Apr 2006 Shadowtime · *announcement*  
 06 Apr 2006 Zukofsky Selected · *notice*  
 15 Apr 2006 Bob Grenier / my reading at Temple · *announcement*  
 22 Apr 2006 Columbia Reading 4/25 · *announcement*  
 24 Apr 2006 Ulla Dydo on Stein Scholarship · *announcement*  
 01 May 2006 Notes on Marie Menken · *announcement*  
 04 May 2006 Perelman & Show event in NY Friday · *notice*  
 12 May 2006 Plays on Words: First Night · *announcement*  
 19 May 2006 Mei-mei Berssenbrugge on Close Listening · *announcement*  
 01 Jun 2006 New on PennSound · *announcement*  
 04 Jun 2006 Night Air (NYC event) · *announcement*  
 11 Jun 2006 Sunday Breakfast Links · *announcement*  
 11 Jun 2006 Re: Brazil Conference / Sunday Breakfast Links · *essay*  
 20 Jun 2006 French poet/artist collaborations at NYPL · *announcement*  
 08 Jul 2006 Mina Loy's visual art in NY · *announcement*  
 23 Jul 2006 Re: Duncan Ground Work · *announcement*  
 24 Jul 2006 Chaucer in New York · *notice*  
 29 Jul 2006 The Passing of a Legend: Louise Bennett 1919-2007 · *announcement*  
 30 Jul 2006 Doping Scandal Rocks Poetry · *essay*  
 05 Aug 2006 Reality Street's summer 2006 sale · *relayed forward*  
 12 Aug 2006 Re: new device/widget for creating/authoring digital poetry · *essay*  
 14 Aug 2006 a few reviews · *announcement*  
 06 Sep 2006 Girl Man · *announcement*  
 27 Sep 2006 Girly Man in New York · *announcement*  
 04 Oct 2006 recommended books/ things to do in NY · *announcement*  
 16 Oct 2006 Richard Foreman's new blog · *announcement*  
 17 Oct 2006 Creeley in darkness and light · *essay*  
 18 Oct 2006 A Tribute to Barbara Guest in NY 10/21 · *notice*  
 03 Nov 2006 URL for video feed of Bruce Andrews on O'Reilly show · *relayed link*  
 10 Nov 2006 Susan Howe Festival · *announcement*  
 16 Dec 2006 devolution · *essay*  
 21 Dec 2006 Re: MLA off-site poetry reading - updated list of readers · *announcement*  
 23 Dec 2006 MLA: Sounds of Poetry · *notice*

## 2007

16 Jan 2007 Girly Man -- 6:30pm today at CUE · *announcement*  
 04 Feb 2007 New M/E /A/N /I/N /G -- Feminist Art: A Reassessment · *essay*  
 26 Feb 2007 Maggie O'Sullivan's Body of Work · *announcement*  
 27 Feb 2007 Fwd: HOW2 SPECIAL ISSUE ON WOMEN AND ECO-POETICS · *announcement*  
 06 Mar 2007 Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) · *essay*  
 11 Mar 2007 Semina show · *announcement*  
 17 Mar 2007 Armantrout review in Sunday Times Book Review · *announcement*  
 25 Mar 2007 Lazer & Armantrout reading in LA on 3/27 · *announcement*  
 27 Mar 2007 New McGann: Prepub discount · *notice*  
 31 Mar 2007 Elaine Equi Sunday Times review · *announcement*  
 08 Apr 2007 Pound on PennSound · *announcement*  
 17 Apr 2007 Nancy Shaw (1962-2007) · *essay*  
 22 Apr 2007 Some NY Spring Readings · *announcement*  
 30 Apr 2007 Curnow & Kuszai in NY · *announcement*

- 24 May 2007 MLA / Poetics · *essay*
- 06 Jun 2007 Mo Pitkin's (NY) Reading · *announcement*
- 27 Aug 2007 Re: "This Feeling of Exaltation" John Ashbery's 80th · *announcement*
- 19 Sep 2007 Fordham (NYC) reading series · *announcement*
- 01 Dec 2007 Re: I'm Not There · *essay*
- 03 Dec 2007 Will Alexander fund [fwd] · *essay*
- 13 Dec 2007 PEPC Library: New Resources · *essay*

## 2008

- 23 Jan 2008 Amalgamated Writing Programs Launch Morally Repugnant Poets-and-Theorists Exhibit · *announcement*
- 17 Feb 2008 Dworkin/Bernstein reading at Columbia (NY) 2/21 · *announcement*
- 12 Mar 2008 Discount Code for new Foreman play in New York · *announcement*
- 17 Apr 2008 Scalapino: It's go in horizontal · *essay*
- 26 Apr 2008 Blind Witness: Launch & Performance May 5 (NY) · *announcement*
- 08 Jun 2008 Caroline Bergvall's Chaucer on Tuesday 7:30pm (NY) · *announcement*
- 28 Jun 2008 Recantorium & bachelor machines · *announcement*
- 11 Sep 2008 Palin/McCain and the Cult of Irresponsibility · *announcement*
- 08 Oct 2008 "Audacity of Mendacity" placards · *announcement*

## 2009

- 07 May 2009 Robin Blaser (1925-2009) · *announcement*
- 05 Jul 2009 Zolf at EPC & my early audio works · *announcement*
- 22 Jul 2009 University of Alabama Press Recession Sale · *notice*
- 07 Oct 2009 Raymond Federman (1928-2009) · *announcement*
- 19 Nov 2009 Duke/boundary 2 · *announcement*
- 11 Dec 2009 40% Discount on Radical Poetics and Secular Jewish Culture -- &-- essays on Oppen collection · *announcement*
- 18 Dec 2009 Ungly Ducking Presse: fund raising letter · *essay*
- 30 Dec 2009 Selected Robin Blaser poems from The Holy Forest · *announcement*

## 2010

- 28 Feb 2010 All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems from FSG · *essay*
- 11 Mar 2010 NY launch for All the Whiskey in Heaven: Selected Poems · *announcement*
- 15 May 2010 S/N: NewWorldPoetics · *essay*
- 29 May 2010 Leslie Scalapino (1944-2010) · *essay*
- 07 Aug 2010 John Wieners EPC page · *announcement*
- 13 Dec 2010 North of Inventions: A Canadian Poetry Festival · *announcement*
- 14 Dec 2010 Dia NY reading on Thursday · *announcement*

## 2011

- 05 Apr 2011 Attack of the Difficult Poems · *essay*
- 13 Apr 2011 New "web log" address · *announcement*
- 13 Apr 2011 Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions · *announcement*
- 27 May 2011 Brooklyn launch for Attack of the Difficult Poems · *announcement*
- 09 Dec 2011 You Can't Evict an Idea: The Poetics of Occupy Wall Street · *announcement*
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- Djuric, Dubravka, poet, translator; editor, Pro Femina;  
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- Drake, Luigi-Bob, editor of Taproot  
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- Education by Stone, Cabral de Melo Neto  
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- Ellis, Steve, listmember; passed along secondhand story  
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- Eshleman, Clayton, editor of *Sulfur*  
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- Espina, Eduardo, Uruguayan poet; co-editor of *S/N*  
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- Evergreen Review, magazine*  
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- Exit Art, New York alternative art space*  
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- Federman, Raymond, writer; wrote the note  
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- Ferlinghetti, Lawrence, poet; suggested a spate of  
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- Ferneyhough, Brian, composer of the opera  
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- First, there is the need, Reznikoff*  
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 Hehir, Kevin, sought a copy of the anthology  
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