

@poetics

The UB Poetics Discussion Group

Archive of Electronic Correspondence

April 1994

26 messages · Sat 2 Apr 1994 – Sat 30 Apr 1994

An electronic mailing-list archive

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

A reading edition. For each post the author's name, the subject, and the message are foregrounded, and the date is kept but subdued. Machine headers, encoded attachments, and the repeated listserv routing that once framed every message have been cleared away; email addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and similar personal contact details have been redacted.

Editor's Introduction

Kristen M. Fabians

April 1994 opens on announcements, the list doing the plain civic work it never quite admits to loving. Nick Lawrence hangs a notice for Alice Notley, reading Wednesday at a Buffalo gallery on short notice — bring friends, students, whoever — while from Vancouver Peter Quartermain tracks Robin Blaser's spring progress through Philadelphia and Washington. Before the arguing resumes, the poets attend to the calendar: who is reading, and where, and how the word might be spread in time.

The arguing, of course, resumes. The month's live wire is the medium itself, and Chris Funkhouser sets the terms with a manifesto's flatness: *"Technopoetics proposed here is not a literary movement"*. Charles Bernstein, never far from the switchboard, presses the point into aphorism — on a network, he observes, *"At every point receivers are also transmitters"* — which is either a theory of poetry or a description of the list you are holding, and probably means to be both.

Relief arrives, as it reliably will on this list, by way of parody. Linda Reinfeld forwards a mock program of conference papers so pitch-perfect it ought to have been real, the academy's whole apparatus of contested spaces and epistemic privilege marshalled behind the immortal panel-title *"Viceroy-on-Elephant or Elephant-on-Viceroy?"*. The list can theorize the institution to exhaustion; it can also, in a single elephant, deflate it.

And underneath it all a sillier engine is turning over, the first sputters of the collaborative doggerel that will overrun May entirely — a thread called Beatnik Bliss, chicken not yet on the menu but the appetite plainly gathering. I have arranged April's letters under their authors' names, the telephones and addresses redacted to black, the readings and the manifestos and the elephant all filed in the order the days delivered them.

— K. M. F.

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1. **Nick Lawrence**

Alice Notley reading this Wed.

Sat 2 Apr 1994

=====A N N O U N C E M E N T
===== Poet Alice Notley, whose *_Selected Poems_*
has just been published by Talisman House, will be reading Wednesday 6 April
at the Nina Freudenheim Gallery (300 Delaware Avenue) at 8:00 pm. Please
spread the word; this event was set up at short notice, so publicity is scant.
Bring friends, students, etc.

Notley's reading is sponsored by the Abbott Poetry Fund.

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2. **peter quartermain**

Robin Blaser in Philadelphia and Washington DC

Sun 3 Apr 1994

Robin BLASER

(*_The_Holy_Forest_* recently published)
will be in Philadelphia 11-15 April, reading at Temple
(courtesy Rachel Blau DuPlessis) 14 April
[he and David will be staying at *_The_Barclay_*]
and in Washington DC 16-20 April
[when they will be staying at *_Embassy_Row_*]. He's
returning to Vancouver 21 April

If anyone can arrange a reading for him in those areas
on those dates could you please in the first instance
(since RB has an unlisted phone number) either contact

Peter Quartermain

voice and fax [REDACTED]

e-mail [REDACTED]

or arrange directly with him once he's in town?

Thanks.

Peter Quartermain

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3. **Juliana Spahr**

misko on TUESDAY

Thu 7 Apr 1994

Joan Retallack is worried that there might be some
confusion about when and where Misko Suvakovic is

speaking. It is on TUESDAY at 12:30 in room
608 Clemens.
on April 12.

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4. **Linda Reinfeld**
yet another opportunity (fwd)
Sun 10 Apr 1994

Subject: Call for Papers - Laboring Elephants

(Why not a call for poems, too?)

+++++ +++++ +++++ +++++ +++++ +++++ +++++ +++++ +++++
+++++

A CONFERENCE PROPOSAL

THE ELEPHANT AND CULTURAL STUDIES

The Elephant as "Physical" Other Does the Elephant Exist? Zoological Hegemony vs. Cultural Fabrication. Pachyderm "Evolution": Eurochronocities and Eurocentric Linearity in the late (post)modern zoological script. Tracking the elephant through texts: Western Visuality and Olfactory Perception

The Elephant: Interrogating Multi-Cultural Rhetoricitities: The elephant: Cyborg, Ethnicity, or "Species"? (E) (L) (E) (P) (H) (A) (N) (T)? What's That": Exploitation and the Rhetorical Strategies of Denial in Thai Forestry Camps. Viceroy-on-Elephant or Elephant-on-Viceroy? Accidents and the Uncertainties of Domination in some Durbars of the Late British Raj.

The Elephant As Eurocentric Object:

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Garage Sales and elephants: A Dialogue of Contested Spaces.

The Elephant As (Post)Modernist Construction Post-Modern, (Post)Modern, or Postcontemporary Elephant? Epistemic Privileging and Discursive Spaces in MLA Debates. Wild Elephant, Tamed elephant, Zoo-Confined Elephant, Extinct Elephant: Alternative Modernities for a Culturally-Constructed Ani(Male). Elephant Ears: Symbolic Excess in (Post)Nouvelle Pastry Culture. Situating the Paradigmatic other: The Elephant in Weight-Loss Discourse.

[END]

Forwarded to me from:

James V. (Jim) Carmichael, Jr., Assistant Professor
Department of Library and Information Studies
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
350 Curry Building
Greensboro, NC 27514-5001

Phone: [REDACTED], Ext 293 INTERNET: [REDACTED]

"There's only one thing better than love . . . and that's company!"

--Eudora Welty, *The Ponder Heart*

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5. **FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH**

"Technopoetics" as it was 4/8/94

Sun 10 Apr 1994

Dear friends,

*At the request of CB I will be posting a .txt of the paper
i presented at The New Freedoms: Celebrating Contemporary
Russian & American Poetry festival held at Stevens Inst. in Hoboken
over the weekend. I shouldn't say too much in preface, but
definitely that it's merely a starting point, opening up of
conversation, speculation--none of it was explained to me, etc.
I don't have any answers to some of the questions about the
hegemonic anti-natures of technology, etc. Since it's already
out in the open i'll be appreciative of yr Critiques / ideas //
praises /// etc. Let's talk--Thanks-- Xhris Funk-*

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6. **FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH**

(no subject)

Sun 10 Apr 1994

"Takes a lot of voices
to sing a millennial song." <1>

The majority of poetry people are familiar with small, relatively intimate scenarios, and many truly like it that way. Nevertheless, with hi-tech communications capabilities, and various forms of electronic text processing, the potential topographies <2> of our interactive communities and activities have widened substantially over the past few years. To begin to bring what is a fairly recent concept out in the open, it is important to stress our use of the idea of technopoetics as a specific term, the concerns of which we would like to make very clear. Technopoetics proposed here is not a literary movement. It involves collaboration, with other people as well as the machines. This process

itself is changing and dividing pervasive notions of what "author" and "publisher" are.

"The electronic age now enjoys this time of awkwardness before the age itself disappears along with its name into the day to day of what at Xerox Park they've taken to calling 'Ubicomp,' ubiquitous computing..."<3>

We remember what was written in Convivio A Journal of Poetics: "Poetics is a labor and a threshold where we are working to make an actual thing..., " which "is a continual reformation.... Above all it treats of inclusion, ...poetics, 'in the plural,' as Robert Duncan says."<4> To echo these notions, as we move into time, and, as a culture, succumb to technology (television, automobiles and such, as well as computers and digital intermedia), the work, our actions must be pluralized in order to maximize the potentials of the technology and not let them contribute to social fragmentation. In no way would we want to speak purely of technopoetry or the technopoetic. "Poetry," "technopoetry" is now, in its potential, something more than a poem, or a book of poems, in its blending with other forms and other media. Will Alexander, introducing a segment of the We Magazine Issue 18, describes the work presented as "...a mix of the poetic and essayistic...like opening up an artery of twilight, and opening up and walking through this vast new expanse where one is neither one [i.e. poetic] or the other [i.e. essayistic] but something completely different."<5> To state the apparent, this report comes from what considers itself a "first" world. As one writer has already pointed out, I am speaking from the perspective of an "unintentional elitism," of a "...live by the modem die by the modem future of poetry as an electronic medium."<6> This is true, but needs to be contextualized within the reality of the newness of this technology. In many ways we are at the beginnings of new technological spaces, new electronic networks, which begin to enlarge their envelopes beyond the corporate, military, governmental, academic milieu which it has benefitted until now. My position is a result of the privilege of birth and guidance, of research and exploration, and is accepted as responsibility. Among the things revealed in the processes of technopoetics is a new kind of wear and fatigue of the body. We are in the age of a physical and mental/consciousness transformation caused by technological phenomena. In fact, sitting in front of video screens and computer monitors especially might be likened to what George Oppen once described as "the bright light of shipwreck" in the poem "Of Being Numerous." Clearly, the predominant scenario in this and future age is a movement towards "The absolute singular/The unearthly bonds/Of the singular", our own type of "Insanity in high places..." in our homes, with the beam of the computer's screen on our faces as well as those of the police helicopter searchlights above our cities and suburbs..."By the shipwreck/Of the singular."<7> This points to

one of the obvious advantages of collaboration: that the time spent by any one individual can be spread out over a collective. There is little chance that our civilization is ever going to be less reliant on computers. "Ours is a time in which ontological questions of truth and falsehoods are less relevant than issues of control--control of meaning, control of context."<8> We have been inspired to "seize the media."<9> The alternative would be to leave it to the disposal of the military industrial complex. As managing editor for *Electronic Journal*, an on-line (Internet) academic magazine concerned with electronic communication between computer users and the implications thereof, as editor with We Press (where a group of editors conspire to "publish" poetry on compact disc, cassette, video and Internet as well as on paper), in addition to my role as a teacher, I am intimately involved with high-tech approaches to both poetry/poetics and the presentation of electronic text. In the spring of 1993, We Press used the Internet (harbinger of the so-called "Information Superhighway") to circulate a poetry journal. After this experiment I wrote an essay regarding the frontier of cyberspace, "We Maga/zine XVII: (A) Textual Experiment." The essay is a theoretical and practical investigation of the po(e)ntentials of producing a magazine on an electronic network and the attempt to incite a global community instantaneously through network connections. The essay's simple conclusion is that there is not a doubt that any publisher with a computer connected to the Internet (or the digital--video and audio-- networks which are soon to come to many, many households in America, and the much of the rest of the "first" world) can exponentially increase the circulation and audience of their publication--and otherwise make connections which they would not normally make<10>--by transmuting what they are already involved with to include cyberspace. Of course there are severe socio-ideological concerns with regards to access to the technologies now available, and any fully legitimized network system must make room and provide equal access for everyone. This is not nearly close to being a living reality, but with "Ubicomp," and other systematic plans such as the Information Superhighway, it is likely that we will see millions more Americans become reliant on on-line services over the course of coming decades. It is important that we concern ourselves with equilateral space and learn to cooperatively communicate within the interactive electronic arena now. This, of course, is easier in theory than practice.<11> Before going further, I wanted to briefly connect technopoetics with what Donna Haraway speaks of in "A Cyborg Manifesto." Haraway writes, "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation."<12> What we find most liberating in Haraway's work, in addition to its pointed ideology

("...cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century"), is its recontextualization of our species as a whole. How anyone can feel they are a part of the same corpus and mindset as those of the pre-industrial world is rather mysterious, to say the least. Do you not often feel constrained by the "metaphysical tradition" which is rooted in what is a truly archaic mode of thought and action? How much do we actually have in common with the mind and body set of pre-electronic culture? Cyborgs, "the awful apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation," are concerned with "the relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination," and are troublesome because "they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism...often exceedingly unfaithful to their origin." Haraway's cyborg myth "is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" in an age where "the need for unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination has never been more acute."<13> Furthermore, as Don Byrd explains in *The Poetics of the Common Knowledge*, "Our fascination to ourselves as cyborgian creatures is that we combine in our beings the predictability of machines with the wreckless, independence of singular [?] creatures."<14> As we are presented with both the predicament and the predictability of culture, as the computer and other forms of technology, ideological weapons all, begin to dominate our work places, and other places, we must familiarize ourselves with them and use them in a project of creating a better society. Purkinge is a technopoetics writing collective with whom I am currently working in Albany. Purkinge improvisationally rends and resews texts in printed and oral forms,<15> producing a particularly angular "writing" "centered" from different perspectives. The group invents and promotes new modes of authorship and anti-authorship, fashioning melodic conversations in opposition to a system grown entropic. In our experimentations, enabled by technology (linked computers and multitrack recording equipment), we insist on the necessity of interactive, intercorporeal elements in our communication. The group's gatherings reflect a moment in the drift, theoretically and poetically fusing concept and action. Nathaniel Mackey, in an essay on Amiri Baraka, writes of the poet's "obliquity, the sliding away from the proposed we find in many of Baraka's poems." Baraka's method "complies with a fugitive, perhaps idealist impulse, as though 'the mind, moving' might if not outmaneuver such constraints [i.e. social 'conditions whose limits one cannot escape,' and, by extension, the poetry produced within such conditions], at least register the need to do so." The "Obliquity or angularity" of such writingQand the lyric which rises from the implementation of such a poetics, which also typifies the type of work done by PurkingeQ"challenges the

epistemic order whose constraints it implicitly brings to light." <16> In Purkinge, a multiplicity of elements, textual modes, and personalities come together in an intertextual play between sound and voice, meaning and obliquity. We develop a tangential "writing" style pointed towards the creation of a new mode of authorship in the movement away from a non-existent center. It is a conversation, a collaboration, melodic in its ideal. We inhale as well as we exhale, hearts dialate as well as contract. The group wants poetry that shows similar signs of life--and we turn the machine on. In addition to expediting interpersonal communications, computer/digital technology has been used technopoetically in the form of hypertext, and through interactive textually based virtual reality spaces--known as MUDs and MOOs--on the Internet . According to George Landow,

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

MUD is an acronym for "Multiple User Dimension," which is an interactive textual-based virtual reality software being used in cyberspace. MOO stands for MUD Object Oriented, in which characters are created and whole electronic dimensions--including a type of hypertexts-- are built. A writer is able to compose by themselves, or with others, in these spaces. We recently spent a few hours with hypertext writers Michael Joyce and Caroyln Guyer. Michael is a novelist, a cybernovelist, and one of the co- developers of Storyspace, "the premier hypertext program available today." <18> Carolyn is coordinator of the woman's hypertext collective High Pitched Voices. Michael gave a talk, "(Re)Placing the Author: 'A Book in the Ruins'" in Albany. He reads the Czeslaw Milosz poem "A Book in the Ruins," drawing metaphors between it and what he perceives as the condition of literature today. He promotes hypertext as the frontier of literature, a re- writing of the process of reading and writing, where the reader, in a sense, is able to write and rewrite any given book. It is an extreme concept for most people, who have quite a linear and perpetualized relationship with literature of all sorts. Joyce reads from Milosz--and interprets: "The poet stands in the ruins...it's the modernist moment...but no...this is not what we see...the poet makes his way into the ruins of a dark building." The building we read metaphorically as technology, "in so doing the movement itself reads barrier as gate. What he reads, he writes." The screen is the barrier, a "gate"--not passable by all. According to Joyce, "Electronic texts present themselves in the medium of their disolution. They are read where they are written and they are written where they are read." A mantra throughout his talk was "print text stays itself, electronic text replaces itself." <19> We see

hypertext as technopoetics in light of its process, which actively promotes the decentering of singular author, and hope the next phase in the development of hypertext software will allow for collaborative interaction in real-time. An article in the recent issue of *Poets & Writers Magazine* paraphrases Carolyn Guyer, noting the "text chunks," which "replace" themselves, are "called lexia, which may be images and sounds as well as paragraphs and their electronic links empower the reader either to submit to the writer's ordering of the story or to collaborate by manipulating the elements into an entirely new story." <20> High Pitched Voices is working together in a collaborative manner on-line. They have a hypertext discussion set up (in the same manner as the Buffalo POETICS conference), and they work together to composing hypertext in a MOO. <27> When one enters this particular electronic space, by issuing a few simple keyboard commands, they are greeted by the formation of an arch, a pair of mirrored, upper case "I"s as columnar bases. An inscription reads: "A roof over our heads, she said. Appropriate, I thought. Yonic symbol as protection and sign. And....there are two "I"s here. What more could we want?" A "reader" is invited to follow links, and, if interested, add to existing texts and create links between lexia. The group of women involved with High Pitched Voices also holds real-time meetings in this space, open to anyone who is able to log in. We see tremendous poetentials in such an interactivity such as this. Technopoetics resists the exclusivity of the technology in general, and maintains a historical awareness that it is merely a forerunner to what will be customary activity to future generations of writers and artists in the post-electronic age. With due respect and admiration for the PRE-FACE of *Technicians of the Sacred*, <28> which asserts PRIMITIVE MEANS COMPLEX, technopoetics enacts the reversal of that phrase, certain that complex can mean primitive. We are in age marked by the power of information, the dominance of technology, yet it is also important to note we're in the relatively early stages of what will become Ubicomp culture. It is a very complicated time. We must study and act upon what is happening now--& stake some grounds here. There are a few collectives and publications already in this realm, in addition to the aforementioned entities, there are a number of poetry oriented journals on the Internet (*_RIF/T_*, *_Grist_*, *_Core_*, *_Taproot_*, and *_Inter/face_* come to mind). Other publishing groups such as Xexoxial Endarchy and *_The Aerial_* are consistently producing poetry in formats other than the printed page, and Eastgate Systems has been pioneering in their dedication to the promotion of hypertext publications. In 1986, I asked Ed Sanders about his vision of the music of the future:

"It has to be, in electronics, the equivalent of the piano forte. That is, right around the time of Bach they were creating this new kind of piano, which was an outgrowth of the harpsichord, that allowed its player to be

infinitely more expressive, using the pedals and playing softly and loud--it enabled the concept of the concerto to arise, where the piano was an actually powerful instrument that could act in concerto with other instruments.

"So what's going to happen now...is the electronic equivalent of the piano forte. That is, there is going to arise a musical instrument sufficient for a new Beethoven, and it will be an electronic instrument. It will have, obviously, many aspects of the modern electronic recording studio and modern high-end synthesizer. I envision it like a giant church organ only instead of stops it will have fifteen or twenty thousand little buttons or knobs & x-y pads & pressure sensitive areas & theramin-like devices where you approach these little knobs with your hands. The proximity of your fingers to these zones & tiny little surfaces will indicate parameters & programs, moods & sounds, or whatever....It will be a "touch" thing; I guess the feet will have to be involved...in other words you'll have to use both hands, both feet, & perhaps a group of assistants. In fact it may be a collaborative thing....It will be complicated...you can use your touch to modify all these parameters instantly...make these sounds, these different layers of sounds, different sounds & chords instantly, as you create it..."<23>

As we find ourselves increasingly--and without much choice--having to making use of the synthetic strands provided by our civilization's penchant for technological living, we need to envision ways to weave the threads given by such an unusual but very real circumstance into a tightly meshed net which alternatively keeps us warm and catches our breath. Among the questions raised by the possibilities implicit in our future immersions is the question of which we want to privilege, the production of artifacts or the actual engagement of people in a process of living and creating as an outgrowth of daily life. To draw an analogy between technopoetics and other technologies which have long predated the computer, I refer to a collection of essays called Radiotext(e), the introduction of which reminds us "that radio existed long before its receiver did."<24> Bertolt Brecht, in his essay "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication" suggests we should "Change this apparatus [radio] over from distribution to communication," and that "Any attempt by the radio to give a truly public character to public occasions is a step in the right direction."<25> These are among the ideas we would like to claim as a basis for a technopoetics in the current historical and technological moment.

--Chris Funkhouser

Footnotes <1> Don Byrd, The Great Dimestore Centennial (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1986), p. 109. The concept is echoed in other places in the

poem (i.e. "Takes a lot of penny whistles to sing/a millennial song." p. 13, etc.).
<2> This is a term I've heard used in this context by Michael Joyce and others.
<3> Michael Joyce, "(Re)Placing the Author: 'A Book in the Ruins,'" SUNY-Albany, March 23, 1994. <4> Louis Patler, "A WORD/AN INTRODUCTION," _Convivio A Journal of Poetics % Number One_ (Bolinás: Tombouctou Books, 1983). <5> Will Alexander, _We Magazine Issue 18_ (Santa Cruz: We Press, 1993). <6> Tony Door, _The Poetry Project Newsletter_, Fall 1993. <7> George Oppen, "Of Being Numerous," _Collected Poems_ (New York: New Directions Books, 1975), pp. 152-60. <8> Gene Youngblood, "The New Renaissance: Art, Science, and the Universal Machine" p. 15. <9> Advice and phrase Peter Lamborn Wilson, Naropa Institute, 1989. <10> Among other previously unknown correspondents for _We Magazine Issue 18_ were Arkadii Dragomoschenko and Armand Schwerner. <11> While the POETICS list at SUNY-Buffalo was thriving for the first month I was a part of it, interaction has decreased substantially for another month now. There were some unusual and fiery interactions which may have contributed to the current status and general awkwardness of the list. In Albany, we hope to see POETICS revive itself. <12> Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," _Simians, Cyborgs, and Women_ (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 150. <13> quotes are from Haraway, pp. 149-154. <14> Don Byrd, _The Poetics of the Common Knowledge_ (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 16. <15> Purkinge uses the Daedalus software program in its computer jams, and a four-track cassette system in its spoken/sound work. The group is an outgrowth of the Awopbop Collective, which was started by Don Byrd and Derek Owen in 1991 (see _The Little Magazine Volume 20_). <16> These quotes are by Nathaniel Mackey, _DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENT Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing_ (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 43. <17> George Landow, _Hypertext The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology_ (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 4. <18> Ted Jennings, introducing Michael Joyce, University at Albany, 3/23/94. <19> These quotations are taken from an audio recording of Michael Joyce's Sesquicentennial Lecture, "(Re)Placing the Author: 'A Book in the Ruins,'" at University at Albany Uptown Campus, 3/23/94. <20> _Poet's & Writers Magazine_, March/April 1994, p. 25. <21> This project is based at Hotel MOO, Brown University (telnet duke.cs.brown.edu 8888). <22> Jerome Rothenberg, ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 1969). <23> Ed Sanders, excerpt from interview with Chris Funkhouser, _We Magazine Issue 3_ (Charlottesville, VA, 1987), p. 6-7. <24> Neil Strauss, _Radiotext(e)_ (New York: Semiotext(e), 1993), p. 9. <25> Brecht quotes from _Radiotext(e)_ (New York: Semiotext(e), 1993), p. 15-16.

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7. **Nick Lawrence**

farewell party for misko & dubravka

Tue 12 Apr 1994

I'm hosting a sendoff party, really a cocktail hour without the cocktails, for] misko & dubravka on wednesday 13 april from 6 to 8 pm

address: 70 Cottage Street (off Virginia off Elmwood, opposite the purple monstrosity/landmark)

feel free to bring drinks & eats

Nick Lawrence

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8. **Jorge Guitart**

MOSLEY/OBENZINGER READING

Tue 12 Apr 1994

Don't miss a sensational reading this coming Thursday!

Just Buffalo Literary Center announces
a National Literary Network Reading

WALTER MOSLEY and HILTON OBENZINGER
reading from their works

at Art Dialogue Gallery
1 Linwood Avenue, Buffalo
Thursday April 14, 1994
7:30 p.m.

WALTER MOSLEY is an African-American mystery novelist. He is Bill Clinton's favorite author. His novel DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS is being made into a film produced by Jonathan Demme and starring Denzel Washington.

HILTON OBENZINGER writes of the cities' vanished past with imagination, wit, and impressive historical accuracy. In his book NEW YORK ON FIRE, his history of New York fires in verse, Obenzinger provides a unique window on that city's past.

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9. **Charles Bernstein**

where are you?

Tue 12 Apr 1994

hm, err, well, uh ...

I have always confused the local and the, what?, nonlocal myself and it may be that everyone on this list should post local events so we find out what is really happening.

But as it is this list is mostly nonlocal and getting moreso everyday.

Can anyone tell me where to get some gas?

Dinner will be at 7.

With all best wishes,

Your Poetics Listserve Host

"If you'e got the time, we've got the post"

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10. **Marc Nasdor**
Re: where are you?

Tue 12 Apr 1994

The Merit station on Bay Street in Rosebank. Cheapest gas in Staten Island. -
Marc

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11. **Nick Lawrence**
Not just local

Wed 13 Apr 1994

Joe Torra, editor of *_lift_* magazine in Somerville, Mass.,
& Nick Lawrence, in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo,
will read from their work on Saturday, 16 April at 3:30 pm*
at the Central Park Grill, 2519 Main Street, Buffalo

I scratched the rules of control, only to find my life a landscape for filling in
blanks. Authoritative demonstrations of height and depth envelope the company
of uniformed pasts. There is no such thing as two lines not meeting. I set my
own timetable and means of regulation. Bits of this pieces of that brutal whole.
[JT]

I wrote a riot and it died
the writer read it and it tore
a stutter in my copy of the page's face
a verse refusal of what's mine in you [NL]

* Note new, relaxed afternoon time

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12. **cy6440%albnyvms.bitnet**
being loca(l)

Fri 15 Apr 1994

a quick note to substantiate
that
*

The Naropa Institute
aka
The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics
co-founded by Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, C. Trungpa Rinpoche
*

is on-line -----
so you can contact the Department of Writing & Poetics in precious care of
Rebecca Bush who facilitates, administrates the Karma there, wonderfully with
the following syntax:



in Albany, NY., mittens are still recommended. Katie Yates (mid April)

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13. **Charles Bernstein**
prequel to long post

Wed 20 Apr 1994

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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14. **Charles Bernstein**
I Don't Take Voice Mail (long post)

Wed 20 Apr 1994

"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 insists 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 in- formation 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 combining 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, or 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 provide an extraordinary space for interaction and exchange among artist 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 a 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 obdurate 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 Slugg, 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 (████████)

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15. **Marjorie Perloff**

Re: prequel to long post

Fri 22 Apr 1994

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

Wonderful to get Charles's electronic piece and it's not too long at all. Would that most of my e-mail were as interesting! The essay is right on! But depressing as well. Those images of the Barbara Streisand home show!. Is life no more than this? Meanwhile, my class is reading (this week) ISLETS AND IRRITATIONS and getting ready (next week) for a visit from Marjorie Welish and Rae Armantrout. Hello to all! Marjorie Perloff

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16. **Toshi Ishihara**

first

Fri 22 Apr 1994

Charles Bernstein suggested that I post a description of my manuscript--a Ph.D. dissertation from SUNY, Buffalo-- on the poetics board, so here it is. I'm in the process of looking for a publisher.

Ran's Notebook and Drawing Book: Speculations by a Japanese Woman on Cultural Differences represents my own experience as a woman, an outsider, and an exile, in a series of "silent" pictures drawn with a language, a language embodied in a dancing figure, fluctuating in meanings. Ran's book is driven by her desire to retrieve the the lost story of "Father and Mother" in China, her hunger for stories of her own--Japan's own--past, and her need to restore a lost sense of the feminine to herself. The book traces a development of Ran from a state of being in "turmoil" to a blooming as an "orchid." ("Ran" means both in Japanese).

What follows is a brief descriptive summary of the manuscript:

The first Chapter in Part One, Ran's Notebook, is woven out of three stories--the ancient Japanese myth of Amaterasu Ohmikami, the Sun Goddess; a standard history of Japan (from which accounts of good and powerful women have been excluded); and the story of Ran, myself. All of these represent the re-emergence of femininity. By interlocking these texts, I try to show one lives with the history of one's country and how the story of one's life is inevitably an embodiment of a national myth.

The second Chapter in Ran's Notebook deals with the issue of naming, writing, and the physical nature of language. Here I integrate Ran's story with my

interpretation of writing by two well known Asian American writers, Makine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan.

Part Two is titled *My Drawing Book*. The change of possessive pronouns reveals a process of self-assertion. My intention for inventing Ran, who is named after Orlando, the character who runs through all of this material up till now, is to show that personality is not something to be taken for granted, but a construct which comes into being through the process of being observed by others and observing oneself. In *My Drawing Book* gradually this persona, Ran, is made to fade and move to one side as the "I" gains confidence to speak in her own voice.

The myth of another goddess, Amenouzume, "one who dances in whirls," is retold with a focus on her dancing body as a critical site where a feminist re-reading of body is configured. The account of her dance also plays an important role in my exploration of the kinds of bonds that can exist among women. Other accounts drawn from tales of Amenouzume--her listening to a god's advice, for instance, or her killing an animal that refuses to speak-- run parallel to Ran's (my) experience of logophobia in the English language.

The shift from writing to drawing in Parts One and Two shows my transformation from a self nervous about linear and clear-cut thinking to a self imaginative and creative, favoring a circular and pictorial representation. I suggest this pictorial mode of expression has its roots in a perception peculiar to the ideographic Japanese language.

In Part Three, *Conversation Piece*, I consider the reason for my father's recourse to a foreign tongue. It shows the powerful effect of his silence in that he communicates not through verbal utterance but through making others see by means of his actions. My conclusion is that my "silent" mode of expression is my father's gift to me, the path he wanted me to follow.

What follows is cited from a report of Linda Reinfeld (author of *Language Poetry: Writing as Rescue*, Louisiana State University Press, 1992) who served as the outside reader of my dissertation:

The book constitutes a most revealing meditation on language as a positive agent of transformation in the

experience of a Japanese woman living in the United States. As she emerges from the persona of "Ran" (meaning "turmoil" in Japanese) through her own writing, she weaves together strands of stories from ancient Japanese mythology, Japanese history, and her own personal experience, including her experience as a sophisticated reader of such Asian-American writers as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan. In showing how her own story is an embodiment of a national myth, the author manages to keep each strand of her narrative distinct and free of sentimentality, thus achieving a sense of depth and multiplicity in a feminist construction of self. The writing is at all times engaging and imaginative, drawing much of its strength and scholarly excellence from an understanding of pictorial, poetic, and ideographic modes of expression. "Ran's Notebook and Drawing Book" is a unique demonstration of what it might mean, right now, to live in more than one language and more than one time--as sooner or later, all of us must.

I'd welcome comments, questions, or advice from the readers on Poetics.

---Toshi Ishihara: [REDACTED]---

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17. **Kenneth Sherwood** *Sarajevo, travel and art.*

Tue 26 Apr 1994

Received from Geert Lovink (Amsterdam) as originally posted by [REDACTED]
(Nermin Zukic).

B O S N E T Apr. 11, 1994

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04/04/94 SARAJEVO POSTCARD

BACK ON TRACK

By Zlatko Dizdarevic

Sometime last summer, when we still used to try to imagine the day when everything would finally stop and we could head south, toward the sea, one of my friends said: "As far as I'm concerned, I'll know the war is over when the

trolleys start running again and, like in the old days, I can get on the No. 2 and take it to the end of the line, right to Villa Cengic. And we can pass all the way across 'Sniper's Avenue,' but no one will be shooting at us."

We laughed then, looking over the twisted tracks, the fallen power lines, the wrecked and burned-out trolleys. The trolleys remained exactly where grenade and mortar shells had stopped them dead in their tracks in May of 1992. It seemed like everything else--the end of the war, a return to normal life--would come before the trolleys started running again. We figured that we'd get to the sea by car, or maybe even somewhere farther by plane, before we'd be able to make it to Villa Cengic on the No. 2 red line.

Things turned out differently. The conflict made fools of us again. When it comes to forecasting war and peace, politics and life, we have to admit, once more, that we're complete amateurs. The trolley is running. The tracks have been straightened out. The power lines have been put up and a few red cars, in mint condition, have been hauled out from God knows where. But none of this has anything to do with the end of the war we had imagined. And it has nothing to do with what our trip on the No. 2 would have meant. There is still no peace waiting for us at Villa Cengic.

What stands out most about the No. 2, as it makes its way through dead neighborhoods, is the route's senselessness. The trip is nothing more than movement from one place to another within the same concentration camp, the same prison. Once upon a time we used to sit in the No. 2 and head down to Bascarsija, the heart of the Old City of Sarajevo. Today the area is just a gaping hole, empty and calm. We used to get on the No. 1 and head for the railroad station and then go on from there, by train, to other places. Like people. Now there are no trains; there isn't even a railroad station. If they start the No. 1 again, what good will it be if it only serves the same bogus purpose as the No. 2? There were times when we used to pile into the No. 3 and somehow make it to Ilidza. And from there we could go wherever our hearts desired: down the old tree-lined avenue to the source of the Bosnia River, up to Mt. Igman or even to nowhere in particular. Thanks to the world's kindness and affection, Ilidza now belongs to "them"; it is at the other end of the world, somewhere on another planet. You can't get there, as everyone well knows, by trolley. A revived No. 3 won't be able to do us much good either.

The No. 2 is off and running, and everything else stays still, with very little hope that anything is about to change. What a blunder it was to think that, one day, a trolley would take us to freedom. For the rest of the world--especially for the politicians and diplomats who try to get

us to accept their lies, who try to get us to tell the world how happy we are--the resurrected trolley is a triumph. But what is it to us? How can we even begin to explain that we've always liked going to Ilidza, the railroad station, Mostar, the sea? And that we'd much rather go to these places on foot than have the ability to "freely" roll to nowhere on a trolley. As the No. 2 stops at every station on its aborted route across nothing, it creates an illusion that is equally senseless, revolting and desperate.

Of course, it isn't easy trying to explain this to people who think that the only aim in life is to fill your stomach and your pockets, and that you can be as happy as a cow in five square meters of living space as long as you have your mercy provisions--the gift of a "landlord" or humanitarian organization. It's also tough to put a damper on the warm feelings of all those who helped get "Operation Trolley" underway by sending money, technicians and even cameramen, just to make sure it was recorded for posterity. The "international community" also kept its honor intact and showed its strength, so its leaders have good reason for a victorious toast over a glass of whiskey. A great nightmare no longer bears down on them in quite the same way or in quite the same place. That nightmare hopped onto the red line, Sarajevo's No. 2, and it's making the rounds now, to the general contentment of some of the exhausted and depleted citizens of Sarajevo.

But it's slightly more difficult to sell this story to those in Sarajevo who are still using their own heads to think with, something that, apparently, may constitute this disobedient city's gravest sin. A few days ago Afan Ramic, an artist, was talking with some people from Japan who had come to visit his studio, which is in an abandoned building that used to be a printing plant. They were a fine bunch, very serious, dignified and sincere. They listened carefully, spoke carefully and made offers even more carefully. For hours they studied the canvases, took pictures of the works. Then, with great tact and meticulously chosen words, they conveyed a message to the painter: their t.v. station, as well as their government, would be honored if he, the Sarajevan artist Afan Ramic, would come to Japan with his paintings. There would be

exhibitions, and all expenses would be paid. In short, they saw no problems except, of course, whether this "extremely interesting" painter would be willing to accept their invitation. Would this trip upset any other plans he might have made? Did he find the concept to his liking? Were there any special conditions that needed to be met?

"I looked at them for a while without really knowing what to say. I wasn't really sure, to tell you the truth, whether or not they were pulling my leg or whether they were serious," Afan said later. "I always admired the Japanese for their seriousness. Could it be that after 700 days of imprisonment, hunger, personal tragedy and every other kind of misery imaginable, they were really asking me whether or not I wanted to go to Japan and have a show? And what's more, did they have any idea what they were saying when they claimed that everything would be o.k. as far as traveling was concerned? Then I decided to ask them what, around here, always ends up being the most important question: 'That's all well and good as far as Tokyo and Osaka go; I have no doubt that it's also nice in Nagoya and Yokohama, but how am I going to get past the Serb barricades on Ilidza?' I got the feeling that they felt confused and didn't quite grasp what I was asking them. I actually began feeling sorry for them. Then I said, more to myself: 'Forget about it, don't worry, I'll get to Ilidza by trolley.'"

The Japanese went off happy that they had gotten Afan to come to their country. The painter was left to wait for the trolley to Ilidza, or some other mode of transportation the international community could arrange. After all, when you get past Ilidza and that last barricade, everything is a lot easier. From there to Japan isn't far at all.

Zlatko Dizdarevic, is author of Sarajevo: A War Journal (Fromm). This article was translated by Ammiel Alcalay.

BosNet is also available as a moderated Usenet group BIT.LISTSERV.BOSNET Check with your sys/net administrator about getting the feed for your site(s)/node(s).

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18. **peter quartermain**

Summer Reading

Thu 28 Apr 1994

so to get my head back into a _place_
I'm looking to read by decent means
some decent poems
and decent poets
I haven't read before

whatever decent means

I figure that if I list one or two that
I like but you may not know about
why then, maybe you'll send me
some names living or dead
and titles (likewise I'm sure)

So try

"The Weekend of Dermot and Grace"

by Eugene R. Watters. *Poetry-Ireland_Review_*
13 (Spring 1985): 25-71

first published Dublin: Allen Figgis & Co 1964 --
surely there's a copy in Fubbalo

and if you see any of his work around
in recent magazines

(try Peter Riley's *Poetical Histories*
or Harry Gilonis' *Form Books* --

Gilonis also publishes Catherine Walsh
Colin Simms and I think Wendy Mulford)

get hold of Maurice Scully
also Irish. Pig Press is bringing
out a new Scully book soon, called
_Basic_Colours_

But if you want some wonderful well call it prose
steal borrow beg or even buy

Rob Kovitz

_Pig_City_Model_Farm_
Toronto

Treyf

1992

(dist in USA by Princeton Arhitectural Press)
a brilliant collage attack on just about

anything to do with the rule of, well, rule --
and even (shudder) community.

What a blessed relief it is that NONE of these books
is flavoured with Parfum du Professorat
or even Sachet d'eleve
though they are not by that guaranteed to be wholesome.

And if you've got this far through this list
there's a BONUS QUOTE as reward and punishment:
Laura's mother in Lola Lemire Tostevin's
new novel *_Frog_Moon_*
(Dunvegan, Ontario
Cormorant Books
1994)

asks and answers
"Do you know what the actress said
to the bishop who was wearing a surplice
and swinging his incense vessel?
Love your dress, darling,
but your purse is on fire."

Peter Quartermain

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19. **sondheim**
(Forwarded) : Obj

Thu 28 Apr 1994

Forwarded message:

From: Self <ZEOS/SONDHEIM>

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: : Obj

Date: 27 Apr 94 20:17:49

I've read your paper, and wanted to comment particularly on the notion of "objects obduring" - it reminds me of my use of "obdurate" in my text; there is also a convergence of idea as well. One reason I continue to look at and write about painting (for example) is precisely this inertness which slows down or retards a flow of information which ultimately becomes a question of manageriality and "kill" files. A traditional painting is handcrafted; the "signature" of the body is everywhere present upon it, as is the signifier of labor. This is an insistence on alterity (I think in the sense of Levinas) that's extremely important. I get tired of "cyber" and "surfing" modes which imply a fast skim-and-response to ideas.

I'm sending along a piece I wrote which you may or may not want to post; it's for you in any case.

ALan

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20. **Charles Bernstein**

Alan Sondheim's "The Start of It All" (forwarded)

Thu 28 Apr 1994

From: IN%"██████████" 27-APR-1994 20:22:02.02 Subj: : Obj

THE START OF IT ALL

Back home, I would think about altarity. But now, wandering in a hermeneutic circle would never square with me...

I'm sitting down to write; I have a reed in my hand, and the sand is spread out before me. The river in the distance has overflowed its banks, and is just now receding. There is a banquet nearby; I will go there shortly, and regale the guests with tales about carpenters and chariot-makers. In this manner, I will earn my keep. Before going out, I make sure it is night; even the stars have their master, and everything is fixed, absolute, and in place forever.

At the banquet, I discourse freely to everyone who will listen. Some charming dancers entertain the guests, a few of whom are members of the Resistance. There is fighting right now outside Jena and the avenues are tense; I can see the imminent victory of the Prussian state, a natural trajectory of the dialectic, beginning with my doubting everything, an occasion for eschatological desire. An abyss opens up beside me; within it, annihilation itself seems to seethe, and there is no end to the affairs of men and women. The ideal state to come will have no poets and no philosophers, something I conclusively demonstrate with all the power of the geometric. Since I am a misfit, I elevate myself to the top of the mountain where red flames dominate the landscape; there are those who dominate and those who are controlled by my subaltern ego. But I reject every pretense, and wear nothing but a barrel; let those who dare to look, do so. (Need I add it would be queerer to gaze?)

>From this vantage point, next to a peasant hut in the Black Forest where men and women are suddenly thrown, I see a red patch, unidentifiable, but offering every attribute I am considering before me. The patch is surely the same in all possible worlds, where it possesses the characteristic of a fact or picture, a rigid designator articulating the armature of an over-privileged semantics. I may or may not refer to 'it.' If I become the red patch, it is beneath the sign of capital; capital flows from my pores, flows everywhere. I

dissolve slowly into transparency, a simulacrum of my former self, and continue to write on a simulacrum-computer, filling all conceivable data-bases with useless Turing machines; I transform myself into a body-without-organs in the terminal stages: constipation, corpulence, power and madness. This is the dreaded 'death of the author' signified in each and every postcard, where letters 'go to the drugstore' of the obsessive-compulsive. The red patch illuminates the desk I am writing upon, as the final apocalyptic conflagration envisions itself from a distance. All I can do is raise my fist as Europe shudders, corpse-like, beneath its sullen masters.

My clenched fist in the air is helpless against the stone I continue to push up the mountain, which seems slightly absurd, even if transcendent and rather egotistical. The mathematization of the granite, rather concrete, results in almost perfect lines of flight across it; these coalesce with the identical categories available to the Beaver, who waits for me with Pierre at the cafe shortly after the symposium has come to an end. No good ever flows from this, the death of Helene on the way to the final construction of a purified and scientific political economy, something I can live with, having roamed the streets of Manchester, in order to bring the philosophical down to the level of material praxis and avoiding any further reification. What an imaginary!

The red patch over my eyes is painful; I am hobbled, resorting to the aphoristic crutch in order to convey my dislike of princes and the press. The uncanny power of women contaminates every line I add to the others; it is only through the telephone and its interminable existential dial-up, that I continue to turn a deaf ear to the world and its discourse-networks, harboring the unequivocal testimony of sight. Everywhere, sight leaves its traces; the punctured hymen of the Beaver provides a final word, projecting from her hole into a freedom always already structured by its opposite. Double lips shudder, reducing me to an imaginary penis, uncapped head indicative of the non-believing Jew exiled from the habitus of the Amsterdam synagogue. Men always do this, and this is what makes them men. I realize that if men are analytic, women are synthetic; the Beaver says it's the other way around. (My statement has never been spoken by a body.)

What makes them men is a purified techne as well, something I would respond to if questioned. Every question demands an answer, but not every answer demands a question, which is ineffable, written on this book of sand that shoots out from under me every twelve or so hours. But I am of the technological, the episteme of instrumental reason, not remote or disembodied in an ideal world inhabited by the elements crowned with the Concept of the Idea. Outside the window there is a tree of a particular color which the Navajo see; I can never take in each of its leaves on an individuated basis, just as I can never count the

pillars in the Pantheon. Better, however, is an act of exile which is reconstruction, always reversible, except for the brute facticity of death, to which I am hardly partial, being somewhat super. Now I am gathering speed, becoming incandescent; fragments and seminars course through my veins close to the speed of light, competing among themselves, completing the torn fabric of the real (always the scenario of suture), mumbling through those same veiled lips that sealed my internal-time consciousness about ten minutes ago.

I am lost in the ipseity of my freedom, confused about beings (there are so many of them) and Being confused. The eidetic reduction is a diminution of the obverse; I drink less and less natural kinds as hypereality transforms null into cipher, leaving me with 'a smaller glass' of tea. The inverse of the glass is neither opaque nor convex; a node within the grid of doxa cathects every drop spilled from the fluid mechanics of the feminine. The result? More rigid designators and more masquerades: the mimetic indeed!

And what is the real if not a game constructed out of the consensual sublime? What is the sublime if not a differend inverted by silence (that makes all the difference in the world, being less noisy!)? The sublime is always silent? Sound is the institutionalization of capital, the rigidity of the script fixed in a prioritization of the written over the purely oral and its stages. Each question eliminates itself; speech is an act of excretion. The cave is silent, too, where men and women watch. (Speech is always four-fold; no one has time for that.) In the corner of the cave is perhaps a snake; it may also be a rod, or rod(ent), whatever is relevant at the moment, whatever might or might not bite. The id has the face of Medusa, an alterity defining an essence or existing seeping away, the result of insomnia, difficulties of health. I write this in the sand until my head is cut off.



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21. **sondheim**

Sending out again...

Fri 29 Apr 1994

THE START OF IT ALL

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is the institutionalization of capital, the rigidity of the script fixed in a prioritization of the written over the purely oral and its stages. Each question eliminates itself; speech is an act of excretion. The cave is silent, too, where men and women watch. (Speech is always four-fold; no one has time for that.) In the corner of the cave is perhaps a snake; it may also be a rod, or rod(ent), whatever is relevant at the moment, whatever might or might not bite. The id has the face of Medusa, an alterity defining an essence or existing seeping away, the result of insomnia, difficulties of health. I write this in the sand until my head is cut off.



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22. **sondheim**

Return from Mistaken Address

Fri 29 Apr 1994

THE STORY OF HORROR WHICH DID NOT HAPPEN TO ME AND IS NOT A STORY

I never had any feeling; ice went up my ass. Everything was dull and frozen. Packed in without feeling. A grey horizon of light. Iron spears of pressure-dependent pain. I was immobile. My eyes felt iced shut. Soaked. The chill is unbearable. I have no number. My blood freezes as my skin bleeds. Nameless. A rotunda.

They turn me over. Flesh cracks; there's blood something transparent on the concrete. "On." Teeth are gone. I know my lip is split but I do not know "I." Oh told to write this you have it.

I am packed frozen between two women. They shove her breast in my mouth. I can't move. The body stashes its tremble. A convulsion. The cock grows of its own accord. I bend double. The women pack closer. One is thrown off and killed. Oh Clara the other one. She places her mouth on my eye. It moves. I have a tear on my skin. Eye screams with pain because it is moved.

My cock is hard. Oh Clara holds it, shoves it in. My back collapses and broken everywhere. It pierces me. Her cunt rings fire. It's of no use of use. Leans forward, braces. They tear her off me. They tear me in two. They put her on me. My back breaks in four places. They tear her off me.

Eye am warmed by ice Oh Clara. Oh Clara your breasts hard against me. Slab concrete buckles. We fall tight, her cunt sewn on cock, eye sewn on eye. Sutures everywhere. Leg leg.

Jagged ice everywhere, cut eye. I cannot rise. Oh Clara told to write this Oh Clara have it Oh Clara you have at it. Blood cracks from her mouth. She has no mouth, eye has no lid, open Clara cock. You cock I am dropped. My back breaks, Clara breaks. Cure this; cure this "on." A last sentence. What can I period. Clara drops. For they drop: drop us. For they cut: cut us. For they break: break us. Eye am open always. Sutured shut.

Eugen Kogan, THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF HELL, pp. 165-166: `Himmler was especially interested in methods of warming persons who had been severely chilled. In a number of series this was done by means of naked women, brought from Ravensbruck for the purpose. "Personally I believe," Himmler wrote Rascher, now promoted to SS captain, "these experiments may bring the best and most sustained results, but of course I may be mistaken." He was not mistaken. Rascher was able to report in detail how revived subjects practiced sexual intercourse at 86 to 90 degrees F. and that this proved to be the equivalent of a "hot bath." When placed between two naked women, the subjects did not recover as rapidly as with one woman. "I attribute this to the fact that in warming by means of one woman personal inhibitions are avoided and the woman clings very closely to the chilled person (cf. Curve 4).' From the blurb inside front cover: `THIS WAS *HELL* ON EARTH / They: *Injected innocent people with disease germs for the greater glory of German ... Made lamp shades from human skin ... Revived frozen men by the use of naked women ... Utilized the body fats of millions for the German war effort ... Put to death more people than any other tyranny in the history of the world ...*'

I do not tell a story. I do not cling to the truth. I do not cling to anything. My skin falls from my bones. I am an electric galaxy. I do not have to live here. I am told: You can go and live wherever you want and it will be okay. I am told: Nothing happened because this is not a story. I cannot help clinging. I am hopeless, having no hope for myself. What would that be like. I do not understand this woman wanting this desire. I have lied to you from the beginning.

Do you want to tell something, to tell the truth. There is no truth, there is nothing.

You transform into dialog, into dialogic; you turn, turn away from me. Oh Clara nothing happened. Do not read the signs!

The signs are there to be read. Or there are no signs, only marks. There are marks made by nails into floors, marks splintering flesh; there are marks but no eyes

There are eyes nothing to read, no marks nothing, you do not know this nothing or imagined or dream torn from its moorings

There are no marks be quiet >>>>Yes be quiet

"It is a description of the closest thing to hell in human history." --Reinhold Niebuhr

I AM FULL OF HOLES

for clara

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23. **Robert Creeley**

Beatnik Bliss

Fri 29 Apr 1994

Late Breaking News!!!

Wednesdays at 4
is o'er--

BUT

Wednesday, May 4th
at 7:30 (dig it)

at the CPG
will be

Teducation's

TED JOANS

fresh from Parisian Haunts
and African Big Changes...

You all come, you hear?
Help keep the beat

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24. **Michael Metzger**

Re: Beatnik Bliss

Sat 30 Apr 1994

OK, what's the CPG??

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25. **Charles Bernstein**

Re: Beatnik Bliss

Sat 30 Apr 1994

| 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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26. **Robert Creeley**
Beatnik Bliss & CP Geebies

Sat 30 Apr 1994

If I had the wings
of a chicken
to the great CPG
I would fly

and sit right up front there
and listen
to all that great shit
flying by...

You all come, folks.
Listen to your Uncle Charlie!
You hear?

.....

OH

You can't get hear from there, man,
You can't get hair from a chair, man.

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