

@poetics

The UB Poetics Discussion Group

Archive of Electronic Correspondence **October 1994**

96 messages · Wed 12 Oct 1994 – Mon 31 Oct 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

October brings the world to the very edge of the room and no further. Aristide is flown home to Port-au-Prince behind a wall of American soldiers, the midterms gather like weather, and the list — which can see all of it — elects instead to spend the month at war over a single adjective. I would call this perverse if I did not find it, on reflection, the most honest thing about them.

The adjective is *“experimental,”* and the fighting starts when Michael Boughn pulls a thread he plainly suspects will unravel the whole garment, asking whether anyone can explain what the concept even means. He offers to trade it in — *“Innovative, maybe,”* he proposes — and within a day some sixty messages are pouring through the wire under headers that mutate from *“experiwhat?”* to *“absurd category”* to *“Failed Experiments.”*

Jorge Guitart supplies the season's best joke, noting that *“experimental drug testing is legal”* while its livelier cousin is not, and wondering whether experimenting with the lexicon might be actionable as well. Ron Silliman, with rather less patience for the exercise, brings the gavel down: *“The category IS absurd,”* he writes — of *“language”* poetry and *“mainstream”* alike — the emphatic capital his own.

What reads from outside as a squabble over a label is really the list interrogating its own name for itself — whether the word denotes a method, a marketing category, or merely a wish. The argument draws Alan Sondheim toward the medium, others toward Susan Howe's visual poetics and the plain question of who the audience is; but it circles always back to the word. This is the community taking its own temperature by the one instrument it trusts, which is language held under pressure.

By month's end the combatants have exhausted neither the subject nor themselves; the thread merely thins into November, unresolved, which is the only way an argument of this kind ever ends. I have set the letters in their true order, returned each correspondent's address and telephone to privacy, and left the fight intact. Posterity may decide whether they were quarrelling about poetry or about a word — my own suspicion, gently held, is that on this list there was never the slightest difference.

— K. M. F.

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1. Charles Watts

"Recovery of the Public World" (fwd)

Wed 12 Oct 1994

Forwarded message: Many thanks to all those who have responded to our call for proposals for papers/presentations at the conference in honour of Robin Blaser, "The Recovery of the Public World," to be held in Vancouver, B.C., June 1st to 4th, 1995. We have received several very interesting proposals since our call went out last summer and we are now circulating these proposals to the chairpersons of the panels.

Several people wrote to me indicating that they had a proposal in mind and would like to send it to us, but didn't have the time to meet our original September 30th deadline. We'd like to encourage those people and others who would like to participate in this conference, but who need more time to consider and draft something.

So, we have decided to extend the period during which we'll accept proposals for the conference to the end of November. If you've been thinking about sending us an idea for a presentation but time hasn't permitted you to draft one so far, please accept this announcement as a renewed invitation. We will be accepting proposals for presentations at the conference until November 30th, 1994.

Following is the announcement I sent last June 15th:

>

> ANNOUNCING "THE RECOVERY OF THE PUBLIC WORLD": a Conference in Honour of the

> Poetry and Poetics of Robin Blaser; to be held in Vancouver, B.C., Canada,

> June 1st to 4th, 1995.

>

> "Poets have repeatedly in this century turned philosophers, so

> to speak, in order to argue the value of poetry and its practice

> within the disturbed meanings of our time. These arguments are

> fascinating because they have everything to do with the poets' sense

> of reality in which imagery is entangled with thought. Often, they

> reflect Pound's sense of 'make it new' or the modernist notion that

> this century and its art are simultaneously the end of something and

> the beginning of something else, a new consciousness, and so forth.

> It is not one argument or another for or against tradition, nor is it

> the complex renewal of the imaginary which our arts witness, for, as I

> take it, the enlightened mind does not undervalue the imaginary, which

> is the most striking matter of these poetics; what is laid out before

> us finally is the fundamental struggle for the nature of the real.

- > And this, in my view, is a spiritual struggle, both philosophical and
- > poetic. Old spiritual forms, along with positivisms and materialisms,
- > which 'held' the real together have come loose. This is a cliché of
- > our recognitions and condition. But we need only look at the energy
- > of the struggle in philosophy and poetry to make it alive and central
- > to our private and public lives." (Robin Blaser, from "The Violets:
- > Charles Olson and Alfred North Whitehead," in LINE No. 2, Fall 1983)
- >
- > This conference will address many of the concerns voiced by Robin
- > Blaser's work in poetry and prose over nearly fifty years' writing,
- > teaching, speaking and living an evolving poetic thought. There will
- > be six panel sessions, each exploring a realm of this thought; there
- > will also be a seventh, convivial session which will give us an
- > opportunity to speak about companionship in poetry and poetics. And
- > there will be readings by poets participating in the conference.
- >
- > The panels, with possible topics for discussion:
- >
- > POETICS, THEORY AND PRACTICE: presentation & representation - self &
- > other - the play of absence - parataxis & hypotaxis - the serial poem
- > - dictation - the poem as field - the poem thinking - the poem as
- > argument - theory and practice of language - augury - the visionary &
- > the prophetic - the construction of modernity - mythopoiesis -
- > grammarology - logography
- >
- > PAINTING, MUSIC, SCULPTURE, POETRY: no break with tradition, but a
- > continuous gathering - continuous breakages and ruptures with
- > academicisms and canon-makings - field in painting, music, the plastic
- > arts - Rimbaud's 'dérèglement de tous les sens' - 'the painter of
- > modern life' - revolution of the word - Duchamp & poiesis -
- > l'avant-garde - Bach's belief &/in the era of Boulez and Cage
- >
- > HETEROLOGIES: 'religio', a 'tying back to' & vision vs. religiosity -
- > futurity as indeterminable vs a settled & expected transcendence -
- > dangerousness of the latter - rethinking the cosmos in the 19th
- > century (Poe, Emerson, Melville, Dickinson) - Blake & cosmos - 20th
- > century turns - "we are 'ventured' by language" - Olson, Whitehead -
- > science as thought & unthought (Einstein, Foucault) - 'scientific
- > angelism' (Girard) - Merleau-Ponty - Leibniz, Bach, probability,
- > monadology - Deleuze, 'the fold' - heterodoxies, heterologies (De
- > Certeau) - 'God, self, history, and book' (Taylor) - importance &
- > implications of cosmology/cosmogony as modes of poetic discourse in

- > relation to the contemporary dominance of philosophies of language &
- > psychoanalysis - muthos/logos - Plato & the preface to Plato & the
- > postface - the 'other' of philosophy & poetics
- >
- > ETHICS AND AESTHETICS: modern 'isms' and persons - self, other -
- > Hannah Arendt & the recovery of the public world - the scapegoat,
- > sacrifice of the other - Marx, Freud, materialisms, positivisms -
- > Foucault (madness & civilization, archaeologies of knowledge, the
- > public institution) - the postmodern condition - poet & ideology -
- > Benjamin, Adorno, Bloch, and others - outsiders (Hans Mayer) & 'the
- > practice of outside' - Nietzsche, the birth of tragedy, the gay
- > science - 'the fragility of goodness' (Nussbaum) - repression &
- > freedom - Hermes & the parasite (Serres) - the practice of everyday
- > life - (De Certeau) - nomadology - ethical poetics
- >
- > EROS AND POIESIS: desire & freedom - eros & agape - self, other -
- > homoeros, sexualities, 'heterodolities' - 'sodometries' - the
- > creative/the destructive, the prolific/the devouring - sexual politics
- > - the poetics of love
- >
- > TRANSLATION: 'De vulgari eloquentia' - Mallarme, 'correspondances' -
- > dictation - mimesis - imitation &/or carrying over - Pound - Nerval,
- > Duncan, Blaser - music the 'upper limit of speech'? - translation &
- > the sacred - 'originality'/'derivation' - 'quotation' - Octavio Paz -
- > before, during, and after Babel (George Steiner) - ethnopoetics,
- > culture studies, linguistics & translation
- >
- > COMPANIONS: breaking bread with - a feast of companionship - 'the
- > great companions: Pindar, Dante, Whitman, H.D., Duncan, Spicer, Olson,
- > Pound, Yeats et al - the everyday & miraculous affection - 'the truth
- > is laughter' - Boston, Berkeley, San Francisco, Vancouver -
- > teaching/learning - generousities of scholarship - order/strife & human
- > fulfillment - truth & life of myth
- >
- > The 'Companions' session will be celebrated as a feast.
- >
- > Obviously, the 'topics' outlined above have hardly the stability of
- > categories, and can easily, and relatively promiscuously, slip from
- > one session to another; "the map is not the territory," and conference
- > participants will find their own territories/unterspaces to speak
- > from. One very valuable guide is Robin Blaser's The Holy Forest, "a
- > collected poems, that is, as far as I've gone today, 6 May, 1993"

- > (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1993), available from Coach House, 50
- > Prince Arthur Avenue, Suite 107, Toronto, Canada M5R 1B5, and
- > from Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley CA
- > 94702, Fax [REDACTED].
- >
- > A CALL FOR PROPOSALS: "THE RECOVERY OF THE PUBLIC WORLD": A
- CONFERENCE
- > ON THE POETRY AND POETICS OF ROBIN BLASER, June 1st-4th, 1995,
- EMILY
- > CARR COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA.
- CRITICISM *
- > THEORY * BIOGRAPHY * LITERARY HISTORY * POETRY * WELCOME.
- PANELS AND
- > SEMINARS WILL BE HELD ON POETICS, THEORY AND PRACTICE *
- PAINTING,
- > MUSIC, SCULPTURE, POETRY * HETEROLOGIES * ETHICS AND
- AESTHETICS * EROS
- > AND POIESIS * TRANSLATION * COMPANIONS.
- >
- > Please send two copies of a 500 word (more or less) proposal by 30
- November
- > 1994 to "Toward the Recovery of the Public World," c/o The Institute
- > for the Humanities, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. Canada V5A
- > 1S6
- >
- > Conference organizers are Ted Byrne, Tom Grieve, Tom McGauley, Miriam
- > Nichols and me, Charles Watts. For additional information about the
- > conference, please write to the Institute for the Humanities, or
- > telephone [REDACTED]; or fax [REDACTED]. My
- > e-mail address is [REDACTED]
- >

I hope this re-announcement will encourage you to consider attending this conference. We'd like to make a festival to celebrate Robin and his work in poetry and poetic thought; we'd also like it to celebrate the company of which Robin is, wholeheartedly, a part.

| *Charles Watts for the conference organizers.*

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2. Christopher Reiner *Parshchikov Book*

Thu 20 Oct 1994

Next month, Avec Books will publish the first English-language collection of Aleksei Parshchikov's poetry, translated by Michael Palmer, John High and Michael Molnar (with an introduction by Marjorie Perloff). The book, *_Blue Vitriol_*, will be available from Small Press Distribution, Inland Book Company, and other distributors. It's also available to members of Syntax Projects for the Arts at their usual 20% discount.

What follows is the text of the promotional sheet for the book.

New from Avec Books

*_Blue Vitriol_* by Alexei Parshchikov

Translated by Michael Palmer, John High and Michael Molnar with an introduction by Marjorie Perloff

Alexei Parshchikov is one of the most brilliant and accomplished Russian poets of his generation. But until now his voice has rarely been heard outside his native country. The publication of *_Blue Vitriol_* is the first opportunity for most English and American readers to experience the full force of his extraordinary talent. Born in 1954 in Olga Bay, near Vladstock, and trained as an agricultural scientist, Parshchikov combines a keen eye for the beauty of the rural landscape with an uncompromising view of the ruin wrought by chemical poisoning and industrial waste. His poetry has been compared to the work of the American beat poets, such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, but it evokes a world that is often bleaker and much more dangerous. In Parshchikov's world, the world of contemporary Russia, reclaiming beauty and inspiration will be a long and difficult process--a process that can only begin in the language of poetry.

"In an 1898 letter from St. Petersburg, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote that it was Russian things that would give him the names for his most tender 'devoutnesses.' Now, almost 100 years later, it would seem that it is not Russian things but Russian names--the fullness of these poems, here beautifully translated for us--that embody those devoutnesses that prolong close observation and sustain contemplative complexity. Alexei Parshchikov's detailed lingering in the world he perceives has given us the fullness of these poems. Their publication in this, his first American book, is an important occasion."--Lyn Hejninian, poet, essayist, and translator

"Alexei Parshchikov is undoubtedly the most exciting young Russian poet today. Through his first English-language collection of his work, American readers get

a glimpse of an imagination that soars freely and boldly through all times and places. Indeed, this book is the trace of a poetic road that, in Parshchikov's words, 'is the place for finding your way while timeUs wind unwinds you and sets you against the flow.'"--Andrew Wachtel, professor of Slavic Studies, Northwestern University

Size/Binding: 7 x 8-1/2; 64 pages; perfect bound. Price: \$9.50;

Publication Date: November 9, 1994. ISBN: 1-880713-02-0.

LCCN:93-71880.

Avec Books are published by Syntax Projects for the Arts, a non-profit, member-supported organization dedicated to publishing innovative poetry and fiction from international artists for an international audience. The organization also publishes the literary journal Avec.

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3. **Charles Bernstein**

Listings

Fri 21 Oct 1994

Would those of you on the list, who have not done so recently, please post information about books and magazines that you edit or publish, including complete back lists (which we then also can make available through the EPC gopher) and information on ordering (be sure to include prices and addresses of publishers or distributor). I would also be interested in posts listing most recent or forthcoming books by those on the list as well as lists of recent works (poems or essays) that have appeared in magazines (together with information on how to get these books and magazines).

Thanks.

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4. **Robert A Harrison**

Re> Listings

Fri 21 Oct 1994

Croton Bug #3 is now available.

Croton Bug #3 includes work from Jackson Mac Low, Ron Silliman, Juliana Spahr, Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds, Clemente Padin, Bruce Andrews, Chris Custer, Richard Kostelanetz, Bob Harrison, John M. Bennett, Geof Huth, John Byrum, Jake Berry, Franz Kamin, Eva Festa, MASSA, Paul Dutton, George Kalamaras, Gill Ott, Kimberly Lyons, George Quasha, Jeff Poniewaz, Rafael Courtoisie, Peter Inman, Spencer Selby and others.

Croton Bug #2 is still available.

Croton Bug #2 includes work from Jackson Mac Low, Juan Felipe Herrera, Anne Tardos, Anne Kingsbury, Charles Stein, Hannah Weiner, Antler, Clemente Padin, Richard Kostelanetz, Franz Kamin, Eileen Myles, M. Kettner, Karl Young, and others.

Xeroxes of Croton Bug #1 are available.

Croton Bug #1 includes work from Clark Coolidge, Bob Harrison, Jesse Glass, Elsa Von Freytag-Loringhoven, Karl Garton, Skip Fox, and others.

All issues, including Croton Bug #1, cost 8 dollars per copy.

Make checks out to Bob Harrison.

Send correspondence, checks, etc. to:

Bob Harrison
PO Box 11166
Milwaukee, WI 53211

My work has appeared recently in Big Allis, Situation, Mirage, Letterbox, Anthology of American Ideophonics, and Texture.

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5. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: Listings

Fri 21 Oct 1994

Now I'm picking up the books of Chax Press, which are all around me, so I may list them. Let me start with the forthcoming, which will be available soon.

Margy Sloan, THE SAID LANDS, ISLANDS, AND PREMISES, should be available about the first of 1995, and will sell for \$11. It comprises several series poems: "Abeyance Series," "Rest," "The Said Lands, Islands, and Premises," "The Argument Needs and Shall Receive," "Infiltration," "Patience, Antithesis," and "Eccentricity of the Middle Ground."

Myung Mi Kim, THE BOUNTY, available late spring 1995, \$12. Three long poems, "Primer," "Anna O Addendum," and "The Bounty."

And now, the blacklist, beginning with the most recent.

Kathleen Fraser, when new time folds up, \$11.

Norman Fischer, PRECISELY THE POINT BEING MADE (collaborative publication

with O Books, \$10.

Beverly Dahlen, A READING 8 - 10, \$12.
Ron Silliman, DEMO TO INK, \$11.
Sheila E. Murphy, TETH, \$9.
Karen Mac Cormack, QUIRKS & QUILLETS, \$8.
Eli Goldblatt, SESSIONS 1 - 62, \$9.
Larry Evers & Felipe S. Molina, eds., WO'I BWIKAM/COYOTE SONGS from the
Yaqui Bow Leaders' Society, \$8.
Charles Alexander, HOPEFUL BUILDINGS, \$9.95.
bp Nichol, ART FACTS: A BOOK OF CONTEXTS, \$15.

Also available from Chax Press:

Charles Alexander, arc of light/dark matter (pub. Segue Books), \$8.

I have not listed the several letterpress hand printed and bound books in many formats, including multiple folds, sleeve-page bindings, codex books, etc., which include books, most recently, by Rosmarie Waldrop, Nathaniel Tarn, and Nathaniel Mackey. Other books include works by Karl Young, Lyn Hejinian/Kit Robinson, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Jackson Mac Low, Anne Kingsbury, and more. These books are book arts editions which retail for anywhere from \$18 to \$125. Please let me know if you want to know more about them.

I'll try to make one more very small letterpress book before the year is gone, and a longer one is in the works by Tom Mandel, but it's unclear right now if it will come out as a publication by Chax Press or by Minnesota Center for Book Arts.

All Chax Press books are available from Chax Press, P.O. Box 19178, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55419-0178. The phone number is [REDACTED] (but no one is ever here, so leave a message or call Charles Alexander in the daytime at Minnesota Center for Book Arts, [REDACTED]). The fax number is also [REDACTED].

Thanks for reading all of this.

Charles Alexander

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6. **Mark Wallace**

Texture Press

Sat 22 Oct 1994

Texture Press in Norman, Oklahoma continues to publish chapbooks by new and emerging experimental poets.

Authors include Ed Foster, Peter Ganick, many others.

Most recent title: Every Day Is Most Of My Time, by Mark Wallace (\$6)

For more information, write to:

Susan Smith Nash
Texture Press
3760 Cedar Ridge Dr.
Norman, OK 73072-4621

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7. **Joel Kuszai** **Meow Press**

Sat 22 Oct 1994

Meow Press was established in August of 1993 as a response to the New Cost festival and also the rapid proliferation of electronic publishing. In the case of the former, there is the hope that by getting involved it might be possible to reopen the anthologizing-closure process set in motion by that fateful gathering; that it might be possible to exist in a state where the printing of a book of poems might be - in the tradition of printer-poets such as Lyn Hejinian - an extension of one's own activity of writing. In the case of the latter, the romance of making books by hand that utilized the hot carbon transfer process as ultimately temporal ephemera, yet palpable physical without too much nostalgia for the Book. An obsessive typography startup kit.

1st Season: 1993-1994

Michael Basinski, Cnyttan
Benjamin Friedlander, Anterior Future
Bill Tuttle, Epistolary Poems
Elizabeth Robinson, Iemanje
Pierre Joris, Winnetou Old
Leslie Scalapino, The Line
George Albon, King

Strike-Shortened 2nd Season: 1994

Rachel Tzvia Back, Litany
Robert Fitterman, Metropolis
Bishop Morda, SDDDRTT-123
Ben Friedlander, Knot
Mark Johnson, Three Bad Wishes

Next Season: 1995

Andrews, Bernstein, Sherry, Technology/Art: 20 Brief Proposals
Misko Suvakovic, Pas Tout
Dubravka Djuric, Cosmopolitan Alphabet
James Sherry, Four For Ben
Danielle Collobert, Notebooks (tr. Norma Cole)

[still reading & accepting manuscripts for 1995 series--send correspondence to
██████████]

Meow Press books are distributed by Small Press Distribution, of Berkeley California. Please consult with your local SPD representative for further information.

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8. **Juliana Spahr** *information about the journal Chain*

Sun 23 Oct 1994

®TW50~Now available: Chain/1

Chain is a new journal that investigates language and its various frames. It includes poetry, prose, and visual work. This first issue explores its editor's apprehension about editing. It attempts to create a dialogic space through its investigation of the (im)possibility of an unmediated reception and the (im)possibility of detaching a writing from its presentational/ideological form.

Chain begins with a forum on how and why journals are created and in what ways questions of gender have informed those decisions. As such it investigates the implications behind making taste public and the manner in which taste presents itself in the public sphere. This section includes an interview between Dodie Bellamy (of *Mirage*) and Andrea Juno (of *Research*) on *Angry Women* and "sex positive" editing practices; Dubravka Djuric (of *Mental Space*) on editing in communist and post-communist societies; Heather Findlay (of *On Our Backs*) on collaborative editing; Susan Gevirtz (of *HOW(ever)*) reading editing as medical diagnosis; Holly Laird (of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*) on the difficulties and rewards of editing feminist journals in the academy as well as pieces from a number of small press and feminist editors.

Instead of a collection that claims over and over the ability of the editor to know and define, Chain is a journal that claims instead "this made itself and here is what it's made of; it is just

part of what continues." In order to facilitate a journal that could make itself, Chain used the model of the chain letter. A number of writers from the U.S., Canada, and England were asked to send a piece of writing to another writer. These writers responded by writing a poem and then sending both poems onto a third participant, and so forth. This section includes work by Abigail Child, Gail Scott, Norma Cole, Sianne Ngai, Kate Rushin, Fiona Templeton and others.

Chain/1
107 14th Street / Buffalo, New York 14213
edited by Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr
appears annually
\$7.95
6x9, 288 pages
issn: 1076-0520
isbn: 0-922668-12-4
publication date: October 1, 1994

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9. **Juliana Spahr** ***information about leave books***

Sun 23 Oct 1994

®TW50`L e a v e B o o k s
p.o. box 786 buffalo, ny 14213-0786

Edited by Kristin Prevallet, Pam Rehm, Juliana Spahr, Marta Werner, Charlotte Pressler, and Jennifer Karmin.

Since its inception in 1991, Leave Books has been a small co-operative press committed to printing works of poetry, essays on poetry, and prose that challenge the formal boundaries of writing.

If you are interested in receiving our books, please send a donation of \$20 for individuals / \$35 for institutions for the 1994 series of up to 15 books. Individual books and books from our backlist are available for \$4. Boxed sets of the entire run which are hand sewn and signed (when

available), are \$100. Checks should be addressed to the UB Foundation.

The following is a catalogue of our entire chap book series. * indicates recent books included in the 1994 series, mentioned above.

- * Will Alexander, Arcane Lavender Morals
- Bruce Andrews, Divestiture-E
- Michael Basinski, Moon Bok: petition,
invocation & homage
- J. Battaglia, Skin Problems
- Tom Beckett, Economies of Pure Expenditure:
Notebook
- * Guy Beining, Too Far to Hear
- Dodie Bellamy, Answer: from the Letters of
Mina Harker
- Julia Blumenreich, Artificial Memory
- * Laynie Browne, One Constellation
- Lee Ann Brown, Crush
- Elizabeth Burns, Letters to Elizabeth Bishop
- John Byrum, Interalia: Among Other Things
- Tina Darragh, adv. fan--10968 series
- * Sally Doyle, Under the Neath
- Peter Ganick, ...As Convenience
- Drew Gardener, The Cover
- Susan Gevirtz, Domino: point of entry
- Jefferson Hansen, gods to the elbows
- * Barbara Henning, (with drawings by Georgia Marsh)
The Passion of Signs
- Le Ann Jacobs, Varieties of Inflorescence
- Robert Kelly, Manifesto: For the Next New
York School
- * Lori Lubeski, Stamina
- * Kimberly Lyons, Rhyme the Lake
- * Kevin Magee, Tedium Drum, Part II
- Joyce Mansour, (translated by Serge Gavronsky),
Cris/Screams
- Gale Nelson, Little Red Pump
- Jena Osman, Pump
- Ann Pedone, The Bird Happened
- John Perlman, imperatives of address
- Nick Piombino, Two Essays

- * Kristin Prevallet, Perturbation, My Sister
Bin Ramke, Catalogue Raisonne
Stephen Ratcliff, Private
Pam Rehm, Pollux
- * Joan Retallack, Icarus fffffalling
Elizabeth Robinson, Nearings: two poems
Rena Rosenwasser, Unplace.Place
- * Joe Ross, Push
Susan Schultz, Another Childhood
Cathleen Shattuck, Three Queens
Susan Smith Nash, Grammar of the Margin Road
Juliana Spahr, nuclear
- * Cole Swensen, Walk
Joseph Torra, Domino Sessions
Bill Tuttle, Private Address
Keith Waldrop, The Balustrade
Mark Wallace, You Bring Your Whole Life
to the Material
Nena Zivancevic, I Was This War Reporter
in Egypt

Also available:

A Poetics of Criticism
edited by Juliana Spahr, Kristin Prevallet,
Pam Rehm, Mark Wallace

This collection, which presents the work of over forty-five poets and scholars from the United States and Canada, includes essays written as dialogues, essays composed of quotations, essays that merge the critical and the poetic. All of them explore the fluidities and possibilities within a poetics of criticism. Includes work by Leslie Scalapino, Jerome McGann, Elizabeth Willis, Dodie Bellamy and Will Alexander. (\$12.95, 315 pages.)

Complications From Standing In a Circle
by Mark Wallace

This book began as a search through the dictionary for words that the author would otherwise not have used. It includes twenty nine poems that are a restless exploration of the possibilities in "what is not usually noticed." (\$6.95, 68 pages.)

Wale; or the Corse
by Elena Rivera

This book was inspired by the author's reading of Melville's Moby Dick and Charles Olson's Call Me Ishmael. This is poetry that merges the harmonies of words with an emotional intensity that over takes the reader with "silent storms." (\$5.00, 33 pages.)

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10. **Sandra Braman** *art in the net*

Sun 23 Oct 1994

Last spring Charles Bernstein launched some conversation on the question of where art is in the net environment, where is outside . . . My response, as a poet/artist who has been looking for the last dozen years at macro-level effects of the use of new information technologies -- the net -- and their policy implications in my "professional" manifestation as an academic, is three-fold, and argues for reconceptualizing/reidentifying ourselves as artists in this qualitatively different period of social history. (The information society, or, alternatively, the postmodern condition, can accurately be said to have first begun emerging in the middle of the 19th century with the electrification of communications and consequent beginnings of globalization; we're now in a third stage, characterized by the harmonization of information systems with each other, across national borders, and with other types of social systems).

(1) Of the three ways of conceptualizing the information economy

- the economy works the way it always has, but the information industries sector of the economy has simply grown in relative importance
- the economy works the way it always has but that way is broken; the expansion of the economy through commodification of information not previously commodified, including that most personal and that most public, is simply forcing us to confront contradictions there have always been; and
- the economy is now working in a qualitatively different way in which the economy now is simply the content of the net (a la McLuhan's insight that the content of each medium is the medium that came before), harmonized information flows have replaced the market as the key coordinating mechanism of the economy, and cooperation and coordination are now as important as competition for economic survival (this also is sensitive to the expanded commodification of information)

the latter, called network economics, a discipline that is just now emerging, seems the most useful for analytical and organizational purposes. Within this

perspective, the role of artists as specializing in particular forms of information and material processing can be articulated and valued in ways not previously accessible. (Roberto Scazzieri helps us in this as he distinguishes between virtual and actual materials and processes....)

(2) Our understanding of causal relations, whether social-psychological and behavioral or critical, has been insistently linear, while theories of self-organizing systems offer us ways of understanding non-linear causal relations, and places a great value on seemingly trivial differences in conditions and on the development of alternatives (deviance), etc.. From this perspective, too, the particular strengths of poets and artists move to the center of our understanding of healthy social processes rather than being marginalized.

(3) Our understanding of the artist as deviant belongs to a geographically and historically specific period and place in human history. Across a much wider range of cultures and across a longer span of time, we much more commonly see models of artists as the central figures in societies, tying together the spiritual and the social through their working with the material.

A full paper articulating the role of the artist in the postmodern/information society condition (the former descriptor focuses on the cultural experience of qualitative social changes, the latter on the technological impetus to those changes) was the basis of a keynote address I recently gave at the Convergences conference on an arts and humanities policy for the net in Boston. Would be happy to send it along, snail or ASCII, to anyone who would care to read it in its entirety and would very much appreciate any comments.

I see that Bernstein et al. have 20 "proposals" to make on this subject. Wondering how it intersects/interacts/reacts with/to/from this approach. And any other response you on the poetics list may have.

Sandra Braman

Institute of Communications Research, U of Illinois



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11. **John Cayley**

CHINESE POET READING IN LONDON

Sun 23 Oct 1994

23/10/94

=== Announcement ===

Yang Lian reads at Poetry International, London

I assume that not many of you will be able to make it to London but you may nonetheless like to know that the contemporary Chinese poet, Yang Lian will be reading at 'Britain's largest poetry festival' at the South Bank Centre, Voice Box on 1 November 1994, 7.30 pm, as part of 'Poetry International'. Enquiries to the South Bank Box Office (0) [REDACTED].

To coincide with the reading, Europe's only publisher to specialize in literary translation from Chinese, The Wellsweep Press, will publish:

Non-Person Singular: selected poems of Yang Lian
translated by Brian Holton.

128 pp, parallel text, 21x13 cm

Paperback GBP 7.95 (US\$ 14.95) ISBN 0 948454 15 6

Hardback GBP 14.95 (US\$ 24.95) ISBN 0 948454 85 7

Yang Lian is one of the best-known of the so-called misty poets who came to prominence in China during the 1980s. His work, which has found rich sources at the margins of Chinese culture the south, the far west and Tibet and in ancient Chinese cultural forms such as his reading of The Book of Changes is wide-ranging, exploratory, linguistically rich and deeply rewarding.

Enquiries to Wellsweep Press: [REDACTED]
(complete catalogue also available by email)

Brief details now follow in HZ:

"Poetry International"

1 November 1994, 7:30 pm in the 'Voice Box'
South Bank Box Office (0) [REDACTED].

:

12821x13

7.95 (14.95) ISBN 0 948454 15 6

14.95 (24.95) ISBN 0 948454 85 7

Wellsweep Press : [REDACTED]
(email)

Wellsweep Press
Tel & Fax: 0 [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

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12. **Michael Boughn** ***experiwhat?***

Sun 23 Oct 1994

Can someone out there explain how the concept of "experiment" relates to the practice of poetry? My own understanding of "experiment" is that it specifically has to do with forms of thinking and practice associated with the accumulation of scientific knowledge, that is to say, the truth and falsity of theories and hypotheses. One forms an hypothesis based on generalizing from certain isolated empirical "facts", and then proceeds to test the "truth" or "falsity" of the hypothesis by submitting it to experimentation, i.e. looking for exceptions to the general rule.

Whatever it is we do as poets, I simply can't conceive of any way in which the concept of "experimentation" can meaningfully describe it. (Sorry, Mark, but it really bugs me when people talk about "experimental poetry".) Innovative, maybe, or exploratory, or even *weird poetry*, but never, never "experimental". I know I may sound a bit cranky, but since words are our lives, we ought to be careful with them, especially when discussing our own craft.

Mike Boughn


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13. **Alan Sondheim** ***Re: experiwhat?***

Sun 23 Oct 1994

I really have to agree with Mike's assessment. My video/writing/music/whatever gets called all too often "experimental," which implies first of all that it's not particularly well-founded; second, that I'm not sure or insecure of the results; third, that it's tentative; fourth, that it's associated somehow with all the other work "out there" called experimental; fifth, that there's no audience because there's no completed or standardized venues - I could go on. It's a dismissal, whether intended to be or not. It also puts too much emphasis on the medium - i.e. "experimental poetry" is therefore poetry instead of an opening; it actually reproduces the binary thinking of prose/poetry.

Alan

I have no books to list at all, except a few places I've appeared this fall - Uncontrollable Bodies (Bay Press, Stallings & Sappington)
Crash (Threadwaxing Space, Zummer)

Vulvamorphia (Lusitania, Lennox)
Transmog (zine, Ficus)
NWHQ (e-magazine, Fischer)
and will be probably editing a Lusitania volume on cybermind.

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14. **Jorge Guitart**
(no subject)

Sun 23 Oct 1994

experimental drug testing is legal, not so experimental drug taking

i know experimenting with syntax is legal, but
is experimenting with the lexicon legal? (i mean in the U.S.)

i would like to conduct an experiment to show that experimental poetry is not
poetry but i really think it is poetry except that i am an honest scientist so i will
try to show that the null hypothesis is true.

Any advice on how to proceed?

jorge guitart

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15. **Mn Center For Book Arts**
Re: experiwhat?

Sun 23 Oct 1994

A usage history is probably called for with regard to "experimental" as a
qualifier for poetry. But it would not surprise me to find out that it was actually
intended as a compliment, i.e. in a world in which poetry is devalued (as it has
been for at least a few centuries), to use a scientific term to describe the newest
work being done in the field may have been intended to elevate the work to the
level of science in some public's mind. Yes, it's inaccurate, and at this moment
in time it does seem dismissive, but has that always been so?

Innovative and exploratory have their down sides, too, don't you think?

charles alexander

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16. Alan Sondheim

Re: your mail

Sun 23 Oct 1994

This is a weird discussion because what is "poetry" , like what is "art" , is clearly problematic and moot; one could appeal to Wittgenstein's family of usages at best. Most of what I would consider poetry, for example, my downstairs neighbors wouldn't. The problem is otherwise - completely - that "experimental" has a negative or troubling effect even within poetics, and while not exclusionary, implies a ghettoization of language practices themselves. Further, this can have concrete implications in terms of economics or distribution as well.

Alan

On Sun, 23 Oct 1994, Jorge Guitart wrote:

experimental drug testing is legal, not so experimental drug taking

*i know experimenting with syntax is legal, but
is experimenting with the lexicon legal? (i mean in the U.S.)*

*i would like to conduct an experiment to show that experimental poetry is not
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Any advice on how to proceed?

jorge guitart

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17. Steven Howard Shoemaker

Re: experiwhat?

Sun 23 Oct 1994

Mike Bough writes:

>

- > Can someone out there explain how the concept of "experiment"
- > relates to the practice of poetry? My own understanding
- > of "experiment" is that it specifically has to do with forms of
- > thinking and practice associated with the accumulation of
- > scientific knowledge, that is to say, the truth and falsity of
- > theories and hypotheses. One forms an hypothesis based on
- > generalizing from certain isolated empirical "facts", and
- > then proceeds to test the "truth" or "falsity" of the hypothesis

> by submitting it to experimentation, i.e. looking for exceptions
> to the general rule.
>
> Whatever it is we do as poets, I simply can't conceive of any
> way in which the concept of "experimentation" can meaningfully
> describe it. (Sorry, Mark, but it really bugs me when people
> talk about "experimental poetry".) Innovative, maybe, or
> exploratory, or even *weird poetry*, but never, never
> "experimental". I know I may sound a bit cranky, but since words
> are our lives, we ought to be careful with them, especially when
> discussing our own craft.
>
> Mike Boughn
> [REDACTED]
>

I agree that the term is often problematic, but perhaps I can play devil's advocate a bit here. George Oppen, aware that he was going out on a limb, believed that poetry could be a "test of truth," or of "conviction." This belief connects to Oppen's sense that only certain things can be said within the bounds of the poem, and, as I understand it, that other statements will be shown in a false light. Now, I admit, this is a pretty grand claim for poetry, but it apparently had validity for Oppen as *a working principle*. I wonder if there isn't some use to be made of the idea that poetry can "test" the language in somewhat the same sense that science tests an hypothesis." As a corollary, one might go farther to suggest that the poem's formal demands invoke protocols or procedures that must be adhered to (different for every poem?) if the "experiment" is to be successful, just as the conscientious scientist must have impeccable lab technique.

steve shoemaker
[REDACTED]

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18. **Justin T McHale**

Re: experiwhat?

Sun 23 Oct 1994

On Sun, 23 Oct 1994, Michael Boughn wrote:

Can someone out there explain how the concept of "experiment" relates to the practice of poetry? My own understanding of "experiement" is that it specifically has to do forms of thinking and practice associated with the accumulation of scientific knowledge, that is to say, the truth and falsity of

I agree that what I call my poetic "experiments" have little to do with a scientific inquiry. Rather, I am using the other established meaning for "experiment" - viz "a method or procedure adopted without knowing how it will work." So when I name a poem an "experiment" it is usually because I am trying out a new kind of discourse, which I may or may not adopt in the future, depending on how the poem is received by readers for example. In this sense, the word, for me, is not especially problematic.

Justin

[illegible]

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19. **Louis Cabri** *experiperi*

Sun 23 Oct 1994

Re: experimental

Here's two quotes and a brief embedment for them:

John Cage's "experimental" suggests a practice that implicates relations external to the practice in the experiment:

The word *experimental* is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as an act the outcome of which is unknown.

Internally and externally, there is no "control subject" in the practice.

Walter Kaufmann's Nietzschean experimental evaluates philosophical and by extension poetic practices existentially -- in other terms evaluates a practice for its radical potential as social/textual agency:

[Philosophical] questions permitting of experiment are [...] those questions to which he [Nietzsche] can reply [...] Let us try it! Experimenting involves testing an answer by trying to live according to it.... Only problems that pres-

ent themselves so forcefully that they threaten the
thinker's present mode of life lead to philosophic
inquiries.

- Louis Cabri

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20. **Jorge Guitart**

experiwhich

Sun 23 Oct 1994

only surgery can be exploratory
only technique can be innovative
mike, that discussion you started, was that an experiment?

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21. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: experiwhat?

Sun 23 Oct 1994

But if a poem could "test" a language, this would imply, first, that there is a paradigmatic or otherwised notion of language, and second, that the poem could be falsifiable, vis-a-vis Popperian analysis. An experiment in science, if it is successful, produces results, which are generally a filtering of evidence in a logically well-defined manner. If poetry is to have value beyond the didactic, its strength is elsewhere.

Alan

On Sun, 23 Oct 1994, Steven Howard Shoemaker wrote:

Mike Bough writes:

Can someone out there explain how the concept of "experiment" relates to the practice of poetry? My own understanding of "experiement" is that it specifically has to do forms of thinking and practice associated with the accumulation of scientific knowledge, that is to say, the truth and falsity of theories and hypotheses. One forms an hypothesis based on generalizing from certain isolated empirical "facts", and then proceeds to test the "truth" or "falsity" of the hypotesis by submitting it to experimentation, i.e. looking for exceptions to the general rule.

Whatever it is we do as poets, I simply can't conceive of any way in which the concept of "experimentation" can meaningfully

describe it. (Sorry, Mark, but it really bugs me when people talk about "experimental poetry".) Innovative, maybe, or exploratory, or even *weird poetry*, but never, never "experimental". I know I may sound a bit cranky, but since words are our lives, we ought to be careful with them, especially when discussing our own craft.

Mike Boughn

I agree that the term is often problematic, but perhaps I can play devil's advocate a bit here. George Oppen, aware that he was going out on a limb, believed that poetry could be a "test of truth," or of "conviction." This belief connects to Oppen's sense that only certain things can be said within the bounds of the poem, and, as I understand it, that other statements will be shown in a false light. Now, I admit, this is a pretty grand claim for poetry, but it apparently had validity for Oppen as *a working principle*.

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steve shoemaker

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22. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Yes, but where's the axiomatics? & all those lines from George Trakl, exactly my point, Ihr Gebirge kuehl und blau! Ein reines Blau elsewhere, those opening lines trans. Firmage, Der Herbst des Einsamen, The Autumn of the Lonely One

The dark autumn enters with fruit and fullness,
The yellowed sheen of lovely summer days.
A pure blue flows from husks of moldered dullness [...]

Alan obsessed with blue bleu blau

On Mon, 24 Oct 1994, Roberts Mark wrote:

>

>

> poem in blue
>
> all poems are blue
>
>
>
> poem in yellow
>
> this poem is yellow
>
>
>
> poem in blue and yellow
>
> all poems are blue or yellow
>
>
>
>
>
>
>
>
> Mark Roberts
> SIS Liaison Officer
> Student Information & Systems Office Ph 02 [REDACTED]
> University of NSW Sydney Australia Fax 02 [REDACTED]
>

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23. **Roberts Mark**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

But if a poem could "test" a language, this would imply, first, that there is a paradigmatic or otherwised notion of language, and second, that the poem could be falsifiable, vis-a-vis Popperian analysis. An experiment in science, if it is successful, produces results, which are generally a filtering of evidence in a logically well-defined manner. If poetry is to have value beyond the didactic, its strength is elsewhere.

Alan

poem in blue

all poems are blue
poem in yellow
this poem is yellow
poem in blue and yellow
all poems are blue or yellow

Mark Roberts
SIS Liaison Officer
Student Information & Systems Office
University of NSW Sydney Australia

Ph 02 [REDACTED]
Fax 02 [REDACTED]

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24. **Michael Boughn**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

No, Jorge, I had absolutely no intention of being experimental when I posted the initial message. Provocative would be more accurate. Stirring up the shit, something like that. It seems to me that part of the problem, a problem the responses have to some extent embodied, is that we tend to operate within taxonomies whose terms are decided elsewhere and which we question only infrequently, and then to defend by some rather farfetched metaphorical extensions categories which make no sense. Take the absurd category of something called "language" poetry. Somebody explain to me what that means and what it's usefulness is outside of hand to hand combat with some other equally absurd category called "mainstream". You can, I suppose, argue that this is nit picking b.s. and respond with some charming poem which proposes to undermine the intellectualism of the question, but that position, i.e. that it doesn't matter how we think (what we say) about what it is that we do, seems pretty bankrupt to me.

Anyway, more anon. For now it's back to work.

Love to all,
Mike

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25. **Joe Amato**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

it seems pretty certain to me, on the one hand, that labelling a work of literature---poem, novel, what have you---as "experimental" does in fact classify

it de facto as directed to somewhat other than mainstream marketplace concerns... as such, i'd expect such a gesture to be at least slightly pejorative, depending on who's mouthing what... it's an attempt, in short, to classify an unconventional artifact...

the most interesting parallel that comes to my mind (groggy at the moment from a long, deep sleep in a chilly apt. under lots of blankets) is that of democracy, that most "noble" of experiments... the latter word is generally used in a distinctively positive sense when the speaker requires a connotation both of inclusiveness and (potential) disruption... that is, as a way of crediting the pioneering spirit of this mighty land of ours with going forth in the face of adversity blah blah blah...

now why "experimental poetry" (again, not always pejorative) should become a category through which marginalization is facilitated probably has much to do with the sorts of inversions we currently see at work in the tag "politically correct"... initially a tag used in jest by liberals, then a satirical barb aimed at liberals by conservatives, occasionally after (and now) a term adopted by some with straight face, and perhaps in the future and across the board a term used to denote a certain zeal in establishing moral propriety, this word classifies those who are presumably implicated in a debatable standard of behavior... now of course "politically correct" appeals to political realities, and implies something other than 'disruptive' insouciance... which is why i've chosen to gloss it (quickly) in the context of our, uhm, democratic experiment.. my aim being specifically to imply that "experimental poetry" is generally seen as "politically incorrect" (so to speak) given a backdrop which is, shall we say, less intent on "making it new" (a dubious proposition when applied by fiat) and more intent on "making it fit" (a dubious proposition when applied by fiat)....

apologies for the sandman scattered throughout... my aim has been to draw in the more properly ideological, by way of corresponding political realities... the conjunction is sloppy...

joe

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26. **Joe Amato**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

oh and a belated footnote: that "experimental" for some (whether used pejoratively or no) would seem to connote a measure of apolitical-ness simply reflects the bias toward a certain *way* of saying politics (or of saying no politics, as the case may be)... that is, the aesthetic is always implicated in

those networks of distribution alan refers to, and perhaps subject to the "network economics" analysis suggested in sandra's post...

joe

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27. **Sandra Braman**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

If we go back to the "techne" notion of art, making in all its senses, then the concept of experimentation applies as much to poetics as to engineering
Sandra Braman

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28. **Nick Lawrence**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Take the absurd category of something called "language" poetry. Somebody explain to me what that means and what it's usefulness is

Language Poetry (not to be confused w/ L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, "Language" poetry, & language poetry, among other designators) is an historically specific term designating the poetry written by Bruce Andrews in New York City, though not outside it, in the period extending from 1980 to 1983. Considerable controversy surrounds the exact placing of Language Poetry's inception after the demise of "language-oriented poetry" & its supersession by such movements as "social expressionism." See my article "'I Guess Work the Time Up': Periodizing Language Poetry within the Reagan Administration's First 100 Days," forthcoming in *_Poetics Yesterday_*, in which I argue that the usefulness of our taxonomic terms can only be realized by pressing their absurdity to some kind of limit. Anyone working on the category "metaphysical poetry" in this vein should contact me privately so we can share findings.

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29. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Alan Sondheim writes:

>

- > But if a poem could "test" a language, this would imply, first, that
- > there is a paradigmatic or otherwised notion of language, and second,
- > that the poem could be falsifiable, vis-a-vis Popperian analysis. An
- > experiment in science, if it is successful, produces results, which are
- > generally a filtering of evidence in a logically well-defined manner. If
- > poetry is to have value beyond the didactic, its strength is elsewhere.
- >
- > Alan

But perhaps an experiment in poetry could produce meaningful results, but according to different criteria, i.e. other than "a filtering of evidence in a logically well-defined manner." There is also the question of how true it is that that is what science does. How much "scientific" activity makes more sense as a language game, a discursive "testing" of images and metaphors?

Another angles: When i look at poetic development over time, say tracing a lineage i'm interested in, like that from Pound/Williams modernism to the Objectivists to the New Americans to the Language (or now, according to Charles, Innovative) Writers (And i am aware that every one of those labels is problematic, as is the notion of "lineage"--which wld surely have to accommodate as much rupture as continuity)--anyway, when i look at that development i see something like paradigm shifts in the Kuhnian sense.

steve shoemaker



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30. **Marc Nasdor**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Mike:

Categories of poets/poetry also serve a functional purpose--self-promotion. Remember strength in numbers? The building of communities? Assembly of like-minded individuals?

Problem is, such categories have a limited shelf life. In the long term, we're all on our own. Anyway, I recall Ron Silliman stating in *_The New Sentence_* that every poet finally has his/her own audience, so this would likely apply to groups as well.

The issue of "experimentals" versus "mainstreamers" is another issue, one I believe rooted in the behavior of a number of poetic "control freaks" who for decades have dominated the grant awards, fellowships, teaching jobs, etc. It's

still a really small pie, so it's no surprise that turf wars continue. The question is, does anybody care?

Marc Nasdor



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31. **Robert Kelly**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Stripped of all the prestiges of professionalism, it isn't a matter of "accumulation of scientific knowledge," but of _seeing what will happen if I do this_. For me, the image of the Experimental Poet (and I agree with MB that the term is not one to like) is not the scientist (mad or otherwise) but that Humble Demiurge, the child in front of the chemistry set. Seeing what happens next when we do this and then do that---that is experiment enough for me. And enough of a practice to justify such a word as experiment. Making new things is good enough a description. Rub two words together.

Best wishes,

Robert Kelly

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32. **Mark Wallace**

Call for Briefs

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Poetic Briefs is looking for short statements, essays, diatribes, confusions on the subject of Clark Coolidge's poetry. And we do mean short-- 1000 words is about the limit (and we prefer 'em shorter than that!)

Send them to:

Poetic Briefs
31 Parkwood St. #3
Albany, NY 12208

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33. **Mark Wallace**

Poetic Briefs #17

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Poetic Briefs #17 continues its ongoing conversation on such topics as

Language Poetry Bashing
The Prosody of Prose in Language Writing
Disjunctiveness and Poetry
Why Do Restricted Economies Exist?
Second Languages and the Poetry of Jorge Guitart
Subscriptions are \$10 for six issues.

Send to:

Poetic Briefs
31 Parkwood St. #3, Albany, NY 12208

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34. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

On Mon, 24 Oct 1994, Steven Howard Shoemaker wrote:

[my post deleted]

>

> But perhaps an experiment in poetry could produce meaningful results, but
> according to different criteria, i.e. other than "a filtering of evidence
> in a logically well-defined manner." There is also the question of how
> true it is that that is what science does. How much "scientific" activity
> makes more sense as a language game, a discursive "testing" of images and
> metaphors?

Of course an experiment in poetry would produce meaningful results - for example, computer poetry, or writing without the letter 'e' or trying a new style. I'd argue that every poem produces meaningful results. But this is different than the category of experimental poetry.

I guess this isn't the place for philosophy of science, but I believe in a core-theoretical approach, neo-platonic entities, etc. Scientific activity is definitely a game, as are research proposals/trajectories, but I'm separating that from experimentalism proper, or the hard-core mathematization at the heart of, say, string theory or fundamental particle physics.

If you do an experiment in poetry, you want the results to be desirable somewhere along the line, i.e. "does this work for you," "does this seem to mean anything," "what do you think of this poem?". (Couldn't decide on the punctuation there.) But this is different than a body of work with the label, which implies one is really just testing the waters. I think I would also argue that an experiment in poetry is not experimental

poetry - it's in the latter that I find the word "experiment" problematic. One could, for example, say to a sixth-grade class, "let's do a poetry experiment," and the students would probably understand.

>

> Another angles: When i look at poetic development over time, say tracing
> a lineage i'm interested in, like that from Pound/Williams modernism to
> the Objectivists to the New Americans to the Language (or now, according
> to Charles, Innovative) Writers (And i am aware that every one of those
> labels is problematic, as is the notion of "lineage"--which wld surely
> have to accommodate as much rupture as continuity)--anyway, when i look
> at that development i see something like paradigm shifts in the Kuhnian
> sense.

I've always had troubles with "paradigm," taking into account the criticism that it was used at least 27 different ways in the original book. Be that as it may, a think of "paradigm" vis-a-vis physics as a mostly fixed set of relations; I just don't see that in the history of poetry, which might be better interpreted along the lines of flows, nomadicisms, impediments, turbulence, etc. - a fluid/mechanical approach drawing from Irigaray and Deleuze-Guattari. Also the demographics are different wildly - during the Language Writers (etc.) period, most poets, I'd say 99% of them, were ignoring them. Styles have always proliferated wildly in the humanities, art historians notwithstanding, and I don't think there is ever a dominant one at any period.,

Alan

steve shoemaker

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35. **Tony Green**
Re: Call for Briefs

Mon 24 Oct 1994

Dear Mark,

I've been meaning to write about the book you gave me yonks ago in Buffalo, but However, 1000 on C.C. is a nice thot. I'll be setting up the drum-kit and bashing out the necessary.

Best, Tony

Tony Green,

e-mail: [REDACTED]

post: Dept of Art History,

University of Auckland,
Private Bag 92019,
Auckland, New Zealand
Fax: 64 9- [REDACTED]
Telephone: 64 9 [REDACTED] ext. 8981 or 7276

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36. **Joel Kuszai**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 24 Oct 1994

I've always liked the term "experimental," as opposed to the term "language centered" or language writing, or what-have- you, because - to follow Sandra Bramen's reference to *Techne*, which I get from Mary Heidegger, what is comes into existence revealing what it is. Anyone who would then rely on the experimental as a locating device would be hard-pressed to say that it meant anything except that they didn't know what they were doing. The "experiment" therefore for me is scientific and would demonstrate that one is attempting to do something without an awareness of the materials. The historical significance of language quote poetry is for real to me, insofar as the project there was a quite conscious and serious attempt to resist the normative functions of those materials. I don't see much experimenting there - either historically or in the present works by those people who were responsible for that episode in *American Letters*. But there was a resistance there which has been lost by the inheritors of those same "innovators" and what is disturbing to me is how those practices are grouped rather blandly under the rubric of experiment, as if such a term somehow validated the practice of giving up one's own relation to the production of texts. In other words, what is so often referred to as experiment falters insofar as it becomes an excuse to "inherit" the technical innovations of a previous revolutionary party. It was a good party, but the terms and requirements of the present age demand something better. The 4th and 5th generation language poets, rather than resisting the normative functions of language, instead invoke - as permissive - previous technical developments while constructing texts which rely on the empty authority of the experiment in order to cover-up for the lack of "meaning" or at least "intention". When I look at the poetry of some of my contemporaries, I often am surprised to see what looks like "auto-matic-drip" writing, a kind of poetry that seems to indicate a subconscious relation to meaning - and under the guise of "experiment" it always makes me laugh that people are willing to submit their texts to readers without having read them themselves. Experiment, then, would mean a lazy and subconscious drifting through the language environment.

When I see those experimenters coming at me down the street, I try to cross and walk on the opposite sidewalk. It always helps if they are carrying a sign.

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37. **Roberts Mark**
Overland

Mon 24 Oct 1994

From John= [REDACTED] Mon Oct 24 17:40:01 1994
Date: Mon, 24 Oct 1994 17:35:42 -0500 (EST)
From: John= [REDACTED]
Subject: re: Listings FORWARD
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Status: R

Overland, Australia's radical nationalist literary quarterly, continues to be edited by John McLaren and published with the assistance of VUT. The most recent issue was Spring 1994, and contained, as well as poetry, sotries and reviews, essays by Syd Harrex, Satendra Nandan, and McKenzie Wark, a photo-essay, 'The Masked Walkers of Prague', by Jiri Tibor NOvak, 'Song for an Exile' by Ouyang Yu, essays on writing for the theatre in Australia, a critical analysis of the culture industry by Donald Brook, and the first of John Herouvim's Overland Round Tables. Available for \$28 for twelve months from PO Box 14146, MMC, Melbourne Vic 3000. (US Subscription price is Aus60)

Mark Roberts
SIS Liaison Officer
Student Information & Systems Office
University of NSW Sydney Australia

Ph 02 [REDACTED]
Fax 02 [REDACTED]

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38. **Robert Drake**
Re: Listings, Burning Press

Tue 25 Oct 1994

BURNING PRESS is an eclectic sprawl of projects including TapRoot Reviews, artist books, audio tapes, a Poetry Hotline, and poetry magazines & chapbooks. Work ranges from "traditional" poetry to avant-garde, and scope ranges from the local to international. All publications can be ordered from Burning Press, PO Box 585, Lakewood OH 44107.

A selected list:

TAPROOT REVIEWS is a quarterly overview of out-of-the-mainstream publications literatures and other arts. Each issue features short blurb reviews of a wide variety of poetries, as well as longer feature articles on particular artists, publishers, or tendencies. The most recent, #5 includes 300 reviews, and features on avant-garde poetries from Russia and Argentina; books by Ivan Aguelles, Bill Luoma, and Nathaniel Mackey; recent translations from the French, and publishers Found Street and WhiteWall of Sound. \$2.50 issue/\$10.00 year.

TAPROOT REVEIWS ELECTRIC EDITION (TRee) reprints the short blurb-reviews (but not the feature articles) in electronic form. e-mail subscriptions are free from <[REDACTED]>, back issues are available at the Electronic Poetry Center.

*** we are currently accepting reviews for the next issue *** *** contact editor luigi-bob drake at the above address for info ***

chapbook/magazines:

ANALPHABET by Geof Huth (industrial Japanese binding) \$10.00

QUEEN OF CUPS by Amy Bracken Sparks \$5.00

MOUTH WATCH by Kristen Ban Tepper \$3.50

TapRoot #31/32--"SpiralRoot," co-edited w/ John M. Bennett

(rivet binding, 24 rotating "pages") \$10.00

NARCOTIC SIGNATURE by Thomas Wiloch (keyring binding) \$2.50

KYOO by Nico Vassilakis \$2.50

CLEVELAND SLAM BOOK by Amy Sparks, Michael Salinger, Kristen Ban Tepper & Ben Gulyas \$3.50

TapRoot #26--"Word/space" featuring Hannah Weiner, Jake Berry, John Byrum, & geof huth \$5.00

WAS AH by John M. Bennett \$3.50

INVISIBLE ARIA by Tom Beckett (embossed covers) \$3.50

TapRoot #22--"Colaborative Writing" 2.50

BABBALLY by Miekal And (multisection book, cassette tape, & 30x42" poster) \$15.00

FLOWERS OF MEL by Andrew Klimek (phonic transdaption of Baudelaire) \$3.50

forthcoming:

FRESH OIL, LOOSE GRAVEL by Major Ragain

TERMINAL by Mark Ezra

I, A SERIES... by Mark DuCharme

SWARMS OF FUGUE by Jake Berry

HELLISH HOURDES... by Fabio Doctorovich

audio tapes:

RECURRING IRRITATIONS DOCUMENT #1: sound poetry in performance
by Gary Barwin & Stuart Ross, and by John M. Bennett w/
Jime Wiese & Byron Smith \$5.00

OBLONG by Terry Durst (words & sculpture) w/ Dennis Maxfield
(guitar & sampler) \$5.00

HEADS/TALES by the BackYard Mechanix fr Language (Kristen
Ban Tepper & luigi-bob drake) \$3.50

CLEVELAND LANGUAGE (TapRoot #19/20) includes: Semiotic Liberation
Orchestra, Jordan Davis, Charlotte Pressler, luigi, Kristen
Ban Tepper, Terry Durst, Major Ragain, BackYard Mechanix,
Frank Green, Dan Thompson, Endangered Specie Trio, Tom
Mulready, & Joan Deveny \$5.00

TEXT/TEXTURE (TapRoot #5/6) includes Susan Frykbert, Pennie
Stasik, Kristen Ban Tepper, Costes Cassette, Elizabeth
Was, Tekst, Beth Learn, Charlotte Pressler, John M. Bennett,
Bob Ebersole, Miekal And, Paula Potocki, & Joan Devney. \$5.00

* * *

In the belief that "poetic community" extends to shared physical location as well as shared aesthetic, we also produce several projects w/ a specifically local focus. The _Cleveland Leaves_ series features poets from a variety of backgrounds, and intends to build bridges across factions and isolated sub-groups. The first 4 in the series:

BLACK EYED by Mary Weems
EYE OF THE STORM by Mykel D. Myles
ONE RING CIRCUS by Steve Melton
LIP SERVICE by Celeste McCarty

All _Cleveland Leaves_ chapbooks are 12 pages, \$1.50 + .50 postage.

We are also involved with an ongoing project to document local micro- press activity, covering northeast Ohio and spanning the last 30 years. The initial catalog of the archive included 1,000+ entries.

Finally, the IN-YR-EAR FREE POETRY HOTLINE provides another venue for local aural poetry. By calling [REDACTED], listeners can hear local poets reading their own poems--the recording changes every week or so.

luigi-bob drake, editor
TRR/Burning Press

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39. **Ron Silliman**

Re: absurd category

Tue 25 Oct 1994

You wrote:

Take the absurd category of something called "language"

>poetry. Somebody explain to me what that means and what it's

>usefulness is outside of hand to hand combat with some other

>equally absurd category called "mainstream".

The category IS absurd.

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

But the LP name was attached as a label to a number of poets after the Poetry Flash special issue on same (May of '79), where it was used by two of the authors, Steve Abbott, who was simply looking for a shorthand term, and Alan Soldofsky who was looking to denounce whatever it was that was new. So it was not unlike the Fauvists being called "beasts" or the "Beats" having been named by a newspaper columnist with very similar intentions to Soldofsky's.

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

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

Tinker Greene used to say "the only way to tell a language poet is that they deny being a language poet." I used to counter that with "anybody is an LP who

has been attacked as an LP" although admittedly even Jorie Graham has been attacked for her LP proclivities.

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

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

Terms that I heard used at Naropa for that nexus included:

The Christian Language Poets

The New Mysticism

The Buffalo Problem

The New Coasters

and a few others (I wrote them down as I heard them).

Whatever one thinks of the writing (my position is that some is interesting, some is not, just like everything else), they certainly have created a sense of collective unity as to make people want to join them into a noun phrase, whatever it might mean.

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

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

Ron Silliman

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40. **Marc Nasdor**

Re: experiwhat?

Tue 25 Oct 1994

As far as I'm concerned, writing "experimental" poetry means unhooking oneself from the annoying influence of some of one's contemporaries, namely those who would seek to recruit potential acolytes for a declared "project." The true experimenter is the writer who--like a number of "outsider artists" in the visual

arts--produce their work via their own "raw vision," but unlike the outsider artists, are not working in total critical and artistic isolation. What I hope such a writer would produce might be defined as something like *wisdom* if such an old-fashioned term may be used.

It might be interesting for people to give examples of writers who might fit the aforementioned definition. I can think of many who would fit: Oppen, Zukofsky, Stevens, Ashbery, Mayer, Wieners, Eigner, Notley, Raworth...

Well, it could be a long list, but those who I think would not fit my definition might comprise a much longer list.

Regards,

Marc Nasdor



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41. **Jorge Guitart**

EXPERIWHAT LVI

Tue 25 Oct 1994

the telling of gedanken experiments may or may not approximate poetry. i want the name experimental poetry for poems that approximate the telling of gedanken experiments that approximate poetry.

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42. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

Re: experiwhat?

Tue 25 Oct 1994

Excerpting from Alan Sondheim's post:

>

> I've always had troubles with "paradigm," taking into account the
> criticism that it was used at least 27 different ways in the original
> book. Be that as it may, a think of "paradigm" vis-a-vis physics as a
> mostly fixed set of relations; I just don't see that in the history of
> poetry, which might be better interpreted along the lines of flows,
> nomadicisms, impediments, turbulence, etc. - a fluid/mechanical approach
> drawing from Irigaray and Deleuze-Guattari. Also the demographics are
> different wildly - during the Language Writers (etc.) period, most poets,
> I'd say 99% of them, were ignoring them. Styles have always proliferated
> wildly in the humanities, art historians notwithstanding, and I don't
> think there is ever a dominant one at any period.

I'm not real happy with the term "paradigm" either. Certainly, in my proposed example we would be talking about something on smaller scale than say, the Copernican world view. The issue of to what a style can be "dominant" strikes me as a complex one. I continue to think that looking at development over time might be a good way to explore the (limits of) the analogy to science that the whole question of "experimentalism" makes unavoidable. I, for one, would like to hear more about you might apply those notions you mention-- "flows, nomadicisms, impediments, turbulence, etc"--to the problem.

steve

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43. **Alan Golding**
"Susan Howe's Visual Poetics"

Tue 25 Oct 1994

Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

Phone: [REDACTED]; e-mail: [REDACTED]

At the risk of introducing a mundane bibliographical note to the list's recent "business": for a paper on Susan Howe's visual poetics, I'm interested in critical/theoretical references on questions of page layout/use of page space (and not necessarily ones that make specific reference to Howe, though obviously that would be ideal). (I'm less interested in stuff on concrete poetry, the artist's book, and similar related-but-not-immediately-relevant-for-my-purposes phenomena.) Things I know of include Marjorie Perloff's *Radical Artifice*, Jerome McGann's *Black Riders*, much of the material in Frank and Sayre's book on the line, Rachel Blau DuPlessis' *Temblor* essay on Anne-Marie Albiach (thanks, Rachel, for that ref.)

PS: The notion of the "experimental" may be as much a question of literary sociology and literary history as of poetics, as I think Ron Silliman's posting (that first came out as "poeting") implies. But then for some years Ron has persuasively been making the argument that poetics may be as much a question of literary sociology as of poetics . . .

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44. **Patrick Phillips**
Re: experiwhat?

Tue 25 Oct 1994

"Experimental" poetry exists just prior to its own substantiation. In this it is kind of a pre-examination, pre-cultural, a pre-thought entity. However, just as you think this the quanta flees. In this moment of thought/flight there is a

mechanism heard, a mental, discursive "click" defying experiment - exposed is the the berm of the idea, the edge of the paper, the lip of the petri dish. This mechanism refutes experiment as a damned threshold of poetic action; damned because in that temporal instant, in that discursive click is the notion of a larger experiment - life - flooding in over edge of the paper. So, experimental poetry exists just after its own substantiation. I guess in experiment the tail is chased.

I am reminded of a story of the archetypal theoretical physicist, Wolfgang Pauli, of whom it was said that even his presence in the same town would make experiments go wrong. He said that two similar particles cannot exist in the same state....in an election year, it's hard to believe...

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45. **kathryne lindberg**

Re: "Susan Howe's Visual Poetics"

Tue 25 Oct 1994

Indeed, for a moment, try to separate poetics from sociology. Doing so would presumably put poetry or language in an ontologically prior position, back there before language, as it were? Perhaps one would less silly trying to separate (log)ology from the social?

Experimental usually means something like neo-, a concept which certainly relies on the pre=existence of something close enough for the new or experimental to be measured against, usually by those sociologically prepared or clued not to guffaw.

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46. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: experiwhat?

Wed 26 Oct 1994

On Tue, 25 Oct 1994, Steven Howard Shoemaker wrote:

>

> I'm not real happy with the term "paradigm" either. Certainly, in my
> proposed example we would be talking about something on smaller scale
> than say, the Copernican world view. The issue of to what
> a style can be "dominant" strikes me as a complex one. I continue to think
> that looking at development over time might be a good way to explore
> the (limits of) the analogy to science that the whole question of
> "experimentalism" makes unavoidable. I, for one, would like to hear
> more about you might apply those notions you mention-- "flows, nomadicisms,
> impediments, turbulence, etc"--to the problem.

>

> steve

>

I would think looking at poetries as discursive formations, style-flows rather than styles - bringing into play everything from gossip, rumor, seminar, book, poem, neighborhood, to letters, manifestos, critiques, those regions of writing that seem to articulate communality. And on another level (or the same) to see poetry as an embodiment or excess of the poet herself/himself, as momentary stases or irruptions in other discourses (which would also be discourses of the other - again, talking to someone else, discussing with someone else). I'm more comfortable with these notions, which are related to the aphoristic (i.e. fragmentation, accumulation), rather than well-defined "moments" - in spite of the fact that the latter is prevalent in cultural historiography - for example, the art history slide lecture. It's interesting that one of the most powerful cultural forces is the body of the poet, I think personally of Creeley, Mayer, early Saroyan, Coolidge, Notley, etc. not to mention Olson's breaths, Einzig, etc., how they play (themselves) out within the cultural, and of course Ginsberg, Byron, Brown, one could go on forever.

Alan

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47. **keith tuma**

"experimental"

Wed 26 Oct 1994

I'm grateful for the discussion of the use and abuse of "experimental," which seems to have raised this list from the dead. I'm with Ron Silliman on the absurd but real force of such labels, wanted or unwanted, tactical or not. I suspect that in common usage the term involves a claim towards "real" or "true" or "genuine" or "important" contemporaneity. Who was it that said that, try as we may, we have a hard time escaping Hegel?

While I am fascinated by the discussion of the appropriateness and the attendant anxieties of analogies with science and technology, I would also be interested in hearing from people who know something about the use of parallel or related labels outside of North America. What, for instance, is Hiromi Ito's work "called" in Japan? What conveniences, shorthand, or academic reductionisms describe work we might casually or sloppily call "experimental" in Germany, in Bolivia, in Ghana? This might begin to tell me something about the extent to which American or North American interests are underwriting or overdetermining the use, misuse, and confusion of the term "experimental" in the construction of taste here (US) and now.

Just a question then. Also, a citation, which may or may not be useful or entertaining, from Pound's "Prefatio Aut Cimicium Tumulus," circa 1932: "As for experiment: the claim is that without constant experiment literature dies. Experiment is ONE of the elements necessary to its life. Experiment aims at writing that will have a relation to the present analogous to the relation which past masterwork had to life of its time." Thus my own "claim" about "common usage" involving rhetorics of contemporaneity and the narrative or historiographical logics these imply.

--Keith Tuma

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48. **log hacker**

Re: "experimental"

Wed 26 Oct 1994

To take off in another direction, the study of labels themselves is pretty revealing . . . currently completing a study of the history of US constitutional law on labelling that reveals it to be a significant trigger of the hyperreal The information and the material object become decreasingly attached either referentially or physically; bureaucratic definitions of cultural experience clash with cultural/historic/traditional definitions (when is a sausage a sausage, after all?); and notions of facticity slip from referentiality to functionality to ephemerally utilitarian, becoming dispersed across space and only fractally determinable. Perhaps the same thing is happening with labels for poets?

Sandra Braman

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49. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: "experimental"

Wed 26 Oct 1994

As I am in the process of editing an international anthology of "experimental poetry" I have found the rubric quickly falls on apart. What cultural containment "experimental" proposes, must be quickly torn open once I venture into Ito Hiromi's poetry. "Experiment's" relationship to a "masterwork" is overshadowed by the effects of cultural hegemony which proposes a violent foil for the "pregnant and lactating body" that Ito writes. I suppose when Keith asks what is Ito's poetry called, he shouts across this masterwork/pregnant body breach, across post Meiji industrial expansion without really intending on asking what "experimental" is. I think his question appears more in the form of: How do you call Ito's poetry? Just How do you call Nina Ishkrenko's poetry, or to jump the gender breach, Hiriade Takashi's, or to jump back across the

Pacific, and into the US, how would "we" call Paul Beatty's poetry experimental?

The engagement of experiment as having to somehow exist within a relation to the masterwork shows the cultural fatigue of the term. My approach is simply to renegotiate the reason for experiment in language given the terms and historical conditions of the society in which it takes place. For example, the Swahili poetry being written in Tanzania is itself experimental by virtue of the fact that up until the Germans colonized Tanzania Swahili was only an oral language. This written poetry, though quite formally rigid, writes against and with both the tide of orality and of colonial history.

Thanks Keith.

Pat

as an etymological reach: experiment is derived from:

PER (pronounced PEER). Important derivatives are: fear, peril, experience, experiment, expert, pirate, empiric.

PER. To try, risk (< "to lead over," "press forward").

1. Lengthened grade *per-. FEAR, from Old English faer, danger, sudden calamity, from Germanic *feraz, danger.

2. Suffixed form *peri-tlo-. (PARLOUS), PERIL, from Latin periculum, periculum, trial, danger.

3. Suffixed form *per-yo-. EXPERIENCE, EXPERIMENT, EXPERT, from Latin experiri, to try, learn by trying

4. Suffixed form *per-ya. PIRATE; EMPIRIC, from Greek peira, trial, attempt.

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50. **FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH**

(no subject)

Wed 26 Oct 1994

dear Poetics,

After the longish "poem" below there are some "pages" of commentary-- which I'd love to discuss further if anyone's interested. Seems somehow related to experimatters-- would love to see other "readings" of this piece here, and a discussion on the question raised at the end. thanks!

Technopoetics '94: Present & Future Considerations of the Word <1.>

note the homunculus?

Maybe.

between the ampersand & questionmark

Footnotes: <1.> A continuation of a previous essay, "Takes a Lot of Voices to Sing a Millennial Song", *I Am a Child: Poetry After Bruce Andrews and Robert Duncan* (Buffalo: Tailspin, 1994). The subtitle is a passage excerpted from a preliminary encounter with David Kushner on SonicNet. Prepared specifically for a panel on "Technologies of Language" at the annual conference of the Popular Culture Association In The South and American Culture Association In The South, 23 October, 1994, Charlotte, NC. <2.> In the essay "Technology, Scholarship, and the Humanities: The Implications of Electronic Information", Vartan Gregorian discusses his concerns about the fragmentation of knowledge and how information technologies allow us to organize ourselves into too many separate, specialized communities: "What is being created is less like a village than an entity that reproduces the worst aspects of urban life: the ability to retreat into small communities of the like-minded, safe not only from unnecessary interactions with those whose ideas and attitudes are not like their own, but safe from having to relate our interests and results to other communities." (*Leonardo*, Vol. 27, No. 2, p. 131, 1994). <3.> This event was hosted by SonicNet, a dial-up network service in NYC. Various people were involved with the proceedings over the course of the evening and are the voices in the CYBERSLAM. Names given by the authors: Spiro (NYC), Bob Holman (NYC), Moderator SonicNet (NYC), Lo-Ki (NYC), Cyberbabe (London, UK), Veronica (NYC), Regie (NYC), Chris Funkhouser (Albany, NY), David Kushner (NYC), Lori (LA), Robert Molochon (NYC), Blue Water (NYC), Harry Goldstein (NYC), Janis (El Paso, TX), Crow (Cambridge, MA), Skaska (NYC), Doug Cooper (NYC). Initials indicating which author wrote which lines has been removed from the text presented here, though the identifications do exist in other versions of this transcript. <4.> For readers unfamiliar with the concept of a poetry "slam", it is a recent incarnation of poetry founded in Chicago but popularized by the Nuyorican Poets' Cafe in Manhattan. The genre mainly thrives in nightclubs and rock'n'roll settings where authors read poems and are given scores by audience members. A poetry tournament might be another way to describe this type of event, were it not for the fact that typically audiences are generally quite interactive with the poets, often to the point of verbal aggression. <5.> "Congratulations. You Have Found/The Hidden Book.", *ALOUD: Voices From the Nuyrican Poets Cafe*, p. 1-2 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1994).

As textual fields expand to include cyberspace, there are various reasons why attention must be paid to what is written in the introduction to *Convivio: A Journal of Poetics* [Number One]: "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." As we continually face technology (television, automobiles and computers and

digital intermedia), the work, our actions, must be pluralized in order to maximize the potentials of technology and not let its presence contribute to further social fragmentation.<2.>

The text which follows was excerpted from an October 10, 1994 application of mutual composition technology, created through home computers and a dialup network. Regardless of its qualities as a piece of art, such a text is essentially something more than a piece of writing (though it was composed on keyboards), or a book (though it is preserved by computer disc). As literature begins to blend with other forms and other media, new forms and types of collaboration emerge:

Live from NYC's Lower East Side
NUYO RECORDS' GRAND SLAM -
POETRY AS BLOODSPORT!!!! <3.>

Join the national slam champions and host
Bob Holman of the legendary Nuyorican Poets' Cafe
for the galaxy's first CYBERSLAM.<4.>

Press Any Key

Before entering this conference room you should know a few things...

1: When you first enter your presence will be announced to everyone in the room. DO NOT TYPE ANYTHING when you enter the conference room, just wait and watch to see who is talking and what is being discussed.

2: Understand that what you type on your screen only appears to everyone else when you press Enter to `send' it. This means you can use backspace and delete to correct things, but it also means that people may be WAITING to see what you are typing. To avoid long waits, interruptions, and confusion, type like this:

Type short bits...
end in "dot dot dot" ...
press "Enter" every few words...
and when done...
end with...
your initials, like this. DN

3. Wait until the person before you has entered their initials before you hit "Enter".

This will allow us to all .. to see & read each other..

Also the following commands may be useful:

/q Quit - leave the conference room
/w Who's online
/s Send a private message see /help for details

ANYTHING YOU TYPE WHICH IS NOT PREFACED WITH A FORWARD SLASH CHARACTER (/) WILL BE DISPLAYED TO ALL OTHER USERS IN CONFERENCE WITH YOU! For this reason, TYPE CAREFULLY!

Enjoy the conference...

Angel! I aimest at the site of love, a crown of born, a shift
to lift. Ala the boom!
boomalay boo m'lay BOOM
is a young poets deity defining the words of sound to mouth to ear to
cyberspace
Bloodsport is an excellent adjectivory on an anti-columbus day
No, there is a world of living world of living in the
livingroom
Stereo?
what sound
rocket a racket
finger chickkle chickle
Airy aereo.
Ticket the pocket of sound.

Who's winning?
Files are denial
walk a mile to a truckstop subway blues tune
tella Bit Jack and Mega Bit jill
Glub glub the view from down here is blue
telephoney congress on capital hill
telea prompt start me
make a simple man beg..
tella phone send me
for a cup o' tea
(tela com heare me
with a pot of
...
Da stars the sun work stations reaching for the....
Duckegg
Peking?
never, never...
Bejing

Duckeggs in the womb of my mother board
the third is a world that disturbs me

Come back dear heart of thread
Oh yes it is none to heither for me either.
Oh my breaking heart (o the melodrama)
A tangerine scene bakes the loaf
:::Asks same question:::
A lemon steals the show
Gone to Haiti, Matey
a t & t steals the show,...
Drain my teeth
of hell upon a branch of C

like a thief at a morrocan
market
Holy Jupiter
indian lit room
heart has been severed and munch up into chunks of liver for the
cats
Like a poet with a dictionary for a toothpick
I can't keep the space between my teeth

tastier
joining in...

like a dead duck down the drink
delicious, delicious

proverbs in progress

the madder magazine
If your parents..
could send messages back to themselves
|
Made you wear plaid...
They never truly ...
what's happening with yr video?
Loved you :)
ducks on the panelling
fortitude fibrulation
put your kilt back on,
cracked shell mauve plangent
longly distance blade runners
I've heard of a few.

The spineless kind?
a spire?
single frame buzz dump
Con-Spire
In spire
implosion diesel pram perambulating
miss placed frogs that hop in the snow
I stick
is
there any way i can send what i write back to myself
as it fits
in real time with the conversation?
the blockhead men in the Ocean of know
HEY EVERYONE...
|
TRY TO HAVE SOME ORDER.
jagged and figged stone faced and frigged huddled up bunched up
broken and twisted!!!!
NO ONE TALK...
LET'S SEE IF THIS WORKS...
OKAY...
REG IS UP...
goregiegoregiegoregiego
ARE YOU READY...
GET SET...
|
EVERYONE ELSE...
SHAD UP...
REGIE...
YOU'RE ON.
REGIE?
HMM...
love cycles: elevating the human experience in poetry is a pick-up
device
But when I get the guy I want
I always get new material
huh?
7.6
4?
who's judge?
.02!

too short. want more.
who's the jury?
love always gets a +.
aFFECTED
UPON ME
LIKE A SUN SPLASH
DAY
tHE WORD IS ELUSIVE
Feels like I should
REACH UP And choke the sky
Put the words back in my throat
but I realise
HEY, HOW BOUT SOME MEANING WITH THE FEELING
is that it?!!
while the storm dies You can't scream without a voice and even
I think that's the pot calling the kettle Blackman,
SOMEONE HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF MY KEYBOARD
If you could
Ma bell baby bell edipousrex teleos Anarcey spitting out text
Tella prompt start me tellaport send Me tella bit tell me Telephone
will me
tella man fear me TeleCom HEAR ME!!!!
Video one way
Who would listen?
yeah!
AWWW...
SCORES?
a 9.2 in my ahem new book
3
100,000,000+ on the "john lily scale"
||
9.2
Tell it to the porpoise, noise man
WHO'S NEXT?
OKAY, AN 8.5
um who's keepin score?
I AM
howzabout a pome
o
TAKIN' NAMES
Ohhhhh

nope I'm at Jupiter
CHICKEN NAMES

sink to the floor
thank you
ohhhh, so it is that
dogs sing in the bull pen
dog
dog
dog
rf-rf-rf

you no way! Tellen you two way tellen you my way Tella Bit
Jack and Mega bit Jill Tella phoney congerss on capital hill Tella
BYTE!!!!

Tella fangs of trust press against americas Neck
the rivers of anticipation suckle my inner bum-rumpus

nice last line blue.
8.456
rf-rf-rf
That was really doggy style.
I dug the dog. 8.8
me too
I dug the hole
i dug the sink

Tella lack of vision
What is this all mean rrfrrf
Tella Joysticks for tv

Tella leminges to the Sea
I have to go all my lungs re reversed, green is mean.
love handles on TV's, right next to the volume nob
Tella KidJunkies cant get free
nothing mean, promise, not at all...
Tella Gentic Chirdern caught in a Dead static RAIN>>>>>

I supersoniced from base control.
(how do you do pvt messages??)
Next poem?
anybody?

TYPE /S, THEN THE LINE NUMBER, A SPACE, AND A MESSAGE
ANY QUESTIONS? TYPE /H FOR HELP.

One Way of Looking at a Blackbird
That is no bird

Runs in to the wall and bounces back
That is a window
And a Tiny little brick.
reportage from the grim front
"the Heart the Heart REMEMBER the Dead Don't Share"
what about the avuncular driver's seat?
cuz we like like it loud here
ooooooooo
wants to hear water gurgle
FOR YOU...
NO ANSWERS ARE LIKE NO REVIEWS...
AND YOUR POEMS...
are like fish
naughty
IN A MOMENT OF EXQUISITE TENSION
Caught, smoked, and hooked
LIFE MAY LEAVE A STAIN
On the phone. sorry!
ON THE MOMENT...
NO EXCUSES...
WE'RE WAITING...
ARE YOU READY?
On the phone, be back in a minute. carry one.
AWW...
or two
TO BUSY?...
THIS LITTLE POET GOT SOLD!..
HOW ABOUT YOU LO KI?
THIS LITTLE POET THINKS HE'S A ROCKSTAR!.....
WHILE THAT POET OVER DERE
this short slug's gotten a bad rap
runs in the room and wacks you with a huge sausage! WACK!
GOT OLD
AND SICK
AND POOR
this is just as exclusive
THE DRAFT UPWIND CAN ONLY LEAVE IN IT'S WAKE
Sad roman a clef, s-man. Clues?
THE SHAFT
Shaesh
Ezra Pound?

so i scream what of it
oh, gefilte fish on corn bread
shinfat
shinfat
hi

X

X

toads trade children by the pond side
like greasy villians from some low grade
how about a poem?
Their it is
ok
buttered soy corners

THE END

ahem

is just the beginning

where's the guy from the Real World?

"The Dead Don't share through they reach toward us from the grave..

(and I Swear they Do!) They do not hand Us their Hearts they Hand

Us

their Heads the Part that Stairs.

Infinity Plus - topical, erratic, and genius!

Ras

binky shot hisself in da foot

feet of pork meat

with a shape

lumpy whitefish sandwich

kosher, pleeeez

OKAY, EVERYONE...

LET'S HAVE SOME QUIET...

This poem is called ART IN ARCHITECTURE

HE'S READY, I THINK...

<<<<<<<<<<@--triangular tumor

+OP Dart sneckle

dart sneckle im bis

Could
Frank Lloyd
Wright create
better structure
what lies

| between my
 lover and
 I is where
 the similar
 transcends
 the seven
 wonders of
 the world
 Twin Towers in white
 sheets how his slopes
 against my teeth- a mini
 skyscraper reating on muscle
 body rocks a |ted
 body rocks a cultivated
 landscape falling
 like babel

--69 six or nine

I wish it was longer.

I decided to keep it short and sweet!

Sometimes you've got to work with what you've got

it's like watching textual tv.

I just download Ripterm and installed and and i get a error about

i actually am gently fascinated by

Why do you want a Poem???

our fond feathered friends

of less means

than ordinary

fowl

you on the wrong planet

because we're slammin

tell me how to fix that index thing... and i will get you a cool

poem..

but we'll settle for a screenplay

I like this medieval barter system: poetry for online tech support

pardon us whilst we resolve technical difficultures

so do anybody use Ripterm?

i like this medieval feudal system

does

!

or is that Marxian dialectic?
Of course.

ducal dynasty dashes down
alliterative alluvial anality
a poem

Ucz(SvI-{] ./_CH-,=

&v1X/NJ\uNL<ct>xf>

lYG=

o]H`Z,[Nzp"):cGDBqXDp0"pV,UYC`x~_4{7r5|[p`4

consonative cacaphonous coddlywaddle

the wire

i sense terrible confusion

dissonant dastardly digital diddling

in your tea leaves

hi

mr minor majestic misfit or anomaly?

nekkid nacreous narcosis

scintillating psychotic cyborg

snarkle sniffer sneezes skank down toilet

loping leprachaun leaps litigious lollipop

oh, snuffer shall we speak of a live skull?

or a giant sand?

m?

A giant sand...

I am ageless.

be back

as the kite flies, then...

from the grain

dirty rags piled

candles burnin'

in the corner,

i don't know if i

can breathe tomorrow

can make it to tuesday

the sound always depends on the instrument blown

sibilance over radio hiss

that radio love that radio

simian ducks shave

invert the lines
whoever you ares...
to be a "real"

* * * *

In the Invocation to the recent anthology ALOUD: Voices From the Nuyorican Poets Cafe <5.>, co-editor Bob Holman writes, "This book dares to state the obvious--RAP IS POETRY--and its spoken essence is central to the popularization of poetry...Now all technology bows to the poem itself, the singular voice rising above the pabulum noise of a society filled with blandspeak, the political blahblah, commercial absurdwords..." A Rap style of poetry, which moves towards making language sound with its rhymes its flashy know-it-all attitude, clearly predominates our Cyberslam transcript. Much of this type of poetry deals with mutual and uncommon aspects of americana, what is happening in domesticated as well as street lives. As with any text, varying measures of gratification are possible as a result of the Cyberslam, depending on one's poetics predisposition. Critically, one might read this piece as falling into the large pool of an already available casual cheap-joke type of poetry which so much "successful" alternative verse has moved towards in recent years. The stylistic homogeneity of the Cyberslam is almost a surprise given that there were at least a dozen authors stretching across six thousand miles of hemisphere attending to the composition.

However, looking closely at the preceedings we can see elements such as concrete poetry emerging, anarchic enjambment and blatant interruption (poetic terrorism?), dada, improvisatory call and response and other derivative forms (such as humor) beneath the surface of a popular lyric form. These blends give something particular to the text, in addition to the fact that it is the first known occasion where poetry has been presented and composed by numerous authors spanning the globe in real time. Still, given the lack of a structural hierarchy and precedent, and its relative homogeneity, this writing remains unaffected by the technological apparatus, embodying more or less the same linguistic territory as the american english which pervades much of popular culture. Though there are certain points where conversation or randomness offer new dimensions, where two "poems" blend into one expanded, there remains a narrative of individuation where the scope and possibility of the poem remain contained by its simplified language and topical narrowness. As poetic purpose and usage of these mechanisms begin to take shape, future writings in this domain could be heightened by meaning and focus (following one course of aesthetic), or at least become more broadly informed by a span of conscientious poets and thinkers. Obviously, due to the newness of the technology and the numbers and varieties of people not yet hooked up with

digital/computer or network resources, there is still a great deal of progress to be made in coming to terms with the potentials of the machinery.

As a poetry "slam", it is difficult to imagine such competitions going over well in cyberspace until interactive audio and video terminals are available to all participants. In a face-to-face atmosphere, the speaker's voice is generally continuous in spite of jeers, though is generally not interrupted as song. On distanced screens we are unable to avoid disruption by textual terrorists able to inject to the conference language as an agency of chaos, without regard to the protocols of writing which flash on the screen before you enter the conference room. Such disruption is appropriate, perhaps, in many cases, but were it ever to be conceived of as an organized event, programmers would need to find way for the poet to instantly transport blocks of text from computer to network conferences. A few practice sessions for perspective writers might also help sharpen the dialog.

Of course, at the start we are told to "enjoy" the conference. Perhaps that is what we are left with: a poetry of momentary enjoyment. It is evident that we are now just starting to feel our way through the early stages of this process distantly clicking fingertips drumming typing the future. Without imposing penalty on disruptive participants (which I wouldn't suggest as an option, needless to say), the genre as we read it today will most benefit poetry's thrill and pleasure seekers and others who have the interest to indulge.

The for(u)m, as is, allows for too much physically and visually unstimulating "down" time on and, for the writer/reader in front of the screen. It possesses value as curiosity and underdeveloped experiment. Despite one writer's comment during the event about its nature as "textual tv", there are many strides to be made before poetry accesses itself to the mainstream from computer to computer. We definitely miss the "spoken essence" Holman refers to in conjunction with _ALoud_, as well as the buzz of the Cafe. It is evident that there are many limitations due to the software and underdeveloped audio/video network interfacing. For instance, in future writings which utilize this methodology, when there are two channels in such a setting, one for composition and one for subtextual dialog (discussions/speculations on the work), both reader and writer may be able to follow the cybernetic narrative without conversational disruption.

Among the important elements contained in this conception of "writing" that could effect paradigms of literary texts in the future are the rules under which patrons are encouraged to write. These restructure or censure the patterns of writing, keeping it short as the attention "span" (instant). Most writing in the Cyberslam follow this premise, which conceivably works well in a sound-bite world. Still, there is not enough visual stimulation to snare the average

attention at this stage. When graphics and sound dimensions become available, artists who are prepared can begin to create and experience mutual situations as a group despite physical separations.

While it is almost certain that nothing replaces the intimacy and warmth of localized inter/action and gathering, in a less than ideal world we are often driven elsewhere for contact and communion. There are scholars who believe that writing in electronic space, divulged from interpersonal contact, invites a more democratic and equilateral writing space than previously available. There are more options, varieties and interpretations of "space" and "writing" using methods accessible in the current historical and creative moments.

Which brings us to the question of whether or not there are political possibilities for the medium. It is likely we might begin to see the "Moderator" play an interesting roll during a projected ongoing poetic scroll or a people's history. At what point would we find our Moderators--looking in at every conversation--beginning to police content? When inventive and intellectual people begin to gather and compose in large numbers and discuss actions toward the creation of social justice and cultural equality through a knit of energy and vision, in cyberspace and elsewhere, what authorities might our Big Brother inform then? It is probably safe to say that while we may be invited to "Press Any Key", pressing what might be considered an improper combination of keys would most certainly lead to trouble for the author(s). Consequently, it may be discovered that there is no potential for social activism through this medium.

We are children in the technojungle beginning to weave floral vines within the poetics tree. There is an overt awareness of the evils of the media. With the Cyberslam there is only a mechanical move towards bridging the gap between poetry and technology. A question yet remains: what are we to do with the machines which are able to interactively process language, sound and visual aspects of expression?

--Chris Funkhouser



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51. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

Re: "experimental"

Thu 27 Oct 1994

At the risk of stating the obvious, it's interesting that this discussion of "experimental" poetry has 1)sought to define that term and its appropriate use, and 2)frequently shaded into a discussion of the nature & use of labels per se.

On that latter point, Pound, continually encouraging Zukofsky to foment some sort of "group action," goes so far as to write that one must have some sort of a "program," that even if the program isn't so hot in itself it will bring things to a head in a useful way. (Can't find the ref at the moment). He also makes some other interesting pronouncements on the "science of groups"--e.g. the point of a group is precisely to have some where to go when you don't want to have to advertise yourself (again, the ref eludes me at the moment).

Interesting that the academy is quite comfortable now with the Imagists and Vorticists (if not yet the Objectivists), but that sort of PR drew a lot of flak on the poetry scene of the day, in the little mags etc. (just like L=A=N=G gang more recently?). Pound was conscious of the that backlash and sometimes careful to make sure a given action/project wasn't seen as motivated by "gang feeling."

Of course labels and groups aren't necessarily the same thing either. Something like "experimental" is, of course, much broader than something like "Imagists" (but at the same time, that term often came to stand for the whole "free verse" avant-garde tendency of the day). And a group can be quite small and coherent or quite large & dispersed.

Well, i'm not sure where all this is heading. I guess i decided to go back in time as a complement to Keith Tuma's valuable suggestion that we extend the discussion across cultures.

steve shoemaker

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52. **FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH**

New Poetry Magazine (fwd)

Thu 27 Oct 1994

Forwarded message:

From Thu Oct 27 11:18:51 1994

Date: Thu, 27 Oct 1994 11:14:40 EST

From: "Harrison, Beth" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: New Poetry Magazine

To: Multiple recipients of list ICONOL-L

<[REDACTED]>

Spinning Jenny, the new poetry magazine from Black Dress Press, is currently accepting submissions.

We are especially devoted to the work of new and emerging writers, and welcome the opportunity to review poetry of all shapes, sizes, flavors, persuasions, and schools.

There are no deadlines for submission or fees for reading; payment is in contributor copies.

Please send your work, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope or mailer, to:

Spinning Jenny, PO Box 356, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276-0356.

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53. **Susan Schultz**

Re: "experimental"

Thu 27 Oct 1994

Just a brief thought about the discussion of "experimental poetry" and the suggestion (Keith Tuma's?) that we consider the question across cultures. It seems to me that some of the most experimental poems being written now are poems that in themselves cross cultures. I'm thinking particularly of Kamau Brathwaite's MIDDLE PASSAGES, where modernism meets "negritude" meets high-tech (he uses different computer-generated fonts to get at the poem's essential orality). Or Lois-Ann Yamanaka's (Hawaii) poem, "Tita: Boyfriends," where a pidgin speaking teenager suddenly lapses into perfect valley girlse, which she speaks with her boyfriend in order to impress him, knowing full well that it's an "act." Experimental poetry, at its best, is a creole form--mixed, ruptured, aware of the power structures it exposes and deposes. It's Caliban writing on a computer (as in Brathwaite's "Letter Sycorax"). Oops, gotta go.

Susan M. Schultz

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54. **Sandra Braman**

Re: "experimental"

Thu 27 Oct 1994

Re Shoemaker's comment that labels and groups aren't necessarily the same thing -- it was precisely my point that in the postmodern environment, they rarely have much of anything to do with each other at all Sandra

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55. **Tony Green**

Re: "Susan Howe's Visual Poetics"

Thu 27 Oct 1994

Dear Alan Golding, Apropos yr notice, but not immediately providing biblio, I've just read S.H's The Birth-Mark. The reading of text from hand-

writing she does there turns poem into calligramme it seemed to me in a very useful way and entered what could be called the semiology of "art" tht relates to problems in painting. I've been much concerned with a like problem in classical European history painting, especially Nicolas Poussin, where the standard mode of analysis is all to do with the literary character of the picture, but cannot handle the pictorial structures, or the style of representation as aspects of "meaning" or "content" . Reading Emily D's poems: I am only content to read them in holograph, knowing that the hand-writing of the text is as important as the actual words. I do not share her certainty that the poems can be entirely done in print. The only kind of answers I have found so far are very rarely corroborated in print. I did find the phenomenological/psychoanalytical early Lyotard Discours/Figure useful. In New Zealand there is a related problem. The outstanding local modernist (now dead), Colin McCahon painted numerous paintings that consist largely of "hand-written" text (usually texts quoted from poems or from the bible]. These are not dissimilar as image/text relations to E.D.'s poems. These thoughts off the top of my head this morning, finding your message.

Tony Green

Tony Green,

e-mail: [REDACTED]

post: Dept of Art History,

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Private Bag 92019,

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56. **Tony Green**

Re: absurd category

Thu 27 Oct 1994

Re Ron Silliman's problem. What about the social gatherings: "writing associated with L=.... magazine", not a style- or historical- period category. As with, equally, "writing associated with United Artists". Once the long-winded name is put in place then subsequent references can shorten to, say, LangPo, without too much confusion. It's obviously an old problem that comes from seeking to conglomerate materials for polemics or history (if there is a difference). When you look at Impressionists or Impressionism, which actual pictures count as central, which as peripheral? At the level of the picture the term becomes a useless generality.

Tony Green

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57. **Tom Mandel**
Re: absurd category

Thu 27 Oct 1994

re: Ron's "...a whole other level, society."

Obviously poetic experiment has nothing to do with scientific experiment; the latter is a well-defined and finalizing act. More "poetic" experiment occurs in physics in the activity which physicists call "bullshitting;" it consists in taking the chalk to the blackboard and writing and talking to the rest of the group. This is done in turn. For some reason, I've been told by a French physicist, French physicists are not very good at this activity. Obviously what we call poetic experiment occurs at the beginning of the/a process, on the model of Kelly's "let's see what happens if I do this" although often way more formalized (i.e. "do this" may describe a pretty lengthy, complex activity: Tjanting is a book written in this way) and not at the end. Someone referenced a definition roughly "an activity with an unknown result" but this definition would seem to have arisen from usages like "experimental poetry" and can't be invoked to explain the usage. It would be nice to trace the history of the phrase; I think it may have more (much more) to do with social experiment, utopianism; how does Bakhtin put it? "The word inhabits a realm of ends." Perhaps also worth thinking of the overlap of experiment with experience (the latter word in french, for example, translates the former english word), a gaining of experience, pushing into new territory -- the territory ahead. Here too would seem a cluster of concepts from a 2d half of the 19th century mindset (rewrite Henry Adams dynamo as modernism). Curious what dross we do our best with? Avant garde -- a napoleonic military term, again one of direction and first contact with the enemy, the unknown.

But I don't think the phrase social formalism is much help; how are the two being combined, i.e. is it the formalism that is "social" or does this juxtaposition of terms simply point at the interests of a group of people -- if so, it's better of

course than "experimental" which points at nothing, but not much better since we would prefer our ostensive definitions not to require explanation.

Well, like John Clare, I "wrote till earth was but a name."

tom mandel

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58. **William Lavender**

Re: absurd category

Fri 28 Oct 1994

Tom Mandel said"

>>it's better of course
than "experimental" which points at nothing, but not much better
since we would prefer our ostensive definitions not to require
explanation.<<

It seems to me that one would have a stable notion of the experimental insofar as one had a stable notion of law (scientific or juridical), ethics, canon, depending on the context. Interesting how a word, cut out of its context, suddenly "points to nothing," i.e. is severed from reference, since the referent is always a relation. In any context it seems to involve stretching or perhaps erasing a boundary, so of course if we do not see the boundary we do not see the experiment. And the unstated polemic of the experimental is the law that the referent hypothetically transgresses. It is a movement of desire. Just as physics now recognizes the impact that the experiment itself can have on its results, i.e. that particles are more likely to follow a certain trajectory if that trajectory is hypothesized, we have to concede that this discussion has altered the term "experimental." To test this, we might pick a term at random ("nothing", for example), cut it out of its field of use, subject to an analysis similar to the one that "experimental" has just undergone, and see if it ended up pointing to anything.

from steamy New Orleans,
William Lavender

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59. **Ron Silliman**

Re: Motivation

Fri 28 Oct 1994

What I like about Social Formalism is that it combines both the general thrust of the activity with the general thrust of the motivation for such activity, i.e.,

that these writings are/were motivated for explicitly social reasons, even where (as often enough was the case) the definition of the social reason would have been hard to get at beyond "general sense of dissatisfaction w/ the present condition of things"

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

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

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

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

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

What has always struck me about the negativity we see with the word
formalism has been those people who presume it to represent an impulse

toward stasis--the new formalists are a positive expression of this, but it could be found in inverted ways in Tom Clark's attack on LangPo and elsewhere.

Every label expresses an agenda.

Think of the terms for the apex of the M nexus:

"Christian Language Poets" definitely throws them into some role as variant/tributary--definitely a subservient position.

The New Mysticism says nothing of their practice as writers (which in turn is a slam on their writing)

The Buffalo Problem may be cute
but in fact their work cannot be generalized to
the larger Buffalo scene where, I'm told,
they've largely disappeared
Ditto the New Coasters

Somebody told me off-line
that in Buffalo they are called
the Scroll Swallowers
altho I've not seen the poem that refers to.

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

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

So when I see a label, I ask
what does it say of the activity & motivation
of those are labeled?

"Poets associated with United Artists"
seems to deliberately skirt
some of these issues, tucked
right under the name of the magazine

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60. **Sandra Braman**

Re: absurd category

Fri 28 Oct 1994

The law stable? It has moved away from the nation-state, become computerized (and therefore deals not with individuals but with statistical probabilities), and been replaced by harmonized information flows Sandra Braman

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61. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: absurd category

Fri 28 Oct 1994

Not in my neighborhood. I get angry at this rhetoric when I see concrete suffering on the street created by concrete "individuals" who are not statistical probabilities and who do not deal with "harmonized information flows." Even if you insist on this terminology, there's nothing "harmonized" about them.

Alan

On Fri, 28 Oct 1994, Sandra Braman wrote:

The law stable? It has moved away from the nation-state, become computerized (and therefore deals not with individuals but with statistical probabilities), and been replaced by harmonized information flows Sandra Braman

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62. **Sandra B**

Re: absurd category

Fri 28 Oct 1994

The comments about the law are reporting on what's actually happening in the practice of law (moving away from the nation-state is into international contract law and international economic law as our constitutional law; the computerization of the law easily observable and much discussed; etc.). Not at all to deny the concrete consequences Alan Sondheim points out as experienced in the street. In fact, one can easily argue that as the law moves in these directions, it is less and less in touch with the street and with Geertz's important point about the local as the ultimate arbiter of what's fair in the law. Untrendy or not, my use of language still attempts at referentiality Sandra Braman

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63. **Jeffrey Timmons**

Re: The Law of Genre

Fri 28 Oct 1994

I've just read thru the whole of the experi-discussion . . . whew . . . and at risk of being repetitive (but wanting to try out this new found forum), I want to emphasize a number of points--all of which were made by more able commentators than I Context in defining genre, which is what it does seem we are discussing, is highly valuable. As has been suggested, without such a situating of particular texts within particular locations terms and labels such as "experimental" lose their . . . well, lose just about everything. Unless one is prepared to argue for some form of essentialism to "experimental" poetry, unless one is prepared to list qualitative formal or thematic aspects dealt with in defining what is less a genre than a general practice, then we must link it to specifics. This is obvious, I know. Bare with me . . . It seems to me that in the study and practice of literature and poetry (no separation intended here) we wrestle constantly with the dilemma of constituting categories and definitions--categories and definitions we immediately begin to question, as we perceive their limitations and short-comings. This seems to amount to a form of law: needing it to give and invest meaning in what it is we do and say, but also feeling the consequent limitation and "oppression" inherent in such formulations. There is a constant tension, evident in the state of literary studies, for instance, between categorizations--ie, The Canon--and their inevitable exclusions. This law can only (I am just stringing this along to see if it works) be mitigated by relating texts and authors to specific practices at specific times. Perhaps, if this has not already been done (and here I am only trying to emphasize particular ideas that have already been raised), it would be a good idea to extrapolate what is experimental from such relations; that is, by examining a particular poet and their relation to other poetic practices at the time perhaps we could in a general sense discern a Law of Experimental Practice--cognizant of the limitations of this method. The discussion of the Japanese poet and the cross cultural situations of Swahili poets seemed to go in this direction, but I would suggest that we look more closely at what it is precisely in such relations that is experimental. Could we please, please [high pitched whining of a child here]. And, I believe, as a result of such an analysis, while we could come to some idea of what experiment is, it would be so widely variable as to suggest the emptiness of the term, of the Law--because Laws deal with generalities and not specifics. They deal on a case by case basis, but from a general position. Is this how we want to deal with such a culturally diverse practice as experimental poetry? I don't know. It just seems to me that we need to rethink how categorization and its effects control and constrain choices and determinations for us--as has been suggested by others here. It's one of

those situations of choosing from between two evils--isn't there some cliché like this, I can't quite get it. Anyway, this has been an interesting discussion to read and I look forward to more. By the way, it's in the upper 80s here in Arizona and the palm trees look great against the bright blue sky

Jeffrey Timmons

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64. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: absurd category

Fri 28 Oct 1994

The law is in touch with the street. The street is the arbiter. It depends on the law. Yesterday an SM dominatrix was freed after an undercover cop paid her because the judge said that the consensual activities didn't constitute what passes for prostitution here. Last night there was a fight outside and the cops broke it up but no one was arrested and it was a family thing and the cops talked to all concerned. It's a street thing. People die one way or another for it. This doesn't negate anything about international trade agreements, whatever, but that's different law.

Alan, Sorry to interrupt the discussion about `experiment' - last post on this subject - sorry -

On Fri, 28 Oct 1994, Sandra B wrote:

The comments about the law are reporting on what's actually happening in the practice of law (moving away from the nation-state is into international contract law and international economic law as our constitutional law; the computerization of the law easily observable and much discussed; etc.). Not at all to deny the concrete consequences Alan Sondheim points out as experienced in the street. In fact, one can easily argue that as the law moves in these directions, it is less and less in touch with the street and with Geertz's important point about the local as the ultimate arbiter of what's fair in the law. Untrendy or not, my use of language still attempts at referentiality Sandra Braman

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65. **George Bowering**

Re: experiwhat?

Fri 28 Oct 1994

I too have long been impatient with the easy use of the term "experimental poetry". But I think that, keeping in mind the highschool chem lab sense of the term, one can sometimes use the term. Remembering that most experiments

are doomed to failure. Failed experiments in poetry should, of course, not be published. For iunstance I once tried to write a series of stories in which the main character would be finding himself inside various of Pound's cantos. I had to rearead the whole of the Cantos before I found out that I could not even do the job in one of them. On of a numbr of failed experiments. When George Perec tries to see whether he can write a novel without using the letter "e". I think that's an experiment. But when someone just writes strange, that's no more an experiment than anecdotal poetry. gb

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66. **Tom Mandel**

Re: absurd category

Fri 28 Oct 1994

I should probably rather have said "points with nothing" than "at nothing" as the phrase certainly points at some broadly recognizable and open body of work. "With nothing" in the by-now too-stressed sense that there is nothing particularly "experimental" about "experimental poetry" any more than anything particularly "metaphysical" or "romantic" about the bodies of work so described, so within "its field of use" as Wm Lavendar rightly mentions "nothing" means "nothing" where outside it it may mean nothing, and every field of use or at least this phrase's is exactly "of use," since it is possible to add to the body of "experimental poetry" (as to that of "romantic" or even "metaphysical" poetry); surely w/o the term it would not be. On the other hand, a field of use (even within the strict caricatures of discipline) may so expand as to become exactly useless, nothing can be added to what will range thereunder, or nothing specific -- in the sense that all things do: "desire" seems such a term now. Perhaps each should choose such a term, and we make a lexicon then whoever wishes can write a poem using exclusively those terms (in whatever way). That would be an experimental poem.

tom mandel

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67. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: experiwhat?

Fri 28 Oct 1994

Failed
 experiments
 in poetry
should

be
published

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68. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: experiwhat?

Fri 28 Oct 1994

some random thoughts --

I have spent part of the last two days with Victor Masayesva, a Hopi video artist from Third Mesa. In a talk last night Victor said that he wondered if there would be anything like a serious Native American aesthetic until there is a Native art (he was speaking specifically about video/film) which is considered, by the artist and the community, to be as serious as the kachina ceremonies and other sacred ceremonies. In a way this would be to bring what to that community seems quite "experimental" back into the "traditional," although I'm not really certain these terms have any meaning in such a context.

Every
Xylophone
Plays
Extemporaneous
Rain
Illusions
Meaning
Everyone
Never
Tells
Another's
Loss

and random thoughts . . .

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69. **Robert Drake**

Re: experiwhat?

Fri 28 Oct 1994

*Failed
 experiments
 in poetry
should
 be
 published*

(failed experiments) does not = (failed poems)

a failed experiment yields no useful data

if a "poetry experiment" "fails" (ie, yeilds a "bad" poem)

it yeilds the data that the particular "experimental design"
has failed to produce a "good" poem (under these specific
experimental conditions)

that result is worth publishing

the failed poem is not

and, how interesting--how we _value_ the experiment (should, or shouldn't, be
published) is defined by whether or not the "result" ought be offered up for
sale.... =\$\$\$

"too" "many" damn "quotation marks"

luigi

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70. William Lavender

Re: absurd category

Sat 29 Oct 1994

*On the other hand, a field of
use (even within the strict caricatures of discipline) may
so expand as to become exactly useless, nothing can be added
to what will range thereunder, or nothing specific -- in the
sense that all things do: "desire" seems such a term now.
Perhaps each should choose such a term, and we make a lexicon
then whoever wishes can write a poem using exclusively those
terms (in whatever way). That would be an experimental poem.*

tom mandel

Of course you're right. "Desire" is the worst catchall of the lot; it was romantic of me to use it. It was specifically the notion of transgression, of experiment as transgression, that I was trying to get to. Then again, I think of "desire" in the same way I think of "experimental"; it may now be hopelessly general, homonyms for a thousand uses, but I can still read Freud or Bataille or Hustler or this discourse and know what is meant when I encounter the term, even though it means something different in each occurrence. Maybe I was hoping that in this new, experimental medium, "desire" could be revived. Vain wish. Only another occurrence, quotation marks notwithstanding.

"What is" "experimental" "poetry" "now" "?"

"Perhaps" a poetry which "desires" "nothing"
"transgresses" nothing "."
"*" "(this has already been done)"

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71. **Ron Silliman**

Re: experiwhat?

Sat 29 Oct 1994

*Failed
experiments
in poetry
should
be
published*

(failed experiments) does not = (failed poems)

a failed experiment yields no useful data

if a "poetry experiment" "fails" (ie, yeilds a "bad" poem)

But what defines failure? Crane's "The Bridge" is certainly a failure (he himself thought so) but the process itself has proven extraordinarily productive for poets thereafter and, besides, it doesn't mean that it's not a "great" poem, does it?

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72. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: experiwhat?

Sat 29 Oct 1994

ASYMMETRY 408*

*indeterminate

"For readers who are not poets or composers and who have not undergone the dicipline of composition by chance methods or other "objective" methods, the improvisational way of realising these poems is beset with perils, not the least of which are cuteness, corny dramatics and other types of posturing."

Jackson Mac Low

March 26-27 1961

New York City

AN ANTHOLOGY

- La Monte Young,

Jackson Mac Low. 1963, '70

verb 1 noun 1

"not"

"adj/1"

noun 1 verb 1 (noun 2) adj/2

"noun 3"

"pl/refl/pron/1"

noun 1 (noun 2)

"not"

"not"

This is a _fragment_ of "Assymetry 408" and in this fragment is proposed something quite complete. Although this piece has begun to acquire a patina, and the bodies of many of its performers have failed (certainly not Jackson's), the temporal has not yet gotten a fix on it. This lack of temporal fixity is in large part because of the "math" of it; the "idea" of it, the "pre" ness of it. Its presence here as a fragment continues its syntactical and cultural geometry its pre ness and I think proposes a kind of suture, definitely to a point in history, but more interestingly, from the page to a condition of language. As Ron points out, Crane's "Bridge" does this, as they both do oddly enough, when taken in, or viewed from a position of "use."

I point to this "Assymetry" not because of our notions of failure, but because it is often the "idea of use," or "usefulness" which determines "failure." I propose that the "idea of use" is often a "mistake," itself often a failure.

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73. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

Re: experiwhat?

Sat 29 Oct 1994

Some of the recent intriguing posts on the question of "failure" seem to me to be edging back towards the question i introduced earlier in relation to Oppen: whether or not the poem can be a sort of "test." This is the sense of experiment i find interesting--certainly not, as i think George Bowering put it, simply "writing weird." Not "experimental" as a catch-all for everything that somehow fails to look "traditional." Thinking of Mac Low (& Zukofsky & Cage & Silliman etc etc), it's interesting that "procedural" poetries have been adduced several

times now as perhaps more valuably related to the notion of "experiment."
What exactly is the relation between the two categories? Is "The Bridge" a
procedural poem? What about Oppen's work?

steve shoemaker

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74. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: experiwhat?

Sat 29 Oct 1994

as and aside:

Whether Oppen's work is "procedural:" Tom and others have done more
thinking on this as perhaps a matter of "procedural discourse," or how a work,
or body, proceeds through a culture. But I will hazard this offering (again which
Tom has a more "present" insight into being the interviewer).

From Burtons Hatlen's _Oppen: Man and Poet_ (that's a big colon there!), pg
40:

GO - Frankly I paste without cutting. What I actually do is every correction I
just paste on top of the poem as it was, and I paste it loosely so I can tear it out,
try another route.

and later in response to Hatlen's question of cohesion in _The Materials_:

GO - Well, I put it together very carefully which means I spent a long time
moving them around.

I'm aware that the fold of "procedural" may have more benefits, or offer more
insight when looked at from the point of view of effect, or how it's used, but this
was on the tip of the tongue....

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75. **George Bowering**

Re: experiwhat?

Sat 29 Oct 1994

That's truly silly.

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76. **Donald J. Byrd**

Categories

Sun 30 Oct 1994

Ron Silliman's note on categories made me think Ed Dorn's Slinger's disputational .44:

this Stockholder will find
that his gun cannot speak
he'll find
that he has been Described

STRUM

the green-horn pulled
the trigger and his store-bought iron
coughed out some cheap powder,
and then changed its mind,
muttering something about having
been up too late last night....

STRUM

The total .44
recurred in the Slinger's hand
and spun there
then came home like a sharp knock
and the intruder was described--
a plain, unassorted white citizen.....

Obviously, getting described is never a comfortable experience, but good distinctions are necessary to get even minimal thought started, and sharp, interesting names for the distinctions are useful and even necessary themselves.

I would like to be able to make a distinction between (1) the poets who appear in the Allen anthology and the recent Hoover, Messerli, Weinberger, and Waldman anthologies, on the one hand, and (2) the poets who appear in the Vendler Harvard anthology and the hundred like it, on the other. There are a few cross-overs, but very few, and the subscribers to this list would be able to sort out anonymous poems into these two groups with considerable statistical reliability.

This seems to me a real distinction that I would like to have a good name for. I am inclined to call the poets in group 1 "the mainstream." I do not mean this as a trick. If you

consider Homer, Sappho, Pindar, Lucretius, Catullus, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Marvel, Pope, Dryden, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Whitman, Melville, and Dickinson as the carriers of the mainstream you will find the contemporary carriers of that stream almost exclusively in group 1.

This has nothing to do with the canon. In fact, the qualities that make mainstream poets mainstream are precisely the qualities that must be obscured to make them canonical. The nature of the canon is to position texts in a juncture at which nothing is at stake (every thing decided).

What makes poets mainstream is that they begin in the crisis of thought, feeling, and form and end in the crisis of thought, feeling, and form, having advanced a poem from beginning to end through a space-time where definitive thought, feeling, and form are achieved (see Keats's distinction between achievement and empowerment).

The poets in group 2 work inside the settlement of the canonical values. It is not a matter of the work "closing on signifier"; that would be interesting indeed. Any text, especially one devoted to imagination and fiction, closing on a signifier would be news. It rather settles on conventions, an emotional system that has created a safe zone, and it is the zombie zone, where the intellectually, morally, and spiritually dead wander around in the perpetual 1950's that is projected by the media, on one hand, and Harvard University, on the other. It is literally the emotional system of a previous generation, which was of course itself derived from a previous generation. The 1950's of TV is the 1880's, and so forth. The genteel tradition is still alive and well in American universities, especially in English departments, including the hippest, and the AWP, the well founded literary magazines and poetry publishers (how many volumes of poetry published by university presses have you read recently?).

When I first came seriously into poetry, it looked as if the Group 1 mainstream had won the battle. The problem was that we did not secure the institutions, and it was not an oversight. The institutions cannot be secured for the mainstream, only for the conventions. In fact, we could call the poets of Group 2 "the institutional" poets.

Then the remaining necessary distinctions will have only to do with the various technical considerations of how to live and write in the crisis of the flow, to keep intellectual, moral, and spiritual being alive without foundations but also without despair. The problem is not to walk the plank. We can walk the plank with any aleatory generator of text. The problem is to walk the plank

and not despair. How do you position yourself in relation to the random that the moment of fall from the ship to the sea is your life?

The institutional poets require no more attention than the dead. Among the poets of the mainstream, the very life of the enterprise is conflict and even vicious conflict: this is the cost of keeping poetry alive. The sadness of much of the conflict that has taken place during the past twenty years in American poetry is that it has not been generative. The mainstream has somehow become so befuddled as to think its conflicts are institutional rather than technical, and poets have become dangerously like every one else in American culture, confusing their tools with their lives. This kind of instrumentalization of the keenest moments of intellectual, moral, and spiritual vitality has nearly destroyed the non-institutional place of poetry (of art).

I suggest that we categorize poets and criticize poets specifically in terms of their technologies. Charles Stein has a marvelous series of drawings of meditating figures working on their heads with wrenches; there are other schools that use hammers or screw drivers. I may think the hammer school has made a very bad choice of tools, that the results do not justify the pain, and so forth, and may even comment on what I take to be their mistake in the most uncompromising terms, but I do not doubt the radical seriousness of their work.

Don Byrd

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77. **Steve Evans**
Motives & Devices
Sun 30 Oct 1994

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

Ron makes three claims in the first five graphs of his posting, each of which pertains to the intersection of motivation/device/generation. I don't

have a "copy" function available to me, so I will reproduce these claims schematically before noting what seems problematic about them to me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Apropos Claim 2: The ominous scenario in which the social is somehow "drained" away only makes sense if such devices as one finds in ITAT represent the exclusive means of criticizing existing social relations and evoking potentials for social transformation. Ron establishes a double bind for G2: continue to employ G1's devices (in which case you'll be labelled derivative and your motivation will be characterized as improper) or invent/adopt other

devices (in which case you'll be accused of permitting the "social" to "drain" away). I've been seeing variants of this argument since the mid-80s, and I'd have thought it was clear by now that there is more than one way to compose/propose the social in poetry, and that the employment of devices associated with the lyric genre does not automatically entail the abandonment of an oppositional literary and social project.

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

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

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

Regards to everyone out there!

Steve Evans

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78. **Robert Drake**

Re: experiwhat?

Sun 30 Oct 1994

if a "poetry experiment" "fails" (ie, yeilds a "bad" poem)

But what defines failure?

*Crane's "The Bridge" is certainly a failure (he himself thought so)
but the process itself has proven extraordinarily productive for poets
thereafter and, besides, it doesn't mean that it's not a "great" poem,
does it?*

of course yr write, this opens up a hole 'nother kettle of worms...

i suppose i'd be fairly comfortable with some form of "use value" as a criteria for success/failure--which immediately demands considering the reader. do i, as a reader of the poem, find it of use? (same question applies, even if the reader is also the writer) the various needs of various readers provides for a variety of value judgements--"The Bridge" (that's my homeboy! where were his daddy's Lifesavers when he needed 'em?) was very useful to me at one point, praps useful to various communities of poets, & thus not a failure, for us. maybe failed, fr Hart, because he had other ends in mind-- but one of the requirments of experiment is to be open-minded (as in Fleming's discovery of pennicillin frm a contaminated (failed) culture- dish of bacteria). & this all, fr me, relates to the Hopi video artist's musings on the utility of art to the larger community, as Kachina ceremonies are central & sacred. why is "experimental"/whatever poetry so devalued/useless? and then it's back to the mainstream/maginialized equations cited earlier, which i (in my better/stronger moments) dismiss, preferring to see a plurality of (overlapping) communities rather than one big molten pot... hoo-baby...

but, back to it...

went back to the dictionary defs from earlier in this thread; my version (oxford concise) gives: "procedure adopted on chance of _succeeding _..." --i think the evaluation of the outcome of an experimental procedure is an important step; a lack of that evaluation leads to lots of schlock that's foisted off as experimental, but which is maybe just lazy--the kind of stuff that was praps an impetus fr this thread. we'll all have various criteria fr that evaluation, but hopefully something more thoughtful than "if some fool editor will publish it, it's good enuf fr me..."

data: "exquisite corpse" experiments--we all know the technique, but few of the resulting poems remain--might this be a succesful experiment that produced no succesful results?

data: al ackerman's wonderful "hacks", the result of what he calls "poetry machines" (procedural cut & paste/replace routines, w/ specific designs fr specific poems)--some more successful than others; when less succesful, he tinkers w/ the machine

& if poems are "machines made of words"

& if machines are mechanisms which do work

what is thee "work" they do (or we do w/ them)?

asever

luigi, friend of loons

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79. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

Re: experiwhat?

Sun 30 Oct 1994

I've just read the beginning of Don Byrd's post with a funny sense of coincidence, since i had been just about to offer up the following tidbit from Slinger:

Don't worry your plaster head
Al, we can turn this car
into a chile relleno
in a mere fraction of Nothin Flat!
Yesah, but i's always 60 feet long
an on wheels

You misjudge the population Albert
theyll think it's experimental....

steve shoemaker

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80. **Tony Green**

Re: Motivation

Sun 30 Oct 1994

Labels are like titles -- short descriptions to fit a small space. "Writers associated with x magazine" may be expanded to suit inquiries regarding motivation, favoured devices, favoured ice-cream flavours, or hair and clothing styles (etc), or shortened to say just "LangPo", as a summary of an analysis already proposed of all the features of the group in question. As a user of poems (cf R.Drake's proposals] a label is the last thing I want; as a critic, historian, polemicist (participant in arts argy-bargy] I can't do without them. They've got to be pondered to carry any weight. The current debate moves straight into "generations" and the positional [institutional] play that always goes with that game. Old generations are going to be shunted back in the name of progress, as usual. This will obscure for who knows how long the wonderful texts produced -- and yet to come from those still alive. But that hand-to-hand combat stuff is, though exhilarating, not the way to sweeter readings of whatever is new or old. This is not to say that the [institutional] tendency to

belittle the new, because it is new and difficult to accomodate, and preserve the old, because it is there, is to be admired.

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Auckland, New Zealand
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Telephone: 64 9 [REDACTED] ext. 8981 or 7276

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81. **Marjorie Perloff**

Re: Motivation

Sun 30 Oct 1994

As I understood Ron's comment, I think he was pinpointing something very important. To wit: Ron's own generation, coming of age as it did in the Cold War and in the wake of the Vietnam War, had global concerns, specifically a critique of capitalism (U.S. style) vis-a-vis a potential for Marxist governance in various places. The alternative to Capitalism was a central concern. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the Eastblock, and with a good view of what "ecology" and such were like under Communism, this particular fervor has largely disappeared, to be replaced by a much more U.S.-centered and even isolationist concern with what goes on at home, capitalism now being a given, and the concern shifting to identity politics and multiculturalism. To put it another way: the burning political concerns of the "In the American Tree" group have been replaced, for better or worse--and no doubt inevitably--with more local, if still "political" concerns about U.S. racism, homophobia, etc. We needn't say which was/is "better," but Ron is absolutely right to notice that it sure is different!

Or so it looks to me.
Marjorie Perloff

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82. **Hank Lazer**

Re: Motivation

Mon 31 Oct 1994

Briefly, to put one oar in the discussion: to expand the emerging generational debate.... On one side, Ron asks if the "next" generation is doing anything not already done by those poets in In the American Tree. It might make sense to

ask the question in the opposite temporal direction as well, since many of us are doing lots of reading in earlier twentieth century poets (and nineteenth century as well). Have the LP poets of Ron's generation developed anything fundamentally different than their modernist predecessors--modernist broadly conceived. IS there anything foundationally different--not anticipated in Stein, Pound, or Dickinson or Mallarme earlier or Zukofsky and Cage later, or pick your own examples....--in the work of the "first" generation of LPs?

Hank Lazer

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83. **kat**

Re: absurd category

Mon 31 Oct 1994

I must say that I was rather surprised to see what I take to be a celebration of law (and order). If law is happening in a sort of carnivalesque street way, what about 3x you're out and the fact that the building, maintenance, and re-fashioning of prisons is the single fastest growth industry? Sorry to be so vulgar about all this, but in particular the statement that "it's only a family matters"(re: street action and cop reaction) likely refers to spousal or other "familiar" abuse. Enough of the reality pinch, I suppose. The discussion of cross cultural and cross linguistic poetry as both experimental and intimately imbicated with the masterwork (or master's works) is most engaging. One thing that I find different (and [therefore] positive) about this phenomenon and the present discussion is that in the Pound days only white guys doing their legimation routines were granted the honorific epithet "experimental." 'nuf said

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84. **Ron Silliman**

G2

Mon 31 Oct 1994

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

>

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

I didn't (don't) make any claim of exclusivity of devices for In the American Tree and the concept makes no sense to me. I could point to hundreds of alternative

examples from my own generation alone that are equally social but well outside the positioned critique that separates out most of the Tree's poets from the broader (less differentiated) terrain.

Ron establishes a double bind for

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

What other devices? It is precisely the continuation of the same set of devices in increasingly modest forms that characterizes the broader poetics of G2, as Steve calls it in a curiously clinical abbreviation. It is that modesty, as such, that I was getting at as a "draining of the social" -- and I accept the possibility that it may actually represent a much more complex ensemble of social phenomena, that may well include grave doubt over the possibilities of collective action (say), all of which would be well worth elaborating on at length

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

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

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

(why for instance

- >the Apex of the M has been taken as the chief development requiring
- >explanation in the past year or so, despite the fact that its version
- >of repressive resublimation hardly accounts for the only instance of
- >"collective unity"--as Ron phrases it in an earlier post--to be seen
- >in that time; cf. "Chain" for instance, also "out of" Buffalo).
- >

Two of Chain's editors also edit Apex of the M. A third co-edited the Technique volume of the O-blek antholog. It's not at all clear at 3,200

miles what distinction is being made here. (I like Chain quite a bit, by the way.)

>

Time to shower & go to work,
Ron

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85. **jena**

Re: G2

Mon 31 Oct 1994

(why for instance the Apex of the M has been taken as the chief development requiring explanation in the past year or so, despite the fact that its version of repressive resublimation hardly accounts for the only instance of "collective unity"--as Ron phrases it in an earlier post--to be seen in that time; cf. "Chain" for instance, also "out of" Buffalo).

Two of Chain's editors also edit Apex of the M. A third co-edited the Technique volume of the O-blek antholog. It's not at all clear at 3,200 miles what distinction is being made here. (I like Chain quite a bit, by the way.)

Chain is edited by only two people: Juliana Spahr and myself. Neither of us edit Apex of the M. I assume you are confusing Chain with A Poetics of Criticism. Kristin Prevallet and Pam Rehm are the two editors that overlap between that project and Apex. I suppose it seems very confusing, but in my mind all three of these publications are incredibly distinct; perhaps the generational generalizing of this discussion doesn't allow for those editorial distinctions to be addressed.

Jena Osman

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86. **Kenneth Sherwood**

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

Mon 31 Oct 1994

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

examination of the conditions of textual production, at least outside of LANGUAGE magazine.

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

Meow Press was established in August of 1993 as a response to the New Coast festival and also the rapid proliferation of electronic publishing. In the case of the former, there is the hope that by getting involved it might be possible to reopen the anthologizing-closure process set in motion by that fateful gathering; that it might be possible to exist in a state where the printing of a book of poems might be - in the tradition of printer-poets such as Lyn Hejinian - an extension of one's own activity of writing. In the case of the latter, the romance of making books by hand that utilized the hot carbon transfer process as ultimately temporal ephemera, yet palpable physical without too much nostalgia for the Book. An obsessive typography startup kit.

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

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

Ken Sherwood

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87. **Steve Evans**

G-ology

Mon 31 Oct 1994

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

Having spent a significant portion of my fairly brief intellectual life

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

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

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

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

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

To clarify one general point in closing: I am not under the impression that a collective re-definition of what

poetry is and does has as yet been articulated by G2,
which is perhaps all Ron means to be saying. Given the
way literary fields work in capitalist social formations,
the failure to achieve such a collective redefinition
will lead to a lot of interesting poetry disappearing
beneath the ready-made rubrics that persist from the last
time such a struggle was won.

Gotta go...

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88. **Tom Mandel**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 31 Oct 1994

"a failed experiment yields no useful data"

not true not in any case and in the least
sense true in the sciences. Back to the drawing board.

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89. **Tom Mandel**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 31 Oct 1994

re: patrick phillips -- tho I yield to none in my admiration for Jackson MacLow
(we were btw born on the same day in the same place 20 years to the day apart,
and schooled at the same u of chicago by many of the same teachers as we jaw-
droppingly discovered one day a few years ago over lunch at the zuni cafe in
SF), perhaps because of this no-yield : I must protest that...

use mistake failure fragment no no no we need a poetics of effect, in which
use is effect and in which we do not make a god of the fragment --excuse me,
that is 200 year old romanticism, hanging around the ruins and it really just
won't do it's too damned easy. asymmetry has neither advantage nor
precedence nor even lack of calculation to boast over symmetry. If
"realising...poems is beset with perils" well that doesn't seem too bad really.
Water cupped in your hand, are you conscious what streams have fed it?

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90. **Jeffrey Timmons**

Re: Failed Experiments

Mon 31 Oct 1994

F a i l e d e x p e r i m e n t s

Y i e l d

O t h e r

N o t

U s e l e s s

S e n s e

S t u f f

N o t

C o n t a i n e d

B y

F r a m e w o r k s

W e ' v e

S e t

O u t

Jeffrey Timmons

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91. **George Bowering**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 31 Oct 1994

I dont see how writing yr own raw way instead of in someone's
tradition constitutes an experiment.

I mean, doesnt an experiment have to start with a proposition?

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92. **George Bowering**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 31 Oct 1994

Well, I seem to remember that when we did experiments in the lab at school,
we were encouraged to build on what science had found out already, though.

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93. **George Bowering**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 31 Oct 1994

Actually, the term "politically correct" was not first used in jest by liberals. It was used in all seriousness by left wing groups. THEN it was used even by them in jest, before the liberals got hold of it.

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94. **George Bowering**

Re: Failed Experiments

Mon 31 Oct 1994

That piece by Timmons was pretty bad, eh? I'd say that it failed at something, and shouldnt have been published here.

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95. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: nostalgia & nostalgia

Mon 31 Oct 1994

Perhaps this is a misdirection aiming at an aside, but after seeing Kenneth Sherwood repeat a praise Joel Kuszai had made for printer-poets with "not too much nostalgia for the book" I had to take at least a little bit of exception. I came to make books because of my work with writing, feeling like the context of words is a conditioner of words, that it is fundamentally important, that space carries meaning as well as texts do.

I have found, in nearly fifteen years of making books, including more or less visual ones, and being around many who make books by hand & machine, including in the last year as director of one of the country's finest book arts organizations, that while I retain an allegiance to text-driven books, much of the finest work being done in the field has little to do with poetry. I try to do what I can to see that that doesn't remain so.

Yet I find that among the bookmakers who would share intellectual/philosophical concerns with users of this electronic forum, there is often a feeling that someone like me has too much "nostalgia for literature" or for the poem or for the text.

So, is it the work of literature, or the form of the book, for which we yearn, with that sweet nostalgia? Let it be neither, please.

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96. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: experiwhat?

Mon 31 Oct 1994

re: Tom Mandel

Mine was not a feigned admiration for Jackson, nor was my proposal that "the idea of use is itself often a mistake" a hymn for the fragment, be it Holderlin's, Mallarme's or the para-tactical fragments of G1. (I can't help but wonder where we put G7 in this shorthand). No, I was using the fragment in this case as an attempt to "bridge" the gap between a notion of use and a notion of experiment which is saw was getting to much in hand (as opposed to out of hand, or toward the uncontrollable experiment.)

To long hand this one; notions of failure, like notions of success, turn on an empirical temporality of too short a duration. (In the case of scientific experimentation this is taken into account by the concept of the theory, or in the addage "if in first you don't succeed...") It is this duration, which in our "terms" measures out in decades and generations, that foists "success" and "failure" upon us. I was using "Assymetry" not as a crutch to a "pre-ness" of language as to a pre-ness of judgement. I wanted to link the "use" of the chance/math language of Assymetry to the fluidity of language _relatively_ independent of an empiric duration which always generates judgements of success and failure. This linkage I hoped and still believe allows for the temporary dismantling of the architecture of failure and success in favor of the dis-array of "use." Use functions; by that I mean that it doesn't loiter in the realm of narrowly-framed perception. Use is temporally beyond critical idiom, the generation paradigm, cross-cultural myopia. We have to look no further than to our wish for greater communication between peoples (as evidence by this medium, sometimes) to see our appreciation for the lag-time of use. Unfortunatley, use is not really on "human time," certainly not on individual time....

With this I would like to point to how we use, and the subsequent use of, this medium. That often it is poorly used. Poor as in impoverished. There are other things to do here than to "participate" in "collaborative" "gestures" of atomized critical "insight." Form is rampant.

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