

@poetics

The UB Poetics Discussion Group

Archive of Electronic Correspondence

March 1995

489 messages · Wed 1 Mar 1995 – Fri 31 Mar 1995

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

March is the month the dollar loses its nerve, sliding to record lows against the yen and the mark while the newspapers mutter about the end of American arithmetic; it is also the month a doomsday sect releases nerve gas into the Tokyo underground and the word cult acquires, overnight, a new and chemical weight. The list registers neither event head-on, being wholly occupied with a slower emergency of its own devising — whether it is still permitted to read a poem closely, and what, if anything, a poem is finally for.

The season's great quarrel is over close reading, provoked when Ron Silliman lets slip that *"I've been trashed for close reading"* before, as if the practice were a species of political embarrassment. Peter Quartermain, with the disarming innocence of a man who has taught for decades, asks the list to explain why close reading has become *"such a reprehensible practice,"* and volunteers that he is probably exposing his own ignorance. He is not; he has merely named the thing everyone had been circling, and the answers run on for a hundred messages, spilling into Chapbooks, Lost Classics, and a running gag about an *"alt.fan.silliman"* newsgroup that does not exist.

Alongside it, Steven Shoemaker poses the month's other keynote — *"what does, or should, poetry do?"* — and watches the list divide between those who want a poem to express feeling and those who suspect that the wanting is the whole trouble. He names the adversary precisely: the Hallmark verse and the poetry-as-therapy paradigm his students carry into the classroom already believing. The list, which distrusts sincerity on principle and pieties most of all, finds itself in the odd position of defending the bare possibility that a poem might mean something after all.

The academy hovers over both threads like weather. Lisa Samuels, writing as a dissertator who also writes poems, describes the campus suspicion that the creative act works a certain *"happifying effect"* on a serious mind, softening it for real labour — a diagnosis she delivers with the driest available irony. Jeffrey Timmons, refusing the word teach altogether, proposes shared inquiry in its place, while the ghost of Charles Olson, summoned in an apocryphal bookstore anecdote, presides over the entire discussion as the reigning myth of how a poet is supposed to come by what he knows. Tony Green talks more than anyone and settles the least, which is its own kind of contribution.

What holds the month together is precisely its refusal to let reading be simple. Under all the banter runs a real and unspoken fear — that to read a poem slowly, to take it at its word, is to be caught believing in it, and belief is the one posture this list has trained itself never to strike. Yet the close readers keep reading, closely, anyway. I have kept the arguments intact and resisted the editor's standing temptation to resolve them on the list's behalf; the list did not resolve them either, and that, reader, is very nearly the point of the enterprise.

— *K. M. F.*

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- 434. Loss Glazier — Chapbooks at EPC
- 435. Gary Sullivan — To Sandra & Wystan
- 436. Michael Boughn — Re: The West
- 437. Edward Foster — Re: POETICS Digest - 25 Mar 1995 to 26 Mar 1995
- 438. braman sandra — To Gary
- 439. Tony Green — mainstream avoidance?
- 440. George Bowering — Re: Rilke Quote
- 441. Wystan Curnow — Re: The West
- 442. George Bowering — AG
- 443. Jorge Guitart — hallmark and social expression
- 444. Jeffrey Timmons — Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons) (fwd)

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- 445. FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH — I'm a loser, baby / so why not delete me . . .
- 446. Aldon L. Nielsen — Re: The West & The rest of Us
- 447. Lindz Williamson — back to poetry
- 448. Mark Roberts — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 449. maria damon — Re: POETICS Digest - 25 Mar 1995 to 26 Mar 1995
- 450. maria damon — Re: hallmark and social expression
- 451. Ron Silliman — Arthur Godfrey, Allen Ginsberg
- 452. Jonathan A Levin — Buffalo talk

- 453. Edward Foster — Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons) (fwd)
- 454. cris cheek — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 455. Gary Sullivan — Call for submissions
- 456. Gary Sullivan — Ginsberg, Sorrentino
- 457. Kit Robinson — West
- 458. eric pape — Re: Thanx pardner
- 459. Tim Waples — Re: Ginsberg's "Don't Smoke"
- 460. eric pape — Re: Who teach?
- 461. Alan Golding — Arthur Godfrey, Allen Ginsberg
- 462. Tony Green — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 463. Tony Green — Re: Thanx pardner
- 464. Loss Glazier — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 465. Tony Green — Re: Who teach?
- 466. Gary Sullivan — thesis humor? ha, ha (fwd)
- 467. Lindz Williamson — Grandma
- 468. Loss Glazier — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 469. Tony Green — re Letter to the Editor (Longish)
- 470. Wystan Curnow — Re: To Sandra & Wystan

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- 471. cris cheek — Responsibility
- 472. Tom White — Memory Play
- 473. Gary Sullivan — To Wystan, more Ginsberg
- 474. Tony Green — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 475. Tony Green — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 476. Tony Green — Ginsberg quote
- 477. Steven Howard Shoemaker — signs
- 478. Loss Glazier — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 479. Tony Green — Re: signs
- 480. Edward Foster — Re: Responsibility
- 481. Jeffrey Timmons — Rilke Quote
- 482. George Bowering — Re: poetry v history

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- 483. Pierre Joris — Re: Rilke Quote
- 484. Bill Luoma — Re: back to poetry
- 485. cris cheek — Re: Responsibility
- 486. cris cheek — GAPsberg
- 487. Gary Sullivan — Re: GAPsberg
- 488. Robert Drake — Re: Chapbooks at EPC
- 489. Gary Sullivan — New Johanna Drucker book

1. **Carla Billitteri**

Re: $W = A = R = N$ blfght= $I * nXQFT * g$ *

Wed 1 Mar 1995

W = A = R = N = I = N = G

A second Simulac spill has caused further disturbance in the downtime/cyberspace continuum. All messages dated Valentine's Day should be boiled before drinking. If verbal dithyrambs continue vomit drench pea bucket and spoonfeed. Repost: rapini tic mouse and barf the arrow. Dandy shift keys download Soon-Yi, Previn commensurately. Anti-Hemorrhaging is projected bile radio.

DONUT RED TAPERS MATCH EDGES.

Rasta sure by hot shots part deux con carne.

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2. **Ron Silliman**

alt.fan.silliman

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Sure do wish I had that kind of free time.

Love & kisses,

Ron

The Hegemony Project

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3. **sandra.braman**

Even Shiva Does the Hokey Pokey

Wed 1 Mar 1995

EVEN SHIVA DOES THE HOKEY POKEY

And then went down to the ice cream parlour,
Set paddles to Pokey, girls & boys, a godly C, and
We set up housekeeping, and sail on a sweat shirt.
And then when we wondered, where going, where sliding,
We tankard the emblem, fran ending, forfend.

Ah, for the life of it, ox carts, masks, coral....

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4. **Jorge Guitart**

decency in communications act

Wed 1 Mar 1995

From: IN%"[REDACTED]" "Jorge Rogachevsky" 1-MAR-1995 10:30:27.09 To:
IN%"[REDACTED]" "Jorge Guitart" CC: Subj: senate bill? (fwd)

id <[REDACTED]>; Wed,
01 Mar 1995 10:21:27 -0500 (EST)
id AA13815; Wed, 1 Mar 95 10:17:24 -0400
1 Mar 95 10:18:02 -0400
Date: Wed, 01 Mar 1995 10:18:01 -0400 (GMT-0400)
From: Jorge Rogachevsky <[REDACTED]>
Subject: senate bill? (fwd)
To: Jorge Guitart <[REDACTED]>

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Tue, 28 Feb 95 12:35:00 PST
From: Archer, Jane <[REDACTED]>
To: "Rogachevsky, Jorge" <[REDACTED]>,
Polly Archer <[REDACTED]>,
"Kendall, Gillian" <[REDACTED]>,
Charlie Bernheimer <[REDACTED]>,
Ben <[REDACTED]>
Subject: senate bill? (fwd)

see way below.

FORWARDED FROM: Archer, Jane
FROM: Linchet, Dominique

TO: Everyone
DATE: 02-28-95
TIME: 11:57

CC:
SUBJECT: senate bill? (fwd)
PRIORITY:
ATTACHMENTS:

Although these are not my words, I thought that the essence of this message
might be of interest to all E-Mail and Internet users.

FORWARDED FROM: Linchet, Dominique

Date: Tue, 28 Feb 1995 08:06:32 -0500 (EST)
From: Lucia Binotti <[REDACTED]>
To: sol Miguel Prendes <[REDACTED]>, carmen peraita
<[REDACTED]>, Dominique Linchet <[REDACTED]>,
dianne brain <[REDACTED]>, Michael Mackert
<[REDACTED]>, jose miguel martinez torrejon
<[REDACTED]>, Ignacio Lopez Martinez <[REDACTED]>,
James Riely <[REDACTED]>, Enrico Binotti
<[REDACTED]>, jose maria tejedor <[REDACTED]>

Subject: senate bill? (fwd)

What anguish... The conservatism in this country is becoming
overwhelming. Kisses to you all

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, 27 Feb 1995 19:03:46 -0500 (EST)
From: Helen Hills <[REDACTED]>
To: lucia binotti <[REDACTED]>
Subject: senate bill? (fwd)

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, 27 Feb 1995 08:57:54 -0500 (EST)
From: Mike Savage <[REDACTED]>
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: senate bill? (fwd)

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Sun, 26 Feb 1995 22:09:58 -0500
From: Rachel A Rosenfeld <[REDACTED]>
To: Multiple recipients of list <[REDACTED]>
Subject: senate bill?

***** Rachel A.

Rosenfeld fax: [REDACTED] Department of Sociology, CB#3210
email: [REDACTED] University of North Carolina office phone:
[REDACTED] Chapel Hill NC 27599

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Fri, 24 Feb 95 12:18:28 -0600
From: Martin A. Reames <[REDACTED]>
To: Arty-Marty mailing list <[REDACTED]>
Subject: not humorous, but important

Hi.

This is not a normal artymarty mailing. I apologize for this email's non-humor nature, but it contains information that, in my opinion, needs to be disseminated as quickly as possible. I apologize for the length, but it's really that important, so please read it all! This is something that affects us all!

Currently 13,748 people have signed the petition to stop Senate Bill S. 314. We need more! Add your voice, it'll only take a minute.

*****Forwarded material*****

Simply put, a couple of senators have proposed a particularly heinous piece of legislation titled the "Communications Decency Act of 1995" (Senate Bill S. 314). Basically, the bill would subject all forms of electronic communication -- from public Internet postings to your most private email -- to government censorship. The effects of the bill onto the online industry would be devastating -- most colleges and private companies (AOL, Compuserve, etc.) would probably have to shut down or greatly restrict access, since they would be held criminally liable for the postings and email of private users.

[for more information, see the www page:
<http://www.phantom.com/~slowdog/>]

The bill would compel service providers to choose between severely restricting the activities of their subscribers or completely shutting down their email, Internet access, and conferencing services under the threat of criminal liability. Moreover, service providers would be forced to closely monitor every private communication, electronic mail message, public forum, mailing list, and file archive carried by or available on their network, a proposition which poses a substantial threat to the freedom of speech and privacy rights of all American citizens.

Obviously, this bill is designed to win votes for these senators among those who are fearful of the internet and aren't big fans of freedom of speech -- ie., those who are always trying to censor "pornography" and dirty books and such. Given the political climate in this country, this bill might just pass unless the computer community demonstrates its strength as a committed political force to be reckoned with. This, my friends, is why I have filled your mailbox with this very long message.

A petition, to be sent to Congress, the President, and the media, has begun spreading through the Internet. It's easy to participate and be heard -- to sign it, you simply follow the instructions below -- which boil down to sending a quick email message to a certain address. That's all it takes to let your voice be heard.

Finally, PLEASE forward this message to all of your friends online. The more people who sign the petition, the more the government will get the message to

back off the online community. We've been doing fine without censorship until now -- let's show them we don't plan on allowing them to start now. If you value your freedoms -- from your right to publicly post a message on a worldwide forum to your right to receive private email without the government censoring it -- you need to take action NOW. It'll take two minutes at the most, a small sacrifice considering the issues at hand. Remember, the age of fighting for liberty with muskets and shells is most likely over; the time has come where the keyboard and the phone line will prove mightier than the sword -- or the Senate, in this case.

--

Here's what you have to do to sign the petition:

send an e-mail message to: [REDACTED] the message (NOT the subject heading) should read as follows: SIGNED <your online address> <your full name> <U.S. Citizen (y/n)> eg. SIGNED [REDACTED] Martin Reames YES

If you are interested in signing the petition, I would highly suggest investigating the details of the situation. You can find out more on the Web at <http://www.phantom.com/~slowdog/>

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5. **v386v5hx**

Re: POETICS LIST B--in jokes (was: A LIST--outing)

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (Lost Gazer)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: Exploding Fibbonaci?!

Date: Wed, 1 Mar 1995 00:25:10

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 6

I would like to see the 'exploding fibonacci' myself.

Who do I 'finger' so that I would see it on my screen? (e-mail addr.)

(I understand that the term. setting should be set to VT100.)

Thank u

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6. **v386v5hx**

POETICS LIST B: unsubscribe!

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>
From: [REDACTED] (Sheila Murphy-Brown)
Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman
Subject: Re: going somewhere?
Date: 14 Feb 1999 18:18:18
Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project
Lines: 7

This message cam from a tightass in Buffalo, for those ofb you who aren't familiar with this school, all the students there are required to go for 1-2 years or so (I'm not sure on the # of years) to serve as missionairies in foreign countries, Tell this kid to stick to the John Taggart Fan Club.

-----Sheila.

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7. **v386v5hx**

IN JOKES (was: poetics)

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>
From: [REDACTED] (Georgous Gorge Bowdlerized)
Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman
Subject: Re: Nudes
Date: 14 Feb 1999 06:06:06
Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project
Lines: 14

In article <?????????>, [REDACTED] (Billius Howe) wrote:

Has anybody got some good looking nudes of silliman? If so could you e-mail them to me or post them here?

*Thanks in advance.
Bill
[REDACTED]*

I have some nudes of Silliman at my house which I took with my camera. I'm forced to hang on to them, though, because I know that someday they will be worth a lot of money.

Georgous Gorge

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8. **v386v5hx**

TEST--DELETE FROM DIRECTORY (FWD)

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (The Guy Chair)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: Re: Naropa Confirms Silliman

Date: 14 Feb 1999 24:24:24

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 28

Christopher Robin ([REDACTED]) wrote:

: I heard from Nate Mackey that Anne Waldman and Allen Ginsberg of Naropa
: have confirmed that Silliman has gotten the job and are pleased with the
: decision.

: This was odd because a few years ago, they considered Silliman too
: hardcore to fit in their Buddhist playhouse.

: Well, he's still hc, though nothing is signed as of yet, but AW and AG are
: pleased with the decision -- and so am I.

:

: cr

I am glad that Silliman got the gig; this is a perfect vehicle for him.
He'll be great with the political kids. I just hope he doesn't fuck
up the rest. I love Silliman, but I cringe whenever I hear that he is
preparing another pronouncement, especially one where some sort of
historical perspective is required. He's so smirky! And he loves to
throw in some stupid fact to make himself sound like a big expert, even
though his comments are totally superficial. I simply can't bring myself to
read any of his essays (except some of the one-pagers, which are more like
poems). He is way too self-conscious as a critic; it's as if he knows the
whole world is holding its breath, waiting to see if he can successfully
deliver a simple opinion without patting himself on the back. The fact that
Naropa isn't a high-powered university makes me more confident that he can
pull it off. But is he actually going to teach a class on meditation
practice from a Frankfurt School perspective? Let's start praying now
people.

Later,

Guy Chair

Charlie Bob Ray "The Tedlock" Sukie

```

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WE'RE THE POETICS PROGRAM AMERICA -- DEAL WITH IT!!!!

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9. v386v5hx

B LIST: "out" jokes

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (Katherine Morrow Lindberg)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: Re: going somewhere?

Date: 14 Feb 1999 19:19:19

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 13

and this person is asking for flames!

dont give it to him/her!

besides...who believe in 'good' buffalonians...

laugh
KAT

 ^_^
 | o o | "RRRRROOAAAAUUGHHH!! I'm working on my
roar!" -Lion King
 \ *_ /

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10. **v386v5hx**

Req: Silliman materials (was:

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (Nathan the Wiseguy)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: Desperately seeking Silliman ...

Date: 14 Feb 1999 06:06:06

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony project

Lines: 20

Ok...back in '84 or '85 (when language poetry was only ten years old or so, whatever you consider to be the movement's origin), an Ohio fan club released among other things, a book called "The Silliman Issue" with a picture on the cover of Silliman smoking a cigar.

I DESPERATELY want to get hold of this item. Is there anyone that can give me some clue/hint, etc. as to how I can purchase or swap for this item?????

I would be eternally gratefull!!!! THANKS.

"Each duck was called Cause & Effect, and
their progeny swim in the same pond today." David Bromige

Happiness? to all,

Nate

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11. **v386v5hx**

ALT.FAN.SILLIMAN: hey, this is condescending!!

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (Cabrini Green)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman,rec.arts.lang_po

Subject: Re: Naropa Confirms Silliman

Date: 14 Feb 99 20:20:20

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 31

In article <?????????>, [REDACTED] (The Guy
|Chair) writes:

Christopher Robin ([REDACTED]) wrote:

: I heard from Nate Mackey that Anne Waldman and Allen Ginsberg of Naropa
: have confirmed that Silliman has gotten the job [SNIP SNIP]

I am glad that Silliman got the gig; this is a perfect vehicle for him.
He'll be great with the political kids. I just hope he doesn't fuck
up the rest. I love Silliman, but I cringe whenever I hear that he is
preparing another pronouncement, especially one where some sort of
historical perspective is required. He's so smirky! And he loves to
throw in some stupid fact to make himself sound like a big expert, even
though his comments are totally superficial. I simply can't bring myself to
read any of his essays

I think "New Sentence" will probably go down as his best performance. A lot of
people say he's not good with detailed reading and therefore superficial but
if you review his essays you see he actually gets TOO detailed. (This is of
course ignoring his MLA thing but at MLA even the established
critics are horrible) His last context *The Politics of Poetic Form*
is also pretty bad, HOWEVER, Silly is quite good in it and seems relaxed for
once. I think a lot depends on his finding a topic where the relationship
between overview and detail makes sense, like "New Sentence" or the piece on
"Disappearance." When he's more abstract like in "Spicer's Language" or
"Migratory Meaning" he's embarrassing, but that's what makes him a POET
not a critic. Hey there's plenty of critics but only one Silly. Don't be
so condescending

Cabrini

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12. **v386v5hx**

Re: test -- ignore

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (Clint)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: Re: Silliman Fans

Date: 14 Feb 1999 16:16:16

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 3

Power to you! This forum is not meant for negative comments! People should form their own newsgroup if they would like to complain. This newsgroup is meant for exulting the god of poetry!

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13. **Gary Sullivan**

in-jokes, flames

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Susan, as someone who very much appreciates in-jokes, I hate to say this, but I agree with you; at least, when confronted with a barrage (12, I think) of them all at once. I thought the first "Ron" flame was funny, the second less so, and I just began deleting the things without reading 'em by the 4th or 5th. As Gerald Burns once cautioned me (I quote from memory): "You'll never learn anything until you realize that the quality of light in a room is the same thing as the life of the mind, or the soul." (He put it more eloquently than that.) As someone who reads & writes a lot of satire, I've always been aware of the inherent paradox: You may hit the object dead on, but the subject is always, ultimately, you. In the best (most "effective") satire, your audience is almost unaware of your presence, all attention being focused on the object. In cases of overkill (like the recent 12-part "Ron" flames), you're not only more aware of the author than you should be, you begin to sympathize with the object(s) of his/her satirical/parodic communication.

I don't want people to cease posting satire & parody: it's a perfectly valid (& sometimes efficient) means of getting across ideas & concerns. But be careful not to alienate what audience you do have.

Thanks,

Gary

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14. **v386v5hx**

Re: test -- ignore

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] ALL.AHP (Ella Al)

Subject: Re: Age of Huts: Best of/Rest of Silliman (early years)

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Date: 14 Feb 1999 07:07:07

Lines: 15

In article <?????????>, Mortified Botchup <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Yall know you cant sell this piece of crap to anyone, unless your some
sort of completist. Its just a marketing ploy by that Sherry guy. Dont
waste your money buying this, it sucks.

so let's hear from the completists. i think you suck.

--elal

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15. **v386v5hx**

YOUR SUBJECT HEADING HERE

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 suggested>

From: [REDACTED] (Pretty Giddy)

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: Silliman, Spicer, Ceravolo

Date: 14 Feb 1999 10:10:10

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 12

I have been a Jack Spicer and Joe Ceravolo collector for a few
years, and was tickled when Silliman's JC fixation was publicized,
whether true or not. I am interested in comments concerning
why Spicer and Joe Ceravolo fans are into Silliman as well.
Yeah, I know the pat answers...abstraction, pushing the limits,
outsiders, etc. but am anxious to get the response of others. Please
post responses.

I love Silliman's poetry, attitude, etc...and only wish that I could
have his intellect. Maybe I need to take up poststructuralism.

- Thanks in advance, Pretty

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16. **v386v5hx**

AHP: claptrap (was: NON-AHP: trapclap

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Rating: PG13 <poetic guidance for readers over 13 is suggested>

From: Juniper Moxie <[REDACTED]>

Newsgroups: alt.fan.silliman

Subject: SILLIMAN RULES!!! oh, and i'm new to this group!!

Date: 14 Feb 1999 23:23:23

Organization: The Anti-Hegemony Project

Lines: 9

hi!!!

i'm June from Rhode Island. I edit a fanzine in Providence, and
i just want to say or write that I have always loved Silliman's poetry
and his attitude towards life.

HE IS THE SHIT AS MY BOYFRIEND WOULD SAY, although he hates him.
Does anyone know when and where silly will be reading?
thanks.

Juniper
[REDACTED]

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17. **BLUOMA**

AHP

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Subject: Time: 12:35 PM OFFICE MEMO
AHP Date: 3/1/95 Having achieved the second level of
funnel, the AHP is no longer accessible to us even through back channels.
Employing a secret identity removal process, they jacked into the net some time
ago. Mind you, they are not merely the binary replicating viruses that the
humans call graffiti. They pinned the access server on the underside of the
complex plane. Their consciousness has become vast. They are the AIs one
encounters called Runt Packet, Multiple Ack, and Broadcast Storm. Yet naming
them doesn't help and they continue to worry us. But shouldn't we be glad
that the vast and fluid AIs think our group worthy of comment? They actually
wish us well and want us to join them in the second level of funnel. The second
level is achieved by realizing that identity is only unnatural. Now become the
person in everyone's life.

-bologna

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18. **Gary Sullivan**
Community/Influence
Wed 1 Mar 1995

Dear Charles, Chris, Sheila, Spencer & others:

I share Spencer's concerns, if not his negativity (which I appreciate nonetheless). Here: Minneapolis-St. Paul, there's the MONOLITH (The Loft, New Rivers, Graywolf, Holy Cow!, Milkweed, New Rivers, Coffee House Press) and then there's "everyone else." "Everyone else" does not constitute a community, and may never, though we might be better off if it did. What we have (partial list, and forgive how reductive this will be): Charles Alexander (Chax Press, and Exec. Dir. of the MN Center for Book Arts): Charles publishes and brings to MPLS-STPL mostly mid- or advanced-career poets, writers and bookmakers. His primary (which is not to say "only") "influence sphere" seems to be the language writers. Curt Anderson (_Exile_): Curt's interests are mostly classical; I couldn't tell you what his contemporary "influence sphere(s)" might be. Erik Belgum (starting up a cassette label which will "publish" sound/text pieces): Erik's "influence sphere" seems to be sound/text artists, mostly Canadians, such as The Four Horsemen. Jonathan Brannen (Standing Stones Press): Jonathan's primary "influence spheres" seem to be the "inland experimentalists" (U.S. & Canadian) and "exploratory" fiction writers past & present. Marta Deike (Detour Press): Marta's primary "I.S." seems to be innovative/feminist writers, such as Sarah Murphy, Kathy Acker, etc. Eliza Murphy (no vehicle): Eliza's "I.S." seems (based on reading very little of her work) to be early American and British women modernists, like Mina Loy. Mark Nowak (_furnitures_, North American Ideophonics): Mark's primary "I.S." seems to be a combination of sound/text artists and poets associated with ethno/spoken-poetics. Anthony Schlagel (no vehicle): Couldn't say what his "I.S." might be, though I think it's mostly classical and international. Gary Sullivan (Detour Press): My primary "I.S." would be the NY School and the unaffiliated/disenfranchised (Burns, Thorpe, Weiners).

There are others here, too. How do we all get together, despite our different interests? Might not our getting together and discovering common ground, as well as making discoveries through each other, be more valuable to us ultimately than if we remain fully devoted to our own special interests?

This, I think, is the crux of Spencer's argument. He seems to be suggesting a dialog as opposed to a number of (admittedly interesting) monologues. We're all interested in "open form" poetry, no? How about "open community"? Is that possible? Ed Foster's _Talisman_ seems to me one of the most successful

attempts at creating, if not an "open community," the next best thing, a fairly open magazine, "meeting place."

I'd like to see that happen here in Minnesota. Any ideas?

Yours,

Gary

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19. **Robert A Harrison**

ub list

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Could we please get the list back into a bit of order? I don't see any reason to bash Ron Silliman's or anybody else's character or work. I regret having made any comment to the effect that we shouldn't keep some restraint in dealing with this list.

This should be an e-space where people can safely and responsibly discuss poetry matters with one-up-manship kept to a minimum. Another place where a real sense of community can continue. Otherwise, it seems it will degenerate into something that most people will not be interested in dealing with.

Sincerely,

Bob Harrison

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20. **Alan Golding**

ub list

Wed 1 Mar 1995

Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

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

Hear hear (or is it here, here?) to Bob Harrison's response to the recent slew of postings. I don't exactly object to what Bob calls the Silliman-bashing, but only because I'm not sure it's bashing--though I'm the one who can't read tone, remember, so Ron, you might feel differently. Are you being bashed? What I do object to is the sudden upsurge in the bullshit quotient. Can we at least consider an "In-Jokes and General Cutesiness" sub-list, to accommodate the folks who have all this free time on their hands to be anti-hegemonic or who want to continue the apparently endless flavors-of-New-Zealand-ice-cream thread?

Frankly I'm getting just about ready to check out and head on over to the New Formalism list.

Dyspeptically your-all's,

Alan

In Slinger, Dorn writes "Entrapment is this society's sole activity / And only laughter can blow it to rags." And Charles Bernstein, in an unpublished (I think) poem: "The shortest distance between transcendence and immanence is hilarity." Fer sure. But then those guys are actually funny.

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21. **Tony Green**

Re: Community/Influence

Wed 1 Mar 1995

"and then there's "everyone else." "Everyone else" does not constitute a community, and may never, though we might be better off if it did. W"

"Gary Sullivan (Detour Press): My primary "I.S" would be the NY School and the unaffiliated/disenfranchised (Burns, Thorpe, Weiners)."

"There are others here, too. How do we all get together, despite our different interests? Might not our getting together and discovering common ground, as well as making discoveries through each other, be more valuable to us ultimately than if we remain fully devoted to our own special interests?

This, I think, is the crux of Spencer's argument."

Hi, Gary, Yup, there's a lot of us on the margins/fringes of Minneapolis via this List, but surprisingly close at hand, like in London (England) Auckland, Melbourne, and, so it seems, New York, San Francisco...e t c What exactly is the difference from being ON THE GROUND? anymore.

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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22. **Patrick Phillips**

subtrafuge

Thu 2 Mar 1995

It appears that this list needs, not wants, a coherent amount of prattle. That the theory/truth dichotomy is not a dichotomy at all, but a revolving door that lets the social, the riff-raff in. It seems this need strikes at the heart (a prattish metaphor) of the hinge that lets in and issues out. The thin membrane between theory and doctrine needs prattle in order to decipher, or to clarify that oscillation between love and chattle, acquaintance and stranger. I hate to appear to substantiate incoherent subtrafuge because in fact what I wish to lend credence to is coherent subtrafuge and applaud all those who relish (and undermine) the berm.

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23. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: subtrafuge

Thu 2 Mar 1995

I thought I might offer that I once climbed three stories above the street at Shattuck and University in Berkeley to "alter" a billboard above McDonald's. The billboard was advertising an Egg McMuffin and the caption was "Rise and Dine." After several Irish coffees at Brennan's (a local wursthause cum irish pub with vietnamese cooks) a co-conspirator and I climbed the narrow ladder, he watched for cops and I spray painted "Wretch and Die" to my delight and we scurried down. (This kind of think can get you killed by vigilante's in LA.) It wasn't until a year or two later that a publication on "altered billboards" and general mayhem in the Bay Area came out that I realized that my double entendre was in fact a mis-spelling - much like subtrafuge.

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24. **George Bowering**

Re: ub list

Thu 2 Mar 1995

Strange, I am really glad to hear a bit of humour from time to time, and really glad to read the fake newspaper stuff from, I think, Albany. Before they showed up I was struck by the earnestness, the humorlessness of most of the talk, the (pardon me) self-imp[ortance. I was thinking: is this a U.S. characteristic of the poetry crowd these days?

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25. **George Bowering**
Re: Community/Influence

Thu 2 Mar 1995

I want to endorse Sullivan's recent plea for openness, for dialogue as opposed to monologs bashing each other. How many times have you had to go to some "function" and talk with a poet whose work you have always felt like denigrating, and found out that she was really fun to talk with, maybe even shared some feelings about things? You don't then have to like the person's poetry, but you can still have commerce with that person, and really, is that worthless, a person? I really LIKE the NY school poets, but that doesn't mean I am going to bang monologue up against a LangPo guy who can't stand, say, Ron Padgett. Sorry if this sounds skewed: I have just come back from reading at a Freedom To Read Week "function" with some "other" types whom I enjoyed hearing.

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26. **WILLIAM NORTHCUTT**
Poetry Alive

Thu 2 Mar 1995

I'm surprised at the criticism directed at the Silliman flames. Well, not surprised. I agree that a lot of it is a waste of time to read, that a lot of the humorous listings here are a waste of time, but that's why we have delete mechanisms. But it also seems to me that this bullshit is a sign of a healthy discussion group as well--a bit of useless material, and there's a lot to be said about the usefulness of uselessness. Too, a lot of it seems not only tongue in cheek, but a tongue in a tongue in cheek. And do we kid ourselves that all of the "serious" material is really valuable? I do agree that the jokes are growing tired, or rather, I'm growing tired of them, even if they do show signs that poetry is alive, that it's being taken out of "serious" discussions and being bandied about. Let this group breathe and stretch and scratch, produce overflow, useless, excretory overflow.

--william

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27. **Jonathan Brannen**
Re: Community/Influence

Thu 2 Mar 1995

Gary,

Any ideas for forming an "open community" here in Minnesota? For a start, you might discuss this idea with those people you list in your post. They actually live in Minnesota which seems relevant since you've chosen to define community as locale (not a concept that I feel entirely at home with). If you find this is too radical a notion, I'm sure Charles (Hi, to all three Charles! on this list), Chris (Hi, Chris! all four of you), Sheila (Hi, Sheila!), Spencer (Hi, Spencer!) and others (Hi, others! each of you, individuals that you are with, I hope, varied life-styles) could all provide wonderful ideas for "open communities" in Minnesota. Why not have a contest?

Why not have everyone SEND PROPOSALS FOR ***OPEN COMMUNITIES IN MINNESOTA*** TO GARY SULLIVAN, [REDACTED]! Maybe, the winner could be chosen randomly in a blind reading by the members of the Minnesota Project for Contemporary Language Arts (Hi again, Gary! Hi, Marta! Hi, Curt! oops, you're not on-line are you Curt?) and announced in a future issue of EXILE (Hi, Minnesota Project for Contemporary Language Arts!). How about a selection of miscellaneous e.g. Press chapbooks as the prize?

I, too, admire what Ed Foster is doing with TALISMAN. I attribute this to his editorial intelligence and his willingness to be open to various poetics rather than being governed by one narrow agenda of poetics.

I don't know what "inland experimentalists" are. But if it's among my "influence spheres" then it includes all the continents, not simply North America and it's not landlocked, though it's not an imaginary coast. I grew up on the coast of Florida, I understand the difference between passing waves and solid ground. As for Standing Stones Press, I publish chapbooks of work that I like, both poetry and fiction. The writers I've published live all over approach writing in various ways. They include Geof Huth, Sheila Murphy, Dennis Barone, Curt Anderson, Stephen-Paul Martin, Michelle Murphy, Peter Ganick, Cydney Chadwick and John Perlman. Titles by Gerald Burns and Tom Ahern are in the works. I'll be posting a catalog to the list in the near future.

Gary, I'm not sure which of Spencer's many well-stated arguments you're rallying in support of. If it's his notion that poetry is an art and that there is a discernable difference between art and theory, I agree. I also believe that poems can be the manifestations of theory and that poems can contain theories or anything else that finds its way into the work. Did I miss a posting from Spencer concerning the nature of dialog? The trick to successful dialog is to pay attention to one another's monologues rather than simply speaking to hear the sound of your own voice. Don't put words in my mouth and I'll listen while you speak.

Best of all to all,
Jonathan

On March 1 Gary Sullivan wrote:

Dear Charles, Chris, Sheila, Spencer & others:

I share Spencer's concerns, if not his negativity (which I appreciate nonetheless). Here: Minneapolis-St. Paul, there's the MONOLITH (The Loft, New Rivers, Graywolf, Holy Cow!, Milkweed, New Rivers, Coffee House Press) and then there's "everyone else." "Everyone else" does not constitute a community, and may never, though we might be better off if it did. What we have (partial list, and forgive how reductive this will be): Charles Alexander (Chax Press, and Exec. Dir. of the MN Center for Book Arts): Charles publishes and brings to MPLS-STPL mostly mid- or advanced-career poets, writers and bookmakers. His primary (which is not to say "only") "influence sphere" seems to be the language writers. Curt Anderson (Exile): Curt's interests are mostly classical; I couldn't tell you what his contemporary "influence sphere(s)" might be. Erik Belgum (starting up a cassette label which will "publish" sound/text pieces): Erik's "influence sphere" seems to be sound/text artists, mostly Canadians, such as The Four Horsemen. Jonathan Brannen (Standing Stones Press): Jonathan's primary "influence spheres" seem to be the "inland experimentalists" (U.S. & Canadian) and "exploratory" fiction writers past & present. Marta Deike (Detour Press): Marta's primary "I.S." seems to be innovative/feminist writers, such as Sarah Murphy, Kathy Acker, etc. Eliza Murphy (no vehicle): Eliza's "I.S." seems (based on reading very little of her work) to be early American and British women modernists, like Mina Loy. Mark Nowak (furnitures, North American Ideophonics): Mark's primary "I.S." seems to be a combination of sound/text artists and poets associated with ethno/spoken-poetics. Anthony Schlagel (no vehicle): Couldn't say what his "I.S." might be, though I think it's mostly classical and international. Gary Sullivan (Detour Press): My primary "I.S." would be the NY School and the unaffiliated/disenfranchised (Burns, Thorpe, Weiners).

There are others here, too. How do we all get together, despite our different interests? Might not our getting together and discovering common ground, as well as making discoveries through each other, be more valuable to us ultimately than if we remain fully devoted to our own special interests?

This, I think, is the crux of Spencer's argument. He seems to be suggesting a dialog as opposed to a number of (admittedly interesting) monologues. We're all interested in "open form" poetry, no? How about "open community"? Is that possible? Ed Foster's Talisman seems to me one of the most successful attempts at creating, if not an "open community," the next best thing, a fairly open magazine, "meeting place."

I'd like to see that happen here in Minnesota. Any ideas?

28. **Jonathan Brannen**
Re: Community/Influence

Thu 2 Mar 1995

Sorry I mangled the line breaks last time. Hope this post can be read.

Gary,

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29. **FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH**

alt.fan.silliman

Thu 2 Mar 1995

the object
of the satire
isn't him or his work,
but the context
of poetic(s) discourse
in which the work
appears

the barrage was a tribute,
as well as a comment

on the flood
of inanity
that threatens all work (his included),
or in any case threatens
to destroy the distinction
between poetry & inanity

we're outta here,

a-h g

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30. **James Sherry**

Re: ub list

Thu 2 Mar 1995

I'd like to second the refrain that the messages are becoming an outlet for a kind of aggression that I don't really want to participate in. The bleeri satires have a good resonance with the base line of discussion and include themselves in poking fun. The current rash strikes me as mean spirited although I agree with Alan again that it's not so much bashing as a kind of misplaced homage. I hope you writers will... James

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31. **James Sherry**

Re: alt.fan.silliman

Thu 2 Mar 1995

I think Chris that the flames have a tendency to consume the firestarter. I also think that you were attempting to prevent others from speaking in the way they wanted to by "shouting" them down and in that way denied them the right to speak how they wanted. There's a big difference between asking someone to modify their approach and the aggression of those messages. If you are not happy with the way you yourself can address the issues, I would suggest thinking about it and coming up with a coherent response rather than with undifferentiated aggression. I don't expect you to agree, but I want to say it.

How is this different from the way you flamed Ron? It's more boring. It's intention is clearer in that I am trying to get you to stop attacking people and gaining control of everyone's e-mail list under the guise of parody. And I am giving you the option. There are other valid interpretations, but that is the way I felt reading those recent messages.

"As Freud said about humor.
I forget." paraphrase of Bernstein

Jamses

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32. **Colleen Lookingbill**

Re: Fwd: Re: Thoughts About Engag...

Thu 2 Mar 1995

to all

several things:

1. re: Charles Alexander's

Getting back to what was a topic at the begining of the po/theor discussion, which was about whether every poem had a theory within or behind it, whether poems embodied theory in some way . . .

Curious that I put in one comment about what interested me most in theory and Gary S. took that to mean something about my poetry. I discussed it with him offline, but it seems that in many minds theor/po are automatically/inextricably linked. I don't consider my writing at all to be poetry of personal experience, I have my methods which come from personal experience but does that make the writing itself that method? Not in my opinion. How does this fit into the discussion?

2. re Spencer's list of eight and the other's replies and reactions - again curious how expressing valid concerns and problems is viewed as "negativity", "frustration", etc. Egads if you aren't frustrated with the literary community you must be in serious denial, and if that constitutes negativity then so be it! Running a reading series in S.F. has made it very clear to me that no community exists here today, except as it serves the various spheres of influence. It puts me in mind of James P.Carse's Finite and Infinite Games - [The fluidity of our social and therefore personal existence is a function of our essential freedom - the kind of freedom indicated in the formula "Who must play, cannot play." Of course as we have seen, finite games cannot have fluid boundaries, for if they do it will be impossible to agree on winners... It is this essential fluidity of our humanness that is irreconcilable with the seriousness of finite play. It is, therefore this fluidity that presents us with an unavoidable challenge: how to contain the serious within the truly playful; that is how to keep all our finite games in infinite play.]

Most important is to keep this list space fluid and free.

From Colleen Lookingbill

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33. **RSILLIMA** **Behavior**

Thu 2 Mar 1995

I've received a lot of backchannel queries about how I feel about the Anti-Hegemony Project's "alt.fan.silliman" sequence (which by my count stopped at around 25 messages).

I don't feel badly. I don't feel "flamed." And I don't particularly think it was directed at me except in that "homage by ambivalence" sort of way. I (or at least a fictive Ron Silliman) was usually the object of some commentary that was being ascribed to somebody else on the list (tho I think one or two "authors" might not be up on email yet). Since they were the ones having phoney words put in their mouths, I suspect that they might feel much more violated in that they were alleged to believe/say things they might not have any sympathy towards whatsoever. How does Lew Daly feel about being characterized in such a two-dimensional Elmer Gantry stereotype? It seemed to me throughout that whatever "meanness" existed in the sequence largely was involved in mangling those alleged voices.

All the quotes of my work were generally accurate and so were a few of critiques. (Yeah, I do use the anecdotal as a lever in my critical pieces and it's worth thinking about the consequences of that. I've been trashed for close reading before (by Don Byrd among others), as if the practice itself were politically incorrect (rather than the uses to which it once was put a full generation ago). But no, Ketjak is not a character. The comment on barfing in K was supposed to call up questions of gender, sexual practice and power. Those lines are grounded in autobiography, but that's not the point. I can't imagine having an R. Crumb cover. I loved the dream and have in fact stolen from it for a piece in progress, thank you very much. Most serious critique of all: not one comment about any of my last 6 books. And anybody who wants a copy of *The Difficulties* should just write to me backchannel. I think I have a few left.)

The day before it all started, a lurker (you know who you are) wrote to me that one reason she posts so little to the group is the sense she has of active hostility on the part of particularly the younger participants toward us old-fart G1 types. People seem ready to jump all over a press like Sun & Moon while nobody trashes New Directions. I responded to her at the time that this was because New Directions was irrelevant, and that this kind of response seems to me precisely an index of anxiety that people may feel about a given person &/or institution. It's ultimately a definitional process. How do we differentiate ourselves from our "elders" especially when we admire their work and can't quite say why or how we ourselves are so unalterably *different*?

I told her that I thought we'd been just as bad in our 20s, although she personally denies it. (I don't: I got to really know Robert Duncan first when I wrote to the SF Chronicle in '66 saying that the bust of Lenore Kandel's Love Book gave writers and the ACLU the chance to extend the first amendment by arguing for the right to produce erotica that was not great literature or socially redeeming. Duncan went onto KQED television to read his open letter denouncing me. I was 19 at the time, an undergraduate at SF State, and a fun time was had by all. That was also the year I wrote to Pound telling him how he ought to conclude the Cantos--with a photo of the Hong Kong harbor, ancient boats bobbing in front of highrises in the smog-filled sky, carrying the poem's move to the graphic to a logical conclusion. I also wrote to Zukofsky, trying to get permission to publish The Objectivist Anthology & the Objectivist issue of Poetry as single volume. I no doubt explained to him in some very condescending fashion the importance of his own work. He sent back a very gracious note that's in the archives at UCSD: "No//but//sincerely,//LZ." I think that the evidence is clear that I was a total brat as a kid, but I only picked on poets who meant a lot to me.)

E-space merely changes the dynamics a little. It gives everybody on the list equal access in a way that sitting around the feet of a pontificating Duncan at a party never did. So it doesn't surprise me at all to see a dynamic I can still remember/recognize showing up here at all. It's no different from what the Apexers are trying to do in their editorials, but that's really the only other kind of venue young writers have for such a social move.

Ideally, though, e-space might actually change the dynamics over time. Maybe if all we simply acknowledge and presume the state of easy access (and, with it, the recognition that everybody's watching), we won't feel so intimidated by older writers who love to hear themselves talk. It would be interesting to see what might happen if younger poets could develop in a supportive setting and older ones wouldn't feel so threatened by difference among the next generation. How do we get there?

It's actually the same question that Gary Sullivan and others have been asking.

I do have one suggestion that I think would make for an improvement all around. When people send out parodies (even mean ones), have the courage to sign it or at least to send it from an email address that let's everyone know just who you are. Believe me, we don't bite. I think that a lot of the bad feelings I hear being expressed, both publically and otherwise, have as much to do with the anonymity of the project as with anything that has ever been said. It's much harder to be an object of parody if you don't know where it's coming from.

Ron Silliman



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34. **Tony Green**

Re: Even Shiva Does the Hokey Pokey

Thu 2 Mar 1995

EVEN SHIVA DOES THE HOKEY POKEY

And then went down to the ice cream parlour,
Set paddles to Pokey, girls & boys, a godly C, and
We set up housekeeping, and sail on a sweat shirt.
And then when we wondered, where going, where sliding,
We tankard the emblem, fran ending, forfend.

Ah, for the life of it, ox carts, masks, coral,
Colas of both brands, we invoke you Mousses
Both Strawberry & Chocolate to enrich our lead-
En mix (as occasionally you do for such as Seinfeld)...

Tony Green,

e-mail:

post: Dept of Art History,

University of Auckland,

Private Bag 92019,

Auckland, New Zealand

Fax: 64 9-

Telephone: 64 9 ext. 8981 or 7276

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35. **Mark Wallace**

theory and poetry

Thu 2 Mar 1995

Perhaps, if it's not too late in the game on this one, I'd like to mention something that I didn't see addressed in the recent theory/poetry debates. Rather than talk about theory vs. poetry at all, might not one mention that FORM is crucial to the presentation of ideas, that it's not simply a "what" but also a "how," and in that sense, every piece of writing (theory/poetry/fiction, call it what you will) has a form that opens up or represses possibilities in words. In fact I always thought that this was one of the most interesting thing about the work of people like James Sherry, Ron Silliman, Leslie Scalapino, many others--

that the "what" (ideas?) was not alienated from the how (the form), but realized in it... What, that is, are the implications of a form of writing in determining its meaning? Using such a question, falling back on distinctions between poetry and theory just may not be the point at all.

mark wallace

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36. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Community/Influence

Thu 2 Mar 1995

My apologies to Jonathan Brannen and others for being reductive. (You were warned.)

Also to anyone who felt "left out" by virtue of my limiting myself to people in my area. It was meant as an example. I'm genuinely interested in reading about others' experiences, & thought that might prompt a few.

That post, Jonathan, being a response to Spencer's well-stated ideas about the differences between "community" and "spheres of influence." If you did indeed miss Spencer's post, I'm sure he'd be happy to forward.

Sorry if what I said sounded like "Say! Let's put on a play! We can use Grampa Joe's bedsheets as a curtain! and me & Sally Mae can act, swell, you bet!"

Pretty much everyone here, Jonathan, those I mentioned, & others, have tried to bring everyone together on different occasions. Some attempts have been more successful than others, but I've never felt what we have here is a "community." I'm sure others elsewhere in the States, in Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia, etc., have made similar attempts. I thought it worth bringing up for that reason. My questions weren't rhetorical. I'm sorry if they came across that way.

If nothing else, someone who runs a radio program e-mailed me for Erik Belugum's address; so, Erik's got at least one more place to send his tapes.

And, yeah, Jonathan: You **should** tell us about your books. I'm sure your authors will appreciate it. Not to mention anyone who'd like to order them but can't w/out your address because SPD has denied you (& other new presses of your size publishing mostly younger writers) access.

Anyway, your point about listening is well taken. I'll shut up & lurk for a while.

Yours,

Gary

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37. **Mark Nowak**

Re: Community/Influence

Thu 2 Mar 1995

in the recent past, Graywolf Press has published:

- 1.) *The Horse Has Six Legs: An Anthology of Serbian Poetry*
edited by Charles Simic.
 - 2.) *Warrior for Gringostroika* by Guillermo Gomez Pena
 - 3.) *Unravelling Words & the Weaving of Water*
by Cecilia Vicuna.
- (& books by/of Rilke, Huidobro, Montale, etc.)

in the recent past, Milkweed Editions has published:

- 1.) *Mouth to Mouth: Poems by Twelve Contemporary Mexican Women*
edited by Forrest Gander.
- (& books by/of Glancy, Neruda, Hauge, etc.)

in the recent past, New Rivers Press has published:

- 1.) *Iron Woman* by Diane Glancy
- 2.) *Wolves* by Jim Johnson
- 3.) *Touchwood: A Collection of Ojibway Prose*
edited by Gerald Vizenor

Holy Cow! Press has published the likes of Diane Glancy, Duane Niatum, John Brandi, etc. Coffee House Press we all or most of us know.

The question, Gary (hi!) would be, if you published a book, say, on Coffee House Press, if I published a book on Holy Cow! Press, if Chax Press won an NEA, would we enter the MONOLITH? My concern is that your call for an "open community" begins by stating, ab initio, an "division". Even the LOFT & its new competitor, SASE, have sponsored events by the Nuyorican poets. etc. I mean you know I'd be the first to agree that what is here (& most other places I've lived) could use a life-support system. One argument might be that what I've outlined above consists of "multi-cultural writing" that seems to me to have had oh so little space/discussion in this "radical" or "experimental" or "whatever" community, & has been outlined by others as explicitly NOT "language writing." I don't know: Basil Johnston's tales are magnificent, Gerald Vizenor (now in Berkeley) is incredible. So much, in fact, of the Ojibwe & Ho-Chunk & Lakota & other Native writers are on par with or excel whoever else might be "out there". Perhaps it's a question of how "community" is defined, whether our litmus test is the level of semantic experiment, the level of compliance w/ French theory-praxis, or elsewhere.

just a thought...
Mark Nowak

ps- also here in Minnesota are Diane Glancy, Maria Damon,
& others..., Nor Hall, Robert Hill Whiteman (part-time) etc.

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38. **Jim Pangborn**

Down in flames?

Thu 2 Mar 1995

The mood on this list shifts like the tides. Yesterday a near-hysterical tension; today the calm of reason. The hysteria I detected was provoked by the most recent spate of AHP parodies, which moved me to write--I wanted to scold those who scolded. I wanted to defend not AHP but satire itself: it was being badly misrepresented. Thus--

Contrary to Susan Schwartz *_et.al._*, satire needn't be cleanly targeted to be effective as hell. Clean contrary to one particular poster (sorry, I forget who), the greatest satirists knew fully well that they made fun of themselves right along with their supposed targets--that's why Swift, e.g., is enduringly interesting.

Come on, you guys. As Chris Funkhouser (et.al.?) points out, the primary purpose of those parodies was surely not to skewer Ron Silliman. (Granted, his spanking of the Apexers did generate some considerable ill will around here . . .) I thought it plainly evident that the "real" target of **all** AHP's stuff is this medium we're trying to learn how best to handle. ("We"? Is there one? Not 'til "we" found, forge, constitute an "us": an always-ongoing project.) Their satires on the forms and styles of electronic communication--wire-service reporting, vapid b-board chat, listserv intellectualizing, our labyrinthine redistribution of posts within posts within posts--ring dead-on true. I'm impressed. And I have to assume there's more than one person producing this stuff; otherwise I'm put to shame, because, even though I divide my workday the way most of you-all do--i.e. between real writing, reading, scholarly writing, reading, teaching, and reading--I too would like to have such time on my hands (see below).

But I guess you had to be there. My wife kept asking me what was so funny (she was watching television two rooms away, to give you a picture of how I react to AHP when it comes across my screen), and damned if I could explain.

Oh yes--let me introduce myself: Shy, uxorious WM, 40-ish
poeticslistlurking gradstud (i.e. no steady job), seeking same or Other or better
for serious discussion **and** serious fun (which is why I'm staying tuned).
Hobbies: time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.

Thanks for attending

--Jim

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39. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: theory and poetry

Thu 2 Mar 1995

Mark,

I agree. Dare I say that form and content are the same?

Perhaps this isn't appropriate for "poetics" discussion, but since I write fiction as well, and in writing fiction I'm very fond of using constrictive forms (somewhat re: Oulipo) precisely because it both opens and represses possibilities for narrative constructs. I tend to avoid constrictive forms (no relation to new formalism which I find unreadable) because they seem to limit possibilities, though MacLow has produced some marvelous pieces this way.

Jonathan

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40. **John Geraets**

Phoney words

Fri 3 Mar 1995

I didn't want to rush in with just another bucket of water to toss on the "Ron Silliman" flaming. It made me think of framing..

With this talk of flaming and hegemony, I wonder if it's worth talking about the use of Names.

I'm not talking about the name as the practical convenience or device that it is.

Of course, in Japan, the last name comes first: your setting, your kin/pattern, then the individual you. In the west, the first name has far greater play. As a person maybe finally I live by my first name.

Where'm I headed? As well as identification, names carry privileges. Ron's (you know who) carries privileges (and maybe notoriety too?!).

Lang-poets

seem still to associate their writings with their names. The last time I asked to be published

(in NZ) without my name, I was refused. In NZ up to the 60s a number of women writers would appear under adopted names, sometimes men's.

It's this privileging of the name, as authentic, integral, with authority, that POETICS goes some way to abating. But it's the reason why so-called younger generations of writers keep wanting to move in on older (privileged) ones. It's the same game, huh. It's the power thing. Could be it's at back of the gender-talk too. AND the posts there were concerning reading only Known (I think Marjorie Perloff was involved) Names. It leans too much on predisposition, supposition.

Because the name is taken to be such an integrated circuit, something irrefragible(??), it's hard to split up or share the renown it accrues. We can have it conferred on us (get someone Big to write in my flyleaf), but it detracts nothing from the function of Bigness, merely confirms it. Same game.

What to do? Allot ids? Swap names (or name-genders) once in a while, have a lucky dip? have a name amnesty for a week? Or maybe be allotted rankings as to a name's current standing. Make teams?

Lousy solutions, I guess. But my point is that this happens informally now too. On my Mail List there is the sender's name and the subject. I find I'm as interested in the senders name as the subject and am aware how this (is it just me) predisposes my interest and to some extent (is it just me?) my readerly anticipations. I'm not convinced the pre-recognition and pre-eminence associated with the formalized use of proper names is so helpful. I don't like its use as a handlebar. I think texts can have names and persons can have names but why valorize one with the other. I'm unconvinced its what best represents langpo and its poetics.

Of course, I'll leave my name anyway..

John Geraets



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41. **braman sandra**

Re: Even Shiva Does the Hokey Pokey

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Whatever else might be said about Robert Bly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Minnesota it was his leadership that generated a poetry community that understood itself to be exactly that, and poetry readings and activities as means of building community. As, for example, we would have readings with multiple folks at a time -- with poets choosing to read poems one after another in a conversation mode -- one poet would start, someone would choose a poem in response to the first, and so on. Or the publishing collective in which each group of 10 in the collective chose the next 10 and then went on their way, so that the decision-makers themselves were constantly changing...

Let me correct a typo in Even Shiva, the "fran" should read "frank." Three of us are now in

Sandra Braman

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42. **Tom Mandel**

Re: Joining the arts community

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Nice to see mention of Artswire and tmn.com - the Metanet, one of my clients and a favorite one. I guess everything is connected somehow. Ignite yr browsers.

Tom Mandel

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43. **James Sherry**

Re: Behavior

Fri 3 Mar 1995

I like your reply to the "flamers" although I think its over generous, but that is a quality that we value in you. I do disagree on one point though. I don't think it's up to the younger generation to create a supportive environment, it's up to the older generation to create a supportive environment, you know. These messages are testing the limits of what can be said and in that they are valuable. If they go beyond the limit of what others find acceptable, they need to be told, but the support must come from those with the surplus to distribute. Jmase

44. **Robert Drake**

Re: Community/Influence

Fri 3 Mar 1995

in the recent past, Graywolf Press has published:

- 1.) *_The Horse Has Six Legs: An Anthology of Serbian Poetry_*
edited by Charles Simic.
 - 2.) *_Warrior for Gringostroika_* by Guillermo Gomez Pena
 - 3.) *_Unravelling Words & the Weaving of Water_*
by Cecilia Vicuna.
- (& books by/of Rilke, Huidobro, Montale, etc.)

in the recent past, Milkweed Editions has published:

- 1.) *_Mouth to Mouth: Poems by Twelve Contemporary Mexican Women_*
edited by Forrest Gander.
- (& books by/of Glancy, Neruda, Hauge, etc.)

in the recent past, New Rivers Press has published:

- 1.) *_Iron Woman_* by Diane Glancy
- 2.) *_Wolves_* by Jim Johnson
- 3.) *_Touchwood: A Collection of Ojibway Prose_*
edited by Gerald Vizenor

Holy Cow! Press has published the likes of Diane Glancy, Duane Niatum, John Brandi, etc. Coffee House Press we all or most of us know.

The question, Gary (hi!) would be, if you published a book, say, on Coffee House Press, if I published a book on Holy Cow! Press, if Chax Press won an NEA, would we enter the MONOLITH? My concern is that your call for an "open community" begins by stating, ab initio, an "division". Even the LOFT & its new competitor, SASE, have sponsored events by the Nuyorican poets. etc. I mean you know I'd be the first to agree that what is here (& most other places I've lived) could use a life-support system.

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Perhaps it's a question of how "community" is defined, whether our litmus test is the level of semantic experiment, the level of compliance w/ French theory-praxis, or elsewhere.

just a thought...
Mark Nowak

*ps- also here in Minnesota are Diane Glancy, Maria Damon,
& others..., Nor Hall, Robert Hill Whiteman (part-time) etc.*

also in minnesota (well, duluth) is Poetry Harbor, which published _days of obsidian, days of grace: 4 native american writers_, as well as Poetry Motel magazine, which certainly has no connection w/ French theory-praxis or langpo or whatever... but multiculti, & so not missing frm yr list on that ground...

i'd guess no matter how much you/we try to enlarge our "community", there'll still be "outsiders": folks whom you/we feel you/we have little in common with. & i'm not saying that's a bad thing, but something we have to own up to, and not just ascribe to some "other" (sorry for the ungainly you/we construction here; i wrote it out w/ just "you" & then caught myself...)

so i'm echoing yr question & qualm, 'bout how we identify (w/) thee MONOLITH... and to suggest "communities" emphasis on the plural-- as a self-perception & antidote to the single-partyline-poetic that seems to me at root of much of the in-fighting we've seen so much ov

luigi

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45. **Ted Pelton** *other side*

Fri 3 Mar 1995

I've already erased two responses to Auntie Hedge Enemy, but will make this my statement of record: It seems to me they're only interested in talking to people who get their jokes. I missed most of them myself. And I'm from Buffalo, four years removed--I can only imagine the bewilderment of an Australian (though on second thought rural Wisconsin actually doesn't seem that much closer). In any case, it's hard for me to buy the argument "This isn't inane, it's just representing inanity."

As someone not in the loop, but trying to follow these conversations anyway (I'm a fiction writer but rather bored with what's been going on in the experimental vein there lately -- is it possible that Robert Coover is hot again? -- finding recent poetry more eye-popping), I wonder, am I allowed to ask a question, or do I have to study long and hard to acquire the shibboleths first?

I do have a question. I saw Hank Lazer give a paper at Louisville which was down on a couple recent anthologies, including the new Messerli edited Sun&Moon, _From the Other Side of the Century_, which strikes me as a fairly

good one (again I say from outside, but interested). Lo, when I arrived home, I'd been sent the book from my sister-in-law as a late birthday present, a happy coincidence. Looking at it, I take Lazer's point about the structure, that is, that the four groupings (in shorthand: "culture"/"self&society" (NYSchool)/"language"/ "performance") are at least as problematic as they are elucidating. But I was more taken aback by what it seems to me are a couple of striking omissions. Ed Dorn, it seems to me, should certainly be included in any selection of recent poets in an innovative tradition concerned with (Messerli's explanation of section 1) "cultural issues and a complex of overlapping ideas about myth, politics, history, place, and religion"--I mean, that sounds like a DESCRIPTION of Dorn's work. And also Kenneth Koch, who strikes me as an integral part of the NY school. I saw him and Ron Padgett read at Woodland Pattern in Milwaukee last year. Koch was the headliner, Padgett seemed implicitly to acknowledge this; Koch read the more challenging works (to my idea of things), yet Padgett is in this anthology and Koch isn't.

Now I only got onto this list in November, and it seems likely that this issue was visited some time in the past when I didn't, as they used to say with CBs, have my ears on. I have a sensitivity to not tying up the space; but then I think, shit, my screens have been clogged with fuck-all for weeks!!! (especially post-Louisville; I'm sure Steve Evans, Alan Golding, Bob Perelman and others who were there have also been very much occupied with simply getting through all the stuff that accumulated last weekend when we were otherwise engaged) Besides, it's like when you run into people who are just now seeing Pulp Fiction for the first time: I don't mind if you say "we've already had this conversation". I'd just like someone to summarize it for me.

And, yes, anthologies are always a problem. But The New American Poetry did reasonably important things it seems to me. This one is self-consciously coming in its footsteps. There are differences of opinion, I'm sure, about both Dorn & Koch, who it strikes me now similarly structure much of their verse around satire, for instance. Ron Silliman (never having seen him, I picture him now with singed eyebrows) spoke a couple weeks ago about the NY school and how for him, for better or worse but undeniably, Koch figured prominently. And if you're going to leave someone out, shouldn't you at least say why (maybe Messerli has in a place I haven't yet looked). Donald Allen was explicit about why T.S. Eliot was left out of Poetics of the New American Poetry in his introduction to that work.

Ted Pelton

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46. **I.LIGHTMAN**

Re: alt.fan.silliman

Fri 3 Mar 1995

I just wanted to say that I found the spoof silliman lists absolutely hilarious, that, as Elizabeth Burns says in the Dec 94 issue of Poetic Briefs, one feels unwelcome thus silenced as a younger poet putting forward reasoned radical critique of the older generation right now, so all power to the anon AHP; and, above all, that the spoof as a total brilliantly conveyed the feel of being a lurker on a list of people *fascinated* by something you yourself don't love in that detail, as is evidenced in a lot of responses to it. What I loved most of all about the spoof was that it didn't do this last effect stupidly; it didn't offer people saying nothing of interest at great length, but made some very informed points about what they (and I) love about the good parts of Ron Silliman's work, and worry over in the porn of it. A point is; you probably wouldn't get this amount of spoof on a lot of the Language Writers, because few of them maintain such a lasting impact on younger readers, certainly myself, as Silliman. Above all, I want to say: the spoof showed me, at least, what a very intelligent list on a very interesting poet or poets (ie both alt.fan.silliman, *and* POETICS, this list we're now "on") looks like to outsiders. I don't myself feel "outside" nearly as much as I'd like to from an exciting margin. It makes me feel.

Ira

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47. **eric pape**

Re: theory and poetry

Fri 3 Mar 1995

The formulation that form is content, or vice versa, is helpful if only to refute the all too common idea that form is a box that somehow contains any given content. A kind of transcendental, naturalized content, which everyone knows, is common sense, contained in an arbitrary, imposed form. This kind of simple opposition I don't find too helpful. But saying simply that form *is* content, or content *is* form, is, I think a little too easy. It collapses what I think are real distinctions between the two. If nothing else it isn't true to what I think is the real struggle, the real battle, to fit what you are trying to say into how you're trying to say it. And maybe this is the most helpful way of seeing the form/content split that I know: as the record of a struggle. As form mediated by content and content mediated by form. At least, I may add, on the level of composition; as you try to write it. It may be easier, maybe necessary, to say that there is no difference on the level of reading; in other words, once you see something in some form, it is impossible to imagine it in any other. But on the

level of writing, I find it more helpful to think of it dialectically. My two cents, Eric.

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48. **eric pape**

Re: Behavior

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Frankly, Ron as someone spoofed, I was pretty flattered. I thought the LSUE. quite clever, but the POPE? Heard worse things about my name in elementary school. But if the implication is that the poetics list acts as a fan club for you, or at least the name SILLIMAN, then I don't agree. Actually, I'm more of a Penn Warren fan myself. That hanged woman scene in Audobon always gives me a stiffy. Thanks, Eric/Erik.

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49. **eric pape**

Re: Community/Influence

Fri 3 Mar 1995

I'd like to respond in an odd way to both Gary and Spencer's posts, ie, to both the idea of community and spheres of influence. I'd like to respond with the absolutely asinine question of what is poetry? I think the answer to that question, a question incidentally, that my students ask me all the time, is that poetry is what poets say it is. But that don't mean that anyone can say I believe poetry is a series of regular belches in a dark room and be taken seriously. That is, not at least until she/he comes up with a good reason why belches in a dark room are poetry, ie, a theory of poetry that is comprehensive enough to be taken seriously. To switch to science: when Copernicus came up with his theory of the solar system, what made it ultimately more compelling than the Ptolemaic theory was that it accounted for more variables. In this way, then, I think a given theory of poetry, and everyone begins to write a poem with a given theory of poetry, must compete with earlier theorizations on this level, ie, to take into account the gaps in our articulation of poetry and account for them. That's what I think NY school did, and the l-school. That's where the new group has to come in. Look for where the dominant strain can't account, and do so. This is, by the way, what ultimately made me switch from mainstream AWP poetry, to experimental/avant garde/oppositional poetry: that the notion of what poetry is is always questioned. Something, I think, we see on this list all the time and is I think the most important contribution of it. Finally, Gary, please don't lurk. I've found your voice very helpful, as well as Susan's and Jonathan's and others, if, for nothing else, we are so far out of the loop. Thanks, Eric.

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50. **Hank Lazer**

Re: other side

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Not down on the anthologies but critical of them, i.e., including praise and negative remarks. The paper I read in Louisville is about half of an extended essay/review which will appear in Contemporary Literature in the Summer issue. The three anthologies I discuss are Lauter's (2nd ed.) Heath anthology of American Lit, Messerli's, and Hoover's. And my particular slant has to do mainly with issues of pedagogy--the use of anthologies in the classroom & the limitations of these particular anthologies. I also, especially on Lauter, consider multiculturalism and its relationship to aesthetic diversity. As for Messerli's anthology, I used it as a core textbook in my Fall 94 course. It IS a rich collection, but....

Hank Lazer

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51. **eric pape**

Re: alt.fan.silliman

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Not sure that I entirely agree with precisely *what* you said, but the *way* you said it is the way. It's the form I tries to articulate earlier. Wow. Thanks, Eric.

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52. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

e-space

Fri 3 Mar 1995

The single most fascinating thing about this list continues to be this list, i.e. the way it morphs, mutates, grows etc. Reminds me a little of those computer games like SimCity or Civilization where your decisions have to be made as your simulated police grows--when do you invent writing and when do you just build more barracks etc etc Only the analogy immediately breaks down because in those "god games" one person makes all the rules, while this Hydra-headed list is always dispersed, always resisting the imposition of order even as "order" and self-ordering necessarily become subjects of discussion. I'm feeling inclined to celebrate the flux and chaos, the giddy sensation of sliding out of control, and i think the AHP stuff has been sort of exhilarating even when it has been tiresome too. And as someone else said, the best thing about it has been

it's canny and self-self-reflexive exploration of the medium itself and all the different shifting, floating discourses of cyberspace. Of course, i can say all this from the safe standpoint of not having been the object of satire, and i can understand why others might feel assaulted. But as i say, i'm inclined these days to celebrate the mess and muck, especially as an order just came down from the Dean of Arts and Sciences that no university facilities, including computer networks, are to be used for political activity (he was responding directly to an attempt to e-organize a protest against the Contract w/ America). Now, i can understand how some rules need to be sorted out for the medium-- i mean i wldn't want my mailbox to be deluged with the propaganda of my political enemies. But i find myself experiencing a certain fear of what is to come and a sort of nostalgia for what hasn't quite passed. As big-business encroaches from one direction (e.g. Bill Gates about to launch his own MicroSoft net) and govt. from the other what lies in store? Will the chaos continue to roil and billow or will these/this be remembered as the wild frontier days and daze that subsided beneath the inevitable wave of tract housing and shopping malls (cf. America On-Line, Prodigy, Compuserve etc etc

steve shoemaker

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53. **Robert A Harrison**

Fwd> Pending Law and Pres.Order Threaten Our Work

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Following is some more news on attempts to seriously police the internet.

Bob Harrison



This posting has been forwarded to you as a service of the Austin Comite de Solidaridad con Chiapas y Mexico.

NOTE BENE: Two actions have been taken to legalize State repression of the kind of work we are doing, i.e., using cyberspace to mobilize support for resistance to Mexican government repression of those struggling for democracy. The rubric under which these actions are being taken is "counterterrorism" --a ploy which has been in use for almost 20 years now. Please note that Clinton's executive order (2nd document below) was signed on February 9, 1995, the same day Zedillo ordered the military against the Zapatistas. Believe it or not absolutely peaceful forms of resistance can be repressed using these means. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION.

Part I: Pending (Counterterrorism Bill)

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Fri, 3 Mar 1995 00:33:18 -0600 (CST)

From: Brad Parsons <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: FYI HR 896 (fwd)

This is in addition to a recent Executive Order seizing authority for searches and seizures without a search warrant on matters of "national security." I'll try to find that recent EO and forward it also.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]

Newsgroups: misc.activism.progressive

Subject: New FBI Charter to Investigate Political Groups

Date: 2 Mar 1995 17:58:41 GMT

The following was posted on Peacenet and should be of paramount concern to all activists - it looks like action needs to be taken on this bill quickly. Apologies if this has already been posted here. Please forward near and wide.

Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill
S. 390 and H.R. 896

New FBI Charter to Investigate Political Groups

February 10, 1995 the Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill was introduced as S. 390 into the Senate and as H.R. 896 in the House. It was initiated by the FBI, and passed on by the Justice Department and the White House. Senators Biden (D-DE) and Specter (R- PA) initiated it in the Senate, Rep. Schumer (D-NY) and Dicks (D-WA) in the House. It has bipartisan support and could get expedited action.

SUMMARY

* THIS IS A GENERAL CHARTER FOR THE FBI AND OTHER AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE MILITARY, TO INVESTIGATE POLITICAL GROUPS AND CAUSES AT WILL. The bill is a wide-ranging federalization of different kinds of actions applying to both citizens and non-citizens. The range includes acts of violence (attempts, threats and conspiracies) as well as giving funds for humanitarian, legal activity.

* It would allow up to 10 year sentences for citizens and deportation for permanent resident non-citizens for the "crime" of supporting the lawful activities of an organization the President declares to be "terrorist", as the African National Congress, FMLN in El Salvador, IRA in Northern Ireland, and

PLO have been labelled. It broadens the definition of terrorism. The President's determination of who is a terrorist is unappealable, and specifically can include groups regardless of any legitimate activity they might pursue.

- * It authorizes secret trials for immigrants who are not charged with a crime but rather who are accused of supporting lawful activity by organizations which have also been accused of committing illegal acts. Immigrants could be deported: 1) using evidence they or their lawyers would never see, 2) in secret proceedings 3) with one sided appeals 4) using illegally obtained evidence.

- * It suspends posse comitatus - allowing the use of the military to aid the police regardless of other laws.

- * It reverses the presumption of innocence - the accused is presumed ineligible for bail and can be detained until trial.

- * It loosens the rules for wiretaps. It would prohibit probation as a punishment under the act - even for minor nonviolent offenses.

IMPLICATIONS * Those who remember the McCarran Walter Act will recognize this bill, only in some ways this is broader and potentially more dangerous

- * This bill is highly political: the President can determine who is a terrorist and change his/her mind at will and even for economic reasons. The breadth of its coverage would make it impossible for the government to prosecute all assistance to groups around the world that have made or threatened to commit violent acts of any sort. Necessarily its choices would be targeted at organizations the government found currently offensive. People to be deported would be chosen specifically because of their political associations and beliefs.

- * The new federal crime: international terrorism doesn't cover anything that is not already a crime. As the Center for National Security Studies notes: "Since the new offense does not cover anything that is not already a crime, the main purpose of the proposal seems to be to avoid certain constitutional and statutory protections that would otherwise apply."

- * While many provisions of this bill could well be found unconstitutional after years of litigation, in the mean time the damage could be enormous to the First Amendment and other constitutional rights including presumption of innocence and right to bail.

THE BILL HAS BEEN REFERRED TO JUDICIARY COMMITTEES OF EACH HOUSE. ONLY THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS AS YET NOTICED THE BILL - A 2/24/95 ANTHONY LEWIS COLUMN. OTHER PAPERS SHOULD BE ALERTED.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Kit Gage, Washington Liaison, National Lawyers Guild
3321-12th St., NE, Washington DC 20017 [REDACTED], fax
[REDACTED], e-mail: [REDACTED]

Part II: Presidential Order (February 9, 1995!!!)

Date: Fri, 3 Mar 1995 00:43:53 -0600 (CST)

From: Brad Parsons <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Clinton Exec.Order-Warrantless Searches

This apparently includes warrantless searches of online machine-readable info. of U.S. citizens in the U.S.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Sat, 11 Feb 95 05:06 EST

From: Dr. Linda D. Thompson, American Justice Federation <[REDACTED]>

***** ALERT ALERT *****

WARRENTLESS SEARCHES CAN NOW BE APPROVED BY FREEH, RENO, DOD, ET. AL. AND CONDUCTED BY ANY FED AGENCY. DUE TO THE CRIME BILL, THE FED AGENCIES ARE NOW ALL OPERATING IN CONSOLIDATED "TASK FORCES."

THIS EXECUTIVE ORDER ***SPECIFICALLY*** APPLIES TO ANYONE USING

COMPUTER COMMUNICATIONS TO GATHER/SPREAD INFORMATION
(SEE THE UNDERLYING LAW AT 50 USC 1801.)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 9, 1995

EXECUTIVE ORDER

- - - - -

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE PHYSICAL SEARCHES

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 302 and 303 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 ("Act") (50 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.), as amended by Public Law 103- 359, and in order to provide for the authorization of physical searches

for foreign intelligence purposes as set forth in the Act, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Pursuant to section 302(a)(1) of the Act, the Attorney General is authorized to approve physical searches, without a court order, to acquire foreign intelligence information for periods of up to one year, if the Attorney General makes the certifications required by that section.

Sec. 2. Pursuant to section 302(b) of the Act, the Attorney General is authorized to approve applications to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court under section 303 of the Act to obtain orders for physical searches for the purpose of collecting foreign intelligence information.

Sec. 3. Pursuant to section 303(a)(7) of the Act, the following officials, each of whom is employed in the area of national security or defense, is designated to make the certifications required by section 303(a)(7) of the Act in support of applications to conduct physical searches:

- (a) Secretary of State;
- (b) Secretary of Defense;
- (c) Director of Central Intelligence;
- (d) Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
- (e) Deputy Secretary of State;
- (f) Deputy Secretary of Defense; and
- (g) Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

None of the above officials, nor anyone officially acting in that capacity, may exercise the authority to make the above certifications, unless that official has been appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

THE WHITE HOUSE,
February 9, 1995.

----- RFC822 Header Follows -----

09:40:17 -0500

with SMTP id AA03692

(InterLock SMTP Gateway 3.0 for <[REDACTED]>);

Fri, 3 Mar 1995 09:41:04 -0600

id AA09940; Fri, 3 Mar 95 09:40:51 CST

Date: Fri, 3 Mar 95 09:40:51 CST
From: [REDACTED] (Harry M. Cleaver)
To: "Robert A Harrison" <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Pending Law and Pres.Order Threaten Our Work

----- Nested Letter Follows ----- This posting has been forwarded to you as a service of the Austin Comite de Solidaridad con Chiapas y Mexico.

NOTE BENE: Two actions have been taken to legalize State repression of the kind of work we are doing, i.e., using cyberspace to mobilize support for resistance to Mexican government repression of those struggling for democracy. The rubric under which these actions are being taken is "counterterrorism" --a ploy which has been in use for almost 20 years now. Please note that Clinton's executive order (2nd document below) was signed on February 9, 1995, the same day Zedillo ordered the military against the Zapatistas. Believe it or not absolutely peaceful forms of resistance can be repressed using these means. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION.

Part I: Pending (Counterterroism Bill)

----- Forwarded message -----
Date: Fri, 3 Mar 1995 00:33:18 -0600 (CST)
From: Brad Parsons <[REDACTED]>
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FYI HR 896 (fwd)

This is in addition to a recent Executive Order seizing authority for searches and seizures without a search warrant on matters of "national security." I'll try to find that recent EO and forward it also.

----- Forwarded message -----
From: [REDACTED]
Newsgroups: misc.activism.progressive
Subject: New FBI Charter to Investigate Political Groups
Date: 2 Mar 1995 17:58:41 GMT

The following was posted on Peacenet and should be of paramount concern to all activists - it looks like action needs to be taken on this bill quickly. Apologies if this has already been posted here. Please forward near and wide.

Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill
S. 390 and H.R. 896

New FBI Charter to Investigate Political Groups

February 10, 1995 the Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill was introduced as S. 390 into the Senate and as H.R. 896 in the House. It was initiated by the FBI, and passed on by the Justice Department and the White House. Senators Biden (D-DE) and Specter (R- PA) initiated it in the Senate, Rep. Schumer (D-NY) and Dicks (D-WA) in the House. It has bipartisan support and could get expedited action.

SUMMARY

* THIS IS A GENERAL CHARTER FOR THE FBI AND OTHER AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE MILITARY, TO INVESTIGATE POLITICAL GROUPS AND CAUSES AT WILL. The bill is a wide-ranging federalization of different kinds of actions applying to both citizens and non-citizens. The range includes acts of violence (attempts, threats and conspiracies) as well as giving funds for humanitarian, legal activity.

* It would allow up to 10 year sentences for citizens and deportation for permanent resident non-citizens for the "crime" of supporting the lawful activities of an organization the President declares to be "terrorist", as the African National Congress, FMLN in El Salvador, IRA in Northern Ireland, and PLO have been labelled. It broadens the definition of terrorism. The President's determination of who is a terrorist is unappealable, and specifically can include groups regardless of any legitimate activity they might pursue.

* It authorizes secret trials for immigrants who are not charged with a crime but rather who are accused of supporting lawful activity by organizations which have also been accused of committing illegal acts. Immigrants could be deported: 1) using evidence they or their lawyers would never see, 2) in secret proceedings 3) with one sided appeals 4) using illegally obtained evidence.

* It suspends posse comitatus - allowing the use of the military to aid the police regardless of other laws.

* It reverses the presumption of innocence - the accused is presumed ineligible for bail and can be detained until trial.

* It loosens the rules for wiretaps. It would prohibit probation as a punishment under the act - even for minor nonviolent offenses.

IMPLICATIONS * Those who remember the McCarran Walter Act will recognize this bill, only in some ways this is broader and potentially more dangerous

* This bill is highly political: the President can determine who is a terrorist and change his/her mind at will and even for economic reasons. The breadth of its coverage would make it impossible for the government to prosecute all assistance to groups around the world that have made or threatened to commit violent acts of any sort. Necessarily its choices would be targeted at organizations the government found currently offensive. People to be deported would be chosen specifically because of their political associations and beliefs.

* The new federal crime: international terrorism doesn't cover anything that is not already a crime. As the Center for National Security Studies notes: "Since the new offense does not cover anything that is not already a crime, the main purpose of the proposal seems to be to avoid certain constitutional and statutory protections that would otherwise apply."

* While many provisions of this bill could well be found unconstitutional after years of litigation, in the mean time the damage could be enormous to the First Amendment and other constitutional rights including presumption of innocence and right to bail.

THE BILL HAS BEEN REFERRED TO JUDICIARY COMMITTEES OF EACH HOUSE. ONLY THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS AS YET NOTICED THE BILL - A 2/24/95 ANTHONY LEWIS COLUMN. OTHER PAPERS SHOULD BE ALERTED.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Kit Gage, Washington Liaison, National Lawyers Guild
3321-12th St., NE, Washington DC 20017 [REDACTED], fax
[REDACTED], e-mail: [REDACTED]

Part II: Presidential Order (February 9, 1995!!!)

Date: Fri, 3 Mar 1995 00:43:53 -0600 (CST)

From: Brad Parsons <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Clinton Exec.Order-Warrantless Searches

This apparently includes warrantless searches of online machine-readable info. of U.S. citizens in the U.S.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Sat, 11 Feb 95 05:06 EST

From: Dr. Linda D. Thompson, American Justice Federation <[REDACTED]>

***** ALERT ALERT *****

WARRENTLESS SEARCHES CAN NOW BE APPROVED BY FREEH, RENO, DOD, ET. AL. AND CONDUCTED BY ANY FED AGENCY. DUE TO THE CRIME

BILL, THE FED AGENCIES ARE NOW ALL OPERATING IN CONSOLIDATED "TASK FORCES."

THIS EXECUTIVE ORDER ***SPECIFICALLY*** APPLIES TO ANYONE USING
COMPUTER COMMUNICATIONS TO GATHER/SPREAD INFORMATION
(SEE THE UNDERLYING LAW AT 50 USC 1801.)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

February 9, 1995

EXECUTIVE ORDER

- - - - -

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE PHYSICAL SEARCHES

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 302 and 303 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 ("Act") (50 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.), as amended by Public Law 103- 359, and in order to provide for the authorization of physical searches for foreign intelligence purposes as set forth in the Act, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Pursuant to section 302(a)(1) of the Act, the Attorney General is authorized to approve physical searches, without a court order, to acquire foreign intelligence information for periods of up to one year, if the Attorney General makes the certifications required by that section.

Sec. 2. Pursuant to section 302(b) of the Act, the Attorney General is authorized to approve applications to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court under section 303 of the Act to obtain orders for physical searches for the purpose of collecting foreign intelligence information.

Sec. 3. Pursuant to section 303(a)(7) of the Act, the following officials, each of whom is employed in the area of national security or defense, is designated to make the certifications required by section 303(a)(7) of the Act in support of applications to conduct physical searches:

- (a) Secretary of State;
- (b) Secretary of Defense;
- (c) Director of Central Intelligence;
- (d) Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

- (e) Deputy Secretary of State;
- (f) Deputy Secretary of Defense; and
- (g) Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

None of the above officials, nor anyone officially acting in that capacity, may exercise the authority to make the above certifications, unless that official has been appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

THE WHITE HOUSE,
February 9, 1995.

----- RFC822 Header Follows -----

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To: "Robert A Harrison" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Pending Law and Pres.Order Threaten Our Work

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54. **Charles Bernstein**

The List Itself

Fri 3 Mar 1995

The List Itself

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

2. Please note that if your e-mail server is down, or if your personal mailbox is full, and a Poetics message gets bounced, you will be automatically unsubscribed from the Poetics listserve. When your system comes back on line or you have cleared your back messages, just subscribe anew. It should be easy

enough to tell if you subscription has been "auto-deleted": a day will pass with no Poetics posts!

3. The DIGEST option is working and that is clearly useful for those who want all the Poetics messages from one day sent as one single e-mail post, or for those whose systems set limits on individual messages. (To get DIGEST, send a one-line message with no subject line to [REDACTED]: set poetics digest; to remove digest send a message that says: set poetics mail.) I have no control over the format of the DIGEST: the listserve program generates the daily digests automatically. If you use the reply option to respond to a message sent in the Digest, the subject line will be the Digest subject head; if possible, send such a message direct to Poetics so that you can write the subject line yourself.

4. To some extent, the Digest option resolves the problem for those for whom the volume of messages is difficult to handle. My commitment is to keep this space open and unregulated -- indeed, I suspect it is the unregulated aspect of the listserve format that is particularly appealing for a list like Poetics. There are no circumstances under which I would consider formally "moderating" this list; though this is an option for other lists because the listserve program makes it possible for messages to be sent to the listowner before they are distributed. In any case, rest anxious, "moderation" has never been considered here at [REDACTED]!

5. I am interested in continuing to explore what formats and styles of posting encourage, rather than simply allow, participation in this "virtual uncommunity". The volume of messages is certainly a useful measure of list activity; but volume itself may be an obstacle for some to participate, just as it may encourage others. Who subscribes is a crucial element: both subscriptions and posting on Poetics are unrestricted, which allows participants to subscribe and unsubscribe themselves at will. When people send me inquiries about the list, I send them the "welcome" message and, generally, ask them to subscribe themselves. The list remains "private", which means that our address will not be found in Guides to the Internet; word-of-mouth (or word-of-net?) seems a better way of including individuals who have a commitment to our multiple areas of investigation. I believe that without some sense of limit, albeit constructed in process, the always fragile sense of intimacy or relatedness that fosters some forms of conversation can easily be lost. But then again, maybe I am resisting the sheer magnitude of the net, as if an imaginary seawall can ever hold back the sea? In any case, different lists and bulletin boards and newsgroups will approach the limits of participation in different ways; no one list can possibly embody all the possibilities. Even as it gets bigger, I still think of this list as "small-scale".

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

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

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

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

--Charles Bernstein

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55. **Charles Bernstein**

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

Fri 3 Mar 1995

HERMIT CRABS DON'T CRY

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

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

1. Postings on [REDACTED] shall be
neither in prose or verse. Rather,
all postings shall conform to shifting
character/line formats, announced
periodically on the list. Initially,
lines shall have at least 43 and no more
than 51 characters; hyphenation is
discouraged.
2. No messages shall be posted between
:43 and :52 minutes after the hour.
3. All postings shall be made from
"Dos"-type platforms; Apple users
may post from "IBM"-type computers
but the graphic orientation of
Macs make these environments
inappropriate for Poetics postings.

4. You have to sound 30 or show ID.
5. On the third Friday of every month, only short "chat" messages to friends on the list may be posted. For those without, or who no longer have, friends on the list, a message service will be available to provide names of friends as well as appropriate messages.
6. The Listowner will provide a name purging service to permit anonymous postings. Purged names will remain strictly confidential, although, at the Listowner's discretion, they may be sold, on condition of continued confidentiality, to benefit the outreach services at [REDACTED] provided by Whitewater Development Company.
7. Subscribers to [REDACTED] agree to end all "back channel" communication. All communication among subscribers shall be sent to the list as a whole: no individual e-mail or conventional mail may be exchanged, no face-to-face verbal communications will be permitted (nonverbal communication is in no way restricted by this rule). At first, this may be difficult for those who live in the same area. But, over time, the enormous advantages to community-building will become apparent.
8. In order to cut down on those repulsive smile icons that are used on Other Lists to indicate humorous intent (as we used to say in Method Acting class -- DON'T INDICATE) [Remember the one about the actor who asked the director what his motivation was to walk across the set and light a cigarette, to which the director replied, "your motivation is, that if you don't, you'll be fired"?] -- where was I? even when I write I lose track

of where I am -- oh yeah,
in order to cut down on those smile icons,
and for other reasons that should be
obvious to all of you (I use the word
"you" inadvisedly), all irony
(including sarcasm, schtick,
mocking, jokes, and comic innuendo)
will be prohibited from the list.
This is a particularly difficult rule
to enforce automatically, but recent,
unpublishable, research, indicates
that there may be genetic markers of
sarcasm and our team of crack(ed?) computer
experts are working around the clock
to find programs to detect this "irony
gene" in linguistic expression.

>FINALLY<

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

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

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

PS

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

██████ -- we're taking the unity
out of community! Unsubscribe today!

or

Not getting enough community at home?

Subscribe to [REDACTED].

Yours in virtuality,

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

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

[originally posted to Poetics 3/5/94]

(rest area)

--Boundary (ID aXbsCtXW+EAcNXFasdGCGw)--

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56. **Sheila Murphy**

Form As Discussion Point

Fri 3 Mar 1995

I would be interested to know (lurking taken to a deeper level?) what kinds of things various people on this list think about relative to form (or not) when you are in the "thinking about" stage of creating a text. Or, when you are making something, at what point form entered the picture. I guess I'm asking for some seminarish exploration with you, your work (whoever you are out there) as the subject. This is just an open question, not a "guess what I'm thinking" game of any kind. It would seem there are multiple possibilities. As with so many things, there are seemingly infinite ways to do this right. But that's not the point anyway.

Eager to hear.

Sheila Murphy

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57. **Alan Sondheim**

Re: Form As Discussion Point

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Almost all my current writing is completed on the Internet, published and distributed on the Internet; hard-copy, magazines, etc. are secondary. So I am aware always of the form of email itself - the reading environment, the nature of the headers, the attention-span of readers, and in particular, the very _appearance_ of ascii text and its "scroll." (I tend to write about "scroll" itself as a form of vision, envisioning. So for me, the text exists in a mobile field, a field

of movement, and I have seen film-scripts on the Net that in fact take advantage of this.

Beyond that, there is a sense of ransacking traditional literature and its values, in a manner consistent with my notions of dissolution. And there is always a sense that my work is archived at a web site and elsewhere, and how the individual components string together.

Finally, I've learned enough about the TCP/IP protocols to understand how transmission occurs, what battles are being fought in the protocol suite itself, and among its designers. And that affects the surface content as well.

Alan

On Fri, 3 Mar 1995, Sheila Murphy wrote:

I would be interested to know (lurking taken to a deeper level?) what kinds of things various people on this list think about relative to form (or not) when you are in the "thinking about" stage of creating a text. Or, when you are making something, at what point form entered the picture. I guess I'm asking for some seminarish exploration with you, your work (whoever you are out there) as the subject. This is just an open question, not a "guess what I'm thinking" game of any kind. It would seem there are multiple possibilities. As with so many things, there are seemingly infinite ways to do this right. But that's not the point anyway.

Eager to hear.

Sheila Murphy

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58. **Sheila Murphy** **COMMUNITY/LURKING**

Fri 3 Mar 1995

Gary, I hope that you DON'T shut up. Keep those posts coming. You contribute to the vibrancy of the list.

I am interested in several people's comments about community. I think that I've found in the postal system for many years a vehicle for community. Or of creating intimacies (several micro-communities). I know a number of writers in Arizona and care very much for a number of friends in what might be called a community. But the way I've always functioned is to commune a bit more directly on paper or one-on-one in the mails with certain people in the writing world (whatever one would call it) than I do face-to-face with people who are geographically near. And both kinds of relating are wonderful in their way. Now, with the net (funny word; in addition to conjuring up webbed-ness, it

seems to suggest catching, as in fish or butterflies), there's a different way (some might say better, but certainly quicker, whatever your position on that point) to commune.

Maybe one of the things I'm leading to or discovering as I tap is that community can't be pushed, although a number of things are catalytic to creating it. For example, projects. Projects are the most wonderful catalysts. Certain people function that way, too. But, again, it sort of happens.

I don't quite know what to make of the discussion about Minnesota, so I'm not sure I would ever presume to be of direct help. Mostly, the message might be, though, that certain (sequences of) projects will shape into the community they desire (even if ad hoc) very quickly. Projects that people care about deeply. Once again, not unlike the world of earnings.

In Phoenix, we are known for not having a very strong poetry community, but we surely have a number of poets. And a number of people know one another very well. Personally, I'm quite satisfied with what we have, as I sort of like having the freedom to work on my own, but then to have a positive spirit among a number of people whom I've known and cared about for years. I guess that some definitions are necessarily quite demanding, even unrealistic.

Enough for one sitting.

Sheila

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59. **Blair Seagram**

Re: DIGEST option: how to get less messages

Sat 4 Mar 1995



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60. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: Form As Discussion Point

Sat 4 Mar 1995

At the risk of being accused of being "wishy washy" (or "worse," "Derridean,") I begin in what may seem like a "middle" (of undifferentiated nothingness) in response to Sheila Murphy's thought provoking "open question" of the "'thinking about' stage of creating a text... (and the idea that..."the seeming infinite ways to do THIS right" is "not the point." The question of what one considers "better" writing, "publishable" is related to the question of "getting lost in the writing" and the question of being

suprised by one's "own" writing, of trying to avoid paralyzing self-consciousness, of the desire "to get all of life in the text" and keeping attentive and not getting carried away on romantic pipedreams that may be the kind of distractions that are necessary for the piece of writing to seem to "take off" as it were (though there must be a pre-airplane way of saying that)...and the question of POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY in the writing act, of editing out the POLITICALLY IRRESPONSIBLE points, as if you in "recollections of tranquility" you actually know what is politically responsible... and the question of various discourses, of the text explaining itself, of the THEME AS THE THING, and the whole socio-historical allegory of text circulation as if composition is explanation...Not all of these things always matter, but the question of "theory" and "practice" can be expressed "poetically" as easily as "theoretically" and so every debate is also a "meta-debate" and maybe is only a meta-debate in an anti-essentialist world in which "having bodyguards but no bodies" (Perelman) is an attractive metaphor, just like Shakespeare's "putrified core"--Anyway, this ties in with ALAN SONDEHEIM'S assertion that there is IN HIS WORK "a sense of ransacking traditional literature and values, in a manner consistent with (his) notion of dissociation"--But what ARE these "traditional literatures and values"? The WESTERN CANON is not set in stone as purely aestheticized...What I thought I once wanted to subvert is not necessarily "traditional literature" but "traditional criticism" that has lent "respectability" and aesthetical-object status to certain writings by misreading it in such a way as to make one want to turn to the "avant-garde" (studd not taught in schools, the whole "auto-didact" cult from which I learned much---correction "studd" is "stuff"), to make one want to turn to a mere inversion of "traditional" values, an inversion that is no better than the so-called "tradition"-- In fact, one could say the "tradition" NEEDS THE ANTI-TRADITIONAL to prop itself up...and this binary view of culture is only interesting as a starting point one may return to again and again on the level of seeming, though of course you'll be accused of being some mere spinning your wheels ORC-CYCLE maya/karma being by those who seem to stand so completely in some "desolation row" of visionary rhetoric they put all their emotions in the PAST--this, too, is an interesting "rhetorical strategy" and may reach a point in which it becomes more, or at least OTHER, than a "rhetorical strategy"--but whether or not this POINT is THE POINT OF NO RETURN is a question i leave to anyone who wishes to take it up...Chris Stroffolino

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61. **cris cheek**

Community / Influence

Sat 4 Mar 1995

Briefly to Mark, Sheila, Gary, Charles, Kali, Eric and others re Community and Spheres of Influence.

This is a community in formational flux. What's workable is who's here now rather than necessarily who those people who are here presently reference. This community will or rather might inconsiderately replicate its existing character preferences unless its behaviour positively embraces both its own and others diversity. Learning ways to be welcoming - to find the touch that's otherwise too carefully thought out from this e-space, bristled and defensive. It's they who fear who feel the need to attack. Challenge is not necessarily struggle. Struggle can too easily become binary dogma. What's present can all too easily become resent.

Our (unpack baggage) behaviour (unpack baggage) or tone can (what is a tone can?) too easily (unpack baggage) disperse (unpack baggage) or repel (unpack baggage) that community (unpack baggage) which we (unpack baggage) imagine (unpack baggage) we (deconstruct unpacked baggage) could (post to Utopia) be (and tell Zeno it explains everything and so tells us nothing (unpack baggage)).

and scroll

cris

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62. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

caught in the Net?

Sat 4 Mar 1995

Reading over my recent posting on e-space, i see that i typed "police" for "polis." I guess that wld be a Foucaultian slip.

steve shoemaker

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63. **cris cheek**

Re: form and content

Sat 4 Mar 1995

xf ox xr mx a n d tx xh ex xo rx xy

p o e t r y a n d c o n t e n t

it's not intended

cris

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64. **cris cheek**

CALL: Sound and Language RE: - Submissions

Sat 4 Mar 1995

I'm editing (and got the money to do) a series of 5 books (each about 70pp and featuring between 3 - 6 writers) which are going to be produced by Sound & Language from May/June this year.

The issue is to cast the most provocative net into:

- writing either made for performance
- or developed / constructed through performance
- or directly related to performance

Some notes and photographic documentation (b/w I'm afraid) will be included.

Get in touch direct with me if you've got something that might open that net.

To give some idea I'm already on the case (and have some work) by some of the following with more coming:

Carla Harryman, Jean Binta Breeze, Aaron Williamson, Fiona Templeton, Gary Stevens, Forced Entertainment, Brian Catling, Steve Benson, Caroline Bergval, Deborah Levy, Fiona Wright Nancy O'Reilly, Charles Stein, Jackson MacLow, Guillermo Gomez Pena David Antin and many others

I'd welcome any leads if it's not your own particular.

I'm keen to present work from across art-forms and so by artists making challenging writing but who aren't primarily known as writers. Multi-voice texts - dark-side monologues - documentation of improvisation / compositions - texts from videos / installations 'performance poems' - photographic poems - explorations of the book as a site (for performance)

It's taking shape now and over the coming months.

Issues 1 and 2 will be available by mid-summer.

The whole project is hoped to be over within 18 months and there's a potential development into (groan) anthology or just collecting it all into a pleated reprint.

Please get in touch with any suggestions / submissions / questions,

and Please pass this on if appropriate

best wishes

cris

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65. **Gary Sullivan**

e-community

Sat 4 Mar 1995

Cris, your well-stated post re: community dragged me out of lurkdom to respond.

>This is a community in formational flux.

Definitely.

>What's workable is who's here now rather than necessarily who those people who are here presently reference.

I exist by virtue of my mother and father; therefore, my existence references them. To deny their existence is to deny my own.

>This community will or rather might inconsiderately replicate its existing character preferences unless its behavior positively embraces both its own and others['] diversity.

Agree.

>Learning ways to be welcoming - to find the touch that's otherwise too carefully thought out from this e-space, bristled and defensive.

Agree, though time and thought unbristle, too.

>It's they who fear who feel the need to attack.

Not always. Fear stifles more than it incites. Attackers are more often angry than fearful. & some anger is justified.

>Challenge is not necessarily struggle.

Not until it's resisted.

>Struggle can too easily become binary dogma.

A single, unchallenged dogma can just as easily become fascism.

>What's present can all too easily become resent.

Resentment is a response to lack, as well as surfeit. What's not present might just as easily foster resentment.

>Our (unpack baggage) behaviour (unpack baggage) or tone can (what is a tone can?) too easily (unpack baggage) disperse (unpack baggage) or repel (unpack baggage) that community (unpack baggage) which we (unpack baggage) imagine (unpack baggage) we (deconstruct unpacked baggage) could

(post to Utopia) be (and tell Zeno it explains everything and so tells us nothing (unpack baggage)).

Our (deny feelings) behavior (stuff shirt) or tone might (tone + might = ?) also incite discourse (spray armpits with chemicals) which might ("Let the machine get it, honey") give rise to (repeat to remove accent) greater understanding (send paranoid message backchannel) of who we (tell Diogenes you can't debase debased coinage) are (strike "genuine desire to positively change things" and insert "negativity"; stamp folder "miscreant"; file under "mudslinging"; close drawer; open mind; insert air freshener; close mind).

Those caveats aired, I do agree, and appreciate your post.

Sincerely,

Gary

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66. **cris cheek**

e-community

Sun 5 Mar 1995

Gary, thanks for responding and thanks for qualifying some of my over-simplistics, necessary business.

Please Don't Lurk (sounds like it should be a pop refrain).

Yes, Denial or rejection of the past are 'classic' fascist characteristics. There are also the boorish Buff type impositional tyrannies of competitive knowledge and the denial of the present through continual deflection. A kind of unfocussed peevishness, sometimes at becoming oneself misunderstood. It's been read that way and that's my shoddy peripherality. And Between - My States of Attention. But then this country is a capital of the heartlands of denial.

A six year old boy just came into the house with the figure of a man who transforms into a rock.

respect

cris

p.s. I'd like to suggest that 'lurking' be valued as a positive rather than a negative aspect. But it can go so cold it freezes. Certainly attention focussed onto activating and facilitating rather than dominating and controlling 'conversation'.

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67. **braman sandra**

Community

Sun 5 Mar 1995

I get a little nervous with extensive discussions about formation of community, actually, for it often seems to take the place of engaging in the activities in the doing of which we become one...

There are of course cultural aspects to the net community thing, as elsewhere. Native Americans (who are seeking sovereignty in cyberspace as well as in material space), for example, are concerned about the clash between net culture and their own. In most Native American societies, the most important people are those who are silent in public and sit at the back of the room, while it is the younger and less influential folks who make the noise. Obviously, this would be problematic in the effort to sustain their culture within the net. (There are many examples, actually, of the use of new information technologies in the sustenance of traditional cultural forms, but there are other examples, as well, where this is problematic.)

About four years ago, after attending a string of 7 conferences from Moscow in the former USSR through eastern and western Europe and Eastern and Middle US (winding up in Urbana), I was quite struck by the difference in terms and conceptualizations used to talk about what were often the very same matters facing the formation of communication policy. In the former Warsaw Pact countries, there is great and explicit concern about the possibility of civil society; in Western Europe, concern over the sustenance of the public in a time when media were becoming privatized; in the US, it's all audience and, as individuals, we've moved from citizens to consumers. In the case of this list, from my perspective, one of the things that makes it a community is a sense of shared substance, including sharing with those who may not be speaking much. Silence and listening are the undervalued communications practices of our time....

Sandra Braman

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68. **Thomas Bell**

Re: e-community

Sun 5 Mar 1995

[DThis may well belong under _boys, but also fits here I think:

"Few men understand how important femininity is in their lives, both inner and outer. Almost all of a man's sense of value, worth, safety, joy, contentment, belongingness,

and happiness derive from his inner feminine nature.....Men, in their arrogance, generally think it is their strength, possessions, and dominations that bring them happiness. But it is not so. Happiness is feminine in a man, a feeling quality, and generally mysterious to him" (pp. 4-5. *Lying with the heavenly woman*, Robert Johnson)

--Thomas Bell [REDACTED]

NOTE: (I suspect that this might have been posted by a lurking female posing here as a male, or...

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69. **Joe Amato**
Re: Community

Sun 5 Mar 1995

sandra and others: i recently had the pleasure of reading a dissertation that brings theories of complex systems to bear on the composition process, via three case studies, to yield "ecologies of composition"... the diss. is by margaret a. syverson, entitled "the wealth of reality: an ecology of composition" (university of california at san diego, 1994)... i believe it to be a brilliant work, one that provides a much richer account of reading, writing and textuality than i've seen to date within the composition field per se (and whatever local reservations i might have)...

i find this pertinent to the discussion hereabouts for two (general) reasons: one, that the first of syverson's case studies consists of examining the various factors surrounding the writing/revision/publication of charles reznikoff's "early history of a writer"; and two, that the last of syverson's case studies consists of a discourse-analysis-based account of conflict that emerged in an electronic forum during the gulf war... in short, i found the theoretical claims made by syverson to jibe well with my own sense of how complex writing and reading and corresponding in fact are... whether the model, if you will, that she employs is found by some in these parts to be a bit restrictive (or reductive) is less to the point, i think, than that there **does** in fact exist theoretical speculation, if you will, that attempts at least to advance in methodological terms a view of process that perhaps, just perhaps poet s too may find useful/enlightening...

anyway, if any of you do manage to have a look-c, i'd be much interested in what you think...

in any case, i don't believe folks in the humanities should resist ipso facto empirical claims, and i do believe that 'we' have something vital to add to more

methodologically-centered fields... and that 'we' includes poets, i'm trying not to speak solely as what i in fact am in part---an academic...

joe

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70. **Gary Sullivan**

Form, etc.

Sun 5 Mar 1995

Sandra Braman, Sheila Murphy, Mark Wallace, & all

Sandra, what you say about Native American culture can't be denied by someone like myself, whose primary, direct experience with Native American culture has been mostly through my work at the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis/Housing Discrimination Law Project. My interaction with both NA clients and NA lawyers has been mostly instances where indigenous and non-indigenous cultures in the U.S. interact, or as is often the case, clash. I've attended a few readings and other events featuring Native American writers, and the audiences for these events have been of mixed race. So, I do appreciate what you have to say about how (some of) these cultures behave publicly, within their specific social groups. (I'd like to get more of that, actually, which is why I appreciate Mark Nowak--a "younger" poet--'s lists of work so much; want more from him.) But, Sandra, I do think younger poets have been listening to, mainly by reading, older poets; I came to poetry not out of a desire to write it, which came later, but to read it. I spent many years reading poetry (if not as "intensely" as I do these days) before I wrote my first poem. I think most of us began, first, by reading, or "listening to," our elders. Relative to that: In response to both Sheila Murphy and Mark Wallace's questions about form, & the "how" & "why": The first poem I wrote that "mattered" to me was written in direct response to work I'd been reading in an early issue of *_avec_* that my wife Marta & I had typeset. As John Geraets (I believe) pointed out, one of the things younger poets respond to are "lacks"--and I felt a definite "lack" in the poetry I found there, which I was forced to read very slowly, if not always as carefully as I should've, as I was typing it into the computer; specifically, I was in love (still am), but having difficulty verbally expressing that emotion to my wife without it being corny, reductive and cliché, and none of the poetry in that *_avec_* *seemed* to include this most basic of human instances. I thought I might take phrases and lines from what (at first) seemed to be the very abstract language in *_avec_*, and somehow use that language, re-presented, to speak, as directly as I could, to my lover. Much of the language I "ripped off" was language having to do with the difficulties of communication, and so my concerns, as it turned out, were not altogether different from my elders'. But it

took writing something, working on it for six months, for me to really understand that. What began out of an apparent difference of "concerns" developed into a further understanding, for me, of the nature of the work in _avec_. What began as resistance, struggle, which wasn't resolved by my reading the work, ended, by virtue of my active participation with it (re-using the language, "against" its apparent context), in my reaching a point where I began to appreciate writing I'd at first mistrusted. Participation isn't necessarily noise, and I do hope that other younger or less-established writers will respond to Mark W.'s and Sheila M.'s questions (I've enjoyed that by those who have). Bill Luoma, how did you come to write _My Trip to New York_? Is your work--as I'm reading it--predominantly "speech- based"? Mark Nowak, how do you use, specifically, all of the diverse material you read? What are the difficulties you've faced in doing that, if any? Erica Hunt, can you take what Mark Nowak addressed in his last post further by talking about your own work, influences? Ira Lightman, "No Things But in Ideas," the work of yours I read in _Mirage_; would you be willing to talk a little about how the form (a brief excerpt)

FOUR O'CLOCK, LIGHT
IN THE HOUSE, STREET
TWELVE BRIT
NIGHT
SLEEP LEE, STREE
T BRUSH, MORN
GONE, BRITAIN A
PPROACH ...

addresses, if & as it does, that very provocative title? I'd like to read more of what younger or less-often published writers have to say about their work, about poetry, specifically or generally. (Questions above not being rhetorical, or necessarily limited to those addressed, or even to "younger" poets.) Shy poets (though, as John Weiners says, there's maybe no such thing), you can e-mail instead of post, if you prefer. (Don't mean to put anyone "on the spot.")

Yours,

Gary

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71. **Blair Seagram**
Re: Leonardo on theory
Sun 5 Mar 1995

Having opened my mailbox to the tune of over 400 messages, I'm taking a reading break around Feb 22nd to respond to the theory vs.art question with this quote from Leonardo da Vinc:

"The supreme misfortune is when theory outstrips performance."

Blair Seagram
()

PS Leonardo had lots of the female in him. As we all know he had an inquiring mind that was scientific, emotional and highly structured.

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72. **Hank Lazer**
Re: CALL: Sound and Language RE: - Submissions
Sun 5 Mar 1995

chris cheek--

your call for leads leads me to suggest Jack (& Adelle) Foley, whose work definitely exists doubly as text and performance, often being issues simultaneously (as with GERSHWIN and, more recently, ADRIFT, also work-in-progress such as STANZAS FROM DJERASSI) as text and audiotape. they performed here (in tuscaloosa) this past december--poems, songs, dance, two-voice pieces. jack is a great resource, fine connection to the writing/performings of others. (jack & adelle, for example, are recorded on lou harrison's most recent cd, a 77th birthday celebration from musical heritage society--they read, with lou, three-voice versions of some of lou's poems). enough blurb. you can reach jack, if you're interested, at 2569 maxwell avenue, oakland, california 94601.

your proposed series sounds great. please keep the group posted as it progresses.

hank lazer

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73. **Tony Green**

Re: Community- apology?

Sun 5 Mar 1995

Dear Gary, Apology accepted re- inclusion of distant remote and unknown persons and places. But not quite what I was after. I wanted to point to possibilities of support and assistance thru the net now from anyplace not only ON THE GROUND and not necessarily requiring backchannel chat. I'd like to think that operates reciprocally.

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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74. **Joe Amato**

Re: Community

Sun 5 Mar 1995

sandra, what's fascinating about syverson's dissertation is the extent to which she manages to employ concepts such as distribution, embodiment, emergence and enaction (across social, psychological, material, spatial and temporal constraints) in her approach to different writing situations WITHOUT a rigorous mathematical model and WITHOUT generating more metaphorical platitudes... that is, she shows how such a model can be put to practical use in the educational arena proper... for a lot of artists, such concerns are strictly ex post facto, and while it is true that syverson is primarily concerned not with the particular writing or corresponding activity or practice but with the extent to which such inquiry informs the sorts of ecologies we contribute to (willingly or otherwise, no determinism implied or intended) i found much in her sense that such practices are intrinsically *historical* (i.e., time-(inter)dependent and dynamic) as opposed to simply structural (and cause-effect based) to help breathe some reflexive life into my own meanderings of late...

joe

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75. **braman sandra**

Re: Community

Sun 5 Mar 1995

In response to Joe Amato's posting re a dissertation involving self-organizing systems theory and poetics -- It's clear to me, at least, that non-linear causality is the only way to get at what's happening in the area of communications, yet an approach that desperately needs those with mathematical tools, etc., in order to develop it in a useful way.... "Commnications effects" is a field that keeps trying to understand things by multiplying intervening variables, yet there simply ain't enough variables to account for what are essentially non-linear relationships.... Sandra Braman

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76. **peter quartermain**

Close Reading

Sun 5 Mar 1995

Can someone please tell me exactly *why* the "close reading" of texts is such a reprehensible practice? I notice it came up in an oblique sort of way in the Silliman Fan Club brouhaha, and I'm probably showing my complete and utter ignorance and stupidity. On 2 March Ron said that "I've been trashed for close reading before (by Don Byrd among others), as if the practice itself were politically incorrect (rather than the uses to which it once was put a full generation ago)." However one reads Silliman's prose I would not think he's instructing his reader how a text ought to be read, but recording how he himself reads it (and what he thinks &c &c) on one particular occasion in a particular context.

I'd assume that the opposite of a "close" reading is not so much a "distant" one as a "vague" or "inattentive" one (though I'm not at all sure exactly what those words mean in this context). Is there a point at which a "vague" reading gets to be reprehensible, or preferable? (And so on.)

This is not a facetious question. I like reading, and I'm really interested in the sorts of strategic decisions people actually make when they read; I'm interested in *how* they read (I'm not all that sure

how *I* read, either, come to that, and if I have a method at all it sure changes a lot, day to day, book to book, poem to poem). I'd have thought "close reading" would be less rather than more reprehensible, so I ask the question in all seriousness.

Peter

Peter Quartermain
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B.C. e-mail: [REDACTED]
Canada V5V 1X2

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77. **Michael Boughn**
Re: Close Reading

Mon 6 Mar 1995

Dear Peter:

Good question, re: "close reading". I certainly can't speak to the specificity of the reference to Ron Silliman and Don Byrd. Generally though, my experience is that "close reading" has become demonized by association with "New Criticism", and entered the panoply of sins connected with formalist concepts of the poem. The opposite of "close reading" (in this demonology) would be "contextual reading" rather than "inattentive". So that "close reading", having been politicized in this binary opposition, is now short hand for reactionary, agrarian, humanistic reading, as opposed to progressive historically, socially, economically, racially contextualized reading.

Any serious reader, it seems to me, would laugh at such a distinction. But whole careers are built on it. Alas.

Best,
Mike
[REDACTED]

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78. **keith tuma**

Re: Close Reading

Mon 6 Mar 1995

Dear Peter,

It seems to me that Michael Boughn's "demonology" is largely accurate as an account of the use of "close reading" in many circles today--many in the academy do seem to set up "close" and "contextualized" reading as (false) binaries, attributing the former to the now vanquished practices of New Criticism. But there are other attacks on "close reading" coming from other directions, within and without the academy. Here "close reading" seems really to mean something closer to "controlling reading" or "controlled reading." Charles Bernstein's poetics of "errant singularity"--Altieri's phrase--seems to use the phrase "close reading" in that second way, for instance. Thus in *_Artifice of Absorption_* we have the following: "The obvious problem is that the poem said in any other way is not the poem. This may account for why writers revealing their intentions or references ('close readings'), just like readers inventorying devices, often say so little: why a sober attempt to document or describe runs so high a risk of falling flat. In contrast, why not a criticism intoxicated with its own metaphoricity, or tropicity: one in which the limits of positive criticism are made more audibly artificial; in which the inadequacy of our explanatory paradigms is neither ignored nor regretted but brought into fruitful play." Or one might look at the recent *_Exact Change_* interview with Michael Palmer, where, discussing "voice in Stevens" and the appropriation of Stevens by New Critics Palmer says, "I think the reason that finally--after initially ignoring Stevens, perhaps because of his difficulty--the New Critics began to attend to him was because they could finally see the control of tone, etc., as susceptible to close reading. And I think I've always tried to undermine close reading, to make it unreadable from that point of view."

It seems to me that we have two problems then--how to dismantle the binary Michael Boughn refers to, and how to present a model of close reading which would allow for openness, uncertainty, and generosity to stand in for the desire for "mastery" always--perhaps falsely, it's been so long since I read them--attributed to the New Critics. But this is not really a problem, as we have no shortage of such models, your own excellent work included. Not that many in the academy are paying attention anymore (I'll echo Boughn's "alas").

Anyway, that's my two cents worth of banalities from your local dimestore on this Monday in the Year of Newt and His Company of Lizards.

--keith tuma

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79. **Robert A Harrison**
A REAL Political Poet

Mon 6 Mar 1995

/* Written 4:07 PM Mar 5, 1995 by moonlight in igc:reg.mexico */ /* -----
"Marcos Communique (3/5 Jornada)" ----- */ Jornada March 5 pg. 17-18

*Amazing that the government denies its taking the military
road, it says*

*The retreat is making us almost scratch at the sky: Marcos"

To the national weekly magazine, Proceso
To the national newspaper El Financiero
To the national newspaper La Jornada
To the local newspaper in San Cristobal de las Casas,
Chiapas, Tiempo
To the national and international press;

February 20, 1995

Dear Sirs:

Here are the communiques. As things are becoming black,
it's almost night. The cynicism is amazed with the negation
of what is evident: the decision to seek a military
solution. Us? Well, but almost scratching at the sky. The
first time that something falls the sky, it will fall on me.

Let's go. Health and a well-equipped boat to break
through so much darkness.

From the mountains of southeastern Mexico.

Subcomandante insurgent Marcos
Mexico, February 1995

P.S. Writing on February 15, 1995, sixth day of the retreat
(we recommend that it be read before each meal; it is an
excellent diet aid).

"The morning of the 15th we were going to drink our urine.
I say "we were going to" because we didn't do it as we all
began to vomit after the first swallow. Previously there
had been a discussion. Although all of us had been in
agreement that each person should drink his/her own urine,
Camilo say that we should wait until night came so that the
urine gets cold in the canteens, and we can drink it
thinking that it is a soda.

In defense of his position, Camilio argued that he had heard on the radio that imagination made anything possible. I opposed the idea, suggesting that time would only make the odor stronger, as well as mentioning that the radio had not been recently known for its objectivity. My other self alleged that a time of rest could help the ammonia settle on the bottom. "It will be the adrenaline"--I said, realizing strangely that the skepticism was my own and not my other self. Finally we decided to take a sip, all at the same time, to see what would happen. I don't know who began the "concert", but almost immediately all of us began vomiting what we had ingested, and also what we hadn't. We were left even more dehydrated, lying on the ground. Like dunces, stinking of urine. I think that our image was hardly soldier-like. At these hours, before the sun comes up, a sudden rain pelted us and alleviated our thirst and our spirits. With the first light of the sixth day we continued walking. In the afternoon, we came upon the outskirts of a small village. Camilo went near to ask for something to eat.

He returned with a little fried pork, hard and cold. We ate it right there without any modesty. In a few minutes the cramps began. The diarrhea was memorable. We were tied to the foot of a small wooded hill. A patrol of federal troops passed by about 500 meters away. They didn't find us because God is grand. The smell of shit and urine could be smelled kilometers away..."

PS Reiterating their rebellion

They can bring more. To do in all of the villages what they did in Guadalupe Tepeyac, where, for each resident, child or adult, they brought in 10 soldiers, for each horse a war tank, for each chicken, an armored vehicle. In total 5,000 soldiers who patrol a deserted village and "protect" a whole slew of dogs, in all of the areas, in all of the ranches. The whole state of Chiapas full of soldiers..

On top of everything and everyone, the mountains of southeastern Mexico will continue to be rebel territory against the bad government. This will continue being Zapatista territory.

It will be forever...

P.S. Clarifying and rectifying

It was not the EZLN who broke off the dialogue and reinitiated the war. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who feigned political willingness while preparing a military attack and betrayal. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who detained and tortured civilians. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who murdered. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who bombed and strafed communities. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who raped indigenous women. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who robbed and plundered the campesinos. It was the government.

It was not the EZLN who betrayed the will of an entire nation to find a political solution to the conflict. It was the government.

P.S. Pointing out incongruencies in the investigations of the Attorney General

If the "Sup" had received political and military training from the Sandinistas, he would have already organized a "pinata" with the recovered properties and he would have expelled those who have criticized from the organization. If the "Sup" had received training from the Salvadoreans, he would have already given his weapon to Cristiani. If the "Sup" had received aid from the Russians, he would have already bombed Chechenia, excuse me, Guadalupe Tepeyac.

In addition, what other guerrilla army, " of the millenium", "fundamentalist", and directed by "white university people" has carried out the military actions that the EZLN has done in January 1994 and in breaking through the military blockade in December 1994? What other guerrilla force has agreed to sit down and dialogue only 50 days after having taken up arms? What other guerrilla force has appealed, not to the proletariat as the historical vanguard, but to the civic society which struggles for democracy? What other guerrilla force has put itself aside in order not to interfere in the electoral process? What other guerrilla force has convened a national democratic movement, civic and peaceful, so that armed struggle becomes useless? What other guerrilla force asks its bases of support about what it

should do before doing it? What other guerrilla force has struggled to achieve a democratic space and not for power? What other guerrilla force has relied more on words than on bullets?

Note: Please send the responses to the, supposedly disappeared, CISEN so that it can help think in a "modern" way. Yes, to the CISEN. The Attorney General is only the pimp paying the ruling class.

P.S. Calling myself the "special investigator on the case of the Sup" and inviting the national and international civic society to be the jury and pronounce the sentence.

"Being such and such hour on such and such day, of such and such month, in the current year, see before this P.S. a man of indefinite age, between 5 and 65 years old, with his face covered with one of those garments that appears to be a sock with holes in it (and which the gringos call "ski mask", and the Latin Americans call "pasamontañas--mountain passes"). Among the particular signs of a face, two enormous protruberances emerge, one of which, which was supposedly deduced after several sneezes, is the nose. The other, judging by the emanations of smoke and the smell of tobacco, could be a pipe, like the ones used by sailors, intellectuals, pirates and fugitives from justice. Exhorted to say only the truth and nothing but the truth, the individual in question said that he was called "Marcos Montes de la Selva", son of Old Anthony and lady Juanita, brother to young Anthony, Ramona and Susana, uncle to Tonita, Beto, Eva and Heriberto. He of the voice declared himself to be in full control of his physical and mental faculties, and, without any pressure (other than the 60,000 federal soldiers who are looking for him dead or alive) declares and confesses the following:

First. That he was born in the guerrilla camp called "Agua Fria" in the Lacandon jungle, Chiapas, in the early morning one day in August 1984. The man with the voice says that he was reborn the first of January 1994, and born again, succesively, the 10th of June 1994, the 8th of August 1994, the 19th of December 1994, the 10th of February 1995, and each day and each hour and each minute and each second since that day up to this moment in which I am making this declaration.

Second. That, in addition to his name, he has the following aliases: "Sub", "Subcomandante", "Sup", "Supco", "Marquitos", "Pinche Sup", "Sup son of a ...", and others that the power of this PS Agent prevents from writing.

Third. He of the voice confesses that, since having been born, he has conspired against the shadows which cover the Mexican sky.

Fourth. He of the voice confesses that, before being born, being able to possess everything in order to have nothing, he decided to possess nothing in order to have everything.

Fifth. He of the voice confesses that, in the company of other Mexicans, the majority Mayan Indians, they decided to make a paper live up its words, a paper that they teach about in school, which lists the rights of the Mexican citizens and which is called, "The Political Constitution of the United Mexican States". He of the voice pointed out that, in article 39 of this paper, it is said that the people have the right to change the government. Coming to this point, the P.S., jealous of his right, ordered the very subversive paper confiscated, and ordered that it be burned without giving it a glance, and having done this, continued to take the statement of the individual with the obvious nose and the contaminating pipe. He of the voice confessed that, not being able to exercise this right by peaceful and legal means, he decided, together with his accomplices, (these whom he of the voice calls "brothers"), to take up arms against the supreme government and to shout "Enough!" to the lie that, says he of the voice, rules our destinies. The P.S. could not help but be terrified in the face of such unusual blasphemy, and was fixated on the idea of leaving him without "a bone".

Sixth. He of the voice confessed that, put to choosing between comfortableness and responsibility, he of the voice always chooses responsibility. This statement merited the disapproval of the people present to this preparatory statement and the instinctive reflex of the P.S. to put his hand on his wallet.

Seventh. He of the voice confessed that he has been irreverent with all of the truths that are called supreme, except those that emanate from being a human being and that they are, to declare clearly, dignity, democracy, liberty and justice. A murmur of disagreement ran through the Holy

Inquisition, excuse me, the office of the special investigator.

Eighth. He of the voice confessed that they had tried to threaten him, to buy him off, to corrupt him, to put him in jail, and to murder him, and that they had not intimidated him nor bought him off, nor jailed him, nor killed him (up until now, he added, threateningly, to the Investigating P.S.).

Ninth. He of the voice confessed that, since he was born, he decided that he preferred to die before turning over his dignity to those who have made lies and crime a modern religion. A thought that was so impractical earned a cynical look from the people present.

Tenth. He of the voice confessed that, since then, he had decided to be humble with the humble, and to be arrogant with the powerful. The P.S. added "irreverent" to the charges that were being made against him of the voice.

Eleventh. He of the voice confessed that he had believed and believes in human beings, in their capacity to try indefatigably to be a little better each day. He confessed that, among the human race, he has a special affection for the Mexican race, and that he had believed, believes and will believe that Mexico is something more than six letters and a underpriced product on the international market.

Twelfth. He of the voice confessed that he believes, firmly, that the bad government has to be brought down by all means and by all parts. He confessed that he believes that a new political, economic and social relation has to be created among all Mexicans, and later on, among all human beings. These promiscuous intentions gave shivers to the P.S. investigator.

Thirteenth. He of the voice confessed that he will dedicate himself to the absolute last second of his life, to struggling for what he believes.

Fourteenth. He of the voice confessed that, in a small and egotistical act, he will dedicate his last second of his life to killing himself.

Fifteenth. He of the voice confessed that he was completely bored with this interrogation. This earned him a severe reprimand from the P.S. Interrogator, who explained to him of the voice that the case will continue until the supreme government finds another tale to entertain itself.

After these confessions, he of the voice was exhorted to spontaneously declare himself innocent or guilty of the following series of accusations. To each accusation, he of the voice responded:

The whites accuse him of being dark. Guilty
The dark ones accuse him of being white. Guilty
The authentics accuse him of being indigenous. Guilty
The treasonous indigenous accuse him of being mestizo.

Guilty

The machos accuse him of being feminine. Guilty
The feminists accuse him of being macho. Guilty
The communists accuse him of being anarchist. Guilty
The anarchists accuse him of being orthodox. Guilty
The Anglos accuse him of being Chicano. Guilty
The antisemetics accuse him of being in favor of the

Jews. Guilty

The Jews accuse him of being pro-Arab. Guilty
The Europeans accuse him of being Asiatic. Guilty
The government officials accuse him of being

oppositionist. Guilty

The reformists accuse him of being ultra. Guilty
The ultras accuse him of being reformist. Guilty
The "historical vanguard" accuse him of calling to the
civic society and not to the proletariat. Guilty

The civic society accuses him of disturbing their
tranquility. Guilty

The Stock Exchange accuses him of ruining their
breakfast. Guilty

The government accuses him of increasing the
consumption of antiacids in the government's Departments.

Guilty

The serious ones accuse of being a jokester. Guilty
The adults accuse him of being a child. Guilty
The children accuse him of being an adult. Guilty
The orthodox leftists accuse him of not condemning the

homosexuals and lesbians. Guilty

The theoreticians accuse of being a practitioner.

Guilty

The practitioners accuse of being a theorist. Guilty

Everyone accuses him of everything bad that has
happened. Guilty

Not having anything else to declare in this first preparatory statement, the P.S. Investigator ended the session and smiled imagining the congratulations and check that he would receive from his bosses.

P.S. Talking about what was heard on February 16, 1995, on the afternoon of the seventh day of the retreat

--And why don't we attack instead of retreating?--Camilo threw at me in the middle of a hill, precisely when I was concentrating most heavily on breathing and on not falling into the ravine at our sides. I didn't respond immediately, I made signs that he should continue climbing. At the top of the hill we three sat down. Night comes to the mountain before it comes to the sky, and in the semi-darkness of this indecisive hour in which light isn't the same, and the shadows waver. Something is heard, far away...

I say to Camilo who is listening with attention. "What do you hear?"

Crickets, leaves, wind-- responds my other self.

--No--I insist--. Pay attention.

Now it is Camilo who responds:--Some voices...very far away...a boom--boom--boom...like a drum...from over there...--Camilo points to the west.

--This exactly--I tell him.

--And?--intervenes my other self.

--It is the civic society. Yelling that there can't be war, there has to be dialogue, that words should talk and not weapons...--I explained.

--And the boom-boom-boom?--insisted Camilo.

--That's their drums. They are calling for peace. There are many people, thousands, dozens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. The government is not listening to them and is confronting them. We, all the way over here, we have to listen to them. We have to respond to them. We can not turn a deaf ear like the government is doing. We have to listen to them, we have to avoid the war until there is no other choice...

--And then?--muses my other self.

--Then we fight--I responded to Camilo.

--When?--he insisted.

--When they fall, when they tire. Then that will be the black hour in which we will have to talk...

--Fight--says my other self

I insist: "We do everything for them. If we fight, it is for them. If we stop fighting, it is for them. In the end they will win. If they annihilate us, they will have the satisfaction of having done everything possible to avoid it, to avoid the war. For this reason they rose up, and now they are not being held back. In addition, they have in their hands a flag that they are responsible for. If we live, they will have the satisfaction of having saved us, of having avoided the war and having demonstrated to us that they are better and that they can handle the flag. Whether we die or live, they live and will become stronger. For them everything, for us nothing..."

Camilo said that he preferred his version: "For them nothing, for us everything".

P.S. Reigniting his nocturnal delirium

Forgetfulness, a faraway lark, is the cause for our going around without face. To kill forgetfulness with a little memory, we cover our chests with lead and hope. If, in some improbable flight, our stay in the wind coincides, you will take off so many clothes and mask of sweet trick, and with lips and skin make the memory better, that of tomorrow. For this reason, a message goes from the earth to the concrete. Listen well!

As an unperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in my own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharg'd with burden of mine own love's might.

O, let my books be then the elocution
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
Who plead for love, and look for recompense
More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.

O, learn to read what silent love hath writ;
To hear with eyes belonge to love's fine wit".

Sonnets

William Shakespeare. Sonnet XXIII

Good bye, amber lark, don't look for us under your flight. Up above yes, where
our pain takes us up, to the sun, where hope rains...

P.S. Not being able to give anything on this birthday

Heriberto has a birthday on the March 5th. They say he will complete 4 years
and start on his fifth. Heriberto walks the mountains, while in his home
soldiers live and a tank is on his patio. The toys that a "Operation Toys"
brought him for the Three Wise Men's Day, are now in the hands of some
general or being analyzed by the Attorney General in search of some secret
organization. Heriberto, as much as he prepared for what happened the 10th of
February (the invasion of the federal soldiers), at the actual moment, he left
behind his best toy: a little car that Heriberto, inside it, played at being a driver
around the patio where the coffee was dried. They tell me that Heriberto
consoles himself saying that in the mountain his little car couldn't go.
Heriberto asked his mom if he ever was going to have his car again, and if the
Sup was not going to give him chocolates. Heriberto asked his mom why the
war from last year returned, why his car was left behind--Why?--asks Heriberto.
His mom does not respond, continuing to walk with the boy and the pain
weighing on her shoulders...

P.S. Remembering and I recite from memory, verses from
Antonio Machado? which refer to distinct things, but which
are coming.

I

In the heart I have
the thorn of a passion
I was able to pull it out one day
Now I don't feel my heart.
Sharp golden thorn
who will again feel you
in the stopped heart...

II

At night I dreamed that I heard
God yelling to me: Watch out!
later it was God who slept
and I was yelling "Wake up"!

P.S. Bleeding unstoppably
An injury I carry in my chest
Of bloody wheat
and there is no bread
to alleviate the desire...

The Sup at the top of a hill, seeing how the sun goes down, in the west, a
twinkle that is going out...

(translated by Cindy Arnold, volunteer, National Commission for Democracy in
Mexico)

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Harry Cleaver
Department of Economics
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78712-1173
USA

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(off) [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

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80. **Robert A Harrison**

more on NEA

Mon 6 Mar 1995

[*****PNEWS CONFERENCES*****]

From: JagDes <[REDACTED]>

Subject: NPW: NEA cuts and race

Color-coded culture cuts?

by Kevin Cartwright

Congressional budget hearings on the National Endowment for
the Arts (NEA) opened in January to ominous forecasts of
NEA's demise as a vital funding source for the arts. The
political right delights in flogging the NEA for allegedly
promoting left-wing ideology and cultivating debased and
marginalized art that most Americans don't care about.

In fact, "the work that is controversial represents less
than 1% of the funding of the endowment," says Vanessa

Whang, fundraiser and program developer at La Pena Cultural Center in Berkeley. "But for smaller organizations [the NEA] is their lifeline. They're supporting the meat and potatoes of being able to stay in business for groups like La Pena that are working in communities of color," she says.

The NEA has an operating budget of \$176 million, a minuscule amount compared to the military budget or even to allocations for military bands, which many have pointed out exceed NEA funding.

Many community-based arts groups which serve minority communities receive funding from NEA's Expansion Arts program. If proposed cuts are enacted, this program could be in danger.

Federal grants to arts groups and individual artists have been reduced to \$24 million, a decrease of \$54 million from last year. Though La Pena received a \$30,000 grant this year, Whang is concerned that cuts could cost jobs and jeopardize La Pena's ability to offer a range of cultural programs, classes, and events at low ticket prices (or free) to people with few resources.

"La Pena and some smaller and mid-size organizations that are working primarily in communities of color are going to be hit really hard by this," Whang says.

The Galeria De La Raza opened in San Francisco's Mission district in 1970, and has been committed to showing the art of Chicano, Latino and indigenous cultures. Their NEA funding accounts for 20% of their budget. The lack of funding would severely affect how they approach programming and the needs of the community. According to Liz Lerma, Executive Director of Galeria, the cuts would undermine the power of cutting-edge art.

"A lot of the dynamism that you find here comes from us being able to present the art in a timely fashion, you know, when something is happening we allow the artist to respond to it essentially. We would be crippled in that effort," says Lerma.

"The politicization of NEA funding is rooted in the right-wing efforts to silence opposition and further marginalize communities of color," Lerma says. "Places like the Galeria are known to show varieties of art that aren't afraid of what the artists are saying. We support it. We're the forum where it can be said," she adds.

Whang, Lerma and other cultural activists are collaborating with the San Francisco Arts Democratic Club in an effort to fight the cuts. At the News ' deadline, the club planned a Feb. 18 town hall meeting to strategize and set up a letter- writing and phone campaign. For info: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

***** This article came from News for a People's World, an independent monthly newspaper by and for Northern California activists. You can read more of the News or write to us by visiting our conference, [REDACTED]. or

http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/.mags/NPW/NPW.html We can be reached by snail-mail at 522 Valencia St., San Francisco CA 94110, phone [REDACTED], fax [REDACTED].

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PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS!

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There are 4 -*PNEWS CONFERENCES*- [P_news on FIDONET], [p.news and p.news.discuss on PEACENET] & [pnews-L on INTERNET]. ***Conferences are gated together***

----- PNEWS CONFERENCES are moderated. If you wish to subscribe to a PNEWS list on InterNet, send your request to: <[REDACTED]>

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81. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: Close Reading

Mon 6 Mar 1995

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

any value if it's ASSUMED that "close reading" is instilled--thus, one generation of academics are teaching a younger one to unlearn the things they never learned (I speak as one who received an M.A. in english without having ever read Shakespeare, for instance), and then there's also the question that is seems the symbiotic relationship of GRADUATE and UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH departments can be reduced to this--the undergraduates learn exactly what they're supposed to UNLEARN in grad school....Chris S.

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82. **Bill Luoma**
Tony Door Speaks

Mon 6 Mar 1995

Dear Friends,

I would like to retract my earlier TEXT: "I am the only 2A's, an E, 2G's, an L, an N, & a U Poet."

The AHP as a body has produced the first & only, to my knowledge, Authorless TEXT. As virtual as they may be, their texts can either investigated in a rather dull, petty, & ultimately uninteresting but gossipy way; the "search for the author." Or, one can read these texts as the products of the chat-line's collective poetic sub-something. . . .

Well, this is getting boring. There is work to be done, & I have my farm to tend to.

Tony Door
Calabria, Itallia
4/3/95

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83. **Bill Luoma**
Re: Form, etc.

Mon 6 Mar 1995

Bill Luoma, how did you come to write _My Trip to New York_? Is your work--as I'm reading it--predominantly "speech-based"?

Gary,

My prose has lately been slouching toward speech and transparent narrative. I also do visual stuff, and am working on a sound poem, so make what you will of that.

I appreciate your asking me how I wrote My Trip to NYC. But the fact is I don't know how I wrote it. It just happened, as if I tuned in a certain radio station in a certain cocteau movie. When I re-read it, some of the sequences continue to astonish me. Like, please let me write like that again. Is it arrogant to say this? I wish I knew how to get into the zone on a regular basis. Waffles? But I remember that Shiva says there are too many variables to formulate a guaranteed methodology. And I agree (what then?) I can only talk around its writing.

I was living in San Diego. I visited my friends in NY and Providence that I hadn't seen for years. Jennifer Moxley had just started the Impercipient and published Douglasses poem about the car:

if the car is broken,
& we cannot go to get it,
who will?

if the car is broken,
& no one can go to get it,
who will?

if the car is old & broken,
wounded like the street,

broken like the broken parts
of these our broken lives,

& we remain?

When I got back to San Diego, Scott Bentley wanted me to send him some slides. I was on unemployment so I had time to write. I tried to immitate Douglasses poem because I thought it was the greatest. But I couldn't write beautiful lyrics like Douglass. I started again. I described my trip so Scott could see how his pals were doing on the east coast. I had never written about myself and friends before, so it was fun.

I remembered that Helena Bennett was dead. When your mate dies, you lose your keys, forget where you're going, cry in public, miss exits on the road, have moments of aphasia and anemone. The deadpan spacy voice I could feel in my head got put down on paper long hand. I could feel the instances/scenes/slides I was remembering (to describe to Scott) as short paragraphs. I could feel that I loved my friends. Thus the form was born.

I wrote 80 paragraphs in two days and revised for a few months. I sent it to Geoff Young at the Figures and he published it.

Bill Luoma

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84. **Michael Boughn**

Re: Close reading

Mon 6 Mar 1995

Dear Chris:

I wasn't being pejorative, actually, being someone who, along with Peter Quartermain, believes in the continued importance of teaching the practice of something called "close reading", as in reading closely. The "agrarian" in that list of attributes was a perhaps too arcane reference to the fact that the originators of what came to be called "The New Criticism" were originally known as the Southern Agrarians. This group included Cleanth Brooks (still, in my books, one of the most astute and careful readers I've encountered), Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Laura Riding (yes folks, no jive).

They considered themselves "agrarians" in that they felt they represented traditional, agrarian, humanist values in the face of the degradations of urban, capitalist, commodified culture. Their theories about "the poem" as a formal object reflected their desire to find an uncontaminated space in which to locate those values. The later contraction of those fundamentally conservative (and I do not use that word here pejoratively, but rather descriptively) values into the kind of mastery Keith Tuma (and via him Michael Palmer) refer to is an interesting story, that has a lot, I think, to do with the institutionalization of the American intellectual. But it's another story.

Best,
Mike



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85. **Marc Nasdor**

Re: E - speration and Communit - E

Mon 6 Mar 1995

I'd like to responding to James's reposting of his Feb. 27 comments:

... The effective limits of community are not yet clear, but from several people's perspective they relate to the number of messages one can get through considering the available time. This obviously differs for different people, so the quantifying of community is not possible at a single value for all participants. What I am looking for is a suggestion how to "customize" each person's community according to their capacity and interest...

We should look at community formation relative to the LISTSERV phenomenon. First, let me say that anyone who participates is a de facto member of this

community; and maybe even full-time lurkers as well. I imagine some (myself, sometimes) get into a routine of subscribing and unsubscribing according to the general tenor of the discussion threads, not to mention volume of mail, as James notes. Some threads (Experiwhat?, Boy Talk, Apex of the M, etc.) were at times as satisfying as a good Monster Truck demo. I haven't a clue about that Hokey Pokey business.

I suggest that self-restraint is the only kind of customization that is possible here, otherwise people start to vote with their bozo filters. After all, the object of the game is to create a climate that encourages participation.

As for the subject of splitting the list, worse things have happened.

It would be nice if there could be some general agreement not to engage in chain-jerking, personal attacks, or "reading" someone out of a discussion, the rest will take care of itself. Or maybe we should just apply chaos theory and see if we **can** quantify community after all.

Cheers,

Marc

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86. **Marc Nasdor**
Re: Close Reading

Mon 6 Mar 1995

Chris Stroffolino writes:

>...there's no need to associate it with "agrarian" in some pejorative way.
> We do not need some city-country division. If, for instance, there is
> to be some viable way of dealing effectively with culture, there's no
> point isolating ourselves against the "agrarian"--which can also be
> the "tenement migrant farmer" etc...

...

> Also, the hegemony of the "contextual" the "new historicist" reading
> in much "hip" avant-garde discourse that claims to be a reaction to
> "close reading" goes too far in the opposite direction...

Good points. In any case, I assume "agrarian" is this usage refers mainly to those New Criticism poets who have been associated with the term for several decades.

Without acting on the urge to drive out to the nearest hacienda to bond with the first tenement migrant farmer within hugging distance, it seems to me that much of the "city/country division" in American poetry stems from a kind of urban arrogance that, unfortunately, has been characteristic of some members

of the poetry avant-garde (of several ideological persuasions). For me, writers who obsess on literature of "the coasts" are guilty of that kind of arrogance .

A slight digression: Try arguing with an art critic/historian about the validity of contemporary painting in small cities with active arts communities and innovative artists (e.g., Cleveland, Baltimore, Austin, etc.). Artists from these areas are punished both critically and economically for such transgressions as refusing to move to NY/SF/LA.... A friend of mine who writes for *_Art News_* once insisted to me that writers and artists who remain in these "minor" communities are perpetually discovering what has already been discovered, an attitude that is ignorant at best. From where does he suppose most "New York artists" originate. Does literary and artistic knowledge/ vision/accomplishment come into being only after exposure to "major" communities? I don't think so.

Regards,

Marc Nasdor



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87. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 5 Mar 1995 to 6 Mar 1995

Tue 7 Mar 1995

talkin' bout my generation, I guess, but: re: close reading, and who unlearns, supposedly, what they learned as undergraduates, and so on. (I don't mean to rant but): after teaching poetry/theory grad courses the last few years, I finally decided to cash in on a gathering hunch and teach, at the grad level, the kind of course I sometimes offer at u.g. level and that used to be offered all the time: "close reading" that is. I'm having a great time (some students are, some probably aren't) but so far the results are pretty staggering. We're doing the course as a workshop, in which a poem and its explication, xeroxed in advance, are discussed concurrently. And (to me) it's just staggering what the generally bright and able students don't have a clue about and don't (yet) by and large have much knack at all for doing. Just on the very basic level of poem as speech act or Burkean symbolic action; or when it comes to thinking about trope as somehow functional in a reasonably sophisticated way: it's a great big blank by and large (w a couple of stunningly smart exceptions). I dunno whether it was always that way (that is, contra Richards, whether no matter how many classes everyone takes basically 10% of the people have an ear and the other 90% can't buy one) or not, but I suspect that not so much deconstruction & all as cultural studies is partly responsible. I don't mean it as a discipline (or non discipline) so much as how it gets filtered into the brainpans of the undergraduates who end up applying, at least, to Arizona, where the

students are quite good but it's obviously not Berkeley, say. Even at the next level up--reading the essays on poetry that come in to Arizona Quarterly, say, it's really just themes themes themes. So this doesn't continue to sound like only a dispeptic rant, I guess I'd want to say that the course is a whole lot of fun (for me anyway), that I intend to offer it every couple of years, and that I think the old close-reading staple has pretty much disappeared from the u.g. curriculum and needs re-instating. But it really is astonishing to me, still, the extent to which grad students in the course write essays/explications tht have virtually nothing to do w wht I understand reading poetry to involve. must be time to power down here.

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88. **Steve Evans**

Espousing 3/7

Tue 7 Mar 1995

FREELY ESPOUSING UPDATE * 7 MARCH 1995

- + DEFENSE OF INDIVIDUAL GRANTS?
- + ADVOCACY DAY / AMERICA FOR THE NEA: LIST OF STATE COORDINATORS
- + PROTESTING CUTBACKS TO STUDENT AID
- + MARCH CALENDAR <IN PROCESS>

DEFENSE OF INDIVIDUAL GRANTS

As many of you know, the main target of proposed rescissions to the NEA's FY 95 budget are individual grants: \$4m out the \$5m targetted for cut-back comes from that area. In this regard at least, the rescission process offers just a foretaste of what future appropriation battles will look like.

If you have a cogent defense of individual grants, now is the time to air it. We will include any comments on this matter in future *FE* updates.

AMERICA FOR THE NEA: STATE COORDINATORS

Here are some people to contact if you are interested in traveling to Washington D.C. for "Advocacy Day" on 14 March 1995.

STATE: NAME-ORGANIZATION/PHONE NUMBER:

ARIZONA	Ms.Sam Campana-Arizonans for Cultural Development/	CALIFORNIA	Susan E. Hoffman-Calif.
Confederation of the Arts/		CONNECTICUT	Jeffrey M Siegel-Hassett, George, and Siegel/
FLORIDA	Ms. Sherron Long-Florida Cultural Action Alliance/	GEORGIA	Shelley Rose-Georgia
Citizens for the Arts/		ILLINOIS	Alene Valkanis-Illinois Arts

Alliance/[REDACTED] INDIANA Carol Darst-Advocates for the
Arts/[REDACTED] IOWA Ruth Nash-Iowa Citizens for the Arts/[REDACTED]
KANSAS Ellen Morgan-Assoc. of Community Arts Agencies/[REDACTED]
KENTUCKY Jean Perry-Kentucky Assembly of Local Arts
Agencies/[REDACTED] Cecilia Wooden-Kentucky Citizens for the Arts,
Inc/[REDACTED] MARYLAND Sue Hess/Susan Eubinag-MD Citizens for the
Arts/[REDACTED] MASSACHUSETTS Ival Stratford-Kovner of M'Assembly/
[REDACTED] MICHIGAN Maryland Wheaton-Concerned Citizens for the
Arts/[REDACTED] MISSISSIPPI Ms. Thalia Mara-U.S. Int'l Baller
Competetion/[REDACTED] NEW HAMPSHIRE Byron Champlin-Arts
1000/[REDACTED] (day), [REDACTED] (eve) NEW JERSEY John McEwan-ArtPride
NJ/[REDACTED] x2623 NEW MEXICO Mimi Roberts-Arts New
Mexico/[REDACTED] NEW YORK America for the NEA/[REDACTED], x146
NORTH CAROLINA Elizabeth Taylor-Arts Advocates of NC/[REDACTED] OHIO
Michael Robinson-Kent State U/[REDACTED] PENNSYLVANIA Raymond M.
Flynt-Citizens for the Arts in Pa./[REDACTED]; or, Melissa Birnbaum-
Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance/[REDACTED] SOUTH CAROLINA Betty
Plumb-S.Carolina Arts Alliance/[REDACTED] SOUTH DAKOTA Janet Brown-
S.Dakotans for the Arts/[REDACTED] TENNESSEE Becky Craft-Tennesseans
for the Arts/[REDACTED] UTAH Cary Stevens Jones-Utah Cultural
Alliance/[REDACTED] VIRGINIA Daisy Portuondo-ProArt Assoc/[REDACTED]
(day), [REDACTED] (eve) WEST VIRGINIA Pamel Parziale-Arts Advoc. Committee of
W.Va/[REDACTED]

<This is the list as it was faxed to *Freely Espousing* on 3 March. You can
contact America for the NEA at [REDACTED] for recent additions to the list.>

PROTESTING CUTBACKS TO STUDENT AID

The following information is taken from a "Call to Action" released by the
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students. You can contact
NAGPS at [REDACTED]:

*A broad alliance of national student groups have issued a call
to supporters of student financial aid to cooperate in communicating
a "Save Student Aid" message to Congress March 13 to 20, 1995. These
dates have been selected because of the need for this message to get
to the Budget Committee as they work on the FY96 Budget.*

*Calls and letters are needed. For the first time on this issue,
NAGPS will provide a central e-mail address to which you can send
letters to Congress. We will print them out and deliver them to
Congress March 17 and 20.*

TALKING POINTS

- * *The interest exemption makes student loans affordable to millions of students. Graduate & professional students, in particular, would suffer tremendously if the interest payments made on student loans while those students were in school were to stop. The average undergraduate would have an increased debt of \$4,000 to \$5,000. Graduate debt could be increased as much as \$35,000.*
- * *Our nation must continue to invest in education if we are to successfully absorb other budget cuts. Cutting the budget while also cutting student aid will reduce our ability to compete in world markets, and reduce US research & development. Making school more expensive will reduce enrollments. Education can be the cushion that keeps budget cuts from harming our economy.*
- * *More expensive student aid will result in fewer people choosing lower paying, but critical, jobs. Many simply won't be able to afford to be teachers and family medical practitioners.*
- * *Talk about your own situation. How would you be affected with the loss of the interest exemption?*
- * *Don't forget to explain your position carefully to staff people. Many are newly hired and need to have the issues explained to them.*
BE A RESOURCE! EXPLAIN, DON'T ACCUSE!

E-MAIL CONGRESS?

Conventional wisdom says that e-mail to Congress doesn't have the same weight as a letter or phone call. We've figured a way around that! The special e-mail address to which people can send letters to Congress is:



Those e-mail letters will be printed out and delivered to Congress. Make sure the letters are in standard letter form with the complete name, address and phone of the person writing.

*Address Letters to:
Name
US House of Representatives
"Location"
Washington, DC 20515*

MARCH CALENDAR IN PROCESS

1 Mar Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, Rep. Slade Gorton (R-WA), chair. Witnesses: Sheldon Hackney and Jane Alexander

2 Mar NEH reauthorization hearings continue in Senate Labor and Human Resources Subcom on Education, Arts, and the Humanities

3 Mar House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee (FY96 funding), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), chair. Subject: National Gallery of Art and Kennedy Center ----

13 Mar <week of> FY95 Rescission Package expected to be considered on House floor (includes \$5m cut to NEA among its proposed \$17b totals)

13 Mar <week of> The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students is calling for a week of messages to Congress in defense of Financial Aid, Interest Free Loan Deferments, and other components of federal educational assistance <see above>

14 Mar National Advocacy Day <See Espousing Update 2/17/95 for more information>

21 Mar House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee (FY96 funding), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), chair. Subject: NEH and IMS

29 Mar Day of Campus Action Against Contract on America (alternate date for campuses not in session on the 29th is 23 March). <See below for more information>

<Please send additions and corrections to [REDACTED]>

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Freely Espousing is an ongoing project aimed at protecting and further democratizing access to the arts, humanities, broadcast media, and emerging forms of communication. For more information, please contact:

Steve Evans & Jennifer Moxley
61 E. Manning St., Providence RI 02906-4008

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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89. **David McAleavey**
Teaching close reading

Tue 7 Mar 1995

This thread may have more relevance on the T-AMLIT list, or perhaps on some other, but I have to agree with Tenney Nathanson that the university's emphasis on theory & cultural criticism takes both undergrads and graduate students away from close reading. How crucial is close reading to writers, to

poets particularly? The students I teach who have most interest in close reading are those who take as many creative writing courses as they can.

But the different types of reading -- pertinent to different types of writing -- a "close reading" of works by most of those subscribing to this list might not much resemble, task by specific task, a close reading appropriate to poems written by those in that other, dominant, not-precisely-parallel tradition (as can be found discussed, say, on the CAP-L list).

But it could be that NT's point is that no matter the difference in poetic ideology or practice, a critical reading strategy which involves reading-with-a-purpose (i.e., to explore cultural or economical conditions imbedded in various texts) may not need to include close reading strategies. Reading for "pleasure," however, or reading to "understand the author's meaning or purpose" -- those tasks do involve close reading (no matter the poetics, I suspect).

The grad-level seminars I've been teaching the past two years make me think students haven't learned much about close reading; but most find it valuable to get an introduction. Minds are malleable....

-- David McAleavey

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90. **I.LIGHTMAN**

for, m etc

Tue 7 Mar 1995

Gary, thanks for your posting asking:

> "Ira Lightman, "No Things But in Ideas," the work of yours I read in Mirage; would you be willing to talk a little about how the form (a brief excerpt)

FOUR O'CLOCK, LIGHT
IN THE HOUSE, STREET
TWELVE BRIT
NIGHT
SLEEP LEE, STREE
T BRUSH, MORN
GONE, BRITAIN A
PPROACH ...

addresses, if & as it does, that very provocative title?"

The thing is having a number of theoretical and personal and aesthetic enthusiasms/beliefs, and not being able right now to set them all in relation in a

complex formal structure, longpoem etc. So nothing will get worked out or mapped in this poem, but "disparate" things (ie with unexplained connections) will appear in the poem, in this case because the title was in my head when the poem was going down on the page. So no go on the form of this poem being shown to address the title, but perhaps a few remarks about strains:

1) the title; I spent two years in New Zealand working by myself on the prosody of the first seven Cantos of Ezra Pound; there is a music that quite formally follows through (not free verse at all) *if* the words can be read with the emphasis, investment, background reading and thinking and feeling that I hypothesize Pound had. There are the equivalent too of dilemmas and paradoxes, just as there would be in well-argued piece of philosophical prose (musically monotonous), in this "music that quite formally follows through". So "no things but in ideas" in the sense that all objects, and musics, to me depend on seeing or meeting the composer or a wonderful interpreter, or reading good texts about or by the author, with huge empathetic imagination, so that one has a world of similar ideas and emphases (the word "incest", for example, scans very differently depending on your take on Freud). And then the pay-off; hearing the most wonderful formal complexity, accepting the ideas in one's head in an act of being the composer (intentionality!) that is not so just intentionaliy, in the sense of "you can only get it if you agree with it", but *negative intentionality*, like Keats' negative capability. Oh and maybe some of the author's soul is left in you after....

2) specific poetic in this piece; my biggest influence is a painter and muralist called Betty Schlesinger, from South London. She is the only avant-garde muralist I know, in the sense that she works with the primary weapon of the muralist, trompe l'oeil (mislead the eye), but where other muralists do this by (thinking they are) misleading you into thinking there is a mantelpiece on the wall or a window looking out onto a garden, Schlesinger does this by taking the lines of a room and painting against them eg a diagonal bridge painted around the corner of a room so that if you look at it hard you can't see the right-angle; in other words, working with people's unchallenged expectations that a wall in a house will always have another wall at right-angles to it, or a door of such and such a height or a room with a sloping ceiling will slope always in a particular way. Her murals work with those expectations (like some avant-gardists work with expectations of left-to-right reading across the page and tug at them, Carla Harryman, for example) and tug at them. She uses her skills as a representational painter (her canvases are usually still-life, which "accounts" for her utter neglect by a London art scene) to do something genuinely avant-garde, when so many lazy conceptualists with no draughtsmanship abound.

3) I often read texts as *trompe l'oeil*, seeing other words within or rhyming with the real words in the text; we don't know ourselves, perhaps the mistake word or phrase was the real one.

4) In this poem there is a specific narrative line unfairly split often in mid-word, sometimes for musical value, sometimes to open the text to others and me to read "subconscious *trompe l'oeil*".

5) There's also a lot of very personal references eg to the subway stop "Osterley" on the Piccadilly Line on the London Underground. The London Underground has too much of a mythic status and too many connotations for most readers to use it in other than a hidden and secretive way. The whole poem is about flying from London to San Francisco, seeing Osterley from the plane, but that isn't needed; I was putting myself in at least two frames of mind, one gives a music to those who know the personal and theoretical ideas (as in my reading of Pound I think I did) and the other gives a music to those who want to read it as flat surface (I hope). Some of the words in the text don't resolve into a narrative at all, though, of any sort.

6) It was basically an improvisation, leading to the fragment I nudged the editor towards putting on the cover:

me/an/in
g = t-cells

This tends towards my favourite form: the mnemonic. Where lots of rhythms and ideas flow into and out of the captured moment, just as a painting selects a moment, suggests the past leading up to it, indicates in the texture and light some of where it is all going. I wanted to say, as an AIDS activist, how "me" is a thing, so needs an "an", and not a "the" as the thing it is decided by different ideas, sometimes many at once. To emphasise the "in", that we are all "in" this epidemic, whether HIV positive or friends of a PWA or none of the above. And we are "in" some kind of self, "it pills self hood", and need to act energetically to see others' constructions on us and counter-act. And also to figure us and parody us, in the vision of medicine, as sums and algebra (and also to bring in some maths, on a personal level, because I liked it at school and it was a major boost of my self-esteem to be good at it, but is that "in" the poem or not, doesn't have to be). I'm doing lots of mnemonic type paintings of words now, in homage to Johanna Drucker, but I don't know that "me/an/in g = t-cells" worked without all the other improv energy around it, personalising it, making it less slogan-like, as I prefer to do mnemonics that aren't slogans. What I do now is live these improves in my head until I come up with a little phrase or letter-cluster I want to paint.

Sorry to bore everyone else, but I wanted to answer you, Gary, in public like you addressed me,

Best

Ira

2)

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91. **maria damon**
more on close reading

Tue 7 Mar 1995

forgive me if i came in too late on this subject and missed important opening salvos (i just joined the list y-day) --but it seems that when people refer to "close reading," they have in mind a very particular and historically circumscribed set of concerns --not only foregrounding the materiality of the text itself (words) but a certain vocabulary that is, indeed, inherited, relatively recently, from the agrarians/new critics. but there has always been "close reading" and an hermeneutic/exegetical/interpretive process --in the sense of careful attention to the material structures of a work-- of one kind or another --whether from a rhetorical (medieval) perspective or other --many people read religious texts, the bible or koran, with a close attention that would put prosodists to shame --and that there's no need to fetishize the kind of close reading we learned in poetry classes as the only close reading that enables intimacy and respect for a text. much good cultural studies work --for example, see daniel boyarin's writing on talmudic traditions --combines a close and charged relationship with the structural/formal elements of a work with broader concerns. that's all folks--maria damon

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92. **Chris Stroffolino**
Re: Close Reading

Tue 7 Mar 1995

Right on, Mark, to hell with big city snobbery fascism, etc, etc.... I mean even "cleveland," etc--is BIG compared to certain art communities not on the map.... But then i wonder if what you're talking about to some extent isn't already a done deal, i mean the "decentralization" of the art world---somebody wrote about there not being a SCENE any more in SF, and NYC is not THAT happening anymore (etc. etc.) and a lot of this has to do with MONEY, and JOBS and FEAR. And I myself wanna move to NYC soon i think (even though...) and I realize how the conservatives have been highly anti-city since the whites could afford to leave in the 50's and 60 ' 's and up to now...and then I find "my people" more in a place like NYC than in the little town I grew up in (I went to a 10th year highschool reunion 5 years ago and saw most of my "hood" friends

with their split-level babies and surbaban ties and potbellies and smug boring etc...or) and so we RUN to the city in an attempt to find something where you DON'T NEED A CAR...Now, perhaps an unfortunate consequence of this then is defensive city snobbery. I too succumb to it (here in SMALLBANY--see what i mean)...I guess I consider the SUBURBS te big enemy....Once Jeff Hansen (who is a dear friend) said in a "POETICS BRIEFS" that the ego is certainly worse than the SUBURBS (i'm paraphrasing)...well, I disagree but I guess if I'm preaching a kind of Marxist unity of cities and agrarian should take the republicanburbs into "account" as well... Best, CHris Stroffolino-----and sorry I SHOULD CHANGE THE TOPIC TO "TOWN & COUNTRY" as opposed to "CLOSE READING"--though the name of the small town I was born in s "READING" and Wallace Stevens was from there and Palmer says the NEW Formalists like READING him, so maybe there is POETIC LOGIC if not poetic justice....

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93. **Patrick Phillips** *cloze reading*

Tue 7 Mar 1995

The notion of close reading, parsing, fakes an ideological neutrality that we've all come to know as a right-wing excision of the social because it relegates the poetic act to an independent linguistic domain. This embrace of the idea beyond the motivation of it is a close (cloze) reading - a cold embrace. The fold, or moment of discovery, comes when we are not parsing "The Idea of Order at Key West," the lay of the land/sea as described by a resolute metaphysician. This is par - the task of close reading as an encounter with the independent idea is equal to the face, or aspect of the writing. It seems to me the real moments of discovery lie in the friction between the practice of distilling and a poem that refuses, or complicates that distillation through, for example, it's linguistic opacity and/or cultural "position." In these contexts, close reading becomes an engagement with that friction, the totality of languaging, the rubbing up against the social, the motivation of the poem cutting in one direction, while the idea of the language tumbles in another. It is here that there is a determination of reading as a process of the social, because here our belief in the distinction between language and motivation is tried. So, in this trial, close reading becomes a passionate exchange of the social and the linguistic; the linguistic becomes/is the social. Close reading in this case is really close. We begin to parse, or closely read ourselves.

Patrick Phillips

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94. **Edward Foster**

Re: more on close reading

Tue 7 Mar 1995

in fact, "close reading" is a deeply authoritarian idea. why not just advocate misreading? why not fail students with the right answers?

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95. **Sheila Murphy**

Response to IL's Response to GS

Tue 7 Mar 1995

For the record, I found Ira's response to Gary's question quite enlightening. This is the kind of thing I'd like to see more of in this discussion (Thus, my previous question about how people handle/locate/imagine form in their own work).

Thanks, guys!

Sheila

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96. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Form, to Ira & Bill

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Ira & Bill,

Wonderful to be off-line a couple of days, come back, & discover both of your responses, talking around & about your work, interwoven with (in contrast to, which is not to say "opposed to") this simultaneous discussion of close reading. Appreciated, very much, both of your thoughts; and, no, Ira, it wasn't at *all* "boring"; as Sheila notes, she'd been asking for such material to be posted, as had Mark Wallace. Would like to see, if anything, *more* of this kind of material here, actually.

Anyone else?

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97. **Ron Silliman**

Re: more on close reading

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Ed Foster wrote:

>in fact, "close reading" is a deeply authoritarian idea. why not just

advocate misreading? why not fail students with the right answers?

>

I don't get the connection between close reading, as a critical interrogative practice and the implicit sense of right/wrong that Ed is suggesting. I never met a reading of one of my poems that wasn't also a misreading, and that "mis" has often been instructive. One is not after "right" readings, I hope. But I would love to hear Ed or Don explicate the authoritarian impulse they feel lurks behind the practice.

Similarly, David McA, I've always felt that the turn away from close reading via theory was a diminution of theory itself. We're all impoverished thereby.

Ron Silliman

██████████

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98. **peter quartermain**

Re: more on close reading

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Ed Foster wrote:

in fact, "close reading" is a deeply authoritarian idea. why not just advocate misreading? why not fail students with the right answers?

I'm not so sure that *mis*reading is a very helpful term because it suggests right readings. my own flip response here (I'm supposed to be on the bus on the way to work) is simply that some readings are more interesting than others, but I guess that's another whole can of worms. I'll have to think some more on that. As for those "students", well, they are why I have to catch the bus, but I'm not sure what the connection is between "students" (presumably working for grades) and close reading (presumably done for, well, call it "pleasure"). Some of my students come up with admirably "correct" and appallingly DUMB or should I say dull readings because there's no delight in them. They read out of duty. But when I asked my original question, I was not thinking pedagogy, I was wondering about my own reading practice -- which is what I take to the classroom anyway -- and is, I'd say (or tries to be), well, attentive. I'm not entirely sure how "students" got into

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99. **peter quartermain**

More on close reading

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Oops! I hit the wrong key in my reply to Ed Foster and sent the message before I meant to, Now I've forgotten the rest I meant to say. I'm sorry hurried message closes so abruptly. Now for the bus, in the warm rain.

Peter

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100. **John Shoptaw**

Re: More on close reading

Wed 8 Mar 1995

I'm happy Peter Quartermain raised the vexing question of close reading, also one of the intersections between poetry and theory.

In recent critical history, close reading took a nose dive when De Man's wartime journalism was uncovered. Deconstruction, I think, really became close reading for most of us in the eighties. Then, nobody I knew (like Barbara Johnson) knew just what to do, except perhaps stop.

I totally agree with Chris Stroffolino that post-deconstructive tendencies tend to slight or ignore texts altogether. I also think that what I've been calling "textually specific" reading can be what Patrick Phillips calls "a passionate exchange between the social and the linguistic," one which overcomes the isolation with the materiality of the poem.

Yet if we continue to read, I don't think we can read just like Brooks, Bloom, or de Man have been doing (when "misreading" began to be prized). I'm

now at work on a book tentatively called "Reading Poetry Now." Have any of you any suggestions about innovative readings, or reading theories, out there? I'd appreciate the help.

John Shoptaw

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101. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: Teaching close reading

Wed 8 Mar 1995

I've had a lot of interruptions reading the list lately, but I recall that Tenney Nathanson made at least a tangential connection between close reading or the lack of it in schools and the lack of an ear by students. I know that I did a lot of close reading as a grad & undergrad in the 70's, but I don't recall that such practice helped much in hearing the work. I also don't recall that the professors teaching such close readings had much of an ear. Whereas listening to Monk & Miles (the sounds & the silences), as well as Cage, and reading Pound & H.D. & later Niedecker, & always Dickinson, helped a lot. Reading for pleasure -- is that connected to close reading?

charles alexander

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102. **Tony Green**

close=intimate

Wed 8 Mar 1995

It is interesting to see that Close-Reading can be such a hotly contestable term. (I suppose that this is a problem not of poetics at large simply, but of a pedagogic situation for poetics.)

What are we talking about? Reading, re-reading, reading again & again, over & over; reading through, reading around & as Ron was saying mis-reading (traduire=trahir)....putting into relief this & that for the sake of the other, (the Other)....

Working with images (pictures &tc) what is often wanting is a good stretch of time for what is on, in and around the image to come to light.

Call this close-reading & spectres of "fascist" practices associated now with the sins of New Criticism (oh boy! these -isms again) appear! Call it the slow careful detailed intimate & thoughtful reading or viewing of a "work" or "piece" or " ".

The question then arises how much of the extensive critical, aesthetic, theoretical, historical literature in any of the arts is grounded in this process? Or even better, the question might be how little.

I suppose that reactions posted recently to the close-reading of New Critics is grounded in readings of New Critical texts. I must "confess" that I thought F.R. Leavis's practical criticism lectures were among the most exciting and stimulating events of the 1950's in eng.lit. at Cambridge, because there was a widespread lack of close-up attention to texts in respect of "values". Whether he was right or wrong was not consequential, because he always insisted that questions of value were always open-ended. The usual alternative attention to texts was that of annotation of detail. (But I suppose that is not what the objection to "fascist" New Criticism is about, given the American Agrarianism argument. But then I wouldn't want to take up the positions of Michael Fried in relation to the values of Abstraction, while I still admire the persistence and specificity of his critical writing).

There is a problem in "higher" education that stems from the difficulty of close or intimate reading (I too like "Density" and "Difficulty" and "Opacity" as points d'appui). It is easier for students to sidestep it and get rewarded for translating theory instead (for many younger academics) or (in art history) to do iconography and annotation and cataloguing (for older academics). There is resistance to taking time and space for the specifics of a "work" from both directions (new & old, so to speak). Radical and Subversive is what it may well be in 1995 to do close, intimate reading.

Call it perhaps "description", description of artworks. "Describe a picture", as an exercise for students, immediately raises the problems barely sketched above. It is probably impossible to specify with any precision (the too many variables in communication processes, Sandra Braman?) how to do this exercise. Lack of specification is interesting: it allows for students to determine specifications in the actual occasion of writing. (This kind of work is best carried out as far as possible from university grade systems, because the protocols for description are so unspecific).

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103. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: Response to IL's Response to GS

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Yes, Sheila, Gary, and Ira!

As someone more interested in process than theory, I'd like to see a lot more of this type of discussion.

Jonathan

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104. **braman sandra**

Re: close=intimate

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Shiva confesses that precisely the reason she never studied literature either as an undergraduate or graduate, the reason she isn't doing literature as a professor -- though she persistently and passionately continues to read and write and read and write and read and write -- was being TOLD how to read.... Somehow, for this poet, it took the life out of it.... Sandra Braman

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105. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: Community-apology?

Wed 8 Mar 1995

Dear Gary,

Having returned from a few days off line and having now read your post beginning: "My apologies to Jonathan Brannen and others for being reductive." I have to echo Tony Green's "Apology accepted... But not what I was looking for."

I wasn't complaining because you were reductive. My complaint was that you were inaccurate and that I felt your characterizations of other writers and presses in Minnesota had perhaps performed a disservice to them. The point I had hope to make was that it's better to ask questions than to assume. You elicit marvelous responses when you do ask. Keep up the good work. I think you and Sheila and Bill and Ira have introduced a needed and useful new direction to the discussion on this list.

Thanks,
Jonathan

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106. **David McAleavey**
Re: Teaching close reading
Wed 8 Mar 1995

Most of my teachers, I think, were excellent, so maybe my experience differs from the norm. Still, I did have some losers thrown in there, and surely some of them were just being tendentious under the guise of doing "close reading." From such you wouldn't learn much of anything, of ear or eye. We've all had enough bad teaching to know what it's like to feel stepped on.

The best writers, theorists or poets, have paid a lot of attention to things -- for example, to the prosody of the first seven Cantos. "Close reading," the way I intended it, is just a subset of "paying attention." Reading page after page of "close readings" of poems, on the other hand, wears thin pretty quickly. Let's just read the poems, I want to say!

In my earlier post I spoke simplistically of teaching strategies of close reading pertinent to different types of writing. That's not right. We certainly can learn strategies for reading, as we can learn strategies for finding our way through the woods; but we can't know in advance the "type," if there is such a thing, of a piece of writing. We really do have to read it, I guess.

I had tried to suggest by using "scare-quotes" that I understand "reading for pleasure" to be a complicated if not illusory notion, but yes, as a practical matter, people who read poetry frequently will tend, I think, to read it carefully. That doesn't mean that everyone is open to poetries which do things differently from what they like to have done, or what they are used to liking. Pound's problem with Whitman may have been that Pound didn't see carefulness in Whitman's work. Or maybe he just didn't like it and so couldn't read it carefully.

And now I'll tiptoe back to the shadows..

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107. **Eric M. Gleason**
(no subject)
Wed 8 Mar 1995

David McAleavey: "Reading page after page of "close readings" of poems, on the other hand, wears thin pretty quickly. Let's just read the poems, I want to say!"

I just joined this list last week, and the first messages I saw led me to believe the discussion would soon turn to crop rotation. I was relieved when I saw the posts about close reading, then disillusioned when I wasn't taking the time to read most of the posts! My background in poetry is severely limited...

(read: they made me write haiku and limerick in grade school) and find myself almost overwhelmed at the content of my first undergrad poetry class. When I first started reading for the course, I had no choice but to slow down and try to immerse myself in the poems, reading closely (almost drowning myself). There have been many times when I instinctively wanted to "just read the poem" but it would all just turn into a jumble of words. For comfort, i would often turn to Dr. Seuss and read aloud. Chanting "Fox in Socks" while stomping around a dorm room can be very liberating and soothing when Olson becomes frustrating.

Let's just read the poem! -i want to say it to, but it gets me nowhere.

--

"I was a teenage monkey wrench

Eryque "I know I spell my name wrong but that's no reason to hurt me!"

Gleason



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108. **Kenneth Sherwood**

Intimacy and intimations of a micropoetics

Thu 9 Mar 1995

1. Confusions of terminology: "close reading" v. intimate reading as if theory and 'to read' can nae share the same bed. And deconstructions be damned, there is not a spirit of MIS-READING (in the academy anyway) despite the prevalence of misreadings there.

2. Fact is "close reading" as method gallops toward singularity, imperial resolution of the chord and production of the cadence. So to Charles A., if only "close reading" could be for pleasure. How would we name it?

3.

Within the hallowed halls if prophylactic theory promotes safe texts and declining intimacy, our loneliness may not be quelled through explication. Brooks and Warren are at peace and the students don't read, agreed, but the spirit of "close readings" climactic S&M mastery over the poem lingers.

4.

"I can't read this poem; I don't understand it at all."

Sure if anecdotal evidence of an authoritarian effect
of close readings ethic of closure.

5.

Good to talk about the "pleasures" of "textually intimate"
readings. Of course the risk of accumulating first a mass
and then a theory.

In fact to talk so (as some have begun to do)
would perhaps bridge the gap (an imagined gap
as Ron Silliman (will the real Ron please stand up)
demonstrates in various theoretical yet intimate
readings in *_New Sentence_*) between the two
threads on this list and between theory and
"just reading the poem."

5b.

Just Do It?

6.

Pleasure this week of hearing Ric Caddel (from NE England)
read and give a reading of Bunting, an intimate reading
complete with overhead projector that gave intimate
elucidation, made it possible to hear with the ears

7.

Suppose the theory monolith has turned the academy's ears
away from particulars of reading, strayed from the text
ye little lost lambs; causal-coincidental correlation with
with the fading of poetry (however read, misread, or unread-but-
theorized in the past) in general from the sanctified syllabi?

Ken Sherwood

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109. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 7 Mar 1995 to 8 Mar 1995

Thu 9 Mar 1995

Charles ("Alexander"): re re close reading and ears ("they fling their speech by
means of it" & etc?): agreed, very much, that courses in close reading don't
teach ear possession (which I think I said or meant to say): I dunno whether I
learned my poetry ear at Monk's knee (though Wallace Shawn has a great Monk
story) or not, or whether, finally, you did--that may be a romanticized account--
but I do agree I didn't learn mine in grad school. Going to grad school I instead
felt by and large that those professing didn't have much to teach me since I had

developed my ear by writing (and reading, in a non-academic context--Cantos on way to teach elementary school on long subway rides to Brooklyn w refugees from the all night Third World Club etc etc--though some notable exceptions, re different KINDS of poems I wasn't equipped to hear having cut teeth or whatever on Olson's earnestness--so mannerism had to be TAUGHT. NEVER the less sitting there in classroom with both 1) PhD students whose ears are full of lead, AND have never been taught even the most rudimentary elabbling terminology for poetry explication (strange but true) AND w CW students (MFA) some of whom are very good poets BUT, I continue to be intrigued by the notion that in some basic way I might get some/several of them by term's end to be seeing/doing something they are not doing yet. and I guess here wd be the gist: if I can't do THAT, then what on earth am I doing at the more "advanced" levels talking about Ashbery and Baudrillard, or Charles B and Benjamin, or whatever I think I do: I mean they are then simply not operating on a level where what I take for granted as enabling details are even within their perceptual pardon the expression universe.

meanwhile, having helped me teach a course here (there; where: Tucson) a few years ago, you would I hope exempt my ear from general professorial ineptitude as I would exempt yours from whatever. Or we could play Duelling Ears?

T.

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110. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 7 Mar 1995 to 8 Mar 1995

Thu 9 Mar 1995

meanwhile a VERY hearty assent to Ron Silliman's assertion or whatever that:

But I would love to hear Ed or Don explicate the authoritarian impulse they feel lurks behind the practice. McA, I've always felt that the turn away from close reading via theory was a diminution of theory itself. We're all impoverished thereby.

I'd add that the turn away from close reading has an authoritarian aspect to it as well....

Tenney

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111. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 7 Mar 1995 to 8 Mar 1995

Thu 9 Mar 1995

was I the one who brought students into it? Sorry if so, I guess; am busy teaching a close reading course to grad students for first time is why, I guess. but: the sort of non-academic or non-instructorish obsessive weird hovering over details of a text. P. Quartermain, is just what I had in mind by bringing students in: whatever I think it is I did sitting on subways as a would-be writer reading Pound and Olson obsessively, has NOTHING (almost) to do w what any of my students do, so far, when they read poems and write on them, in the sense that their habits of attention by and large are incredibly clotted up w Big Ideology questions--or perhaps as non-writers mostly getting weened or warned in the academy of the 80s-90s they are being offered a whole set of questions which while meant to supplement close reading skills are instead replacing them wholesale (cf. Kenner on EP and foibles of presumed "classical education" as background "which he proceeded to modify" in ABC & etc.). anyway I was just responding to I don't anymore remember whose suggestion that close reading was authoritarian, w the suggestion or perception or grouse that dealing w students makes me feel just the reverse: that quirky attention to quirky details would in fact be whatever the non-twelve-step word for "enabling" used to be.....

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112. **Eliot Katz**

more on close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

In a lecture I once heard on tape, a terrific Rutgers University left political theorist, Stephen Bronner, talked about artworks as having "internal dynamics" and "external dynamics," both of which deserve consideration. He attributed the phraseology, which I have found really helpful, to a contemporary German philosopher whose name I'd have to look up. As I understand it, the major critique of New Criticism's way of close reading is that it too often ignored the external dynamics of poems--the relationship of texts to important matters (historical events, human lives, political ideologies, etc.) outside the text. In so doing, the New Critics privileged certain poetic elements (e.g. textual ambiguity and indeterminacy), and unfairly marginalized others (e.g. more determinate explorations, often radical explorations, of the social world). In **Repression and Recovery**, Cary Nelson does a good job of looking at poetry from the first half of the 20th century that was marginalized by New Critical standards, without denying the quality of the poetry which New Critics championed. It seems to me that, by considering both internal and external

dynamics, it becomes easier to talk about the literary value, as well as the radical potential, of a wider range of poetic styles.

Up the Rebels,
E. Katz

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113. **Joe Amato**

Re: More on close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

ok, i'm gonna be persistent and once again recommend that dissertation i mentioned to those of you who are sweating out the implications of close reading (which i sweat out myself): margaret a. syverson, "the wealth of reality: an ecology of composition" (university of california at san diego, 1994)... syverson is attempting to take into account factors that reach *beyond* the individual (i.e., the individual reader, writer, text)...

so from the diss., p. 31:

We need to discover *who* and *what* are the agents interacting in an ecology of composition; how these agents organize themselves into a more or less coherent whole---a word, a sentence, a poem, a literary genre, a collaborative writing group, a movement such as "romanticism" or "modernism"; how they situate themselves; how they interpret their environments; and how they use their interpretations to engage in purposeful activities and interactions. And specifically, we need to better understand how composing systems are *distributed, embodied, emergent, and enactive* across physical, social, psychological, temporal, and spatial dimensions.

anyway... though syverson's rhetoric may strike some of you as functionalist, fact is the strength of her READINGS (close? intimate? or distant? systemic? or both? etc.) of (again) reznikoff, a collaborative student essay, and a flame war convince me that there is something valuable in her 'approach'...

joe

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114. **maria damon**

the list

Thu 9 Mar 1995

hello, i just want to comment briefly, because it seems a bit parasitic to be learning so much from others' conversation and not saying something every once in a while, that i'm enjoying the quality of people's engagement with the

"close reading" issue. i'm glad to have contributed to a concept of textual intimacy and i'm glad there hasn't been any further cultural-studies bashing. i've enjoyed esp. sandra braman and ken sherwood, but everyone else as well, but was puzzled by what i took to be ?irony? on ed foster's part? but others have addressed that. what happened to the questions of community and poetry's "utility" , of which several were forwarded to me by charles b (thanks)-- whoever introduced the poem about cocaine, could i please get a copy? over the e?--maria damon

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115. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: Teaching close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

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

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116. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: POETICS Digest - 7 Mar 1995 to 8 Mar 1995

Thu 9 Mar 1995

Tenney, you are absolutely right to take me to task. In some sense I learned ear from father reading poetry to me, and from constant reading, with a sense of sounding, from an early age. Yes, Monk helped, as did various other sources, but most likely I could never have heard Monk without having heard much else before. My guess is there's some strange sources that went into this ear, including southern baptist preaching, Tennessee Ernie Ford (a paternal favorite) & more.

Yes, I exempt your ear from criticism directed at the professorial realm, although I exempt it after hearing your poetry & hearing you talk about poetry informally over the years -- I can't entirely remember if concepts of sounding and hearing came up in the class I helped you teach (my couple of hours against your dozens of hours in that class, which I enjoyed, and which, I remember, had a few ears in it).

Merton Sealts (Melville critic) oversaw my graduate teaching experience, and commented that he thought what I did best for the students was read poems aloud. I was shocked to think that other beginning level (this was a freshman sophomore intro to lit class on 19th & 20th century lit -- one century each semester) teachers (grad & faculty) did not do this.

all best,
charles alexander

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117. **H. T. KIRBY-SMITH** *History of Close Reading*

Thu 9 Mar 1995

Like many others, I did encounter "close reading" as a shared presumption among the critics who are lumped together under "New Criticism." It seems to me that the most important document that encouraged "close reading" was I. A. Richards's PRACTICAL CRITICISM. For Richards, this was a revolutionary and experimental way to proceed--he gave copies of poems to Cambridge University students, or attendees at his elctures, who were supposed to know a lot about poetry. He found that many could not look at a poem and see what was there in front of them. He found that the elite were not very bright, unable to talk about a poem unless they already knew something about the poet and had learned the right things to say.

Richards's experiment paralleled the teachings of T. E. Hulme and Pound, the emphasis on the sharp, clear, image. Later, along came all the careful explications of poems; Donne was read with understanding by many people for the first time in hundreds of years. To read Donne you have to keep your nose to the page.

After neing trained in this "New" thing, I discovered that the French had been doing it in their lycees and universities for years. It was known as explication de texte.

But to learn to read poetry this way makes it almost impossible to read poetry that requires that the reader submit to a vague evocativeness. For example, you have F. R. Leavis's famous demolition of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind. " You

cannot read Shelley that way. You have to read Shelley as if he were at least part Language Poet. That is even more true of certain poems by Rossetti, William Morris, and Swinburne. You have to loosen up. One cannot study clouds with a microscope. The same is true of good Language Poetry. And of many French Symbolist poems. Gerard de Nerval and much Mallarme. Poetry can be many things, but vague evocativeness has been out of fashion for a long time, perhaps because a hundred years ago there was entirely too much of it. Funny how at the same time there was too much overt didacticism--which the New Criticism also disdained, and which the Beats and the anti-war poets of the sixties and seventies brought back in.

or so it all seems to me

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118. **Gabrielle Welford**
on the chiapas.... (fwd)

Thu 9 Mar 1995

I hope this isn't inappropriate to post here. Thought there might be among us interested.

Gabrielle

Sorry to bring this news to you but I just received this and thought I should pass it on. This sounds serious to me, and some of you may want to do something with respect to this news.

Subject: Massacre in Chiapas

>>>>> >We've just received an emergency call from friends in Mexico. They tell us that the Mexican army has surrounded the city of San Cristobal in Chiapas, and that the hospital in the nearby city of Comitán is flooded with casualties. The press is being excluded from the area. The people being attacked are the Mayan Indians, and other poor farmers, who've been denied land and food since the conquest.

They've asked that we try to get word about this out via email. While we have no further information beyond this one call I ask you to pass this message on, or tell anyone you think relevant via any means so that this does not occur in silence.

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119. **Joe Amato**

Re: More on close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

in the composition studies vein, and again, methinks, pertinent to this question of close reading/pedagogy, i recommend the following:

derek owens, *_resisting writings (and the boundaries of composition)_* (southern methodist up, 1994)...

derek's book is the only one i know to situate writing instruction over and against work by h.d., cage, stein, s. howe, olson, davies, duplessis, brossard, etc... the pluralism he calls for is, imho, a welcome relief from so much in comp. studies that relegates "creative writing" to reductively expressivist theories...

joe

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120. **Hank Lazer**

close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

I've thoroughly enjoyed the postings of the last several days. I find the list taking more and more of my time, but I am learning and engaged. Thanks to all.

When I was at the conference in Louisville, it was great to meet a number of you that I'd had only known via e.

Of the current discussion, probably winding down?, on close reading, I wanted to raise a related issue. Peter had asked what would be the opposite of close reading. Inattentive reading? Non-intensive reading? As others have pointed out, the allegedly conservative nature of close reading has to do with its institutionalization via a textbook: *Understanding Poetry*. (It's my mpression, that Jed Rasula's forthcoming? just released? book will discuss this history.) In my opinion, recent theory "advances," particularly those stemming from deconstruction, have, in a different context, reiterated "close reading" methodologies, but with much greater play and with different metaphysical stakes.

But the issue that I would like to raise is the relationship of close reading to theme-based reading. It seems to me that much close reading ultimately gets down to a process of unification of the explanation of the poem by means of a thematized understanding. While much (most? all?)

newer/innovative/experimental (take your pick) poetries have to one degree or another overthrown such habits of unification and closure, many discussions of

poetry end up defending "new" poetries as having rather traditional modes of meaning (as theme). As various of y'all have pointed out, cultural and contextual readings DO lead in different directions (and sometime away from a close consideration of that great new critical polestar, the text itself). But even so, especially in the domain of the multicultural, many readings boil down to assertions about "content" (a close cousin of "theme").

In one of my poems in Doublespace, I had written that to be "thematized is demonized."

Is close reading inevitably tied to "theme"? Is "thematizing" inevitably associated with retro modes of mastery--a kind of strip-mining of the text?

More later.

Hank Lazer

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121. **Charles Watts**

THE RECOVERY OF THE PUBLIC WORLD

Thu 9 Mar 1995

Forwarded message:

> Announcing:

> >

> > The Recovery of the Public World: a Conference and Poetry Festival in Honour of Robin Blaser, his poetry and poetics, June 1-4, 1995, on the occasion of Robin's 70th birthday and the publication of his major work, *The Holy Forest*, at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

> >

> "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"

> >

Panel discussions will be held on the mornings and afternoons of
the four conference days. There will be an opening night
welcoming and reading on Thursday evening, June 1st; a banquet
Friday evening, June 2nd; a reading featuring many of our invited
guests Saturday evening, June 3rd; and a closing night reading
Sunday, June 4th. What follows are some details about the panels
and other conference and festival events:

> >

The Panels & Their Chairs

> >

> Composition & Performance

> > Daphne Marlatt and Phyllis Webb

> >

> Eros & Poiesis

> > Bruce Boone and Sharon Thesen

> >

> Ethics & Aesthetics

> > Lisa Robertson and Jerry Zaslove

> >

> Heterologies

> > Susan Howe and Nathaniel Mackey

> >

> Poetics, Theory & Practice

> > Charles Bernstein and Miriam Nichols

> >

> Translation & Poetry

> > Norma Cole and Michael Palmer

> >

> > The Festival

> > A Gala Series of Readings

> > Thursday, Saturday and Sunday,

> > June 1, 3 and 4

> >
> > The Exhibition
> > In Search of Orpheus:
> > Some Bay Area Poets & Painters
> > Works from 1945-1965 by Robin Blaser, Jess, Fran Herndon and many
> > others; curated by Scott Watson and Greg Bellerby at the
> > Charles H. Scott Gallery. June 1 - 25
> >
> > The Banquet
> > A Feast of Companions
> > Hosted by Kevin Killian and Ellen Tallman; prepared under the culinary
> > supervision of Chef Brian DeBeck. Friday, June 2
> >
> > Some Invited Guests
> >
> Charles Bernstein, E.D. Blodgett, Bruce Boone, George Bowering, David
> > Bromige, Colin Browne, Don Byrd, Norma Cole, Peter Culley, Michael
> > Davidson, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Clayton Eshleman, Deanna Ferguson,
Peter
> > Gizzi, Robert Hogg, Susan Howe, Pierre Joris, Paul Kelley, Kevin Killian,
> > Joanne Kyger, Steve McCaffery, Karen MacCormack, Michael McClure,
> > Nathaniel Mackey, Daphne Marlatt, Miriam Nichols,
> > Michael Ondaatje, Michael Palmer, Peter Quartermain, Jed Rasula,
Lisa Robertson, Jerome Rothenberg, Leslie Scalapino,
> > Andrew Schelling, Aaron Shurin, George Stanley, Catriona Strang,
> > Ellen Tallman, Nathaniel Tarn, Sharon Thesen, Lola Tostevin,
> > Pasquale Verdicchio, Fred Wah, Anne Waldman, Phyllis Webb, Jery
Zaslove,
> > Zonko,
> >
> and Robin Blaser.
> >
> > Sponsored By
> > The Institute for the Humanities, Simon Fraser University * The
> > Vice-President Academic, Simon Fraser University * The W.A.C. Bennett
> > Library, Simon Fraser University * The Canada Council * The Charles H.
> > Scott Gallery, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design * The Fine Arts
> > Gallery, University of British Columbia * The University College
of the Fraser Valley * The Kootenay School of Writing *
> > The Western Front * The Charles Olson Society
> >
> > Inquiries

- > > Phone (voice mail) [REDACTED]
- > > Fax [REDACTED]
- > >
- > > Registration Fees
- > > Entire package \$100
- > > (including Panels, Readings and Banquet)
- > >
- > Panels and Readings only \$80
- > >
- > Students and fixed incomes \$60, \$40
- > >
- > Banquet only \$25
- > >
- > Please pay in Canadian funds. Depending on registration, tickets to
- > > individual readings will be available at the door of each reading.
- > >
- > > This event is being organized by volunteers;
- > > if it is to be everything we hope for, we're going to need a little help
- > > from our friends. Tax receipts will be issued on request for all
- > > donations and each donor will be listed in the program as
- > >
- > A Companion donating \$500 or more: your name will be listed in the
- program;
- > > you'll receive a signed limited edition poster
- > > designed by the artist, Christos Dikeakos,
- > > all publications resulting from the conference and preferred seating at all
- > > events.
- > >
- > An Ideal Reader donating \$250: your name will be listed in the program;
- > > you'll receive a signed poster and preferred seating at all events.
- > > A Friend donating \$150: your name will be listed in the program; you'll
- > > receive a pass to all events and an unsigned poster.
- > >
- > A Pal donating \$50: your name will be listed in the program and you'll
- > > receive a pass to the banquet. Smaller donations are also welcome; you'll
- > > have the satisfaction of knowing you've helped make this festival
- > > possible.
- > >
- > >
- > For a brochure giving information about some recommended hotels
- > and a tear-off registration form, please send your name and regular
- > mail address to:

- >
- > The Recovery of the Public World
- > The Institute for the Humanities
- > Simon Fraser University
- > Burnaby, B.C. Canada V5A 1S6
- >
- > or send an e-message to [REDACTED]
- > >
- >
- > A reminder: Please note that seating is limited at this conference.
If you plan to register, please try to do so by May 1, 1995.

Some Late Additions:

We have added two panels to the conference schedule, names of the panels and their chairs to be announced. The conference will thus begin on the morning of Thursday, June 1st. We're in the process of notifying those whose papers have been chosen for a panel. We're now working out the scheduling of panels and other conference events, and we'll publish a conference/festival programme when we have these details worked out. I'll post the programme information on this list at the same time. Inquiries can also be sent to me at cwatts.sfu.ca. If you have sent us a proposal (and you're wondering what happened to it), we should be able to let you know whether or not it has been accepted for a panel in about a week's time. Please be patient: the process of selecting panelists has been complex and lengthy, but some remarkable panels are coming out of it.

Charles Watts for the conference/festival organizers

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122. **Eric M. Gleason**

Re: Teaching close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

>From a student's point of view...reading one or two shorter poems and discussing them for an entire class (or more) can be much more effective than parsing longer works. Although part of this is because I started as an engineering major and have an attention span accordingly...i find it easier to become intimate with a shorter work, especially when the author or style is new to me. After I get a couple pages into a poem i start to remember less and less, and have more trouble discussing and understanding the discussion of the work.

--

"I was a teenage monkey wrench

Eryque "I know I spell my name wrong but that's no reason to hurt me!"

Gleason



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123. **Edward Foster**

Re: more on close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

if "close reading" indicates "correct reading," it is authoritarian. but then, who's to say what's "close"?

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124. **Gabrielle Welford**

Lobbying for the NEH/NEA (fwd)

Thu 9 Mar 1995

A message some of you may not have seen. Gabrielle

Tell me if I'm steaming up the airways...

----- Forwarded message ----- I'd like to share with all of you a letter I received this week. I wonder if you will find it as disturbing as I did. Because of my participation in the NEH Summer Seminars for Teachers (I studied William James' _Varieties of Religious Experience_ at FSU last summer), I'm on the NEH mailing list, and this week I got a letter from NEH which said, in part,

the following: "In recent testimony before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee former Chairman of the NEH William J. Bennett singled out the Summer Seminars for School Teachers as an example of one of the ways the NEH has had 'a deleterious effect on our culture.' This criticism was unexpected. Nothing we have seen in the program's thirteen years of existence had suggested that these seminars were anything other than successful by any measure."

The letter went on to ask former seminar participants to comment on the validity of the criticism based on our experience. It also included the text of Mr. Bennett's comments on the subject, and those are what I really want you to see, since you may not have been aware of them. Mr. Bennett, by the way, is also the author of the bestselling *Book of Virtue*. Here is what he had to say about the seminars in a general attack on NEA and NEH:

"...how could the two Endowments hope to serve a larger civic role when they have not improved the quality of the arts and humanities since 1965? There is no question in my mind that things have gotten much worse in these realms during the last three decades.. Some of the dominant movements that have swept through the arts and humanities world include the radical nihilism of post-modern art; homosexual and lesbian self-celebration; Marxism; neo-Marxism; radical feminism and multiculturalism; deconstructionism; and various manifestations of political correctness. "When I was chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, at my direction the NEH staff, in order to counteract some of the modish projects that were swamping NEH, devised a summer program where high school teachers would devote themselves to the study of a single great work of philosophy, literature, or history. The program worked admirably the first year ...[but] by the third it was obvious that this program was going the way of all the others. The books were being Marxised, feminized, deconstructed, and politicized. High school teachers, far from being exposed to "the best which has been taught and said in the world" (in Matthew Arnold's phrase), were being indoctrinated in the prevailing dogmas of academia."

Among other things, I resent the implication that high school teachers, some of the best educated and, frankly, most opinionated people I know, can be unwillingly "indoctrinated" into anything in a few weeks of classwork. Furthermore, I think that Bennett has a naive view of culture if he believes that encounters with the "dominant movements of thought" of one's milieu can or should be avoided by thinking people. The Declaration of Independence is a product of a "dominant movement" of eighteenth century thought, for God's sake! And, while one would probably not want to adopt any of them as the whole of one's philosophy of life, and one might indeed have valid grounds for rejecting their theoretical bases, the movements he mentions, such as

multiculturalism, gay self-celebration, and feminism, have contributed much to humanizing our culture and have produced _some_ excellent scholarly work.

I think a valid case could be made (in terms of the proper role of government, for example) for the dropping of federal funding for NEH and NEA, but the idea that such funding should be discontinued because of the deleterious effects of those agencies' programs on our culture is ludicrous. People and cultures are nourished, not diminished, by knowledge and the challenge of new ideas and fresh thought.

Lisa Pearson, MRE

(2)

From: IN%"[REDACTED]" 21-FEB-1995 14:20:35.92

Subj: RE: Lobbying for the NEH/NEA ...

I'm writing in response to the question of why funding the NEA is important. I am a poet, and have been a recipient of NEA money in several different ways during the course of my career. I am working class, the first of my family to go to college out of high school (my father did go to college nights over the course of 15 years, and finally got a degree the year I graduated from high school). People in my community mostly worked in factories or in the trades. When I found myself writing poetry, it was not out of an academic tradition, but rather out of the desire to tell stories that I could not find in the literature, stories of working class people. My heritage is mixed blood, French-Canadian and Abenaki. Again, not found in the literature. My writing is not a matter of fashion or aesthetic play, but has to do with cultural survival, of being represented in the literature.

My training as a poet was not in MFA programs, but in the community, and with the generosity of older poets such as Etheridge Knight and Sam Cornish - poets who were working in the communities, sometimes receiving some funding from the city/state that dribbled down from NEA sources.

I worked for several years as a writer-in-residence in public schools in Massachusetts. What does that mean, exactly? I taught three or four creative writing classes a day, in programs that lasted from one day to several months at one site. I did readings of my own work and that of other contemporary poets, bringing poetry as a living tradition into the classroom, reading poets who were writing out of the students' own communities, latino, african-american, arab-american, Native American, Asian American, as well as poets from the Anglo tradition, and poets in translation from all over the world.

It was important to students that I was a real person in the community, telling stories about my own community and life. When I was a child, no one ever told me that my stories were important, worthy of literature. I know my example encouraged students to see their own lives and stories as important, as well as

introducing them to the vitality of poetry, and encouraging their skills as writers. Students in my workshops were drawn from all populations, not from honors or "gifted" programs, and teachers were often amazed (though I was not) at the writing done by students with fair or poor academic records. Every residency also included teacher workshops, where I shared ways of teaching poetry and creative writing, and introduced teachers to contemporary poetry they were not familiar with. These artist-in-residence programs were largely funded with money from the NEA.

In 1990, I was awarded a Fellowship from the Massachusetts Artists Foundation, a \$10,000 award. This was funded largely by NEA money. This award allowed me to take the time needed to finish my first book of poetry, which was accepted for publication by a small press that receives, you guessed it - funding from the NEA.

With a book out, I was eligible to apply for a Fellowship from the NEA. Individual Fellowships are granted to artists in the amount of \$20,000, and in 1993, was awarded a Fellowship from the NEA. The award gave me the time needed to work on a second book of poetry, which will be out this spring. The award has also been seen as a credential, and I with that and my publication record, I have begun teaching on the college and university level.

Without NEA funding, I would have done next no work in the schools - I simply wouldn't have been able to afford it. (As it was, the most I made as a writer-in-residence during the years 1985-1992, working four to five days a week from early October to June, was \$12,000 - well under the beginning salary of public school teachers - and I was considered one of the busy and successful artists in the program. This of course, is before taxes and without any benefits. I would say the community was getting it's money's worth and then some. It's important also to understand that all money received by artists is considered and taxed as regular income, so those \$20,000 dollar grants actually amount to approx \$13,000. When you see the figures allotted to the arts remember they are highly inflated by these omissions.) Without NEA funding it would have taken me much longer to get my first book in print, if indeed, I did it at all.

The impact of a Fellowship in the arts is more than just monetary, it is a great affirmation of the importance of one's work. As the arts are so undervalued in our society, it is crucial to have one's work affirmed. This is especially true for the beginning artist, but is true for artists throughout their career. Poets are not generally paid for writing their poetry. They're paid for teaching writing, doing readings, teaching literature, and sometimes though rarely, for editorial work. Receiving a fellowship is one of the few times when a poet/writer/artist is told: just do the work. That is invaluable.

For a working class artist, who does not automatically have the support of a university environment, the NEA support is crucial. For marginalized communities, who are by definition under-represented, the NEA support is crucial. Many of the small journals that are publishing some of the most vital writing going on in America are NEA funded. Literary writing has been largely pushed out of the trade publishers. Without NEA funds, many small presses would fold. If you care about literature, you should care very much about NEA funding.

The move is to push all funding into private foundations. This system moves money away from the working class and marginalized communities, to where it's least needed. It encourages a good ol' boy system of grant-giving. (I knew no writers on the panels of any funding organization that has given me moeny, so I know it is possible to be funded without being part of a good ol' boy network.) Public funding is crucial. The benefits do not end with the individual artists, but reverberate throughout the community.

I hope others on the Net will share stories of how NEA and NEH funding has effected them, programs they've been a part of, or know about, etc. Please forgive the haste with which this note was written, as I'm doing it on line.

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125. **Kathe Davis**

Re: more on close reading

Thu 9 Mar 1995

"External dynamics" is perhaps a more expressive way of referring to what most of us have been calling "context" for lo thesmany years. I heard Cleanth Brooks years ago stand up at an English Institute meeting at which the New Criticism was being slammed, and say strongly if in a rather quavery voice that it had never been his intention, or that of anyone he knew, to ELIMINATE considerations of biography, history, etc., (that is, context, or "external dynamics"). They merely wished to call fresh attention to the specificities of the language(s) of poems, since those were being badly neglected. I very much like the notion of close reading as simply a subset of paying attention. Anything can be TAUGHT tyrannically, but there is nothing INHERENTLY tyrannical in being urged to be more aware. On the contrary. k. davis

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126. **Loss Glazier**

Re: Intimacy and intimations of a micropoetics

Thu 9 Mar 1995

Subject: Intimacy and intimations of a micropoetics

1a. Close reading, closet reading, closet reading, closed reading. Do we impale texts or are they, constituted as texts, offered within a definition of closure, as closed?

2a. Galloping toward singularity but for a single "reader," no? Is not the singularity (or single array of possibilities) particular to this reader and only trots to "resolution" when a singularity is imposed on others? As to pleasure, it is true in fact that tidying up is a pleasure to some. Does the text differ from a disorderly kitchen?

3a. Yes, possibly the pressure of history. Hallowed halls, etc., have taken their toll and do cast their monolithic shadows by restricting textual terrain. Does close reading equal explication? The former is a kinder phrase but carries the tenor of the latter. Is it my schooling? Did anyone get graded on explication? Does this mean there is a right answer? Time for a little alto?

4a. Maybe not an ethic of closure but a fear of elevation? Is not any "formal" writing elevated? If it's not, "Hey, buddy, can you spare a rhyme," then what is the entry point for someone not conversant with the conventions of the elevation? Walk for ten minutes then rest five...

5a. The mass _does_ turn to theory and this perhaps is the most difficult moment. (Some might say after theory it continues to a consumer product.) But this is not "theory" as a district attorney (we are speaking about law here) would use the word rather the fear of imposed consent. But do not our means of production offer a route out? Or am I under a delusion?

6a. At the reading thinking - this was a break away from what constantly overwhelms me: daily work - "What I need to hear is some elevated language." (Also dialect.) And boy did I need to hear some elevated words. It _is_ elevated: physically, of course, there is a stage - in this case a podium. But the reading voice offers words that are _set_. That is, written in some other frame of place and activity, transported, and delivered as if encased, framed, "on the crispest sheet of white paper," I think I noted. Setting up the dilemma perhaps instantly.

7a. Most probably that the monolith has penetrated through original texts to secondary and the tertiary. For the syllabi of the lambs a lullaby. If poetry were to fade from the academy should it not be carried on by word of mouth? Is _any_ comment on text theory? Or close?

Loss Glazier

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127. **Ted Pelton**

Re: Form

Thu 9 Mar 1995

I really liked Bill Luoma's description of his compositional process when writing *My Trip to NYC*. I'd never heard of this work, but I'll be on the lookout for it from now on. That sense of the wonderful accident, followed by the fear one will never be able to repeat the moment; not knowing how it happened, the feeling if one only knew it could be repeated, but then knowing that each new text creates each own success story as it were; unreproduceability part of the uniqueness of the text, its genius--don't mean for this to become blather, but the uncertainty Luoma describes struck me as exactly right, or exactly my own experience.

I'm a fiction writer, so-called, but very influenced in my writing process by Olsonian "field" notions, every moment in the writing a new decision in a continually revised field, ever reformulating itself with each new decision. Yeah, when it works, there's nothing like it, but it also leads to a lot of garbage. But it's the way I write, I can't do it any other way, a fact which has come clearer to me as I've been working on a so-called novel. I tried to figure out a plot, even if just to get me another step into the book. But I found as soon as started trying to follow it, I'd mess it up. Intentionally.

In prose, there's the example of Poe, who said that everything should be figured out to the least little detail before ever setting pen to paper. I used to think Poe was making it up, perversely creating a counter-myth to prevailing romantic theories of composition. I don't think so anymore (about Poe) but it's still a very foreign method to my own. I get too bored with just filling in the blanks of a pre-planned piece. Nor do I think lively writing can be accomplished unless there's a sense it's renewing itself all the time, turning over and over again.

I forget who said it, but I've also found oulipo-style formally rigorous experiments engender work well. Again, at times. "Either it works or it doesn't," as I seem to recall Spicer saying somewhere. But knowing you only get so many lines here, so many there, and letting that become something that hadn't been there before is a nice way of having constant and variant, that play between which can be fruitful.

Now, in this "novel," I am working one episode at a time. I have a loose idea of where I'm going, but want no more than that because when I do, like I said, I fuck it up. I'm also reading a lot, letting ideas or even just images set me off. I remember hearing once (it may be apocryphal, and I'd like to be corrected by someone with better information) that in Olson's library, volumes would have copious notes, starting in the beginning and up until a certain point, where the marginalia would just stop. Presumably this is where he'd start writing. I'm

committed to a long form on this work though, and its tru I do have some tricks I'm keeping around for later (but it's also true they might not fit; they're in the field as I see it now, but may be abandoned later). I'd like to hear from people who have written things that couldn't be completed in one sitting, or even a couple -- extended works -- yet are committed to a similar improvisatory approach. I'm suffering long droughts in between successful episodes.

Ted Pelton

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128. **kathryne lindberg**

Re: the list

Fri 10 Mar 1995

can anyone help with a name, location? I simply cannot remember who told me about a poet, at Fresno State, I think, who is working on/with/ within the Volga Deutsch community in Central California. Anybody know? I'd like to be in touch with this person. Believe she is a woman. What a well of ignorance I am this late evening. This query is prompted by the death of another of my fast disappearing and tangle-rooted or rhizomatic family leaves. Never thought I'd be rooting around in this a/A/ohm-poetics. Sorry to break into the meditation onclose reading which y'll are pounding out. Thanks indeed for the enlivening discourse, of course.

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129. **Marjorie Perloff**

Re: POETICS Digest - 8 Mar 1995 to 9 Mar 1995

Fri 10 Mar 1995

I was delighted to read some of the "close reading" commentaries triggered by Peter Quartermain's great query, especially Tenney Nathanson's because I've had the identical experience. The fear of close = closed which began as a needed response to the New Criticism (which, incidentally, performed mostly thematic rather than really close readings) has now produced the opposite: students confronted by, say, Beckett or Aime Cesaire, ignore what's on the page and jump off to some ideological position. When asked why a line breaks in a certain place or what the relationship of some item to another is, they are absolutely at a loss because no one has ever asked them to just plain really read or reread, that is look empirically at what's actually there, materially. So I'm delighted that the tide is finally turning, as it seems to be judging from this week's discussion. Marjorie Perloff

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130. **Tom White**

Re: POETICS Digest - 8 Mar 1995 to 9 Mar 1995

Fri 10 Mar 1995

The Recovery of the Public World: a Conference and Poetry Festival in Honour of Robin Blaser, his poetry and poetics, June 1-4, 1995, on the occasion of Robin's 70th birthday and the publication of his major work, The Holy Forest, at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

"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"

Panel discussions will be held on the mornings and afternoons of the four conference days. There will be an opening night welcoming and reading on Thursday evening, June 1st; a banquet Friday evening, June 2nd; a reading featuring many of our invited guests Saturday evening, June 3rd; and a closing night reading Sunday, June 4th. What follows are some details about the panels and other conference and festival events:

The Panels & Their Chairs

*Composition & Performance
Daphne Marlatt and Phyllis Webb*

*Eros & Poiesis
Bruce Boone and Sharon Thesen*

Ethics & Aesthetics

Lisa Robertson and Jerry Zaslove

Heterologies

Susan Howe and Nathaniel Mackey

Poetics, Theory & Practice

Charles Bernstein and Miriam Nichols

Translation & Poetry

Norma Cole and Michael Palmer

The Festival

A Gala Series of Readings

Thursday, Saturday and Sunday,

June 1, 3 and 4

The Exhibition

In Search of Orpheus:

Some Bay Area Poets & Painters

Works from 1945-1965 by Robin Blaser, Jess, Fran Herndon and many others; curated by Scott Watson and Greg Bellerby at the Charles H. Scott Gallery. June 1 - 25

The Banquet

A Feast of Companions

Hosted by Kevin Killian and Ellen Tallman; prepared under the culinary supervision of Chef Brian DeBeck. Friday, June 2

Some Invited Guests

Charles Bernstein, E.D. Blodgett, Bruce Boone, George Bowering, David Bromige, Colin Browne, Don Byrd, Norma Cole, Peter Culley, Michael Davidson, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Clayton Eshleman, Deanna Ferguson, Peter Gizzi, Robert Hogg, Susan Howe, Pierre Joris, Paul Kelley, Kevin Killian, Joanne Kyger, Steve McCaffery, Karen MacCormack, Michael McClure, Nathaniel Mackey, Daphne Marlatt, Miriam Nichols, Michael Ondaatje, Michael Palmer, Peter Quartermain, Jed Rasula, Lisa Robertson, Jerome Rothenberg, Leslie Scalapino, Andrew Schelling, Aaron Shurin, George Stanley, Catriona Strang, Ellen Tallman, Nathaniel Tarn, Sharon Thesen, Lola Tostevin, Pasquale Verdicchio, Fred Wah, Anne Waldman, Phyllis Webb, Jerry Zaslove, Zonko,

and Robin Blaser.

Sponsored By

*The Institute for the Humanities, Simon Fraser University * The*

*Vice-President Academic, Simon Fraser University * The W.A.C. Bennett Library, Simon Fraser University * The Canada Council * The Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design * The Fine Arts Gallery, University of British Columbia * The University College of the Fraser Valley * The Kootenay School of Writing * The Western Front * The Charles Olson Society*

Inquiries

Phone (voice mail) [REDACTED]

Fax [REDACTED]

Registration Fees

Entire package \$100

(including Panels, Readings and Banquet)

Panels and Readings only \$80

Students and fixed incomes \$60, \$40

Banquet only \$25

Please pay in Canadian funds. Depending on registration, tickets to individual readings will be available at the door of each reading.

This event is being organized by volunteers; if it is to be everything we hope for, we're going to need a little help from our friends. Tax receipts will be issued on request for all donations and each donor will be listed in the program as

A Companion donating \$500 or more: your name will be listed in the program; you'll receive a signed limited edition poster designed by the artist, Christos Dikeakos, all publications resulting from the conference and preferred seating at all events.

*An Ideal Reader donating \$250: your name will be listed in the program; you'll receive a signed poster and preferred seating at all events.
A Friend donating \$150: your name will be listed in the program; you'll receive a pass to all events and an unsigned poster.*

A Pal donating \$50: your name will be listed in the program and you'll receive a pass to the banquet. Smaller donations are also welcome; you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you've helped make this festival possible.

For a brochure giving information about some recommended hotels and a tear-off registration form, please send your name and regular

mail address to:

*The Recovery of the Public World
The Institute for the Humanities
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, B.C. Canada V5A 1S6*

or send an e-message to [REDACTED]

*A reminder: Please note that seating is limited at this conference.
If you plan to register, please try to do so by May 1, 1995.*

Some Late Additions:

We have added two panels to the conference schedule, names of the panels and their chairs to be announced. The conference will thus begin on the morning of Thursday, June 1st. We're in the process of notifying those whose papers have been chosen for a panel. We're now working out the scheduling of panels and other conference events, and we'll publish a conference/festival programme when we have these details worked out. I'll post the programme information on this list at the same time. Inquiries can also be sent to me at cwatts.sfu.ca. If you have sent us a proposal (and you're wondering what happened to it), we should be able to let you know whether or not it has been accepted for a panel in about a week's time. Please be patient: the process of selecting panelists has been complex and lengthy, but some remarkable panels are coming out of it.

Charles Watts for the conference/festival organizers

Date: Thu, 9 Mar 1995 15:57:55 CST6CDT
From: Hank Lazer <[REDACTED]>
Subject: close reading

I've thoroughly enjoyed the postings of the last several days. I find the list taking more and more of my time, but I am learning and engaged. Thanks to all.

When I was at the conference in Louisville, it was great to meet a number of you that I'd had only known via e.

*Of the current discussion, probably winding down?, on close reading, I wanted to raise a related issue. Peter had asked what would be the opposite of close reading. Inattentive reading? Non-intensive reading? As others have pointed out, the allegedly conservative nature of close reading has to do with its institutionalization via a textbook: *Understanding Poetry*. (It's my mpression, that Jed Rasula's forthcoming? just released? book will discuss this history.) In my opinion, recent theory "advances," particularly those stemming from deconstruction, have, in a different context, reiterated "close reading" methodologies, but with much greater play and with different metaphysical stakes.*

But the issue that I would like to raise is the relationship of close reading to theme-based reading. It seems to me that much close reading ultimately gets down to a process of unification of the explanation of the poem by means of a thematized understanding. While much (most? all?) newer/innovative/experimental (take your pick) poetries have to one degree or another overthrown such habits of unification and closure, many discussions of poetry end up defending "new" poetries as having rather traditional modes of meaning (as theme). As various of y'all have pointed out, cultural and contextual readings DO lead in different directions (and sometime away from a close consideration of that great new critical polestar, the text itself). But even so, especially in the domain of the multicultural, many readings boil down to assertions about "content" (a close cousin of "theme").

In one of my poems in Doublespace, I had written that to be "thematized is demonized."

Is close reading inevitably tied to "theme"? Is "thematizing" inevitably associated with retro modes of mastery--a kind of

strip-mining of the text?

More later.

Hank Lazer

*Date: Thu, 9 Mar 1995 16:14:09 -0600
From: "Eric M. Gleason" <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Teaching close reading*

From a student's point of view...reading one or two shorter poems and discussing them for an entire class (or more) can be much more effective than parsing longer works. Although part of this is because I started as an engineering major and have an attention span accordingly...i find it easier to become intimate with a shorter work, especially when the author or style is new to me. After I get a couple pages into a poem i start to remember less and less, and have more trouble discussing and understanding the discussion of the work.

--

"I was a teenage monkey wrench

Eryque "I know I spell my name wrong but that's no reason to hurt me!" Gleason

[REDACTED]

*Date: Thu, 9 Mar 1995 17:54:03 -0500
From: Edward Foster <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: more on close reading*

if "close reading" indicates "correct reading," it is authoritarian. but then, who's to say what's "close"?

*Date: Thu, 9 Mar 1995 13:20:14 -1000
From: Gabrielle Welford <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Lobbying for the NEH/NEA (fwd)*

A message some of you may not have seen. Gabrielle

Tell me if I'm steaming up the airways...

----- Forwarded message -----

*I'd like to share with all of you a letter I received this week. I wonder if you will find it as disturbing as I did. Because of my participation in the NEH Summer Seminars for Teachers (I studied William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* at FSU last summer), I'm on the NEH mailing list, and this week I got a letter from NEH which said, in part, the following:
"In recent testimony before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee former Chairman of the NEH William J. Bennett singled out the Summer Seminars for School Teachers as an example of one of the ways the NEH has had 'a deleterious effect on our culture.' This criticism was unexpected. Nothing we have seen in the program's thirteen years of existence had suggested that these seminars were anything other than successful by any measure."*

*The letter went on to ask former seminar participants to comment on the validity of the criticism based on our experience. It also included the text of Mr. Bennett's comments on the subject, and those are what I really want you to see, since you may not have been aware of them. Mr. Bennett, by the way, is also the author of the bestselling *Book of Virtue*. Here is what he had to say about the seminars in a general attack on NEA and NEH:*

"...how could the two Endowments hope to serve a larger civic role when they have not improved the quality of the arts and humanities since 1965? There is no question in my mind that things have gotten much worse in these realms during the last three decades.. Some of the dominant movements that have swept through the arts and humanities world include the radical nihilism of post-modern art; homosexual and lesbian self-celebration; Marxism; neo-Marxism; radical feminism and multiculturalism; deconstructionism; and var

Tom White

Phone: [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

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131. **Bill Luoma**

Re: More on close reading

Fri 10 Mar 1995

Joe,

I'm glad to you you being persistent. I'm interested. Where can we get a hold of more of margaret a. syverson's work?

Also, have you ever heard of Vivian Zamel, a composition theorist?

Bill Luoma

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132. **Lisa Samuels**

close reading

Fri 10 Mar 1995

Hank's question about the thematizing of close reading prompts me to make a point which partly echoes Keith Tuma's posting of earlier this week. though 'experimental criticism' allows, or anyway tries to allow, for uncertainty, for embracing 'the inadequacy of our explanatory paradigms' (Charles B's =Artifice=), the majority of =published= readings of literature aims -- must aim, for respectability if not for very publishability -- to demonstrate that its readings & therefore its conclusions are the BEST way of seeing particular texts. (which seems to come, in some dark past way, from religious methods of textual explication: in order for us to be right, everyone else has to be wrong, but must also have to do with the human desire to have a right answer, & to be the one who provides it.) that's obvious enough, but it made me think that the academy has two types of close reading: one publishable and one pedagogical (or speculative, say). the latter may be the realm of free play, the one we happily teach to students, the 'isn't it interesting to consider what happens when we pay attention to these lines in this way'; but the former is still mostly stuck in the justifying, & therefore almost inevitably thematizing (line 'meanings' lead to poem 'meanings' lead to thematic meanings lead to historical, contextual, &c meanings, to sew up everything), mode of close reading, the one in which 'when we say of something that it is true, we say that it has stopped' (to use Alan Davies' formulation, in =Signage=, of how static the notion of truth is for us moderns). the published realm of close reading, then, has an off-putting rigidity, =historically=, while the pedagogical one is a beautiful & permitting part of reading language.

isn't this fun?

Lisa Samuels

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133. **Edward Foster**

Re: POETICS Digest - 8 Mar 1995 to 9 Mar 1995

Fri 10 Mar 1995

"what's actually there, materially"? oh, come on, marjorie. it's a game, sometimes serious, with its own rules. "empirically," "actually," "materially." all these absolutes!

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134. **Joe Amato**
Re: close reading
Fri 10 Mar 1995

if this discussion re close reading is polarized twixt 1) anything goes and 2) only an unidentified number of "best" readings goes, then i guess i'm forced into category 1... but as a member of same, i'd want to push for a general recognition that "anything goes" is only a theoretical, or better, hypothetical assertion... in (pedagogical, publishing, communal and other) actuality, there are some "readings" that just ain't gonna fly, period.

i do believe, further, that a few of the more professorial among us (tenney, marjorie, myself), and not to privilege this latter category AT ALL, are struck by how few rhetorical skills are actually learned by undergrads. these days... for the sake of simplicity, let's just say that a general level of syntactic awareness, say, constitutes a rhetoric (that is, that grammatical analysis constitutes a rhetoric)... perhaps this is desirable in some situations, undesirable in others... but to argue against same, again, as a member of category 1 above, just doesn't make sense to me... i.e., category 1 does not preempt the usefulness of this particular rhetoric...

but to abandon my binary altogether: i must confess to being somewhat perturbed when faced with folks who are incapable? or just unwilling? EVER to deal with a text in whatever terms "close reading" implies... just kinda bugged, is all, and i certainly wouldn't want, esp. in these academic climes, to position myself *against* ideological readings... lord knows this plays into the hands of some folks i'm in utter(ance) disagreement with... that was *against*, of course, damn line editor... anyway, close reading or not (of this post), you all follow me here i'm sure...

why not admit to the usefulness of close readings, however defined, at a general rhetorical level?...

joe

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135. **Gabrielle Welford**
Re: POETICS Digest - 27 Feb 1995 to 28 Feb 1995
Fri 10 Mar 1995

Ah, no. Don't put the extended in-jokes on another list. I'm in the middle of the Pacific too. And I like them. Maybe it's because I used to live in Albany...? (Sorry Susan :-)...)

Gabrielle

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136. **Joe Amato**

Re: More on close reading

Fri 10 Mar 1995

bill, no, i don't know zamel... i don't know where peg syverson is at the moment, i'll try to find out (though i'm certain *somebody* at ucsd knows)... some of her work was published in _sagetrieb_, but am on a captain video terminal at the moment and don't have any resources around... hey, my system goes down at 6 pm this eve., so if you respond and i don't, it's not that i'm not responding... er, i mean, i'm not responding, but---

thanks for the kind words...

best,

joe

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137. **Eric M. Gleason**

Re: more on close reading

Fri 10 Mar 1995

Edward Foster>if "close reading" indicates "correct reading," it is authoritarian. but then, who's to say what's "close"?

Who's to say what's "correct"? Mebbe we all have a similar idea of what's "authoritarian"?

Eryque

--

"I was a teenage monkey wrench

Eryque "I know I spell my name wrong but that's no reason to hurt me!"

Gleason

██████

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138. **Edward Foster**

Re: more on close reading

Fri 10 Mar 1995

i don't know the answer, eryque, but the candidates announce themselves, all the time.

139. **Eliot Katz*****more on close reading, theory, politics, etc.****Fri 10 Mar 1995*

Before I go off on different tracks, I'd like to ask those who've noted a lack of undergrad ability to do close reading whether they think that correlates with an increased student understanding of history, current events, political theory & other matters of social context, or whether they find it part of a more overarching crisis in U.S. education? I'm also assuming there are many thousands of exceptions, am I too naive? Regarding close reading, Kathe Davis wrote: "Anything can be TAUGHT tyrannically, but there is nothing INHERENTLY tyrannical in being urged to be more aware." I totally agree. (Perhaps contemporary critics exaggerate the New Critics' lack of concern for social context? Were New Critics also exaggerating predecessors' lack of attention to textual matters?) Overall, I don't really think any particular style of literary criticism, nor any particular style of poetry for that matter, is inherently progressive or reactionary. For instance, among deconstructionist literary critics, as among the modernist poets, politics ranges from democratic left to fascist. I think we always have to try to avoid **a priori** assumptions based merely on form or style, and take an actual look at the particular work (again, both its internal & external dynamics) & make a case for our reading or judgment of it. (Re the matter of attaching inherent political qualities to literary styles, let me begin to walk out on what is definitely a tangent & possibly a limb...) I think one tendency that can lead to imposing **a priori** political labels, often used to dismiss certain styles of criticism or poetry out-of-hand, is a tendency to conflate conceptual categories. This seems pretty common today. One of my favorite contemporary examples is the post-structuralist theorist, Lyotard's (highly influential, I think) conflation of the philosophical concept of totality with the political system of totalitarianism. Besides conflating categories, that equation also seems mistaken on the practical level, since the concept of totality was used (among others) by some marxist thinkers who were clearly theorizing the extension of democracy into all spheres of public life (e.g. extending democratic rights to the working class) to ensure that no leaders could remain unaccountable or outside the rule of law & in order to safeguard diversity. As Daniel Singer has pointed out: during Rosa Luxemburg's day, using the phrase "democratic socialism" would have been like saying "buttery butter." No matter what other disagreements one might have with some of these theorists (e.g. problems with teleology, orthodoxy, etc.), many were clearly working for a **more** democratic society, not a less democratic one--and it seems silly to blame these theories of extending democracy for the eventual and often-horrific development of "actually existing

socialism" in the Soviet bloc. (Walking further out toward the limb's edge?...) This conflation of categories also seems to me to occur in some language poetry theory where traditional narrative & syntax structures are sometimes conflated with the rules of the existing state--rules that interconnect with language structures, of course, but that aren't reducible to language structures. (I'd appreciate corrections here, since I'm still trying to learn this stuff...) In this argument, as I understand it, breaking the dominant rules of syntax (or creating non-narratives or anti-narratives in Jerome McGann's formulation) is seen as an inherently radical act. But it seems to me that both narratives and anti-narratives can be used for different purposes--both potentially able either to help promote notions of progressive social change or to help protect the status quo. (Re the latter, I think of TV commercials that appropriate techniques of modernist juxtaposition; corporate paper shredders; government documents & speeches that are filled with huge gaps in narrative & logic, sometimes foregrounding language at the expense of content, in order to mystify the public or maintain plausible deniability; etc.) I think part of the tendency among poets (myself included) & literary theorists to conflate conceptual categories (esp. the literary & the political) is the result of some part of us hoping that our writings might by themselves transform the often-distressing political reality of our day. But, as much as I wish as a poet that I could believe in "magic bullet poems," or, more to my political preference, "magic nonviolent civil disobedience poems," or even "magic post-structuralist deconstruction of oppressive state apparatus poems"; and as much as I think terrific poems often derive a good deal of their energy from their attempt to achieve such a magic transgressive political ability; it seems to me more helpful & honest to think (heuristically) of categories like poetry, politics, economics, etc. as distinct spheres that interrelate in complex and mediated ways--i.e. spheres that are not conflated but not autonomous either. The fun & challenging part then is to explore the ways they do (& might possibly) interrelate under particular (past, present or future) circumstances. For example, one can consider ways in which particular poems might interconnect with social context by raising an audience's political consciousness, inspiring alternative ways of thinking, urging commitment, offering shrewd historical critique, envisioning healthier social reconstructions, etc. I don't think contextualizing precludes "close reading," since I don't really think it's possible to talk about a poem's relation to social context without looking at the text's internal dynamics. Poems, then, written in a wide variety of forms and styles, including poems that explode traditional syntax & also poems that use traditional syntax, can potentially be seen to contain emancipatory elements which a reader or critic (using a variety of critical styles) can draw out. That doesn't mean that all poems will contain emancipatory elements, but just that one has to be open-minded enough about questions of form & style to actually

look. One nice thing about avoiding the conflation of literature & politics is that different criteria for evaluating poetic and political realms become possible. (I guess I feel post-structuralism & langpo theory have done a valuable job in helping to correct what may have been an overly determinate way of reading literary texts, but added a not-very-helpful overly indeterminate criteria for judging politics.) Poetry is free to eXpeRimeNt without getting called petit-bourgeois, too esoteric (or too didactic) or some such *a priori* label often meant to dismiss a poem so that one doesn't need to read it. (Poetry is also free to explore lots of areas besides politics, and also to offer pleasure, etc.) At the same time, more determinate and normative judgments are possible in the realm of politics in order to arrive at (to even debate) bases for united actions, common principles & platforms, agreed-upon strategies & democratic structures, etc.--all the stuff required to build the sort of organized political movements that are ultimately needed (along with raised public consciousness) to create lasting radical, truly democratic & egalitarian social change. Sorry for the ridiculous length of this post. I'll go back to sitting on the sidelines for awhile. Sincerely, E. Katz

(If anyone's interested, re my last post, Stephen Bronner attributes the internal dynamic & external dynamic phraseology to an Austrian philosopher, Max Adler, whose book in German on Marx and Kant hasn't yet been translated into English.)

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140. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: close readings

Fri 10 Mar 1995

Marjorie Perloff refers to the difficulty of students in talking why the line breaks where it does, where something is placed on a page and what that means, and the like. I have wanted, in recent years, to turn a part of the discussion concerning poems to their contexts. For me, as a bookmaker as well as reader & writer, this means the physical context. That may mean that everything the author puts in the work has a meaning, which is particularly evident in recent readings of Emily Dickinson's manuscripts. But is authorial intention everything? What about choice of paper/type/spacing? What about sky poems? What about poems in public places? What about the sound of the page turning? Is there such a thing as the physicality of meaning? These issues are certainly crucial to the book arts and to the design arts (not the same thing, by any means), and both of these arts may be in partnership with literary texts in various ways. Is there any reality to the literary text outside its actual physical manifestation? If so, what, and is that different than the physical presence, and that would be exciting to talk about as well.

I'm afraid I have many more questions than answers here, but I do wonder if these are issues others wish to talk about. And is this just an extension of close reading? really close reading . . .

charles alexander

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141. **Kathe Davis**

Re: POETICS Digest - 8 Mar 1995 to 9 Mar 1995

Fri 10 Mar 1995

What's absolute about the empirical, the actual, the material? But here we are, now, and we have to play it as it lays, play things as they are, on the blue absolute.

k davis

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142. **cris cheek**

the berm

Fri 10 Mar 1995

I've looked at Patrick Phillips' subtrafuge massage several tomes and each has read like (I misquote) "relish (or undernourish) the berm" is being spoken by Peter Sellars (in upper crust pronouncing of bomb - and so on to labours that point). As we say in England 'who's got hard shoulders?

Who's for 'the central reservation'?

Wow (or whew), that was close! The irony is that was raised.

cris

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143. **Wystan Curnow**

Re: close readings

Fri 10 Mar 1995

1. I,too, thought Marjorie (hello, Marjorie) had particulars in mind. Not absolutes, and yes some of the writing which engages me because of its relation to my own writing concerns draws 'the support' into the text.

2. Close reading. Have we yet had information on the origin of the phrase? Who, if anyone, used it first for the purposes we think we recognise?

3. Close reading is not close listening. The New Critical education I received, which I have to say I am grateful for-- at l8 I was a pretty capable reader of Donne, of Stevens ...-- was entirely semantic in its approach. I only learnt to

HEAR poetry later, and from the poet's reading work in public. There was no voice. And then I found out about the Formalists (Russians) who did listen, but no one at my graduate school knew anything of them.

4. Other particulars: close reading in what context? Or, is it ONLY the classroom context that's at issue? I mean is the concept useful, meaningful, when discussing our own reading. At any rate, IF that's so, what of that context? Among other things it is a place where good ideas get ruined. Including methods of reading. I remember Mel Bochner (remember Mel Bochner?) saying teaching was throwing fake pearls before real swine!

5. A note re. theory. I'm for the close reading of theory, of for theoretical texts which demand it. (demand?)

Wystan

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144. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

Lang Po Top Ten List

Sat 11 Mar 1995

What are the ten most important Language Poetry books and why?

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145. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: close readings

Sat 11 Mar 1995

My experiences teaching poetry were not unlike Marjorie's (hello, Marjorie). None of the students had ever previously been expected to actually look and listen to the poem and consider it on its own terms. They were all experienced at translating English into English (thematic discourse, what the poet might have said if s/he had a more limited vocabulary and a pressing desire to please an instructor) or they were eager to place the work in a theoretical context and then discuss that context rather than the poem. They had all caught the mysterious fear of poems disease from prior instructors. I suggested that they read poetry the same way they listen to music (college students listen to a lot of music). I was amazed, but this actually worked better than I could have expected. When presented with the poem as an experience, and something with an event with the potential to alter perception, they related to it that way. The poem ceased to be a trick question on some future exam and became a work that they could enter into. I'm mentioning this because when they realized that a poem was an act of language and they were at liberty to be affected by it rather than jumping through somebody else's hoops, they became

fascinated by how the poem created that effect, the mechanics of the piece. When they figured out for themselves in class how John Ashbery's line breaks work, you could almost literally see the cartoon lightbulbs coming on as they explained it to each other. s*%w D) 2 _ . JGj3P Vx2T4 -fpo/ Op [A [A

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146. **Sheila Murphy**

Text and Sounds and Words and...

Sat 11 Mar 1995

I'm very much interested in pursuing what Charles Alexander has raised beginning with physical context, and then listening and watching for all of the "beyonds" that come from that. There seem to be so many experiences possible with the sharing of words and the ranges of intimacy or of widest co-experiencing seem deliciously infinite. It seems that as we increasingly venture into the virtual, the more physical experiences (of, say, reading and touching a beautifully made physical book) seem more to be savored. I guess that what is happening for me is that simultaneously a multiplex of experiences become possible. And I need to be more fluent to be able to appreciate as I'd like all the different way things reach me and the ways that I might participate in these vehicles. All the modes are different, no one better or worse inherently, but each requiring procedures, approaches appropriate to it..

Add to that the challenges of an instructional setting, and the plot thickens! As all of the possibilities change, so have the students' expectations/level of preparation/predispositions.

Thinking aloud on this one, simply. Level of casualness about how a thing, a word, a message is offered probably is connected to how it is valued, too, further complicating the issue.

Well. It's late enough. I'm enjoying what I hear on the list more and more these days. Enriching.

Sheila

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147. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Charles Alexander's post

Sat 11 Mar 1995

Thanks, Charles, for bringing up the physical context (or manifestation) of the poem as carrier of meaning. The first books of poetry I responded to (after college) were those Kulchur Press editions, often with drawings, cartoons, scrawled things, the books themselves of a particular bulk, very "present" *as*

books, without actually being (necessarily) "artists' books." Looking back, I'm not so sure it was the poetry itself I was enjoying so much (though I did, especially Bean Spasms and Album) as the fact that these books were not "transparent" in the way that many (uniformly produced) books are. Reading Defenestration of Prague in the Kulchur edition (which I stupidly sold, thinking I'd re-find it) was more of an experience, more memorable to me, than reading the piece in the Sun & Moon reprint, "down-sized," uniform with most other S&Ms. (Whether it matters to Howe how the work appears or not.) Someone told me that Olson wrote, or at least "set," Maximus for the page, that his attention to the page as unit (at least in this instance) was as intentional as that of his line. (Anyone with better info, again, please jump in.) This person also told me that he thought the poems could be reset for a smaller page (as in the New Directions Selected Writings) with different, but equally satisfying effects. Whether or not my friend's correct about Olson's intentions, it *is* a wholly different effect reading the work IN LARGE in the UC edition. Then, of course, there are the people like Sir Walter Raleigh or Donne, many of whose poems were, originally, scored as letters, were (so I'm told) considered *published* as letters. Publishing, in the strict sense, was (again, so I'm told, please correct or expand) considered, by some, "professional," & that in an almost purely derogatory sense. As much as I like it, I wonder sometimes, reading Frank O'Hara's Collected Poems, if I'm not doing the poor guy something of a disservice, that book seeming to exist in near- absolute opposition to O'Hara's (another letter-poem writer) *intention* for those poems. But, this was something that didn't come up for me until I'd found (very luckily) first eds of Love Poems (Tentative Title), Lunch Poems, Second Avenue, the material he'd seen in print in his lifetime. That's obviously speculation on my part, but it is true that reading these things as "originally published" (already one step removed from hand or typewriter), especially Love Poems, I get more of a sense of *how* he was a "personal" poet (however tongue-in-cheek "Personism" may have been). Much of what's most powerful in Love Poems (Tentative Title) seems (to me) washed out reading those same poems in the Collected. There's something "authoritarian" about that giant book, an odd thing for someone who'd put "(Tentative Title)" into a title of a published volume of poetry. So, yes, I do (personally) agree there's meaning in a poem's physical manifestation. Poetry is largely "about" presence (even conscious attempts to distance oneself from or remove altogether "ego"--well, that's an issue of "presence"), so consideration of a poem's presence seems not only perfectly valid, but worth further exploration. In a way--maybe something of a leap--some of the earlier posts about community or lack thereof, about the nature of the poetry "world" itself, seem equally germane with respect to considerations of poetry's "meaning." Books of poetry, magazines, even discussions of poetry, never simply "arrive." The question, I guess,

might be: at what point do you lose rather than gain in drawing in all of these other variables? I don't know, but think the net can be larger than we often allow.

Yours,

Gary

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148. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: Lang Po Top Ten List

Sat 11 Mar 1995

On Sat, 11 Mar 1995, Kenneth Goldsmith wrote:

> What are the ten most important Language Poetry books and why?

>

Most important, in what sense? Best to prop a window open with? Keeps a fire burning longest, in which case the quality of the paper used may plan a part?

My choices as a writer may be different than another's, certainly different than someone else's as a teacher, & my choices as a bookmaker may take into consideration limited editions which bring the visual into the verbal in books of such small circulation that there may be none or at most a few on this list who have seen them -- in my mind that makes them no less "important" than an edition which sells 20,000.

Also it seems to me that only someone not particularly involved with so-called Language Poetry would put the request in such a way. To poets who make up the enlarged group, many of whom detest the moniker, our reading of Beowulf or Christopher Smart may provide as much generative energy as our reading of Rae Armantrout or Carla Harryman. I'd be more interested in such lists which are expansive rather than reductive, although I'll admit it might be nice to see a list or lists of people's favorite ten little-known-but-once-discovered-not-to-be-missed tomes.

But "most important?" Read, she sd, and by all means DON'T look out where yr going.

charles alexander

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149. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: Charles Alexander's post

Sat 11 Mar 1995

Gary, you are getting into rich territory concerning what it means "to read," i.e. that there is always a context, and that certainly not limited to the physical book or page, but yes, involving how one came to the work, real people, and more. I don't have time to get into this tonight, but wanted to say that I found your comments on O'Hara lovely and stimulating. Also to add that even reading Olson in the big California edition is a far cry from reading the original editions which, while they don't gather as many pages, are printed on pages with more bulk, with covers which have real texture, so that, altogether, they seem to occupy more territory. This, too, would be quite different than coming across those Olson poems in letters and manuscripts. But certainly one reads into the New Directions Selected the black & white aesthetic of that press, which seems quite foreign to Olson, and one reads into the California edition, despite the spacious size of the book, a slick jacketed university/corporate packaging, getting even farther from that "excessively rough moraine" (Letter #41) which, in its bulky and shapely manifestation, is the Olson I always hear (interesting how even the physical book or context of reading remains, as do the texts, in one's memory, which is where the work remains, as books are closed for more than 99% of their lives).

charles alexander

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150. **Thomas Bell**

Re: Text and Sounds and Words and...

Sat 11 Mar 1995

Two comments:

One of the interesting things about poetry posted on the net is that it can be downloaded and manipulated: fonts, size, spacing, etc. This allows the reader to be an active reader, indeed.

In the course of rereading some of Charles Olson's work and writings I came across two items of interest.

1.) In "Projective Verse" (_Poetry New York_, 1950) he wrote: "If a contemporary poet leaves a space as long as the phrase before, he means that space to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time. If he suspends a word or syllable at the end of a line (this

was most cummings addition) he means that time to pass that it takes the eye - that hair of time suspended - to pick up the next line. If he wishes a pause so light it hardly separates the words, yet does not want a comma - which is an interruption of the meaning rather than the sounding of a line - follow him when he uses a symbol the typewriter has ready to hand:

"What does not change/is the will to change"

Observe him when he takes advantage of the machine's multiple margins, to juxtapose:

'Sd he:
to dream takes no effort
to think is easy
to act is more difficult

but for a man to act after he has taken thought, this!
is the most difficult thing of all'

Each of these lines is a progressing of both the meaning and the breathing forward, and then a backing up, without a progress or any kind of movement outside the unit of time local to the idea.

...by this emphasis on the typewriter as the personal and instantaneous recorder of the poet's work...as though not the eye but the ear was to be [poetry's] measure, as though the intervals of its composition could be so carefully put down as to be precisely the intervals of its registration. For the ear....can now again, that the poet has his means, be the threshold of projective verse."

Thomas Bell

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151. **John Cayley**

Re: charles alexander's post <-- form

Sat 11 Mar 1995

*to turn a part
of the discussion concerning poems to their contexts. For me, as a
bookmaker as well as reader & writer, this means the physical context.*

*Is there such a thing
as the physicality of meaning? These issues are certainly crucial to the
book arts and to the design arts, and*

both of these arts may be in partnership with literary texts in various ways. Is there any reality to the literary text outside its actual physical manifestation? If so, what, and is that different than the physical presence, and that would be exciting to talk about as well.

While skimming the 'form' discussion, wished to reiterate that there is an obligation to engage at a =low level= (in the programmer's sense of the term) with form as it is modulated by the technology which we are all now using. Isn't it still the case that we accept these tools handed down to us from on high and then continue to try and carry out our various forms of piracy in the ways we are used to? Isn't there still too much simulation on the literary net and not enough new form?

Now charles alexander's words prompt posting of a short piece written for another context (general readership?):

[

The book is not just a physical object, the essential, definitive icon of our material culture. It is the pre-eminent medium for the storage and delivery of linguistic creation and information. As such it is supremely effective and remarkably convenient. Books are elegant and often beautiful. However, the book is also a metaphor which may invoke any or all of its qualities in order to create new ways of understanding the self. Everyone in the modern world, even those people who share our culture but who were never or are no longer people of the book, everyone must accumulate written paper throughout their lives--scraps, certificates, lists, deeds, forms, letters, and so on -- and may sometimes long to see these fragments organized, made sense of, bound together. For others this longing is central to their existence. The book is, potentially, a body of work, a summation of what you have to say and, finally, of what you are. 'This book is my life's story, the sum of all I know. I put everything into it, body and soul. It's my life itself, and before I pass on I must close it, leaving it behind for others to read and interpret.'

The meaning created by this metaphor is determined by the physical characteristics of the book. This has not been static although its predominant form -- the codex or collection of paper-like leaves bound together so that it can be opened at any point -- has been with us since the second century of our era. Book artists and others have challenged this dominance, but however creative and inspiring the resulting dialogue has proven, it has not undermined the shape of the vital book-as-metaphor in our culture.

Now, later than many predictions would have led us to believe, the book is changing. The word is applied to bodies of text which are stored in electronic libraries, on the ever-spinning magnetic or optical disks of programmable machines. Millions of these machines are already linked on the InterNet.

'Books', 'libraries' -- the use of these words, the inability to find others, demonstrates that the irreducible, defining quality of a book is that it should be a body of work recorded in language without regard to physical form. Thus the metaphor survives but its shape and significance change forever. There is no longer the sense that a book -- as electronic book -- is bound or bounded, that you can see all of it at once, hold it, pick it up, that it has a physical location. It is more difficult to believe that the words of the book are fixed and stable, its author's definitive statement on its subject. Although there is general familiarity with the tools that conveniently allow us to write and edit bodies of text, some people will be less content with the realization that these same tools will allow others to appropriate and even alter what they have created. Many will be unwilling to apply a metaphor to themselves, as once they did, which begins to suggest unboundedness, indeterminacy, openness to the electronically interleaved books of anyone else on the InterNet.

The codex will live on. It is not a question of either or. Both old and new books will coexist. Some writers and book-makers will wish to explore new opportunities offered by the less familiar qualities of unbound, coverless books. Some readers will welcome new ways of understanding themselves in the ghostly, fragmentary, drifting leaves of an evolving metaphor.

]

btw: In one understanding Quakers quake at Friends' meetings (a metaphor for these discussions?) as a physical manifestation of the tension, vacillation, radical self-questioning which arises when a friend realizes s/he has something to say in the context of profound silence.

Are you, virtually, quaking?

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152. **Spencer Selby**

Re: request

Sat 11 Mar 1995

My unix server's been down for the past several days, but now I think it's OK. Messages that were sent to me, but returned, can now be re-sent. Thanks.
Spencer Selby

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153. **H. T. KIRBY-SMITH**
Close Reading; Authoritarian?
Sat 11 Mar 1995

Close reading certainly need not imply an authoritarian interpretation of a text, but close readings which attempt to impose something on the text which is not there certainly are authoritarian--as are any readings which claim for themselves exclusive and complete accountings of a poem.

If you give a group of people a poem, for example, Williams's "The Yachts," to read closely, you will find that a certain number of them agree that it is about the Race of Life, the competitiveness encouraged by American free enterprise, and the indifference of the winners to the losers, the "horror of the race." But different readers will express this in different ways and will see patterns of imagery, transitions in point of view, rhythmic effects, sound patterns, associations of all kinds. There is an authority, and the authority is the poem itself, but any good poem is rich enough to allow an immense variety of responses. Some, for example, might even point out that "The Yachts" starts, very uncharacteristically for Williams, in terza rima--a form that he hoped to emulate with his triadic, or "step-down", lines in later poems. But the rhyme pattern is immediately abandoned and the poem itself seems a criticism of established patterns of authority--the initial strict form being emblematic of this.

But what about the person (this has actually happened) who thinks that "The Yachts" is an account of a caesarian section? And adduces evidence from the poem to prove this? Is that person flouting the authority of the poem? Such a reading would, to me, seem authoritarian and arbitrary and I would want to escape from that reading and go back to a free perusal of the poem. Which, it seems to me, is about what really goes into the creation of the yachts, how "The Yachts / contend."

And there are good poems that close reading doesn't do much for--poems that depend on evanescent, tangential, indirect, and possibly musical effects.

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154. **Gary Sullivan**
Re: Text and Sounds and Words and...
Sat 11 Mar 1995

Sheila,

Since this is related, would you mind maybe talking a little bit about the form of your published booklet, *_Criteria for Being Touched_*? Was this a collaborative

project? I ask because the crayoned cover, and the slip of sandpaper (is that what it is?) stapled to the back of the book, and even the way you have to unfold the pages themselves to read the poems, all seem to further engage your reader, forcing him/her to be aware of "touching." I love what Jonathan Brannen says about getting his students to be aware of the poem as an *experience*, and this, the way your book was manifested, seems to help ensure a reader's fullest participation with that work as experience.

At first, I'd thought it was the publisher's idea to do these things, but I'm beginning to suspect that you'd been the one to do this. Could you verify and, if you've time, expand? It's my favorite of the half-dozen or so books of yours I have, would love to read what you might say about it.

Thanks,

Gary

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155. **Gary Sullivan**

More in re context

Sat 11 Mar 1995

When learning about Bach in music school, it was explained to me (& anyone with better info, please correct or clarify) that keyboard instruments were, by necessity, only *approximately* in key, not only with wind instruments, but with themselves. (A low "G" not being quite "in key" with a "G" higher up, & this on the same keyboard; to say nothing of how a keyboard interrelated with previously extant instruments.) In a sense, assuming that music on the page isn't music, but music's map, the map itself, with the invention of the keyboard, became even further distanced from the physical territory itself. The actual pitch of "G"--even a "specific" "G" carefully drawn onto a specific place on the staff--would be different depending on whether a keyboard or wind was playing it. (& this doesn't even bring in timbre, accent, attack, etc.) To clarify the above, the keyboard literally "flattens" the notes as you go up the scale.

Interesting that the keyboard and the printing press were inventions that both came into existence around the same time period. (Not sure which came first, though I suspect it was the printing press.) In a way, what the keyboard does to music (or, to "actual pitch") the printing press does to the word, both written & spoken word. Published books do have a "flattening" effect similar to that of music played on the keyboard. I was a terrible music student, but I took away from it this sense that the meaning of work has everything to do with its "physical" manifestation. So, reading poetry where everything hinges on the "meaning" of the words themselves, where everything is focused down to "language"--it's less satisfying to me. Meaning you can be didactic without

having anything, necessarily, to prove, or wanting to do that, but by limiting yourself to an understanding of "meaning" in a poem being determined solely by the words, the extent to which those words, taken together, mean this or that. Charles, you are absolutely right to consider the context of the UC printing of *_Maximus_*; I think so many of us (including myself) can be very shortsighted, or blind, to all of the other levels of meaning radiating from a published (however published) work. Whenever I review Sun & Moon books, for example, for *_City Pages_* or other journals, I want, always, to say something about how the press itself goes about promoting, or contextualizing the work, which is almost always very dissatisfying to me, it seeming so often to be in direct opposition to a poet's intentions with a particular work. (I don't make fun of S&M's "Classics" series just because I'm cantankerous.) Yes, as John Caley says, publishing is largely about "convenience"--which immediately sets up a tension between work written **against** convenience of any sort. And what poetry--besides the purely didactic--has ever been written **for** convenience?

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156. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: the berm

Sat 11 Mar 1995

chris -

I jest want to think you for sentimenting the echo.

patrick

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157. **maria damon**

Re: cloze reading

Sat 11 Mar 1995

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

> The notion of close reading, parsing, fakes an ideological neutrality that
> we've all come to know as a right-wing excision of the social because it
> relegates the poetic act to an independent linguistic domain. This embrace
> of the idea beyond the motivation of it is a close (cloze) reading - a cold
> embrace. The fold, or moment of discovery, comes when we are not parsing
> "The Idea of Order at Key West," the lay of the land/sea as described by a
> resolute metaphysician. This is par - the task of close reading as an
> encounter with the independent idea is equal to the face, or aspect of the
> writing. It seems to me the real moments of discovery lie in the friction
> between the practice of distilling and a poem that refuses, or complicates

> that distillation through, for example, it's linguistic opacity and/or
> cultural "position." In these contexts, close reading becomes an engagement
> with that friction, the totality of languaging, the rubbing up against the
> social, the motivation of the poem cutting in one direction, while the idea
> of the language tumbles in another. It is here that there is a
> determination of reading as a process of the social, because here our
> belief in the distinction between language and motivation is tried. So, in
> this trial, close reading becomes a passionate exchange of the social and
> the linguistic; the linguistic becomes/is the social. Close reading in this
> case is really close. We begin to parse, or closely read ourselves.
>
> Patrick Phillips

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158. **maria damon**

Re: more on close reading, theory, politics, etc.

Sat 11 Mar 1995

the new critics/agrarians were indeed political reactionaries, as walter kalaidjian's forthcoming essay in Marketing Modernisms (Duke UP, ed. Watt and Dettmar) demonstrates; allen tate defended lynching, etc. so any attempt to make them sound noble in their pleas for political "neutrality" is just plain naive. however, that does not mean that any close attention to a text, esp. as people have been delineating those multifarious practices on this list, is fascistic. --maria damon

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

> Before I go off on different tracks, I'd like to ask those who've noted a
> lack of undergrad ability to do close reading whether they think that
> correlates with an increased student understanding of history, current
> events, political theory & other matters of social context, or whether they
> find it part of a more overarching crisis in U.S. education? I'm also
> assuming there are many thousands of exceptions, am I too naive?
> Regarding close reading, Kathe Davis wrote: "Anything can be TAUGHT
> tyrannically, but there is nothing INHERENTLY tyrannical in being urged to
be
> more aware."
> I totally agree. (Perhaps contemporary critics exaggerate the New
> Critics' lack of concern for social context? Were New Critics also
> exaggerating predecessors' lack of attention to textual matters?) Overall, I
> don't really think any particular style of literary criticism, nor any
> particular style of poetry for that matter, is inherently progressive or

> reactionary. For instance, among deconstructionist literary critics, as among
> the modernist poets, politics ranges from democratic left to fascist. I think
> we always have to try to avoid *a priori* assumptions based merely on form
or
> style, and take an actual look at the particular work (again, both its
> internal & external dynamics) & make a case for our reading or judgment of
> it.

> (Re the matter of attaching inherent political qualities to literary
> styles, let me begin to walk out on what is definitely a tangent & possibly a
> limb...) I think one tendency that can lead to imposing *a priori* political
> labels, often used to dismiss certain styles of criticism or poetry
> out-of-hand, is a tendency to conflate conceptual categories. This seems
> pretty common today. One of my favorite contemporary examples is the
> post-structuralist theorist, Lyotard's (highly influential, I think)
> conflation of the philosophical concept of totality with the political system
> of totalitarianism. Besides conflating categories, that equation also seems
> mistaken on the practical level, since the concept of totality was used
> (among others) by some marxist thinkers who were clearly theorizing the
> extension of democracy into all spheres of public life (e.g. extending
> democratic rights to the working class) to ensure that no leaders could
> remain unaccountable or outside the rule of law & in order to safeguard
> diversity. As Daniel Singer has pointed out: during Rosa Luxemburg's day,
> using the phrase "democratic socialism" would have been like saying "buttery
> butter." No matter what other disagreements one might have with some of
> these theorists (e.g. problems with teleology, orthodoxy, etc.), many were
> clearly working for a *more* democratic society, not a less democratic
> one--and it seems silly to blame these theories of extending democracy for
> the eventual and often-horrific development of "actually existing socialism"
> in the Soviet bloc.

> (Walking further out toward the limb's edge?...) This conflation of
> categories also seems to me to occur in some language poetry theory where
> traditional narrative & syntax structures are sometimes conflated with the
> rules of the existing state--rules that interconnect with language
> structures, of course, but that aren't reducible to language structures. (I'd
> appreciate corrections here, since I'm still trying to learn this stuff...)
> In this argument, as I understand it, breaking the dominant rules of syntax
> (or creating non-narratives or anti-narratives in Jerome McGann's
> formulation) is seen as an inherently radical act. But it seems to me that
> both narratives and anti-narratives can be used for different purposes--both
> potentially able either to help promote notions of progressive social change
> or to help protect the status quo. (Re the latter, I think of TV commercials
> that appropriate techniques of modernist juxtaposition; corporate paper

> shredders; government documents & speeches that are filled with huge gaps in

> narrative & logic, sometimes foregrounding language at the expense of
> content, in order to mystify the public or maintain plausible deniability;
> etc.) I think part of the tendency among poets (myself included) & literary
> theorists to conflate conceptual categories (esp. the literary & the
> political) is the result of some part of us hoping that our writings might by
> themselves transform the often-distressing political reality of our day.

> But, as much as I wish as a poet that I could believe in "magic
> bullet poems," or, more to my political preference, "magic nonviolent civil
> disobedience poems," or even "magic post-structuralist deconstruction of
> oppressive state apparatus poems"; and as much as I think terrific poems
> often derive a good deal of their energy from their attempt to achieve such a
> magic transgressive political ability; it seems to me more helpful & honest
> to think (heuristically) of categories like poetry, politics, economics, etc.
> as distinct spheres that interrelate in complex and mediated ways--i.e.
> spheres that are not conflated but not autonomous either. The fun &
> challenging part then is to explore the ways they do (& might possibly)
> interrelate under particular (past, present or future) circumstances. For
> example, one can consider ways in which particular poems might
interconnect

> with social context by raising an audience's political consciousness,
> inspiring alternative ways of thinking, urging commitment, offering shrewd
> historical critique, envisioning healthier social reconstructions, etc. I
> don't think contextualizing precludes "close reading," since I don't really
> think it's possible to talk about a poem's relation to social context without
> looking at the text's internal dynamics. Poems, then, written in a wide
> variety of forms and styles, including poems that explode traditional syntax
> & also poems that use traditional syntax, can potentially be seen to contain
> emancipatory elements which a reader or critic (using a variety of critical
> styles) can draw out. That doesn't mean that all poems will contain
> emancipatory elements, but just that one has to be open-minded enough
about

> questions of form & style to actually look.

> One nice thing about avoiding the conflation of literature & politics
> is that different criteria for evaluating poetic and political realms become
> possible. (I guess I feel post-structuralism & langpo theory have done a
> valuable job in helping to correct what may have been an overly determinate
> way of reading literary texts, but added a not-very-helpful overly
> indeterminate criteria for judging politics.) Poetry is free to eXpeRimeNt
> without getting called petit-bourgeois, too esoteric (or too didactic) or
> some such *a priori* label often meant to dismiss a poem so that one doesn't

- > need to read it. (Poetry is also free to explore lots of areas besides
- > politics, and also to offer pleasure, etc.) At the same time, more
- > determinate and normative judgments are possible in the realm of politics in
- > order to arrive at (to even debate) bases for united actions, common
- > principles & platforms, agreed-upon strategies & democratic structures,
- > etc.--all the stuff required to build the sort of organized political
- > movements that are ultimately needed (along with raised public
- consciousness)
- > to create lasting radical, truly democratic & egalitarian social change.
- > Sorry for the ridiculous length of this post. I'll go back to sitting
- > on the sidelines for awhile.
- > Sincerely, E. Katz
- >
- > (If anyone's interested, re my last post, Stephen Bronner attributes the
- > internal dynamic & external dynamic phraseology to an Austrian philosopher,
- > Max Adler, whose book in German on Marx and Kant hasn't yet been
- translated
- > into English.)

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159. **Ron Silliman**

Re: close readings

Sat 11 Mar 1995

I hesitate to reply to a message when I have 22 unread messages (many from this list) still waiting on my machine...but Charles Alexander's comments are too delicious to let pass by.

Jerome McGann & Cary Nelson have both addressed, quite usefully in somewhat different ways, the role of the page in its relation to the text, and I would imagine that most people on this list would agree that it's an active one.

Poetry is full of attempts on the part of poets to dictate the final physical look of a work on the page. (I can remember how very strange I felt the first few times poems of mine were published in little magazines back in 1965, sort of like a "primitive" seeing himself in a polaroid for the first time or my lingering dislike of my voice on videotape.) From Grenier's box to his more recent scribbles to Duncan's typewriter, these attempts generally never worked because the tools (and goals) of the poet and those of the printer and book designer were not identical. I had one publisher (Jim Orsino-Sorcic) who once broke my own lines in places more convenient to his page size! Ah well, Faulkner couldn't get them to publish *Sound & the Fury* in multiple colors either.

The poets who have succeeded at this have been printers/graphic artists themselves (Blake being the Big Example).

Now with DTP, however, more people have access to some rudimentary form of that knowledge. I controlled every possible element in Toner (designed the cover myself) and in the forthcoming (R) -- where Bill Luoma did the cover. But I know my limits when contrasted w/ a Chax Press.

So, yes, a Big Yes, on every element on the page being a part of the experience of the poem (the poem as an experience). It's pouring outside right now, another day of near Biblical torrents here in California, and I'm reminded of the passage in Brautigan's *In Watermelon Sugar* (a great little novel), in which he says something like if it's raining outside when you read this poem, then that's the title of this poem,

Ron Silliman



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160. **Loss Glazier**

FYI (March 24) Internet Conference in Buffalo

Sat 11 Mar 1995

Info about an upcoming conference, FYI:

THE CONVERGENCE OF SCIENCE AND THE HUMANITIES: INTERNET
TECHNOLOGIES AND

SCHOLARLY RESOURCES

Friday, March 24, 1995

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The Buffalo Marriott
1340 Millersport Highway
Amherst, NY 14221

This conference is sponsored by the Conversations in the Disciplines Program of the State University of New York with support from the University Libraries and Computing and Information Technology, Academic Services, of the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Note: For a complete online brochure of the program, use the World-Wide Web to go to:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/internet/library/e-journals/ub/rift/documents/conversations>

About the Program:

The Internet's impact on scholarly research and communication is the subject of this Conversations in the Disciplines Program, which brings together a group of people involved in applying Internet technologies and resources to studies in the humanities, social sciences, arts and letters, and the sciences. The conference will include a demonstration of Mosaic, Internet radio, and the UB Electronic Poetry Center, as well as an RIF/T poetry reading.

Program Schedule:

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. "'Our Words Were the Form We Entered': Towards a Theory of the Net," Loss Glazier, University at Buffalo

9:30 - 10:00 a.m. Paper: "Electronic Scholarship," John Merritt Unsworth, University of Virginia

10:00 - 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break

10:30 - 11:00 a.m. Demonstration: MOSAIC, Jim Gerland, University at Buffalo

11:00 - 11:30 a.m. Paper: "Gender and Democracy in Computer-Mediated Communication," Susan Herring, University of Texas-Arlington

11:30 - 11:45 a.m. Event: "Internet/Radio/Communities: Social Relations and the New New Media" Martin Spinelli, Independent Radio Producer

11:45 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 - 1:30 p.m. Paper: "I Don't Take Voice Mail" Charles Bernstein, University at Buffalo

1:30 - 1:45 p.m. Demonstration: Electronic Poetry Center and "Textual Spaces: The Formal Structure of Published On-line Writing" Kenneth Sherwood, University at Buffalo

1:45 - 2:15 p.m. Event: Poetry Reading Charles Bernstein, Loss Glazier, Kenneth Sherwood, and Katie Yates

2:15 - 3:00 p.m. Afternoon Coffee and Poster Sessions: Internet Art, Internet Music, and "Collage"

3:00 - 3:30 p.m. Paper: "E-Journals and Preprint Servers In Mathematics and Science," Professor Neil Calkin, Georgia Institute of Technology

3:30 - 4:15 p.m. Issues: "Continuing the Conversation: Internet Issues and Concerns" Stuart Shapiro, Valerie Shalin, and the Audience. Stuart Shapiro, "Graphical User Interfaces: A Critique."

4:15 - 4:30 p.m. Closing Remarks

About the Main Speakers:

Charles Bernstein is David Gray Chair in Poetry and the Humanities at the State University of New York at Buffalo and co-editor of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, a literary magazine often credited with founding a well-known and highly visible school of contemporary poetry. He has recently been influential in founding the Poetics Program in English at the University at Buffalo. He is the author of twenty books, including *A Poetics*, published by Harvard University Press, and has given papers in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. He is editor of the Poetics listserv on the Internet, one of the most vital electronic discussion groups in contemporary literary theory.

Neil Calkin, Professor of Mathematics at the Georgia Institute of Technology, grew up in England, where he studied mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge, before earning a Ph.D. in Combinatorics and Optimization from the University of Waterloo, Canada, in 1988. He was Zeev Nehari Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Carnegie Mellon from 1988 to 1991. Since 1991 he has been a member of the mathematics faculty at Georgia Tech. He is co-founder and managing editor of the *Electronic Journal of Combinatorics*, one of the first WWW journals in mathematics.

Susan Herring is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Texas at Arlington. Since 1991, she has been investigating the language of discussion groups on the Internet. She is the author of eight papers on the subject, including "Gender and Democracy in Computer-Mediated Communication," which appeared in the *Electronic Journal of Communication* in 1993 and is scheduled to be reprinted in *Computerization and Controversy*, 2nd edition, edited by Robert Kling. She has given numerous talks on gender differences in on-line communication in the United States, Europe, and Asia. She is the editor of a forthcoming interdisciplinary collection entitled *Computer Mediated Communication* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), and will guest-edit a special issue of the *Electronic Journal of Communication* on "Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis" containing papers presented at a one-day symposium by the same name to be held at Georgetown University this March. It will be the first symposium and the first publication devoted exclusively to linguistic approaches to computer-mediated communication.

John Unsworth is Director of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities and Associate Professor of English at the University of Virginia.

He is co-founder and co-editor of *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism* (published by Oxford University Press) and editor of the highly acclaimed *Research Reports of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities*. He has taught "Theory and Practice of Hypertext," "the Information Superhighway: An Interdisciplinary Introduction to the Internet," as well as courses in contemporary literature and theory. He is currently working on "Postmodernism and Information Theory," a book-length study of information theory within the context of postmodern literature, literary theory, and social history. His paper, "Electronic Scholarship," will appear in the forthcoming collection, *The Literary Text in the Digital Age*, edited by Richard Finneran (University of Michigan Press).

About the Program Planners and Participants:

Librarian and poet, Loss Pequeno Glazier is English & American Literature Subject Specialist at Lockwood Library, SUNY Buffalo. He assists in the maintenance of Internet resources for the Libraries, co-administers the Electronic Poetry Center, and co-edits the electronic journal RIF/T. His most recent book is *Small Press: An Annotated Guide* (Greenwood Press, 1992).

Nancy Schiller is the Engineering Librarian at the University at Buffalo. Her research focuses on the impact of networked computer and communications technologies on academic libraries. She is co-author of "Creating the Virtual Library: Strategic Issues" in *The Virtual Library: Visions and Realities* (Meckler, 1993).

Stuart C. Shapiro is Professor of Computer Science and a Fellow of the American Association for Artificial Intelligence. His research has included work on intelligent multimedia interfaces.

Kenneth Sherwood, also a doctoral student in English at UB, is co-editor of the electronic magazine RIF/T.

Martin Spinelli works with National Public Radio and Pacifica as an independent radio producer. He is a Ph.D. student in English at the University at Buffalo.

Poet Katie Yates presently lives in Colorado. Her most recent book, "So Difficulty," was issued by Rodent Press.

Assistant Professor of Industrial Engineering at UB, Valerie Shalin's research is in the area of human-computer interaction, specifically human behavior and information technology.

Conference organizers: Loss Pequeno Glazier and Nancy Schiller

To register for the conference please contact Nancy Schiller ([REDACTED])

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161. **Mark Nowak**
Silliman's "primitive" (sic)

Sat 11 Mar 1995

Dear Dr. Silliman,

I found your post, in which you compare how it felt to have your first poems published in little magazines back in 1965 to ...

"...sort of like a 'primitive' seeing himself in a polaroid for the first time..." truly moving. Do you have any other such engaging similes for us young & older white poets who predominate this list?

Mark Nowak

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162. **Charles Bernstein**
(no subject)

Sat 11 Mar 1995

quiet del poetics mlljorge

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163. **Pierre Joris**
Re: close readings

Sat 11 Mar 1995

yes, the page... Ron's examples from right now are indeed exemplary. the thing goes, however, back a long way. One of the finest examples of poet's will re page left hanging was Mallarme's COUP DE DE. It came out in 1897, & not according to M's design instruction. In fact the very first edition published according to M's instructions came out in the late 70ies (this century) when Mitsou Ronat & Tibor Papp did so. Pierre

=====
===== Pierre Joris | He who wants to
escape the world, translates it. Dept. of English | --Henri Michaux SUNY
Albany | Albany NY 12222 | "Herman has taken to writing poetry.
You tel&fax: [REDACTED] | need not tell anyone, for you know how email:
| such things get around." [REDACTED] | --Mrs. Melville in a letter to her mother.
=====

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164. **Wystan Curnow**
Re: Silliman's "primitive" (sic)
Sat 11 Mar 1995

I love what somebody says about something. I like it best when some people use abstractions and meaningful generalisations. I'm really enjoying the net these days. Before, I was hurt by the fascistic postings of some people, and I relate strongly to those posts about some people being left out of something, or being kept out more likely. Let's have more of those. But really all the posts are different and not one is better or worse than any other. Everybody is doing their best to be very good and change the world as quickly as possible. Let's hear it for the net effect! love, Wystan Curnow

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165. **Charles Bernstein**
WARNING: Poetry Area--Publics Under Construction {long post/essay}
Sat 11 Mar 1995

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

WARNING ~ POETRY AREA:
Publics Under Construction

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

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

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

In the post-Pantheon world of book publishing, the diversified companies that own the major trade publishers are charged with publishing not simply profitable books but the most profitable books. Works that appeal to minor or micro publics, that is to say small constituencies, are excluded from this system in favor of works that appeal to macro publics, which is to say a substantial market share of the targeted audience. The circumstance is somewhat analogous to a TV show with millions of enthusiastic viewers being cancelled for its failure to garner an adequate public. Yet unprofitable cultural product does continue to be manufactured in the commercial sector and not simply as a result of the inevitable market failures of the entertainment industry. The question is, why are some works published despite their relatively poor profit potential in preference to other works with a similar profit profile? It isn't just nonprofit arts organizations that lose money supporting their particular cultural agendas. Indeed, as far as losing money in an effort to construct a public, the independent and alternative presses are no match for such mainstream magazines as *The New Yorker*, which, despite a circulation that has recently surged to 750,000, appears to be losing as much as \$10 million a year (that's something like \$13 per subscriber) -- an amount that could finance a good part of the annual cost of the alternative poetry presses and readings and magazines. *The New Yorker*'s parent company, S. I. Newhouse, is apparently less concerned with profit than with cultural dominance -- legitimating the

cultural product that forms the basis of its media empire; for this exercise in hegemony, circulation and publicity are more important than profit. Of course, publishing statistics are notoriously unreliable, especially when they concern the amount publishers are willing to lose -- less to obtain cultural legitimacy, let me correct myself, than to establish cultural values. According to *The New York Times* (3/2/94, p. C20), Harold M. Evans, the publisher of Random House's adult trade division, told an audience at the PEN American Center that "the 29 books he published that made it on to *The New York Times*'s 1993 list of Notable Books lost \$680,000" and the eight books that "won awards from the American Library Association lost a total of \$370,000." Evans went on to say that three of these books had advertising budgets of \$71,000 to \$87,000 each and that these books lost from \$60,000 to \$300,000 each. Innovative works of literature or criticism or scholarship that challenge the dominant cultural values of institutions such as Random House are not the most likely candidates to receive this type of support; yet without such subventions they stand little chance of being reviewed or recommended in *The New York Times*, whose reviews are closely correlated to its advertisers. The point is not that official "high" culture, just as alternative-press poetry, requires subsidies; but that a system of selection and support favors certain works over others; it is this system of selection and promotion that allows the media conglomerates to control cultural sectors that they have written off as largely unprofitable. Note, however, that the content of the selections is less important for this system of dominance than the system of selection and promotion itself, since the alternative presses can never afford to lose *as much as* these corporations. It should be no surprise that it is neither the public nor accessibility that creates official literary product, nor that much of official "high" culture is a loss leader. Advertising and promotion of targeted "loss leaders" are evidently worth the price in influencing literary and critical taste, specifically by fostering a cultural climate in which genuinely profitable products may thrive.

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

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

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

mostly 18-24 year-olds, has become the primary site for the distribution of poetry. I don't think this is quite true, but few can fail to recognize how much of poetry's public consists of students. This reflects badly neither on poetry nor universities, quite the contrary; rather, it reflects the appalling lack of public cultural space outside the narrows confines of the literary academy. It is bad for poetry, and for poets, to be nourished so disproportionately; for the sort of poetry I care for has its natural habitat in the streets and offices and malls and parks and fields and farms and houses and apartments and elevators and stores and alleys and parades and woods and bookstores and public libraries.

Sometimes I imagine the kind of audience contemporary poetry would have if it were on the radio on a daily basis: say a new half-hour program every night at 8. The public for this programming would be small, although larger than our current publics for poetry. At the turn of this now turning century, radio promised to revolutionize the distribution of poetry, making widely accessible, at no cost, the new the new acoustic riffs of the language arts. For, of all our technologies, radio has the greatest potential to create a democratic listening space. Without access to the public soundwaves, subsidiary, privately available, spoken art media (tapes, CDs) cannot flourish. The exclusion of contemporary language arts from the public air, from radio, is a stark warning about what we can expect from the upcoming merging of cable TV, radio and the internet.

If contemporary poetry is able to construct only a series of disconnected publics, then poetry is banished from that virtual republic that we aspire to, all the more, knowing it unattainable. For all the utopian promise of technological optimists, the answer is not in our machines but in our politics. For we see in this society a constant erosion of public space -- space not privatized for maximum profit, but made available for common use. And so it seems we can only imagine the public square, the town green, a Central Park of our poetries, where, leaving the solitude or sustenance of our rooms or communes, we might jostle against one another, unexpectedly mingle, confuse our borders: refigure ourselves, reconstitute our affiliations, regroup. There is no education in the arts equivalent to having art works available in open channels -- public spaces -- to intrigue, befuddle, and engage those unfamiliar and familiar, but especially unfamiliar. Such initial points of public access to art must not be abolished; neither should they be privatized, through the restrictions of pay TV or high admissions prices. For such sites to have a democratizing function they must be maximally accessible from a physical, technological, and financial point of view, just that what they exhibit may not be so immediately accessible in other ways. We must resist the idea that difficult art is elitist, any more than that science is elitist or that learning is elitist. Such arguments breed demagoguery not populist empowerment. By denying the value of the labor necessary to become linguistically and culturally informed, we encourage the maintenance of an uninformed, indeed, ignorant, citizenry.

If the arts are denied public support, it is not the artists or dedicated readers and viewers who will suffer, for one way or another their commitment will keep them working and they will be prepared to find art in out-of-the-way places. But for the uninitiated, the decline of public space for art can be devastating, for they will have no common place to find non- market driven art production. Public radio and public television, despite their manifest inadequacies, are, like public arts funding through the NEA and other agencies, a fundamental point of intersection between the public and the arts. They are the town square of art. In a society that has few such points of access, any diminishment of our public spaces for culture is a catastrophe. Don't lament, or don't lament only: construct.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Kolbert, "How Tina Brown Moves Magazines," in The New York Times Magazine, Dec. 5, 1993, p. 87. I lift this paragraph and the following one from the footnotes of an essay in which I discuss some closely related issues -- "Provisional Institutions: Alternative Presses and Poetic Innovation", which is forthcoming in Arizona Quarterly (Spring, 1995).
2. More on this in "I Don't Take Voice Mail", in M/E/A/N/I/N/G #16.
3. EPC connections through the main menu are as follows: July, 1994: 614; September, 367; October, 429; November: 573. Perhaps an additional ten percent accessed the server through Veronica searches or direct gopher connections.
4. "The WAIS-based search function for PMC, which operates through a WWW fill-out form, is heavily used, with more than 6,000 requests for that. The table of contents for the May 1994 issue (our most popular recent issue) has been requested over 6,000 times. Our most popular single item has been the popular culture column on Krazy Kat, with roughly 2,500 requests for the opening page. By the way, the page of information and archives on PMC-MOO has been requested almost as many times (5,700+). PMC-MOO, by the way, is now the second largest virtual community on the internet, with 2,718 "citizens," over half of whom have been active on the MOO in the two weeks [prior to this tabulation]. And we've had close to 900 requests for the table of contents of the PMC book of collected essays. I should add that none of these numbers reflect the non-WWW distribution channels; I don't have stats for gopher or ftp use, but we do have over 3,000 subscribers to the listserv distribution list for the journal's table of contents and calls for reviewers." -- John Unsworth, personal communication, January 31, 1995.

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166. **Kali Tal**

Viet Nam Generation web site

Sat 11 Mar 1995

I've just set up a web site server on Viet Nam Generation's macII. Our book catalogue is on-line now. I'll be putting up selections from the books themselves in the next couple of weeks. The site also describes the Sixties Project. The web address is:

http://kalital.polisci.yale.edu

Enjoy,
Kali

Kali Tal

Sixties Project & Viet Nam Generation, Inc.

18 Center Rd., Woodbridge, CT 06525

203/[REDACTED]; fax 203/[REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

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167. **Kali Tal**

Joe Amato's volume of poetry now available...

Sat 11 Mar 1995

Several months ago we announced Joe Amato's forthcoming volume of poetry, *_Symptoms of a Finer Age_*. It's just come back from the printer, so next week we'll be sending out copies to those of you who ordered it. If you didn't order it, but want to, here's the info....

Joe Amato, *_Symptoms of a Finer Age_*, 96 pages, perfectbound, \$12, White Noise #5; ISBN: 1-885215-12-6. You can order directly from Viet Nam Generation, Inc., 18 Center Rd., Woodbridge, CT 06525. Add \$1.35 for shipping and handling.

I've been following the form/content discussion--my opinion as an editor and book designer is that the physical medium should, ideally, work with the poetry. For example, the standard size for books in the White Noise Series is 8.5" x 5.5", a pretty standard paperback size. Joe's poetry has long lines, though, and sometimes he has right-justified lines which have the feel of marginalia. He also has a couple of pages which make use of a mixture of fonts and type sizes to create a particular visual effect. I felt that in order to create a book which would carry Joe's work, I had to change sizes and go to 8.5" x 6", giving the text a broader look and shifting the proportions somewhat closer to square. Our cover designer, Steve Gomes, created an "outside" for the package which is in

dialogue with the contents: Joe's brother had taken a B&W picture of the New York World's Fair globe; the globe appears in one of Joe's poems and is an integral image for the book. We reversed the image so that it looks like the globe is hanging in space, flipped the negative so that the continents appear as they would appear on a map (convincing, but completely wrong, as any architect would--and did--catch immediately) and then had the photo hand-tinted in the style of 1930s photo labs, in blues and tans (exactly matching the colors of the earth from space). Steve then got a flat, black mat on which he laid out the hand-painted photo, holding it in place on the front cover with those little old-fashioned black photo corners. He similarly set up the B&W author photo on the back cover. Then he went to our page layout program and set up the titles, which he printed on paper of exactly the color that newspaper turns when it gets, oh, say about 40 years old. He printed them in 150dpi resolution instead of the 600dpi our printer is capable of so that they would look just as blurry as newspaper type. Then he cut them out, carefully, by hand and glued them on the black mat board, folding the corners of one piece to crease the print and give it a more "authentic" look. Then we shot the whole board so that we could get a vivid 3-D effect. The result is that the cover looks like pages out of a carefully kept scrapbook. To keep the scrapbook feel, we had the printer run the black background in a separate pass through the press in a **very** flat matte black. Then they ran the four-color passes in regular gloss inks. Finally, we did a double pass with liquid lamination--gloss lamination just on the photographs, and matte on the rest of the cover. The result is that the photo-corners look like they come off the page, a remarkable illusion which resonates perfectly with the images in Joe's poetry. We could have gone to less trouble, I suppose, but then, the poet could also have taken it easier. The result in either case would have been less pleasing.

I like computers and I am very into writing HTML documents, but there is something different about manufacturing a book--I really like that particular interaction between message and medium.

Kali

Kali Tal

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168. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: close readings

Sat 11 Mar 1995

I certainly respect Ron's examples, and his own design of TONER, and Pierre is right to call attention to Mallarme, but I think that, if the discussion of space is limited to the page and its typography, something is missing. Gary Sullivan wisely called attention to the context of publication for O'Hara. I have got the first edition of Maximus IV, V, VI down from my shelf, and in that book the weight of the volume, the texture of pages and cover, all contribute. This is about paying attention to what and how we read and what effects that reading, and the field is much broader and more complex than "the page."

I also have a sense that books today are very restricted in how they might convey the sense of the poem. By that I mean that I suspect Ron designed TONER according to at least some of the conventions of the marketplace. I'm not certain a book with the size, uncoated paper, and other characteristics of that second Maximus volume would find shelf space in any but about four bookstores in the USA, if the book were by a poet with about the same exposure as Olson had at the time that book came out. In 1995 more and more of the smallest presses are conforming not only to size standards, but also to paper standards, often to the 4-color processes marketing seems to call for, and including bar codes. How does an individual text, and a publisher, maintain a distinctive physical manifestation? How will they do so in electronic publishing? Do the advantages of the current means of distribution outweigh what is lost?

charles alexander

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169. **Tenney Nathanson**

reading against (the) against the grain

Sun 12 Mar 1995

contra (as per usual lately, oddly) my friend Charles (A), I guess I'd want to suggest that: 1) while, when dealing w a chunk of poetry (poetries) by various authors where the going wisdom has to do w irreplaceable signature (17-C mannerist; modernist--eg) it's interestin (a la Bob Perelman book I've not yet bought/read?) to dispute the category of the "master work) 2) when dealing w something like Lang Po 1 which so insistently insists on textuality and discourses etc etc, it might be, exactly, (most?) interesting to focus (or insist) instead on the grain of the (non) voice and the category of the would-be masterwork: of all the many-hundred (?) (or couple hundred, it must be) books by so-called so-called G-1, which of them, (if the books itself or "itself" sruvives another 50 years) will survive as THE books from Lang Po - 1 that one needs to

read? since the question itself is inimical, in important ways, to the ethos of the movement (or non-movement), it's THEREFORE interesting. or so say all of us
Tenney

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170. **John Cayley**
Re: close readings

Sun 12 Mar 1995

In 1995 more and more of the smallest presses are conforming not only to size standards, but also to paper standards, often to the 4-color processes marketing seems to call for, and including bar codes.

As a small publisher I conform to book trade standards, of necessity to make it *possible* for a book to exist in the trade context, even if it is unwelcome and may languish in a distributor's warehouse. There are always constraints.

*How does
an individual text, and a publisher, maintain a distinctive physical
manifestation?*

Surely that is a function of the creative effort some or all put in. Dancing in chains?

*How will they do so in electronic publishing? Do the
advantages of the current means of distribution outweigh what is lost?*

We've already crossed the Rubicon. The hype is all true, except that it is not possible for us to predict or even conceive of the final physical forms in which the medium we are currently using will manifest itself. It is very hard to believe that it will not have at least the flexibility and degree of material articulation as does print/paper. It's likely that sooner rather than later it will have acquire many 'sensual' characteristics which will be as pleasing to us as those associated with productions of the finest paper/print practioners.

(Remember when screens of texts were little green dots on a black void? That was when Ted Nelson invented hyperText.)

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171. **H. T. KIRBY-SMITH**
Poetry and the Page

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Concern with the interrraction of poetry and its appearance on the page coincides with periods of adventurous experimentalism in poetry writing. But first you have to have a page. That was difficult before the printing press, but not impossible. A few poems in Greek, the "technopaignea," survive--shaped

poems that resemble an egg (a poem about a nightingale), panpipes, a few others.

In the later 1500s there was a lot of experimentation with accommodating the poem's appearance on the page to its content--a mixture of graphics and print, and in the 1600s there were emblem poems. The irregularity of line lengths, too, could be advertised by conspicuous indentations, and there were poems that bordered on free verse--in fact, given the context of the times, were free verse.

Beginning about 1680 and continuing to about 1780, typographical devices were scorned and avoided for the most part. The page was simply a place where the poem could be recorded. There are exceptions to all the generalizations offered so far, but on the whole there was this rhythm of experimentation and reaction.

Then with Blake and continuing with the Pre-Raphaelites there was renewed experimentation with typography, graphics, advertised expressiveness or irregularity, etc. Surely Whitman, a printer himself, realized the typographical impact of his lines--as opposed to what was generally expected in the nineteenth century.

Mallarmé pointed to the future with the typographical extravagances of "Un coup de dés," and Pound and Amy Lowell certainly used typography for formal purposes. It has been argued that Williams's "triadic" line was really a typographical device, and that Olson's distribution of his lines appeal to the eye more than serving as a transcription of his "breath."

Imagist doctrine (Ford, Hulme, Pound, Lowell, Aldington, etc) emphasized the visual over the audible, and that included the appearance on the page. e. e. cummings used the typewriter for witty purposes that involved exact placement of letters and words, and of course Olson insisted even more grandiosely on that tool's usefulness.

The visual media available for recording poetry always affect the poetry, especially in periods of experimentation. First came moveable type, then after a long time, the typewriter, and now all the graphic possibilities--the fonts, etc--available in word processors. Actually Mallarmé went a long way very early; his poem was so hard to set in type that it was not published in correct form until some years after his death.

Neoclassicists, from Joseph Addison (who called shaped poems "false wit") to the present tend to be unsympathetic with the notion of typographical poetry. This is another of the issues contributing to the bifurcation of American poetry.

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172. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: reading against (the) against the grain

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Yes, Tenney, I do have some objections to a listing of the "masterworks" of langpo, although part of the problem I had with that request was that it did not ask for the ten "masterworks" or "best works" (about which you could give your list, I could give mine, etc.), but for the ten "most important." What does important mean in this sense? I may find works which are most influential are not works which I consider the most accomplished. I may argue that the most accomplished are not the most generative or courageous. I also may believe that a book issued in 200 copies (or even 50) by a very small and independent press in northern California is more of a masterwork than the best distributed langpo book published by Sun & Moon (arguably the most "successful" langpo publisher, but "successful" by what standards -- aesthetic, marketplace, other? -- & this is not to argue against Sun & Moon, Douglass, as I love your work).

So, first, make clear for me your definition of a masterwork, then I'll be glad to suggest how I might fill in the blanks in the top ten. But I suspect your definition may be more interesting than my list (or someone else's).

all best to you & all the list,
charles alexander

ps -- to John Cayley, yes I still believe there's lots of room for creativity in bookmaking, even for the wider marketplace, although I sometimes feel bad that some of the tools are lost or made difficult. Interesting that some of the most exciting developments in commercial papermaking are in the issuing of exciting (visual & textural) recycled papers, and that these particularly lend themselves to book covers, except for the fact that they are uncoated, which means some bookstores don't want them and that their suitability for 4-color printing (without going to great expense, although the results can be dramatic) is not great, which means that sales reps have a harder time marketing them. I am currently driven to design books for the market which do conform (at least enough to make them work, but not enough to make them absolutely "regulation") to trade standards, but also to keep making books whose devotion is to the union of bookmaking excellence & innovation with literary works, even though the labor to produce such works is great and the market is tiny.

As to the possibilities of sensuality in the electronic realm, I am excited and fairly ignorant, but hopeful.

To H.T. Kirby-Smith, thanks for the brief history, it's helpful. But I don't think "typographical poetry" is the extent of what we're talking about. As a poet who makes books, certainly, the shape of poem on page, the kind & shape of page,

the double-page spread, the conception of sequencing in turning the page, as well as other aspects of color and form, are all part of the artistic composition, yet these are not "typographical poems" in any sense I recognize that term. I know there are other poet/bookmakers on this list, and I wonder what they have to say about this issue, whether they are printing/designing their own works or works by others. I am interested in the possibilities of design/book art, while being a "presentation" of texts, at the same time being a "reading" or "interpretation" of texts, and even, when possible (and this is tricky) being a "collaborative partner" with texts. Among texts some would consider as language poetry (getting back to possible masterworks, Tenney), I would point to the first edition of Susan Howe's DEFENESTRATION OF PRAGUE (Kulchur Foundation, 1983), Charles Bernstein & Susan Bee's THE NUDE FORMALISM (Sun & Moon, 1992), and Lyn Hejinian & Kit Robinson's INDIVIDUALS (Chax, 1988), as three books which enact such a partnership in three dramatically different ways. I sometimes wonder, though, if future scholarship will keep such presentations/partnerships in mind, or pay attention only to the texts, which I find limiting. On the other hand, I am not a proponent of some masterwork notion of bookmaking, rather that such partnerships are illuminating while not being the only artistic possibilities, yet maintain some eminence when they are the first printed editions of texts.

charles alexander

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173. **Sheila Murphy**

Re: Text and Sounds and Words...

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Gary, What a welcome question (concerning form and physical presence of my small chap called CRITERIA FOR BEING TOUCHED)

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174. **Sheila Murphy**

Re: Text and Sounds and Words...

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Excuse, please, folks, the premature sending that just occurred. I'll begin again:

Gary's question (about the form and physicality of my small chap called CRITERIA FOR BEING TOUCHED) is most welcome. Much of the credit must go to C.L. Champion, the publisher, who lives in Tucson. I had sent Champion a small grouping of poems, many of which seem now to me to have a quality of casualness about them that may have inspired the publisher to present them

together with wonderful drawings crayoned in and showing childed printing on the front cover, using the space as children do, with the word "Sheila"'s taking up the whole horizontal space, necessitating a move to another place to the right of the drawing of figures and sun and a house on the left of the page, just to get in the middle initial "e" (to distinguish, some of you know, from another Sheila Murphy in the lit world - I did this a long time back, knowing what a common Irish name I have - and there indeed turn out to be several by my name). Anyhow, the little stub of sandpaper on the back of the book does several things as far as I can see. The suggestion of sand itself is there, as in sandbox (the recollective aspects of the work, notably the first piece about my now late father, called "I Could Ask Anything," which youngs its way along to mirror, as happens, the naive art concept on the cover), and as in rough cut of feelings almost unconsciously released as they are from childhood. There's mention of physical things in that first poem (a haibun, by the way) about my father's making our lunches and placing them in brown manila envelopes he would recycle from the office (long before this sort of thing was done). The style of the book seems to be perfectly tuned to the moment the experience it talks about was born.

A primary reader of what I do, who responds to many things before they leave me, also loved this book, Gary. Bev Carver immediately perceived the link and loved what C.L. Champion had done.

I have had this hunch concerning serendipity that keeps proving itself true: one of the most exciting aspects of writing comes at the point at which an editor who really cares can leap with the work to the physical place at which it needs next to occur (for many other people to perceive). I'm constantly lucky in this. And notably in small, small press efforts that come directly from garages. This is the best example I know of where something boundlessly and simply beautiful occurs when I've completely let go of something I have written. For me, the physical imagination of the other person comes as a gift that enriches the experience of making. While I love direct collaboration (I do a lot of that with John M. Bennett (in text) and with Megha Morganfield (on Celtic harp with text) and some others, THIS is collaboration of another kind.

Thanks, Gary, for asking.

Sheila

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175. **Sheila Murphy**
Re: More in re context
Sun 12 Mar 1995

Gary and others -

A beautiful example of physical form has just arrived in the slow post. AVIDLY PERPLEXING by Meg Davis has been newly released by Sun/Gemini Books in Tucson (Clint Colby, publisher). PO Box 42170 Tucson, 85733. \$9.95. This is Meg's first chapbook. (A large chap with nothing spared re: expense, by the way, and 39+ pages). The poems are WONDERFUL. Charles A. knows some of Meg's work, and I hope still more others will soon. Splendid, fresh stuff.

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176. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

Apologies and new thoughts re: Top Ten

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Folks,

Please excuse my first post. It was dashed off hastily and being a first-time poster, I wasn't sure if it was going to even go through. I certainly didn't mean to imply verticality or canonization. Rather, what I meant was that it would be helpful to begin a list and commentary of important, influential, provocative, or simply favorite books centered around The Language Poetry dialogue--let's call it a community bibliography of sorts. Hopefully, in the future it be compiled into a coherent resource that could be deposited at the E-Poetry Archive as a signpost for net wanderers or other interested parties. As a very side discussion in this group, if people would occasionally post their choices and reasons, I would begin to compile (being a natural compiler) a resource.

Kenneth Goldsmith

-

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177. **Tony Green**

Re: close readings

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Thanks, Jonathan Brannen, for your post on close reading(s). I agree the context of university classes can be destructive in just the ways you indicate. Content dis-formed is what the system produces, because at the place where your poetry-as-music or (as-for-music) gets found, so discourse re-theme and content gets dis-abled.

Equivalent in painting and other "visual" arts discourse is: taking painting exclusively as picture, where picture is reduced to a small selection of nameable objects, each of which can then be drawn into theme-content discussion (and "theory") but with no regard for questions of how in the

medium all that can be seen. (Classic much anthologised example is Louis Marin reading Poussin's Et in Arcadia ego.)

The level of the working by which the work has had to be constructed (constituted as image) disappears from view, where the work in the medium and the resulting figuration (or absence of it) makes picture visible.

Tony Green,
e-mail: [REDACTED]
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Telephone: 64 9 [REDACTED] ext. 8981 or 7276

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178. **Tony Green**
Re: close readings

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Hi Wystan, cd you say more abt the demand of texts to be read close. I can think of paintings like that, and some that do best with a quick take.cturee

Tony Green,
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179. **Tony Green**
attacks on funding

Sun 12 Mar 1995

Defenders of public funding

against attacks of such as W.Bennett

cd well note W.Spanos The End of Education University of Minnesota Press
1993

which is an elaborate defence of positions in education against such as Bennett

Intro p xiv "In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, a massive educational reform movement was initiated in 1979 by Harvard University....Such reform was theorized by prominent American humanists, by conservatives such as William Bennett, Walter Jackson Bate, and Allan Bloom, and by liberals such as E.D.Hirsch and Wayne Booth. This reform movement has as its purpose the recuperation of not only the humanist curriculum that was "shattered" by the protest movement in the 1960's but also the discourse of disinterestedness now called into question by the theoretical discourses that have come to be called "postmodern" or "poststructuralist", but which this book prefers to call "posthumanist".

a wsTIVSA

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180. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Goldsmith's Top 10 request

Mon 13 Mar 1995

Kenneth, here's one:

TOP TEN LANG NOs

"We are forever deceiving ourselves with names and theories."

--Charles Lamb

"Benjamin Franklin [was] the only president of the United States who was never president of the United States."

--Firesign Theater

1. Aristotle's *_On the Art of Poetry_*. Section 20, focussing on linguistic definitions.

2. Charles Lamb's *_Selected Prose_*. As Adam Phillips notes in the Introduction: "[for Lamb] great art was unfinished in the sense that it relied on the imaginative involvement of the audience to complete it. It was not something that by virtue of its perfection diminished its audience. It was not an

idol but an invitation." From Lamb's essay on Hogarth: "*imaginary work*, where the spectator must meet the artist in his conceptions half way; and it is peculiar to the confidence of high genius alone to trust so much to spectators or readers." (cf. "reader-response writing.") Lamb's essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare" is the first instance of someone suggesting a preference for *reading* Shakespeare over viewing the plays performed. An excellent, intelligently stated argument, with all the panache (& thrice the wit) of Grenier's "I HATE SPEECH." (You'll have to read Lamb's essay to see whether or not you agree--and to what extent--Lamb's & Grenier's concerns are related.)

3. Gertrude Stein. No need to explicate. Richard Bridgman's *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* includes a (complete?) bibliography, with actual & well-guestimated dates for each work, if you want to read her chronologically.

4. Samuel Beckett, esp. *How It Is*, *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, *Fizzles*, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, *Worstward Ho*, *More Pricks than Kicks*, *Company* and *Stirring Still*. A big influence on Coolidge, who seems a big influence on lang pos.

5. Jack Spicer, *Language*. (cf. Silliman on this in *New Sentence*.)

6. Clark Coolidge, esp. *Space*, from 1970. The spine of this book claims it was published by "Harper & Row"; I think they did that with mirrors.

7. J.G. Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Originally published in 1972 by Panther; reissued (expanded edition?) recently by Re/Search. His notorious "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" (there's an Andrews title for you) orig. appeared in 1968 in *Ronald Reagan, The Magazine of Poetry*, edited by John Sladek and Pamela Zoline. (Includes groovy, Brainardesque line-drawings by Zoline.) Andrews is funnier, but Ballard stays with you longer. (Well, okay, "has stayed with *me* longer.")

8. Ad Reinhardt. It's been too long since I've read him to explicate, but I remember, first coming across journals like *Ottotole* and *Poetics Journal*, that the Ad-man'd covered some of that conceptual ground with respect to the visual arts. His art-world satire collages (including a horse-racing form with the names of various abstract expressionists substituted for horses) are not to be missed. He may or may not prove relevant.

9. The Firesign Theater, *Don't Crush that Dwarf, Hand Me the Pliers*. If anything can be said to've prepared me to read (& appreciate) Bernstein, it was this record. I'm constantly amazed by the lack of (serious) critical attention these guys have received. One of the members, David Ossman, did the interviews of New American Poets published in *The Sullen Art*. (Corinth published that, I think.) There are several e-space "whatchyoucallems" devoted to the F.T. I've discovered using Gopher. Can't remember where they are, how I

got there. At least one site includes the F.T. "lexicon," which might be valuable for the un- or recently initiated.

10. Alan Davies, "Peer Pleasure," just published in *_Cyanosis_ #2* (e-mail [REDACTED] for info). Any serious study of a movement, group, clique or tendency might include a well-stated, serious critique. "Peer Pleasure" is an example.

--Gary Sullivan

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181. **Robert Drake**

Re: Apologies and new thoughts re: Top Ten

Mon 13 Mar 1995

I certainly didn't mean to imply verticality or canonization. Rather, what I meant was that it would be helpful to begin a list and commentary of important, influential, provocative, or simply favorite books centered around The Language Poetry dialogue--let's call it a community bibliography of sorts.

Kenneth Goldsmith

ken--

im not sure its possible to avoid the implications of verticality or cannonization; the AUTHORity of this list ("owened" by bernstein, and regular contributors including a substantial part of the langpo movement) militates against such...

& id suggest, (related to the forms of publication thread) that the kind of centrally compiled list yr suggesting is a holdover from pre-electronic publishing ideas--if the e-network has any advantage at all, its the possibility of decentralized multiplicity, where all participants lists are equally available, w/out the added "legitimization" implied by being added to a maintained list...

id be *_very_* interested, on the other hand, to have random postings by any and all participants of what they're reading & enjoying this week...

lbd

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182. **R.I.Caddel @ durham.ac.uk**

Juhan Viiding

Mon 13 Mar 1995

This isn't the first message to this board I'd hoped to send: Just back from the visit to Buffalo referred to by Kenneth Sherwood, where I read my "Baltic Coast" sequence, and I've just got this mail. Viiding was one of the activists of

Estonian poetry, emerging in the sixties along with Kaplinski, Ehin and others, sustaining his oppositional craft for years:

Forwarded message

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 95 15:02:30 EST

>From: "Aili Aarelaid-Tart" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: inf

To: R.I.Caddel @ durham.ac.uk

Dear Ric,

We have now sad news: two weeks ago
Estonian poet and actor Juhan Viiding
(Elo Vee's father) made a suicide.
His cry against the brutality of
contemporary life, its stupidity
and dullness is still breaking
our hearts. Funerals were last
act of lifelong desires to make
the world differ real and false.
New times were too hard for him
to bear.
Indrek

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183. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: close readings

Mon 13 Mar 1995

I can't recall off-hand whether Maximus IV, V, VI was published by Jargon, Cape Goliard/Grossman, or perhaps someone else. In any case, I wonder how widely distributed it actually was at the time it was published. I know that Olson personally placed copies of the previous volume of Maximus in bookstores, probably by towering over the owner.

I share your concern about the pressures to conform to publishing standards. Reading books is an intimate experience. And all aspects of the book contribute to that experience. I treasure both ends of the publishing spectrum that are disappearing, those amazingly textured, inventively designed, carefully executed, letterpress, handbound editions (such as Chax "non-trade" editions, though the trade editions are lovely too) AND the xeroxed (in earlier days mimeographed) books done as cheaply as possible just to get the work out. I value my disintegrating copies of books from presses like Doones and Angel

Hair. The quirks and eccentricities of the handmade (homemade) book on both ends of the spectrum are a delight.

I'm wrestling with these issues now. Standing Stones Press publishes chapbooks. They're attractive, carefully made and reasonably inexpensive. I do everything myself in order to keep the costs down because I want them to be affordable. I fantasize about breaking even someday but this is not a capitalist venture. I think it's psychologically important for younger writers and writers that are not as well known as they should be to have collections of their work printed. The

The problem, of course, is that don't meet the shelf and profit needs of all but a few bookstores. Small Press Distribution won't carry them. The reasons I was given is that they're not taking on any new publishers of chapbooks because they don't make enough money from them to make it worthwhile and that they're moving toward carrying only trade editions because that's where the market is. Now, I can understand their desire to increase sales and stay financially solvent, and I can more-or-less ignore the irony of a non-profit corporation complaining about not making enough profit. But here's the conundrum, I can do a trade edition annual in which I essentially publish the chapbooks I would have, but the psychological boost that comes from having what may be your first collection published has been denied you. Instead you're lumped together with other writers with whom you have little in common and there's a higher price tag for all involved.

So, if I capitulate a spectrum of distinctions get lost. Now I confess a certain nostalgia for the book. They're portable, tactile, don't require hundreds of dollars of equipment to read, and can be read when the power's out. But I'm also considering electronic publication. Until the frontier aspects of the net are squashed by government interests, you have spontaneous distribution and minimal overhead. I suspect that electronic publications will evolve into collaborative efforts due the level of expertise required to utilize the wide media available through the computer. Electronic journals will contain animation, "films," music, voice, text and who know's what all thrown in the mix together. Who can foresee how it will evolve? The problem I see at the present is that the net is a realm of the privileged. You have to have the equipment to access it and you have to have an entrance point. Public sites are scarce. This is less an issue for those of you associated with universities where limitless net access usually the norm. If you're not, it gets expensive quickly, even when you can make connection without racking up long distance phone charges.

I throwing the above out for consideration.

Jonathan Brannen

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184. **Hank Lazer**

reading now

Mon 13 Mar 1995

In response to luigi-bob drake's request to mention what we're reading & enjoying now:

biography of Coltran by Nisenson; poetry manuscripts by Charles Bernstein and Lisa Samuels; books of poetry by Bei Dao and manuscript materials by an amazing poet (from Suzhou) - Che Qianzi; music by Coltrane & Monk (for classes I'm teaching later in the week); and work by Norman Fischer, Precisely the Point Being Made (a joy of a book) and subsequent manuscripts....

Hank Lazer

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185. **B. Cass Clarke**

Re: close readings

Mon 13 Mar 1995

I can't recall off-hand whether Maximus IV, V, VI was published by Jargon, Cape Goliard/Grossman, or perhaps someone else. In any case, I wonder how widely distributed it actually was at the time it was published. I know that Olson personally placed copies of the previous volume of Maximus in bookstores, probably by towering over the owner.

Dear Jonathan:

Maximus Poems IV,V,VI was published in 1968 by Cape Goliard Press in association with Grossman. When I was a student studying Olson, in 1973, it was most difficult to find a copy. Students searched used bookstores in the hope of finding a copy. Until Butterick completed his heroic task of the Collected Maximus, I believe IV, V, VI was out of print. As to the idea of Olson pressing his work on any bookseller, it is my impression that Olson cherished, and hoarded his copies. I recall vividly Harvey Brown and Jack Clarke fondly describing Olson's hospital room - and the stack of IV,V,VI prominently displayed and referred to by him - it was a treasure. The literal fact of its accomplishment and material presence was no small feat - it signified a labor of love by Olson and the many friends who believed in his work. Its "success" measured by sales - was never the point.

B. Cass Clarke



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186. **Jonathan A Levin**

SUNY-Buffalo talk

Mon 13 Mar 1995

To list subscribers at Buffalo:

I'm going to be giving a talk at Buffalo on Friday March 31, sometime in the afternoon (2, 3, or 4:00, I believe). The talk is titled "Wallace Stevens and the Pragmatist Imagination" and is a part of a book I'm writing on Pragmatism and American Literary Modernism (the literary part being, for the most part, devoted to Henry James, Gertrude Stein, and Stevens). Some in the audience (students in Art Efron's Pragmatism and Literature seminar) will, if I'm not mistaken, have read my recently published "The Esthetics of Pragmatism," in American Literary History, Winter 1994 (not, however, "required reading"). This, for those of you interested, doesn't really cover any poetry, though Stevens sneaks in near the end: you'll have to wait for the book! (Not long, I hope.) The talk, on the other hand, is full of close reading, of the best kind.

I'll post the time and place in a couple of weeks. Hope some of you can make it--

Jonathan Levin

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187. **Edward Foster**

Re: POETICS Digest - 8 Mar 1995 to 9 Mar 1995

Mon 13 Mar 1995

re: k davis and the absolute: "play things as they are"? who's in charge of that?

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188. **James Sherry**

Re: Apologies and new thoughts re: Top Ten

Mon 13 Mar 1995

Several poetry lists have been compiled by the poets of whom you speak. A group of us compiled a yearly list in the Segue distribution catalog. I can give you this which consists of 300 titles. A list of ten as has been suggested is, as others have suggested, like asking which dozen eggs makes the best omlette. Any eggs will make the omlette you choose to make. The works of the poets of the past 20 years compose matrix of poems, themes, and strategies and to isolate any in a list is to miss the point of the matrix structure. Can we begin to isolate works in this overall and complex way rather than a string of titles and justifications? James

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189. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 11 Mar 1995 to 12 Mar 1995

Mon 13 Mar 1995

back to the masterworks. The topic, that is (not like "back to the things themselves!"). I don't know that the criteria (would) come first, Charles; just (perhaps) after a while (20-30-50 years say) some books, and writers, will rise, or stick, or whatever your trope is (maybe the spaghetti on the wall is best). And I think that that's gonna be interesting, for Lang Po in particular, just because it goes against the grain of the enabling rhetoric (not so for modernism) and is therefore likely to show unexpected things about Lang Po, and to shed interesting light on it. I'm not really invested or even interested in arguing canon right now. There are just so many truisms about discourse, and textuality, and enabling of readers and etc etc that it's nice to contemplate a meaningful (let's hope) engagement w some of the poetry that comes at it from a stance quite different from its own. (the obverse and less interesting--but satisfying!--case is to watch Charles Altieri take Workshop Poetry w its pride in Craft and The Well Made Poem and The Individual and cook it all down to a suet (sp.?) w maybe 3 ingredients).

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190. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: close readings

Mon 13 Mar 1995

Dear B. Cass Clarke

Of course, Maximus's success measured by sales was never the point, nor did I intend to imply that it could be measured in sales. I was addressing Charles Alexander that only about four bookstores would carry a comparable ahem, I was addressing Charles Alexander's observation that no one would stock a comparable book today (comparable in terms of size and needed shelf space for a poet now at a similar point in her or his career).

My notion of Olson towering over bookstore owners comes from reading Jonathan Williams' account on Olson personally placing the Jargon edition of Maximus I - III in bookstores in small towns in North Carolina, stores so unlikely to sell them that Williams claimed copies were still in stock in the mid-1980s (for the original list price). I can't vouch for the accuracy of the story or the accuracy of my recollection of it, other than to say I think it's fairly accurately. I think I gleaned this from an interview with Williams in Vort in the early 1980s.

I don't personally placing books in bookstores precludes the possibility of later hoarding copies. Having watched a couple of my own books go out of print, I tend to be generous with copies and aggressive about placing them in stores when they first appear and considerably more parsimonious when there are only a few copies left. I think Butterick's labors are profoundly admirable. Nor do I find Olson's personally trying to make copies of his books available to a potential audience less than admirable. The unignorable fact, though, is that booksellers measure the success of a book in terms of sales, which is why you had such difficulties in finding copies of Olson's book.

Thanks for clarifying the issue of the publisher for me.

Best regards,
Jonathan

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191. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

You can't make an omlet if you can't get your hands on the eggs

Mon 13 Mar 1995

James,

Thank you for your helpful comments. I would very much like your list of 300 titles and would like to use it as a jumping off point for a "matrix" or "galaxy" oriented resource. Of course, as I implied in my last post, ten seems like a ridiculous number for all the reasons you mention. But, if we can think non-hierarchically and in a horizontally spread manner concerning this project, it could prove to be a valuable resource for many people who haven't been in this dialogue for as long as you have. It seems like the contributors to this list are growing every day and I feel that an archive like the one we're discussing could be essential to laying a groundwork for those unfamiliar with much of the reading material (which is, unfamiliarity through poor access). Many books have fallen out of print and many people are so new to Language Poetry, that they don't even know that many of these titles have ever existed. Access to resources has been limited. I can't tell you how many authors and publishers in the scene complain to me that their books aren't known about due to poor distribution that in turn, creates a lack of interest. It's really a shame. For example, access to your Segue list is limited. I live in the same city as you, I speak on the phone with you, and see you at readings, but it never crossed my mind that such a thing was in existence (I've never, quite honestly, until recently known what Segue was or how get at it. To this day, I've never seen the Segue catalogue of which you speak. I do, btw, consider myself a media-savvy New Yorker, and not much escapes my attention.) No fault of anyone's except we're dealing with a different mode of communication here on the net

(which is also new for many people) that has the potential to point people from all over the world in the direction of the ideas that you and several other poets have been working on for many, many years. You might not be aware of it, but you sit on a trove of information that remains relatively inaccessible to people entering the dialogue at this much later date. If we were to begin with your list, the base for an excellent resource would be solid. If we could continually update it, add to it, and revise our opinions of the contents of such a resource (via this list), something wonderfully organic and less resistant to definition might emerge. You can't make the omelet if you can't get your hands on the eggs.

--Kenny

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192. **Robert Kelly**

Re: close readings

Tue 14 Mar 1995

a quiet emendation---Olson was a very shy man, and for all his loud palaver, would hardly have hovered over a bookseller. In the sixties when he was back in Gloucester, there was never a book of his to be seen in local shops (though here and there you'd see books of Ferrini and others), and his frequent letters to the Gloucester Times were on matters of public import other than poetry.

You're right in thinking MAX IV/V/VI did not have huge distribution, but it was around, and more available for a while than most books of poetry, so those who had any interest in such matters could and did find it. (As you'd find Content's Dream now, for instance.)

It is interesting to recall the late George Butterick's conscientious even desperate attempts to decipher certain later Olson scripts, where decipher really meant to engage, let me use such a word. Those who heard Olson rread out loud know that the domain of the page and the domain of the voice seldom coincided, and were not, I think, meant to in any obvious illustrational way. The way of the page was the man's cry.

RK

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193. **B. Cass Clarke**

Close readings

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for your courteous response. However, I was reacting to your easy use of Olson's mystique, promulgated mainly by folks who disliked, envied or otherwise had reason to misread and misrepresent Olson's person. The time is not too far off when his living memory will be dead and when those who knew him and know the distortions that are used to discredit him, are exhausted.

I'm certain that was not your intention, but you'll pardon my using the occasion to lament.

Truly,

Cass Clarke

B. Cass Clarke
[REDACTED]

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194. **Jonathan Brannen**
Olson

Tue 14 Mar 1995

From jbrannen Tue Mar 14 02:18:17 1995
id AA20120; Tue, 14 Mar 1995 02:18:12 -0600
Date: Tue, 14 Mar 1995 02:18:12 -0600
From: Jonathan Brannen <jbrannen>
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Close readings
Cc: [REDACTED]
Status: RO

Dear Cass,

I certainly had not intended to misrepresent Olson's person. I view the image of Olson in this perhaps apocryphal bookstore with a degree of warmth because I've talked to enough trade managers in bookstores to understand that it can be awkward trying to get them to stock poetry. I relished the human element of the tale. And I confess to braking for bookstores in North Carolina on the chance it might be true.

I don't know what to say about my or anybody else's easy use of the Olson mystique. There's no denying that there is such a mystique, unfortunately images can never be accurate and with even the best intentions they distort the reality of the person. I don't wish to be perpetuating falsehoods when I mention Olson, but never having met Charles Olson, I have to take somebody's word for truth. The alternative is to refrain from mentioning him, and he's too important a figure not to be mentioned. I hate to use the term figure in

reference to anyone, but for me he can never be the complex human being that you interacted with.

If it's any comfort, Olson's detractors are fighting a losing battle. There's no doubt in my mind Olson's poetry will continue to be read. I'm sorry if you feel I've done him an injustice. I had not meant to. His work and literary reputation are both strong enough to withstand even the most spurious attack. Since he's one of the writers to whom I keep returning, I'd rather not be construed as contributing to such an attack or perceived as participating in it. I'll try to mend my wicked ways. How did you meet Charles Olson and what was your initial impression of him? I kind of excited to be "talking" with someone who knew Olson. Please excuse my gracelessness that brought it about.

Best regards,
Jonathan

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195. **H. T. KIRBY-SMITH**
Jonathan Brannen's messages
Tue 14 Mar 1995

Dear Jonathan Brannen,

If you have not done so, I hope you will write up everything you know about the progress of small-press publishing from Jargon Press to the present, along with accounts of the personalities involved. As best I can tell all your own book publications are poetry.

Is Jonathan Williams still alive? I never met Olson, but Williams gave me a hard time about not arranging a poetry reading for him years ago--and then we got onto the more agreeable subject of the Appalachian Trail. I was in Black Mountain just the other day--stopped off while heading to Tennessee. There's a historical marker on old Route 70--no reference to any poets by name. If I got to the right place in the end, the campus is now occupied by the Western Division of the Department of Human Resources, including an Alzheimer's treatment center. Only postcards available in town were general views of the Black Mountains, except for one of the drugstore itself, Black Mountain Drugs, which is probably much like it may have been if Olson bought aspirin there.

Has anybody thought of a poetic guidebook? Walden Pond, City Lights, Jeffers's tower if it's there, the academic computing center at Buffalo...

Tom Kirby-Smith

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196. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

You can't make an omelet if you can't get yr hands on the eggs

Tue 14 Mar 1995

James,

Thank you for your helpful comments. I would very much like your list of 300 titles and would like to use it as a jumping off point for a "matrix" or "galaxy" oriented resource. Of course, as I implied in my last post, ten seems like a ridiculous number for all the reasons you mention. But, if we can think non-hierarchically and in a horizontally spread manner concerning this project, it could prove to be a valuable resource for many people who haven't been in this dialogue for as long as you have. It seems like the contributors to this list are growing every day and I feel that an archive like the one we're discussing could be essential to laying a groundwork for those unfamiliar with much of the reading material (which is, unfamiliarity through poor access). Many books have fallen out of print and many people are so new to Language Poetry, that they don't even know that many of these titles have ever existed. Access to resources has been limited. I can't tell you how many authors and publishers in the scene complain to me that their books aren't known about due to poor distribution that in turn, creates a lack of interest. It's really a shame. For example, access to your Segue list is limited. I live in the same city as you, I speak on the phone with you, and see you at readings, but it never crossed my mind that such a thing was in existence (I've never, quite honestly, until recently known what Segue is or how get at it. To this day, I've never seen the Segue catalogue of which you speak. I do, btw, consider myself a media-savvy New Yorker, and not much escapes my attention.) No fault of anyone's except we're dealing with a different mode of communication here on the net (which is also new for many people) that has the potential to point people from all over the world in the direction of the ideas that you and several other poets have been working on for many, many years. You might not be aware of it, but you sit on a trove of information that remains relatively inaccessible to people entering the dialogue at this much later date. If we were to begin with your list, the base for an excellent resource would be solid. If we could continually update it, add to it, and revise our opinions of the contents of such a resource (via this list), something wonderfully organic and less resistant to definition might emerge. You can't make the omelet if you can't get your hands on the eggs.

--Kenny

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197. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

bedside reading

Tue 14 Mar 1995

My favorite part of Vanity Fair is when they ask celebrities what they are reading before they go to bed. Imagine how much better it would be if we were able to hear what people were reading whose tastes and minds we actually respect?

Kenny

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198. **Jonathan Brannen**

Re: Jonathan Brannen's messages

Tue 14 Mar 1995

The informal "history" of small press publishing is a long term interest of mine, but it's progress is too mercurial for me to do justice to. And I'm sure there are others on this list more knowledgeable than I am. I'd love to hear some of the "war stories" that the various people who have been involved in literary publishing might have to share.

Having recently "made easy use of Olson's mystique" I'm hesitant to speculate about the existence and whereabouts of anyone. To the best of my knowledge, though, Jonathan Williams is alive, and my understanding is that he has taken up full-time residency in Great Britain, I believe in Devonshire, though I'm not certain. Perhaps someone reading this can provide you with a current address.

Best of all possible but progressively improbable worlds,
Jonathan

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199. **cris cheek**

open and close books

Tue 14 Mar 1995

(longish post)

'It is not that we go into the past, live in the past, to find her, but that her print, her traces, are around us. Indeed, if one searches the past for her, the search will lead to fiery details, a stroke here and then an airy space, another stroke of what is now called fact, and then something obliterated, drowned, burned, lost. And then another stroke, until an entire structure of a life begins to rise, brilliant, with long reaches, venturesome, airy, full of risk, moving in a way that speaks to us in our century. She is a rebel who

appears to fail at every climax of her life. She can be seen to go deeper at these times.' (Rukeser 'The Traces of Thomas Hariot')

I've often referred to Muriel Rukeyser's terrific book 'The Traces of Thomas Hariot'. It seems to encapsulate some of the problems lurking in premature discussions about book objects, publishing formats, top tens and 'readings' / 'influences' - intriguing though I've found recent posts on such subjects. It talks about the processes of 'history' of how what survives survives and how what is lost is sometimes that which is most valuable.

An amended quote from a short, slack and unsatisfactory snippet written for the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E issue of Open Letter locates part of my own feelings (hard to believe I could say that), some of which I retain, about the political economy of the cultural production and consumption of the book:

' "Perfection - Constancy - Consistency are terms applicable to a static state of affairs that this writer would wish to be considered outside of" (allen fisher 'A Sketch Map of Heat') The size of the page that work is made on, the page as a site, the texture of the paper to be printed on and its class pretensions towards promoting substantiable meanings, its color (if any), the choice of typography and more - all such active choices inform the work and such choices form part of what can be read. . . Words are actions, they are part of a physical process. . . to extract one element of this processual space and reproduce the same extraction, say in a re-print or anthology is to re-present rather than present. This is effect amounts to translation.'

Not that translation should be anything other than encouraged, but acknowledged, have its own process incorporated, be sensitized to the poet's choice of presentation as some recent posts have carefully, documented. Thanks for those.

Also consider the ambience of the reader's location - like Tenney's tale of reading Olson on the A Train or whatever - works written to interfuse with environment or encouraging expansion of consciousness.

Consider the likening of the potential of these e-spaces for re-integration of word and image - (yeah I know the arguments re- Caxton primacy of print out of economic and technological imperatives and the connections being made both positively and negatively regarding e-Medievalism (sic)).

Check out the work that John Cayley, and I hope others are (I just don't know you), making for this environment. And the somewhat stalled but clearly related, soon hopefully becoming more stimulating, discussions on hyper-text composition on ht-lit.

One thing that irks at present is the relative normalising influence of electronic presentations in spaces such as these. I printed out RIF/T when I clocked on here and found the layout (not the writing) dull (no disrespect to the editors who must be slightly frustrated in their ambition as yet) - with all the typographical possibilities available for DTP innovation we speak here in a 'normalised', formally relatively controlled and limited e-space. That's part of the problem with its strained physicality (how comfy is your chair and does your screen periphery see your vision?).

Consider the possible inter-relations between printed matter and e-publishing?

I haven't got far yet but am currently improvising, in short takes, from postings (including those on this list - issues of ownership anyone?) into a dictaphone which I also carry when out driving or walking and whatever. The materials are then written (by hand) in notebooks with keen attention given to emphasis and re-invented when necessary. These materials become typed onto word processing formats and transferred into DTP packages (I use Claris and Quark). I then print out and sometimes (not always) blu-tack the printed pages (large font size) up on a wall in a kind of grid which is then re-improvised from onto cassette and re-transcribed. I use choices from all stages of such a process to compose the 'poem'. Sometimes these texts go on to form elements of performance work. Some is printed - other versions are released on CD in spoken word or soundwork contexts - other versions might be appropriate for electronic presentation. The point is process and version. Somehow that leads back to the top of this post and 'The Traces of Thomas Hariot' re - issues of posterity and the market forces which exerce their imperatives onto choice and 'what remains' or 'residues' its presence.

(that's my quid's worth on personal working processes - well actually I'm thinking more in peso's now since a lot of my time over the past week's been taken up with following the unravelling of events in Mexico re Chiapas after being alerted by Robert Harrison's extraordinary post 'A REAL Political Poet')

o when the sandwich has been cut
e and when the architect arrives
we will go boating you and i
upon the same

love
cris

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200. **Bill Luoma**

Re: close readings & . . .

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Notice how the disscussion of close reading has

led us to Blakean picture books and away from themes. We moderns are so easily led to privilege sight. Or, not wanting to be seen privileging anything, we claim that means of productions, physicality and sight are bonus themes and theme enhancers.

Spencer Selby's fine new book (thanks Spencer!), Malleable Cast--Generator, might be a good thing to discuss in this context, for it carries the moniker Art/Visual Poetry on the jacket. Everyone please buy this book, look at it, and have your close reading prepared for class next monday. The thesis statement must contain the following words: advertising, early modern, DPT, Charles Alexandrian, seepage, and icon template.

Bill Luoma

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201. **B. Cass Clarke**

Olson

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Dear Jonathan,

I knew Olson through the eyes of those who loved him. "The ailing Buffalo herd" he once called them, and in fact, I'm not convinced they ever recovered from the loss his death effected and so I was moved to remind you, as others have noted, that these matters are not simply "dead matter" to be used, Thucydides be damned, for the current economy.

Your post was not disgraceful nor did I intend to chastise you for your "wicked ways." It is a small matter to most - and in this forum folks are reaching for their delete keys.

I welcome continued conversation by private mail.

Cass Clarke

B. Cass Clarke



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202. **Tony Green**

Re: reading now

Tue 14 Mar 1995

In response to luigi-bob drake's request to mention what we're reading & enjoying now:

Inventories of Cassiano dal Pozzo's collection of pictures; back numbers of Burlington Magazine; Johanna Drucker's Theorizing Modernism; Stephen Davies's ms on Cage's 4'33"; Thierry de Duve's Au Nom de l'art --pour une archeologie de la modernite which includes a thorough search through contemporary methodologies for saying what "art" might be all in vain! and Art as a Proper Noun; T de D's Resonances du Ready-Made; Robert Kelly's The Loom (a bedside book, for re-reading) Lacan The seminar bks I and II; Alan Loney's recent poems (ms)

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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203. **Loss Glazier**

Re: Olson

Tue 14 Mar 1995

I, for one, has not been reaching for my "delete" key where conversations on Olson have been concerned. What may be said in public I would look for eagerly.

Thanks,

Loss Glazier

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204. **RSILLIMA**

Books

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Mistah Luoma,

Is that early modern or early modem?

I find that I have a strong ambivalence to Spencer's new book, which is an ambivalence I have to much (tho not all) "visual poetry." It pushes the line between "reading" and "looking" in a direction I'm not that comfortable with (I'd rather go in the opposite direction, start close reading adverts in the mags).

Spencer's "regular" poems are so terrific that I deeply want to "get" this work, but then feel pushed out again. It's a reaction I've had to other visual works by Bernstein, DiPalma and other poets who I'd easily count among my very favorite, so it's a reaction that puzzles me.

Two notable exceptions to this seem to me to be John Byrum (see the work in Writings from the New Coast) and (from same book!) by Mark Mendel (might be misspelling that name, sorry). Mendel's work seems to me very influenced by Jenny Holzer, but with a sense of ear and compression that I find lacking in her skewed aphorisms.

Both of these poets seems to take the visual to the written. Spencer's work in contrast seems to pose the idea that the visual is a mask for the written (or vice versa). The images appear "found" -- are the texts likewise?

I'd love for somebody to close read this work and wake up my eyes. I'm ready to learn!

Ron Silliman



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205. **Robert A Harrison**

Call for work

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Call for work for

Visual Poetry Show

at Hermetic Gallery

in Milwaukee, WI

o

All submissions must be in 8 1/2 by 11 format, camera ready.

Contributors receive 1 copy of show catalog.

Send submissions and SASE to:

Bob Harrison & Nick Frank

PO Box 11166

Milwaukee, WI 53211

0

Deadline for submissions: May 15, 1995

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206. **Robert A Harrison**

Re> Re: Jonathan Brannen's messages

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Actually, I just spoke to Jonathon Williams several weeks ago concerning a Mina Loy Jargon Book. He is living in North Carolina.

Bob Harrison

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207. **RSILLIMA**

Lost Classics

Tue 14 Mar 1995

Rather than just list what I've been reading lately (which consists of relatively little beyond recent books in the mail, such as Spencer Selby's, Snow Crash by Neil Stephanson and Watten's Under Erasure [which I read and reread the way Libyans read Khadafi's Little Green Book], then massive numbers of Information Week, CIO, PC Week, Byte and the like for work), I've been mulling over, rereading a series of "Lost Classics" that I wish were still in print. I've gone so far as to think about trying to package a series for a publisher.

By and large, these are longpoems, mostly from the 1960s, that I think everybody should have and read because they're so wonderful:

A particular example of this genre would be Robert Kelly's Axon Dendron Tree (which, with Finding the Measure & 20 Songs will always be the key Kelly books for me because they arrived at just the right time to help me with my own development as a poet, so that I have that deep love for them that goes beyond articulation). Another is Ron Johnson's two Norton books, Book of the Green Man and Valley of the Many Colored Grasses. Another is Frank Stanford's battlefield where the moon said i love you (writing from the job, so may have botched that title some). That may still exist, tho would be hard to find, as would be the case I should think with Grenier's Sentences (a "Chinese box" of 500 4x6 cards, the sort of impossible project that extends Jonathon Brannen's insights sort of toward a limit), a collection that I think all 1,000 subscribers to the T-AMLIT list should read. Not to mention everybody here.

I think somebody could make the argument that the ideas in my own The Alphabet are a direct (if transformed) descendant of the conception of form implicit in Axon Dendron Tree and it still reads wonderfully today.

Anyhow, this after that's what seems powerful & moving and worth mentioning

Ron Silliman

██████████

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208. **RSILLIMA**

John Hoffman?

Tue 14 Mar 1995

I remember reading somewhere that at the very famous reading at the Six Club (where Howl debuted in 1955), McClure (I think) read not his own work but that of the recently deceased John Hoffman. Given how icon-ized every other participant of that even has become, I'm surprised that I've never read any of this poet's work. Does anyone know where one could find samples?

Ron Silliman

██████████

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209. **peter quartermain**

Re: Olson

Tue 14 Mar 1995

In message Tue, 14 Mar 1995 17:24:11 -0500,

Loss Glazier <██████████> wrote:

*I, for one, has not been reaching for my "delete" key where
conversations on Olson have been concerned. What may be said in public
I would look for eagerly.*

To which I add my own hearty agreement.

And take the chance to mention, for those who don't know it,

Ralph Maud's

Minutes of the Charles Olson Society

six or is it seven issues so far, all damn good stuff,

available for a nominal cost (say \$10 or so?)

from 1104 Maple Street

Vancouver BC

Canada V6J 3R6.

Well worth getting.

Peter

Peter Quartermain
128 East 23rd Avenue voice and fax [REDACTED]
Vancouver
B.C. e-mail: [REDACTED]
Canada V5V 1X2

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210. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Books (reply to Luoma & Silliman) {long!}

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Dear Ron & Bill, There's nothing (besides holding down a regular job) at which I'm more inept than explicating people's--especially friends'-- works, but you learn by trying, so here's a take on Spencer's *_Malleable Cast_*. I'm going to try to stay away from a "close reading" approach, which has more to do with my inability to articulate, specifically, what interests me about this work than whether or not such a "close reading" (or mis-reading) might prove valuable. Much of Spencer's non-visual poetry has (my take only) to do with what I'd call "depolarization"--working with opposites (ideas, images, etc.) in an effort to work through apparent dichotomies, but doing so not toward a resolution so much as maybe a (this is going to sound silly) "shimmering effect." If you like longpoems, Ron, check out Gerald Burns' *_Letters to Obscure Men_*; it ends with thirty-six 21-line sections, placed two on a page, the second on each page "restating" the first. It's Gerald's belief that the resulting "poem" on each page is not the two poems actually there, but that which resonates "between" them. It's an effect I've yet to actually experience there, though this, to some extent, does seem to describe what I "get" from much of Spencer's work. Spencer's impulses toward the visual (& toward/through apparent dichotomies) come, I think, from having been a movie fanatic at a fairly early age, especially of film noir. His interests resulted in at least one published book, *_Dark City_*, a study of the film noir, published by St. James Press (a reissue of an earlier edition, from McFarland & Company) in 1984. The photographs Spencer chose to include in *_Dark City_* (I'm assuming Spencer chose them) look very much like the raw material "finds" of some of his visual pieces--though he avoids using film stills in his visual poetry. My own take is that film noir as a rule seems to be, generally, a visually rich genre, lots of accentuated (even bizarre) camera angles, much dark/light contrast--the result, I think, of there having been at the time in Hollywood a lot of emigrated German cinematographers who'd done earlier work on German expressionist movies. (Spencer could tell you whether

or not that's accurate.) Many of the "found" images in Spencer's work remind me very much of expressionist paintings & films, & I don't think that's an accident. Spencer's work isn't expressionistic, though it does use perhaps some of its elements. I said I wasn't going to "close read." Well, okay, so I'm a big fucking liar. Turn to the page in *_Malleable Cast_* (no page numbers given) of the buckets on the stairwell, water flowing from the top bucket into the next on the next step down, overflowing & then into the next bucket down, overflowing there & down into the next. (Sort of looks like a Rube Goldberg detail, eh?) Now, read the words overlayed onto this image.

I think that this ambivalence i
found in art today. On the o
sary to suspect that art's involv
clean conscience to peo
selves up [illeg.] erything else. O
up and [illeg.] from the world
warm [illeg.] here they doze o
speration and [illeg.] that are sy
their lives. As though art flew
hard enough. But [illeg.] again
iew that's present with [illeg.]
nd possibility. We'd see artists
bing what a truly creative life co
nderstood as the making of an off
hing as life understood as perm

Of course, when you look at this, the buckets dissuade reading, at least initially, the text from left to right: what happened with me was that, after recognizing the buckets on stairwell & water flowing down via buckets, my eye caught certain words & phrases on the page: "art today"; "conscience"; "the world"; "they doze"; "enough"; "possibility"; "life understood." (What anyone picks up looking initially will obviously differ from person to person.) The buckets on stairwell create a waterfall, a human-created waterfall, something we might even recognize (given the verbal clues) as "art." The image--given the Rube Goldbergesque impracticability of moving water this way--might also strike one as funny. (It struck me so.) Spencer seems to be playing here with ideas about art ("Making of an off/ [t]hing as life understood as perm[anent]"), and the ideas & visual resonances I found I was picking up "reading" this piece seem to be if not mutually exclusive opposites, certainly nothing tidily pat. The *idea* of the buckets struck me as funny, but the image itself was actually, on second glance, quite lovely--a tension's created between that specific "idea" and (one of) the visual effects. We aren't "allowed" to read the whole text, it having been cut on both ends, and illegible in spots where the buckets've been placed

over it. This gives a very "fluid" effect to the words on the page, certain words or phrases bob & rise as though afloat--again something reinforced for me by the image of water flowing down the page. Spencer has--at least in this visual poem--managed to (for this viewer) put everything into motion, despite the initial visual stasis of a block of words overlayed over a fairly static black & white line-drawing. Well, it's late & I'm out of cigarettes. I don't know if any of the above "explains" anything, or helps--but it's something, I guess. I'd like to hear what anyone else who's seen this book might have to say about it, or what Spencer might have to say about my "reading" of one of its pages. This type of book isn't for everyone, and even I think some of the pieces in it are more successful than others, but I do want to say that I've been picking it up at least once a day since I got it a week or so ago, & continue to be inspired by it.

Yours,

Gary

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211. **H. T. KIRBY-SMITH**

Olson

Wed 15 Mar 1995

If Charles Olson really was a shy and gentle person, it is a shame that he is not alive to hire a lawyer, a public relations firm, and some radio time to rehabilitate his reputation.

Seriously, if there was a side of Olson that does not get into the books about Olson, then it had better be convincingly recorded before those who know that side have disappeared too.

To those not part of his flock he sounds pretty overbearing. It sounds as if Jonathon Williams (I now remember that's the right spelling, I think) is still alive--well, he struck me as an honest person and he knew Olson as well as anybody. Let J. W. speak!

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212. **Ron Silliman**

Reading Selby

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Gary,

That's a terrific reading! And I didn't know that we had more than one Dark City author on this list either.

But I wonder how much of the concealment/revelment dynamics (a sizeable portion of your reading) don't actually reiterate themselves on every page in the book. What about the cole miners (on the cover and inside a few pages beyond the cascading buckets)? Or the blindfolded women? How do you read those pages differently? The horse playing a flute?

There seems to be a deliberate irony set up throughout between these consciously retro images (in the same way that rubber stamp works all use iconography from the 1930s to early 50s) and the often philosophic texts that underlay them. So that in the man with a drill, in the most legible portion of the page, one reads:

to the lack of
more social than the
overactivated by social
Rather, it was a dream
a violent form --
Communication.
ferentiated
opia

Elucidate further, please!

Ron

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213. **Pierre Joris**

Re: Lost Classics

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Ron,

I couldn't agree with you more re RK's AXON DENDRON TREE (& most of the others on your lost classics list). A couple years back I thought I had convinced Pat & Marla Smith (NOTUS & OTHERWIND PRESS) to reprint AXON DENDRON TREE -- only to find out that RK had convinced them to do his new longish poem MONT BLANC, a lovely work, btw. There exists thus an electronic version of ADT, as Pat had set the poem -- & I have mentioned to Loss that this wld also be the kind of work eminently suited to the purposes of the Poetry Archive. I haven't had time to talk to RK (hello Robert) about it, but will, & have done so herewith as he is a reader of this list.

Except for Grenier's book, most all of your "lost classics" cld in fact be brought back into a electronic poetry archive, until some gutenbergian enthusiast is ready to reprint them. Or does that sound like some cyber-holding tank or some post-xtian limbo 'twixt pardiso of print & inferno of o.p.?

Pierre

=====

===== Pierre Joris | He who wants to
escape the world, translates it. Dept. of English | --Henri Michaux SUNY
Albany | Albany NY 12222 | "Herman has taken to writing poetry.
You tel&fax: [REDACTED] | need not tell anyone, for you know how email:
| such things get around." [REDACTED] | --Mrs. Melville in a letter to her mother.
=====

=====

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214. **peter quartermain**

Re: Olson

Wed 15 Mar 1995

In message Wed, 15 Mar 1995 08:47:31 EST,
"H. T. KIRBY-SMITH" <[REDACTED]> wrote:

*If Charles Olson really was a shy and gentle person, it is a shame
that he is not alive to hire a lawyer, a public relations firm, and
some radio time to rehabilitate his reputation.*

*Seriously, if there was a side of Olson that does not get into the
books about Olson, then it had better be convincingly recorded before
those who know that side have disappeared too.*

*To those not part of his flock he sounds pretty overbearing. It
sounds as if Jonathon Williams (I now remember that's the right
spelling, I think) is still alive--well, he struck me as an honest
person and he knew Olson as well as anybody. Let J. W. speak!*

Jonathan Williams is indeed alive and well, and has indeed
spoken on Olson on more than one occasion. The best is
his brief 1976 memoir / portrait "Am--O" reprinted in
his collection of essays _The Magpie's Bagpipe: Selected essays_
San Francisco: North Point, 1982, 6-12.

Peter Quartermain

Peter Quartermain
128 East 23rd Avenue voice and fax [REDACTED]
Vancouver
B.C. e-mail: [REDACTED]

Canada V5V 1X2

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215. **eric pape**

Re: Books (reply to Luoma & Silliman) {long!}

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Great reading Gary. This is exactly the sort of thing we should be doing more of, at least to my relatively unschooled mind. One of the things I deeply regret about being in Baton Rouge is the near impossibility of finding texts from any but the more big name small presses (Sun & Moon, etc.). Thus I'd like to ask to list in general if they know of a better way of ordering than to use the friendly neighborhood book store. What we need is some type of archive of presses, something like the poetry center's, but perhaps more comprehensive? Maybe even an electronic distribution center, like spd, but electronic? Something like you send by e-mail a list of books and they can get it back to you? Does something like that exist? I ask that because I'm very interested in Spencer's book, as well as others listed here, but am not looking forward to a several months wait while various distributors try to find each other, as has happened before to me in B.R. Anyway, again, thanks to Gary and Ron for the readings, Eric.

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216. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Olson

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Dear H.T. Kirby-Smith,

Actually, Jonathan Williams' first name is spelled just like Jonathan Brannen's: with two "a"s. He's still alive, and still sending out manuscripts (while temping at a nonprofit press here in MN a couple of months ago "we" received a collection of some of his "bawdy" work). He might well write about Olson, though you couldn't force him, of course.

You COULD, however, "force" (or coerce) him to talk to YOU about Olson. Some of my favorite things to read are "oral histories," of people, places, "things." (For instance, Studs Terkel's *_Work_*, which I LOVE.) Maybe you might consider going to Williams w/tape recorder, getting him to talk about Olson. Then, moving on to others who knew him--document an "oral history" of the guy. It's probably something you could get published fairly easily. (Though doing it would be difficult, & require a lot of traveling.) You'd want to talk to Cid

Corman probably, who I think's in Japan, not doing terribly well financially, I've heard.

Here in MN there's an agency that funds nothing but travel expenses for various "critical/research" writings. Maybe there's such an agency in your area? Maybe worth looking into...

Yours,

Gary

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217. **James Sherry**

Re: You can't make an omlet if you can't get your hands on the eggs

Wed 15 Mar 1995

I have been working to compile all the Segue catalogs together into one document and I think the project is nearly done. I am trying to get a copy of each book in the catalog into an archive which I am compiling and obviously that takes a bit longer. Meanwhile I will try to get an electronic copy or at least a paper copy to you and anyone who wants to see it. Please let me know if you do. James

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218. **Michael Boughn**

Re: Olson

Wed 15 Mar 1995

If Charles Olson really was a shy and gentle person, it is a shame that he is not alive to hire a lawyer, a public relations firm, and some radio time to rehabilitate his reputation.

Seriously, if there was a side of Olson that does not get into the books about Olson, then it had better be convincingly recorded before those who know that side have disappeared too.

To those not part of his flock he sounds pretty overbearing.

Dear TH Kirby-Smith:

Yeah, that's a problem the dead have, especially when the living set out to sharpen their personal and poetical axes. If you are actually interested in this issue, there's two places to start. One is with Olson's poetry which, regardless of what anybody says about the man, speaks for itself. The second place would be Ralph Maude's newsletters, which Peter Quartermain mentioned in a recent post. Maude has taken it upon himself to deal with the hatchet job Tom Clark performed on Olson, through minute and careful examination of the record, especially as it is to be recovered in the documents. Come to think of it, there is

a third place: Charles Boer's marvelous essay, *Charles Olson in Connecticut*. Your notion of "flocks" seems to reveal a certain prejudice on your part. If you're willing to move beyond that, you might be surprised what you find, not just about Olson, but about yourself.

Best,

Mike



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219. **Marisa A Januzzi**
"Lost classics," Jonathan Williams

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Greetings all--

Jonathan Williams's address (still, I think):

Box 110

Highlands, NC 28741

I didn't speak up earlier, but I am currently preparing a critical edition of Loy's poems. Its fate probably depends upon the demand (or lack of) for the forthcoming *SELECTED* by Roger Conover (from Farrar, Straus, Giroux); Conover doesn't want to "flood" the market, though I've got a zillion potential Loy projects on tap here. Would love to talk backchannel with anyone else interested in textual crit. or ML.

The recent discussion about the textuality of the physical book was fascinating-- has anyone seen *MY MOTHER'S BOOK*, by Joan Lyons? It's very moving constructed as a double-hinged folio-- a twin-spined hug built in paper, which suits the text just fine.

The discussions of close reading and textual aspects of book layout etc. dovetail nicely in my mind around the editing of Loy's work. I don't think it is "constraining" at all to consider "just" the text when so often editors misjudge the extent to which elements of textual presentation (down to use of ampersands, numbers of dashes, white space in medias line, and-- hardest of all to determine with Loy-- misspellings) are the "matter" of the work itself. Susan Howe's piece on Dickinson (in *SULFUR* and again in her book on American Lit) has been a big help. I think Loy was far more painterly and subversive than she "looks" in her last two poetry collections (Conover has come I think to agree)-- the *SELECTED* will reflect it.

Thanks for the fascinating ongoing conversation--

Marisa (currently reading Alcott's journals, Anne Porter's poems, Padgett's translations of Cendrars, and LAMB baaa)

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220. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Reading Selby

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Long, long, long, this. (Forgive me, scrollers!) Eric Pape (& others interested in this and other Generator books), the address is at the end of the post.

Dear Ron, Hey, many thanks for the kind invite to say more about *_Malleable Cast_*. As to the concealment/revelment dynamics, I think you're right, that's a lot of what seems to be going on here. Whether or not that's going on each page, I don't know. The coal miner would be a great one to talk generally about since, as you note, it's not only one of the images in the body of the book, it's also the cover, suggesting a "visual title," maybe. When I think of "mine" I think immediately of Coolidge's *_Mine: the one that enters the stories_*, a lovely metaphor-- though an odd way to put it, as you'd think he'd've used the one "WHO" enters the stories, not "THAT" (which seems to imply "inhuman"). "Mine" is a hinge word I hear frequently among poets who, like myself & Spencer, create a certain amount of our work using (directly or otherwise) found material. "Mine" as a verb (how one gets the material), and what it becomes, having done that (the "mined" becomes "mine"). I also think of this as a somewhat "hack" phrase: one "hacks" when mining, but it's also, as I say, a word that gets used a lot, with as much frequency among poets I know as "finding your voice" gets used in workshops. It's become a cliché, or is fast becoming one. Before I bring J.G. Ballard into this (in a moment), here's one of three epigraphs Spencer uses to preface *_Malleable Cast_*:

"Our Fire Stone should be prepared and matured, like our food and all other medicines, by the corporal fire which reigns in the little world. Where the solar fire of the great world leaves off, there our corporal fire begins a new generation."

--Basilus Valentinus

Spencer has his own reasons for using that epigraph, but what I take from it ("mine" from it) is that sense of a "minor" literature (or art) that seems to be implied by "the little world." Note the distinction above between the fire of the "little world" and the "solar fire of the great world." &, where the latter leaves off, is where (so I'm understanding) a "minor" literature picks up. (Also note the homonymous nature of "minor" and "miner.") In J.G. Ballard's *_Vermilion Sands_*, a collection of some of his earliest published short stories there's a

fabulous (in every sense) story, "The Singing Sculptures," about "sonic" sculpture. A gallery owner sells one to a rich art collector, a large statue that "sings" by virtue of the fact that there's a tape-player in it playing pre-recorded music. The collector seems to "fall in love" with the statue, the gallery owner seems to "fall in love" with the collector. (Seems to because my memory of the story is only so-so.) The gallery owner records his own voice singing, apparently love songs, to the collector. The collector ultimately moves, and takes everything with her, including (so the gallery owner thinks) the singing statue. It turns out, she'd actually hacked it to bits; the gallery owner stumbles onto fragments of it, embedded in the soil, actually *growing* now, and *literally* singing (in the gallery owner's voice, & not by virtue of tape recorder). I've always loved this story (my memory of it) as a kind of fluid metaphor for (a) the process of making art, & specifically art from "found" material, and (b) its seeming preferential attitude toward "minor" works of art. The collector couldn't bear being with the statue (the "major" artwork here) anymore, she was "so" "in love" with it, & so hacked it to bits & moved on. The singing sculpture, seductive as it was, was also (note, by virtue of the tape recorder) a sham. It's not until it's been hacked to pieces that it, genuinely, sings (if still in the voice of the gallery owner). (Note that the resulting singing "roots" were the result of a *collaboration*, which is what art created using found material is, even if the other collaborators aren't "present" during the final process.) Sentimental? Yes, maybe. Hackneyed? Certainly, & part of its (for me) charm. Ron, you point out the anachronistic nature of the visual material used, and the second (of 3) epigraphs seems to address that:

The beginning, the awakening, offers itself only at the
end as its inscription, by the writing of the
remembrance, in its working out.

--Jean-Francois Lyotard

Another possible reason for Spencer's interest in the often (though not always) "anachronistic" imagery has probably to do with what was available when he was growing up, when he was young & impressionable, the things (ideas that images reinforced) experienced then. I remember at a slide show-reading of Bernadette Mayer's *Memory* (I think it was), Barrett Watten asking of Bernadette: "Don't you feel that the cars, the clothing, the hairdos, the things you've captured on film here, "date" this piece?" Couldn't tell whether or not "date" was in the "bad" sense of this word. (Like, the way some people feel about Donald Barthelme's writing--"period" writing.) Well, Spencer's work, I think, uses so much of the iconography of the 40s & 50s because that's when he grew up (as Bernadette's piece was certainly a record of a specific time period), & the sort of "defining" characteristics, the negative ones at least, of that particular era are what he seems to be working against in these visual pieces.

I'm going out on a limb with that because only Spencer can tell you whether or not this, indeed, has anything to do with his impulses. But, "hacking" and "mining" (drilling, too) are, for me, much of what's going on here (mining memory, personal and cultural, as well as Salvation Army-type stores for books with these kinds of images). Much of this work does seem self-referential--to me, at least. As far as a "close" reading of any more of these images, maybe I'll do that with a couple & send them to you by direct e-mail, or snail-mail. I think it can be done, I'd love to do it, but felt--given the public nature of this medium--it might be more interesting to those reading (w/out copies to look at) to talk more generally about the book. (Like, maybe I think it's "not fair" to talk specifically about something here since I can't reproduce the actual piece, given its visual nature.) Again, I'd really like to hear what Spencer has to say about this book. Thanks again, Ron, for asking. I can't hope to make a convert of you (or anyone else), & that's not my intention; in fact, as perverse as this sounds, I really appreciated getting to write about this as it made me think about my own interest in this sort of work, in "found" work, in "minor" work, & so on. So, again, many thanks. Anyone who hasn't left this post out of total boredom might be wondering: "Well, heck; how & where do I *get* this book?"
Malleable Cast was published by John Byrum's

Generator Press
8139 Midland Drive
Mentor OH 44060
U.S.A.

It's \$10.00 (not sure if you need to include shipping). Byrum's published numerous books & magazines over the year--most (maybe all?) being visual poetry in one form or another. Write and ask for a catalogue or list of "in print"s.

I have to go eat something,
Yours,
Gary

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221. **Tony Green**

Re: Lost Classics

Wed 15 Mar 1995

One more on a different track from Ron Silliman's

----- [I'd likewise

include the Grenier Sentences from which at random

" says "

" muddy flavors tending off the horse couch button "

also important, ((reminding me that Ben

THE OTHER TRACK What ever happened to the collected O'Hara. It was out of print in hours or minutes, so it seemed. The Selected was all I ever got, in paper-back, with Larry Rivers drawing on cover. Has the collected ever been reprinted?

[the blue (faded) box of
SENTENCES which remains
like a fetish object in my office on campus
because my wife Judi had the sense
to buy it, 1983]

Thinks: I've never even sighted the Axon-Dendron Tree!

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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222. **Tony Green**
Re: Reading Selby
Wed 15 Mar 1995

Gary Sullivan's doubts about the interest of what he is doing.

Dear Gary,
yr close/intinmate reading of Selby is
fascinating to one who has not seen the book, imagining
the images and text only from what is said -- as
exciting as any 'ancient' ecphrasis for any renaissance
painter. The pressure on exact indication turns

the prose on I suppose. (I go searching for Ezra Pound's inistence on description, the tale of Prof Agassiz's fish) I am disappointed to think you won't continue with it on the Poetics List. Lucky Ron.

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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223. **George Bowering**

Re: bedside reading

Wed 15 Mar 1995

My guess is that responders re the question of bedside reading will cook the books. Not me, though. I'm rreading (it has been on my must-read-immediately shelf for years and years) Burroughs's _The Western Lands_. Verrrry relaxin'.

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224. **Blair Seagram**

Re: Goya's LA, a play by Leslie Scalapino

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Please take note of the following if you happen to be in NYC on March 24th.

Jandova CoMotion Inc.
and
Drogue
present a work in progress
on scenes from
Goya's LA

a play by
Leslie Scalapino

at
Context
28 Avenue A
(between 2nd & 3rd)

New York, NY 10009

on

Friday March 24th, 1995

at 8:30 pm

For reservations call [REDACTED]

Suggested donation \$7

or reply to [REDACTED]

Blair Seagram

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225. **Loss Glazier**

Re: Lost Classics via Silliman & Joris

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Pierre, Ron, and others -

them to do his new longish poem MONT BLANC, a lovely work, btw. There exists thus an electronic version of ADT, as Pat had set the poem -- & I have mentioned to Loss that this wld also be the kind of work eminently suited to the purposes of the Poetry Archive. I haven't had time to talk to RK (hello Robert) about it, but will, & have done so herewith as he is a reader of this list.

I would, of course, argue that this is precisely the role of an electronic poetry archive. For those people really intent on reading the Many instrumental works branded with the o.p. stamp, there's little recourse, especially if they are not in the academic circles that allow funding to travel to special collections, or unless they know someone with an Extraordinary collection ...

op prices are extremely prohibitive - and if one were to make an argument that electronic versions of texts don't help the author financially, I would leap in to say that op priced texts help even less, as the text moves from circulation to an object of fetishization.

Of course, I have seen a number of postings here and there that electronic copies actually boost sales of print works when both are available. People in places not sporting comprehensive bookstores like to browse too...

Further, the electronic "fascimile" of the work would offer the text but would by no means ever preclude its reissuance in print nor (if currently in print) eclipse a physical presence. I think the recent flurry of posts on physical parameters of texts would insist on this as well.

Except for Grenier's book, most all of your "lost classics" cld in fact be brought back into a electronic poetry archive, until some gutenbergian enthusiast is ready to reprint them. Or does that

| sound like some cyber-holding tank or some post-xtian limbo 'twixt
| pardiso of print & inferno of o.p.?

So, not meant to me argumentative here in any way. Pierre and I have spoken and do agree, methinks, about the place of electronic versions of some texts.

I mean, op only means one of two things in these cases - not commercially expedient - or - the publisher decided it was time to put food on the table again, rather than give it to the printers. (Unless they were also the printer, in which case they might have decided to cut back from forty hour weeks...)

As I say, not to argue anything here but to throw my (not entirely unbiased) vote in for the electronic editions idea. I say, there are many many on the list for whom I've found citations for books but could not find an in print copy. I would guess that in this case for most interested readers, the text would not get read.

As such, a kind of call to those who might be authors of these classics. Contact me or Ken Sherwood via the list or privately ...

My feeling is that we've got a tremendous resource in the Electronic Poetry Center author library and I turn this "second" to Pierre's motion into a suggestion that one very productive development of these valuable discussions of "classics" might be to have them equally at our fingertips.

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226. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: Lost Classics

Wed 15 Mar 1995

Tony--Somehow I managed to get a copy of the hardcover collected at a BORDERS bookstore (of all places) as late as 1991--people told me that it was impossible--it's out of print--but i somehow "got it"-- Anyway, i've been reading through it--there are many poems circa 53,54 that are lyrically quite modest and very intense that didn't make it into the SELECTED--these don't get talked about much. People seem to think he grew beyond them--but there's something here that often gets eclipsed by the more public "i do this" kind of of poem....Chris Stroffolino

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227. **Loss Glazier**

Re: Lost Classics via RS & PJ (Minor correction)

Wed 15 Mar 1995

though not a major point by any means

... that was meant to read _eighty_ hour weeks ...

- lpg

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228. **Colleen Lookingbill**

Re: My Reading Selby

Wed 15 Mar 1995

"Malleable Cast" can be read as a story, from first to last image. I took the Basilius Valentinus quote at the beginning to be an alchemical metaphor like "as above so below" or the transformative effect of spiritual fire creating and burnishing a soul (our philosopher's stone) into something more than the grossness of common reality, but at the same time "the ordinary of his commonplace."

Reading the book as a story has you starting out with the young boy and his mother going up the metaphorical ladder (she is pushing/helping him) and ending with the young boy holding his tank or whatever that is in his hands out to the world. In between you have the magical creative and alchemical processes formed by word and image that lead to the smiling lad's "patience of the test of the world. longer passions of there is no" All the images and text as they appear seem to tell the story of the "remembrance, in its working out." the Lyotard quote at the beginning of the book.

I agree with Gary the images are from the forties and fifties and operate on a subconscious as well as conscious level to evoke that time in this nation's world building that has us where we are today. The technology and the medical diagrams shown here are fascinating frightening and funny. A woman and young girl stand in profile blindfolded. I had to see this as the way woman were (still are?) when faced with survival in a culture that is antagonistic to the inner most value systems we possess. Words float up and then away as you try to read the poem and the image at the same time. This effect of this book feels very much like my own creative process where the words just seem to appear before me and then create an imagelife of their own on the page that is neither nature nor technology nor biography nor emotions but some other space wanting to get charted. Responding to this art/visual poetry takes place in the guts as well as brain - anything less will be pretty cold for this hot little black and white world.

Colleen Lookingbill

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229. **thomas c. marshall**
reading habits

Wed 15 Mar 1995

What the students are into here is clothes
reading where style becomes content
with itself by seeing how wrong everybody
else's is.

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230. **Blair Seagram**
Re: Olson, Visual Poetry, Top Ten

Thu 16 Mar 1995

My first question concerns Olson. Since I logged on here I have been catching bits and pieces about Olson, until tonight when I read lots of references to him. Has something happened recently that has provoked all this discussion? It's odd because a friend of mine recently pulled "Call Me Ishmael" from my bookshelf and got totally involved in quite a critical way. He totally rejected the book until the chapter on Shakespeare at which point he became enthusiastic.

I don't really have a second question, rather a comment. I like the discussion on visual poetry, because that is more or less where I am coming from. This bulletin board, the way it is now configured, for me at least, is not what I would call visual. In fact I think it discourages visual presentation. Nevertheless it is extremely seductive.

As far as the top ten go, Kenny , all I can say is music, radio, poetry.

What is good about being part of a group of people without a rigid hierarchy is the spontaneous. The fact that important works of art have been lost is very disturbing. However, an idea can be passed from one individual to another. I am enough of an egoist to want people to know who I am, but I also know that great works of art have been produced anonymously by groups of people. Not an easy position to take in an environment that stresses the individual, but one that might help us into the future.

bs

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231. **Ron Silliman**
Re: Books (reply to Luoma & Silliman) {long!}

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Eric,

Everybody should be on the catalog list for Small Press Distribution, 1814 San Pablo, Berkeley, CA 94720, leading distributor of poetry in the USA.

Phone [REDACTED]

All libraries should have a standing order for its books. (And someone should post this on the T-AMLIT list too.)

Ron

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232. **H. T. KIRBY-SMITH**

Gregory Corso

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Next I wonder if anyone knows whatever happened to Gegrory Corso, and also if anyone knows why his poetry was cut out of the second edition of the Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry. Seems to me he was rather indifferent to reputation, like some other people I've heard of. He seemed a kind of comic Whitman to me. I keep him going with xeroxes.

Oh it was good to hear about the Mina Loy revival. And I look forward to seeing Cendrars made available in English--"Blaise, est-ce que nous sommes tres loin de Monmartre?" (Song of the Trans-Siberian Railroad).

Would you believe that Mina Loy was one of the poets most admired by Yvor Winters, at least when he was a young man--when he and Williams were still on terms of mutual admiration?

Tom Kirby-Smith

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233. **James Sherry**

Re: You can't make an omlet if you can't get your hands on the eggs

Thu 16 Mar 1995

In response to several messages and again to Kenny Goldsmith, the Segue Catalog which was published by Segue from 1981(?) through 1994 was a curated list of what I and a few others thought was each year's best new publication and the most important of the past few years. Usually books stayed on the list only three years, although some books, by their centrality were kept on longer. I also kept Roof Books on as long as they were in print. This then represents the list of books that the poets chose, primarily east coast writers, although the major west coast writers were polled every year by mail. Some responded regularly and some didn't. Since I don't remember all the names of the people who contributed to the list I will not mention names for fear of

angering someone I forget. The list is pretty accurate in terms of how the material was collected. Over 100 publishers were asked for their list of books. People who are new to the poetry group would have been on the list had they been around as late as 1993 and actively going to readings. Someone like Kenny it has been pointed out might have received 5 or 6 copies. There were generally about 10,000 copies of the list circulated which made it the widest circulation publication in this poetry circle. Lists included were the Segue Foundation list, MLA selected lists, and library lists. When NEA defunded the list I asked people if anyone could help it to continue, but the \$10,000 short fall was too much for anyone to bear to accommodate my taste and the taste of a few poets who were willing to donate their curatorial time. So 1994 was the last list.

Again, I will send out the compiled list when it's completed.

James

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234. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Lost Classics

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Dear Tony Green & other O'Hara readers,

The *_Collected_* was actually just reprinted by University of California (I think) in paperback, maybe a couple of months ago. I've already seen it in a couple of bookstores. Selling for something between \$15 and \$18 (U.S.).

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235. **Bill Luoma**

Re: Reading Selby

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Tony,

Do you have an explication of ecphrasis? Were there words on Achilles' shield?

Bill Luoma

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236. **Alan Golding**

Re: Lost Classics

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

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

Tony (and everyone else):

The Collected O'Hara is in fact just now back in print, in paper from the University of California Press. Got mine in the mail just 2-3 days ago. As a consultant on the project, I suggested that they try to price the book to make it competitive with the Random House (I think) Selected, hoping that for a couple of bucks more teachers, for instance, would be willing to order the Collected over the Selected for classes. So please consider that possibility if you're in the business of teaching O'Hara. And all interested parties who are not will hopefully want to have the book anyway . . .

Alan Golding

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237. **eric pape**

Re: Books (reply to Luoma & Silliman) {long!}

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Thanks Ron. I do get most of my stuff spd, but I know now to get the catalog list. What I'd really be interested in is something like spd on line, maybe just because I've become so instilled with the pace of e-mail, regular posts seem terribly slow. Does anyone know of an electronic poetry archive that is comprehensive and quick? Thanks again, Eric.

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238. **Gary Sullivan**

Re: Reading Selby

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Dear Colleen, Tony Green & inbetween, Tony: okay, I won't hold out on you. Was very glad, Colleen, you posted about _Malleable Cast_--you're absolutely right that this's to be taken in thru the gut as well as the head. And what you say about the two blindfolded women in profile sounds absolutely right. (Note how the word "SHE" falls right there, on the taller woman's blindfold.) & Colleen, what you say about _Malleable Cast_ being read as a narrative sounds absolutely right, too. The book is, after all, squarish, one visual per page, sort of like a storyboard, or successive film stills. I wonder, though, about what's gained (vs. what's lost) reading the book from cover to cover, without considering other options. You're right; the two images opening & closing the book are closely related. But, note that the woman pushing the boy up the ladder (first image) is pushing him *out* of the book (to the left, against English-language reading, which goes from left to *right*). (& that's not something I thought about so much, but felt, in my gut.) Since Spencer's doing these things on transparencies, I'd imagine if he wanted to, he could easily have

reversed this image so the boy was being pushed *into* the book, not out of it. (*That's* something I thought about.) Also, consider the title: *_Malleable Cast_*. Cast as in "cast of characters" (so narrative's right on here) or in the sense of something being cast (a line, as in "fishing"--what both you & I are doing writing about the work, as well as how Spencer put it together, physically) or, finally, in the sense of a cast, like a mould. But, it's "malleable"--thus working against the idea of characters in the workshop sense (w/traits that *determine* character), and also against a linear reading--from cover to cover--of this book. Sure, this (these images, in this order) is how it's been cast, but the impulse (suggested by "malleable" in the title) seems to be suggesting that the reader might work against that. Myself, first I read this book from the center out, as the images on both ends seem "exits" of a sort. But, it can be read otherwise, too. (I always remember Spencer as being the person who introduced me to Chaos theory, which seems to work against linearity.) This is not to suggest that there isn't a narrative element working here: I think you're right, Colleen; there is. And also, again, your reading of the epigraphs seem dead on, having much more to do with what's here than what I'd (first) taken from it. So, thanks for your splendid reading. Spencer? How come you've been silent through all this? Did you construct this book as a narrative? As a linear narrative? How do you feel about our readings--encouraged? Discouraged? These aren't rhetorical questions, my friend ... this seems a great opportunity to get an author's response to readings ...

Yours,

Gary

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239. **Kit Robinson**

Books on My Table

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Reply to: Books on My Table

Here is some of what I have been, am, or will be reading -- lately, currently, presently:

Tom Raworth, *Frames* (Riva San Vitale: Giona Editions, 1994)
Chris Tysh, *In the Name* (Hamtramck: Past Tents Press, 1994)
Jessica Grim, *Locale* (Elmwood: Potes & Poets Press, 1995)
Kenneth Rexroth, *Bird in the Bush: Obvious Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1959)
Marguerite Duras, *Four Novels* (New York: Grove Press, 1965)
Helmut Heissenbuttel, *Texts*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Marion Boyers, 1977)

Etel Adnan, *The Spring Flowers Own & The Manifestations of the Voyage* (Sausalito: Post-Apollo Press, 1990)
Bruce Andrews, *Strictly Confidential* (Gran Canaria: Zasterle Press, 1994)
Wystan Curnow, *Cancer Daybook* (Auckland: Van Guard Xpress, 1989)
Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994)
John Yau, *Hawaiian Cowboys* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow, 1994)
The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes (New York: Knopf, 1994)

Regards,
Kit Robinson



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240. **Tony Green**
Re: Achilles' shield

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Bill Luoma (et al) " Were there words on Achilles' shield?"

The last word on Achilles's shield was Homer's, I believe.

Seriously, as a proposal, why not a shield with words on it for Achilles?
However, the series: words - rebus - image (or another series words-theatre-image?) allow transition from word-text to image to become comprehensible.
Perhaps. Anyone have any ideas on this?

But the Selby book sounds like it's mixed image and text, which makes the effort to ex-plain in it in order to convince Ron Silliman of it's value(s) stress the functioning of the image-in-the-text. Word-text would be simply reproducible/quatable on e-mail but the particular appearance of this book is "transmitted" (translated, betrayed) via word-text only. That's why I was fascinated by the resultant posts of Gary.

Best wishes,

Tony Green,

e-mail:

post: Dept of Art History,

University of Auckland,

Private Bag 92019,

Auckland, New Zealand

Fax: 64 9-

Telephone: 64 9 ext. 8981 or 7276

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241. **Tony Green**

Re: Lost Classics

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Chris S and Alan G,

Thanks for posts re- lost Frank O'Hara. I'm glad to know the collected is available again -- and that it's in use....

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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242. **Spencer Selby**

Re: Two Poems For Ron

Thu 16 Mar 1995

Two poems for my ambivalent friend Ron.

(One is for close reading, the other for misreading.)

THE SENTENCE for R. S.

I thought illusion belongs in a book

words to living pink of life for whom

the growth more native force is not

my chance to draw forth curious

feeling perpetual transit apparent

feeling necessary light above gray

sacrifice arm all promise nightly

that I would speak more softly

in a hush eternal loving to survive

the tongue the body race

in uniform newly washed

dead weight through a swamp
warning camouflage thought as jealous
limits of capital

back door horizon sensitive rub
cost of production inheritance flaw

to the living remembered
reason curious word into matter for
doing what keeps us alive

THE SENTENCE for R. S.

I thought reality belongs in a book
words to living pink of life for whom
the growth more native force is not
my chance to draw forth curious

feeling perpetual transit apparent
feeling necessary light above gray

sacrifice arm all promise nightly
that I would speak more softly

in a hush eternal loving to survive

the tongue the body race
in uniform newly washed

dead weight through a swamp
warning camouflage thought as jealous
limits of capital

back door horizon sensitive rub
cost of production inheritance flaw

to the living remembered
reason curious word into matter for
doing what keeps us alive

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243. **Patrick Phillips**

Bedside Books

Fri 17 Mar 1995

The only book by my bed for the last week and a half has been the new "Collected O'Hara." I've been sleeping very well after my 20-40 minute perusings.

Though the book's a treasure here's one I keep passing through - POLOVTSOI
(p 430)

white

blood

dead

when

ate

fear

yes

red

scare

pearl

die

gay

black

fit

saturdaynight

parse

fend

flame

contend

disperse

Can anyone tell me what Polovtsoi is? Polovoi (with various endings) in Russian is in one meaning an adjective - sexual. But I'm not sure of this at all, particularly with the -tsoi ending. I could be way off the track.

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244. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: close reading

Fri 17 Mar 1995

An open question--When people read (whether it's "close or not"--you decide what to call it), do you (plural) tend to mark up the margins alot? Do you sit there with a notebook? Do you find that you write more WHILE reading--(I i.e. do you read to write), or do you see these as discrete activities more often than not? If you do write in the margins alot does that have something to do with whether you like long-lined or short-lined poems? Does the kind of poem Spencer Selby just posted "turn you on?" By "kind of poem" I mean a certain

kind of balanced lyric formal diction and tone that is not in much contemporary poetry I'm aware of...a refusal of gaudy gimmicks...a poem that "looks like a lyric" in a certain old-fashioned sense allegedly of "gem-like" White Buildings Crane--or at least the momeory of it, a certain modesty that is also authority...Personally I tend not to separate reading and writing much...I am interested in a discursive mode of close reading that doesn't exist until I do it...I am in academia now and am trying not to let that get in the way...or am trying to find a way NOT to let it get in the way...The great taboos surround seemingly in force...One could say they're only in "the mind."---Chris Stroffolino

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245. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: close reading

Fri 17 Mar 1995

Addendum:--When I say I am in academia now and am trying not to let that get in the way, I am aware that this statement can also apply to editors. There are several editors of magazines, journals and books here "on line," I am curious what they feel their involvement with contemporary poetry manuscripts is like...Partially because that is not as much what i'm reading now as dead people (though not just "white guys"), I mean IS dead people--I'm curious about other people's "balancing" between not just between "dead" and "alive" writers... but also about what they feel this does to their sense of poetry or writing or whatever...(you could talk about MUSIC too, do rock lyrics effect your writing sometimes more strongly, assuming you're VERBAL suggestive, if not quite STRICTLY referring only to other texts...
Chris

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246. **Ron Silliman**

More Sixties Gold

Fri 17 Mar 1995

Thinking further of great books from the 1950s and '60s that definitely deserve to be preserved and put forward.

When the Sun Tries to Go On by Kenneth Koch. This 113 page poem is one of the founding documents of the New York School. It was published in a little magazine called Hasty Papers and then released as a book by Black Sparrow in 1969 with a cover and 5 collages by Larry Rivers in an edition of 1500. It's never been republished and Koch chose not to excerpt from the poem in his

Selected Poems in hopes of eventually having the whole again in print. It's the most spontaneous and surreal work of Koch's.

Poem of the Cid, translated by Paul Blackburn. The goofiest publication of a major poem during that entire decade and maybe ever this appeared as a "Study Master Publication" in 1966, a competitor with Cliff Notes. It's an infinitely better poem in English than the Merwin (as anything by Blackburn is, even tho I admit that I admire some of Merwin's work. This was the source for Dorn's Gunslinger epic. 151 pages sans Spanish in the original.

Others that come to mind include John Weiners' Hotel Wently Poems (the impact of that book, with the Robert LaVigne illustrations, gets lost in a larger gathering, as does Spicer's Language, for example; my copy of the Weiners originally belonged to Bill Bathurst during his heavy recreational pharmaceuticals period, bleary pen doodles everywhere; Keith Abbott tells me he's cleaned his act up and is now serving as a consultant to one of the post-communist countries in Eastern Europe), Joanne Kyger's The Tapestry and the Web, Phil Whalen's On Bear's Head (Norman Fischer is working on this as we speak), Kathleen Fraser's What I Want, Curtis Faville's Stanzas for an Evening Out, and possibly Tom Clark's Neil Young. There are some critical texts that also would warrant rescuing: David Ossman's The Sullen Art, the original Olson/Creeley Mayan Letters.

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247. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 15 Mar 1995 to 16 Mar 1995

Fri 17 Mar 1995

>Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

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

>

>Tony (and everyone else):

>

>The Collected O'Hara is in fact just now back in print, in paper from the

>University of California Press. Got mine in the mail just 2-3 days ago.

As a

>consultant on the project, I suggested that they try to price the book to make

>it competitive with the Random House (I think) Selected, hoping that for a

>couple of bucks more teachers, for instance, would be willing to order the

>Collected over the Selected for classes. So please consider that possibility

>if you're in the business of teaching O'Hara. And all interested parties who

>are not will hopefully want to have the book anyway . . .

>

>Alan Golding

>

Alan--

bravo and kudos (and huzzahs!). will do, absolutely.

I have a couple/few copies of the collected as first published, designed to be a big book that would look something like the Stevens Collected apparently. The cover on the Selected (the Rivers sketch w Frank's prick prominently displayed) was supposed to be the cover to the original hardbound and I THINK that there were a very few of those distributed (rather like a stamp w the flag upside down now....) before Random House chickened out (all this, baffled by several years [loss of] memory from David Shapiro); but the bowdlerized version has an absolutely beautiful photo of Frank on the cover.

Did "Berdie" get restored to the index (it was in the table of contents but not the index in the Collected, and NOT in the Selected--a really beautiful poem)? There are a number of other amazing poems not in the Selected, so this is Good News Indeed!

Tenney

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248. **Ron Silliman**

Re: Bedside Books

Fri 17 Mar 1995

Books I'm either reading or about to that I forgot because I was scribbling my email at work (avoiding the completion of a white paper on "What is PC Asset Management?"):

Culture on the Brink: Ideologies of Technology, edited by Gretchen Bender & Timothy Druckrey (Bay Press' DIA series), with pieces by Stanley Aronowitz, Paula Treichler (Cary Nelson's SO) on AIDS and Identity, Langdon Winner, Laurie Anderson, Avital Ronell, and Andrew Ross. Anderson is the only one I didn't actively solicit for work when I edited Socialist Review. These other folks are all terrific, but I will be very curious to see if they actually understand what they're talking about in this terrain. If I had a dime for every bad piece of writing on technology meets culture, I'd never work again.

New Left Review 209 (Jameson on Derrida & Marx, Stuart Hall on Caribbean identity, Geras on Rorty, some other excellent looking pieces [meaning I haven't read them yet]). Looks like the best issue of NLR in about 5 years.

Made to Seem, Rae Armantrout's new book from Sun & Moon. This is rereading really, since I see most of these poems in manuscript first (often in ten or twelve different versions with just one word or a line break altered). Seeing them in a book is always a curious experience for me since it means that they have now been "pinned down" in a way they seldom seem to be "in life." Here's my favorite this week:

MY PROBLEM

It is my responsibility
to squeeze
the present from the past
by demanding particulars.

When the dog is used
to represent the inner
man, I need to ask,
"What kind of dog is it?"

If a parasitic
metaphor grows all
throughout--good!
Why stop with a barnacle?

A honeysuckle,
thrown like an arm,
around a chain-link fence,
would be far more

articulated,
more precisely repetitive,
giving me the feeling
that I can go on like this

while the woman
at the next table says,
"You smell pretty,"

and sends her small daughter's
laugh, a sputtery orgasm,
into my ear--

though this may not have been
what you intended.

It may not be a problem
when I notice
the way the person shifts.

Rae's poems often have the hallucinated clarity of a dream state (maybe in this case, with the decidedly incestuous undertone of the mother initiating the daughter's "orgasm," one of the dwarf dreams out of Twin Peaks). Behind that lucidity the "narrative frame" is often either unclear or unimportant compared with the rhetoric or structure of the argument at the surface (a particularly Lacanian view of content I suppose). I can't tell if the Bromige allusion in the title is intended or not.

There's also a lengthy piece on Armantrout (the first that I'm aware of) by Jeffrey Peterson in the new *Sagetrieb*. I continue to be amazed that Rae hasn't been the "crossover" success of LangPo & G1 generally, but where some fall back on beauty, humor, or anger posed as satire, Rae never pulls punches in her work. The largest book to date is a selected published in France in French. Amazing!

Ron Silliman



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249. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

Books by my bed

Fri 17 Mar 1995

>

> Books by my bed:

>

> 1. Frederic Spotts "Bayreuth: A History of The Wagner Festival" (Yale University Press, 1994). I heard Spotts speak to Stefan Zucker, host of the now sadly defunkt "Opera Fanatic" show on WKCR, 89.9 NYC, for 4 hours giving the real dish on the Nazification of the Festival (eg: Hitler's sexual abuse of the young Wieland Wagner). This book gets even diriter & deeper and unlike most books I've read on the Festival, this is juicy stuff. Wonderful read.

>

>

> 2. "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna" by M (Vedanta Press, 1942) M was to Ramakrishna what Boswell was to Johnson. Need I say more? This is a permanent nightstand fixture.

>

> Next up: "The Tunnel" by William Gass. Anyone read it?

>

>

> Peace, Kenny G

>

> Shoutouts to Blair, James, Charles A., Chris C., Gary, and Kit--thanx for
> the responses

>

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250. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

Re: More Sixties Gold

Fri 17 Mar 1995

This takes things from the sixties into the seventies and even eighties, but people on this list should also know that bp Nichol's *The Martyrology* has been re-issued by Coach House Press, Toronto (always difficult to find in this country, but perhaps SPD has them (at times they've had Nichol's work & Coach House titles, but not consistently, the fault, I believe, not being theirs, rather Coach House & the difficulty of dealing with customs, etc.). These works are 9 volumes in, I believe, 6 books. They are most definitely worth the read, although Nichol's other collections have a variousness I am often drawn to even more. (Thanks again, Joel K. & Bill H., for taking me to Toronto recently to see the concrete poem in the concrete on bpNichol Lane).

As to reading, beside my bed are John Cage: *Composed in America*, ed. M. Perloff & C. Junkerman (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994), Robin Blaser's *The Holy Forest* (Coach House, 1993), *How to Make an Antique* (artist's book by Karen Wirth & Robt. Lawrence (pub. by the artists, 1989), Kevin Magee's *Tedium Drum* (lyric &, 1994). I'm carrying around with me Kit Robinson's *Balance Sheet* (Roof, 1994) and various books of poems by Emily Dickinson (I seem to do that periodically). I'm looking at Keith Smith's *Non-Adhesive Binding*, which gives fantastic ideas & instruction for real & possible book structures. And I'm reading Tom Peters's *The Pursuit of Wow*, which is very silly, but refreshes me on the need to be creative in managing & directing an organization and the people who work with me there. I'm also reading manuscripts by Anne Tardos and typesetting/designing manuscripts/books by Mary Margaret Sloan and Myung Mi Kim. A manuscript of sonnets by Tom Mandel is never far away, trying to figure its best way to become the astonishing book it needs to be.

all best,
charles alexander

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251. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: "Berdie" and "Berdie, Berdie"

Fri 17 Mar 1995

The first line of "Berdie" is in the index, yes. Another poem, "Song of Ending," starting with "Berdie, berdie" has a particularly Rilkean feel to it, ending with:

...they disappear with one

last cry, not echoing, and then
the emptiness is full of light.

Berdie, not to be sad and crazy,
all birds hide what the have lost.

compared to another ending:

...and distant calls of birds , while in the sky
the starry nights of another, sweeter country
blossomed above them and would never close.

from Rilke's "Tombs of the Hetaerae." In all likelihood this is just chance, or a habit of mine of forcing pieces of the puzzle together. It would be interesting to find out, if anyone knows, O'Hara's feelings toward Rilke and whether he'd ever been known to carry around a copy of "New Poems."

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252. **I.LIGHTMAN**

anew strain?

Fri 17 Mar 1995

"the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in the glass"

1.

Anew strain. A new strain with the look of the mainstream.

2.

Fragmentation. Is what most do, read a whole text that might challenge their values, but never be sobered by that, jump, hop, scotch.

3. Language. Making a fashion, shared agenda, purity, is exactly what those who write "communicative" poetry, with "images" and "feeling" do; and they feel we exclude them as we they do us - though they hold more money in the market.

4. Camp. Ashbery homage. As if one were Ashbery, imagining a political agenda for his work that John himself doesn't have; very simple politic "accept gays" and then lots of in-jokes, and exclusionary tactics for those not in the polari syntax. "Savour painting more", as well, perhaps.

4. Fragmentation. As indication that one had in fact read and loved the whole of Dante and Ovid, and one's own poem is a furthering synergy, overhearing the private and succinct conversation of Dante and Ovid knowing and loving each other utterly and planning a collaborative project.

3. Originary energy 1978-82. G1, not easy to take the pot calling the kettle over-boiled when both thin the paint for yet another go at a one-colour abstract canvas, G2. Re-feel a feeling? A fell, a high hill, re-fuel.

2.

Derrida's Cinders. Cannot go back (to 1968-78), the furthering synergy says something of his carriage makes good pumpkin broth.

1.

Fragmentation. One glimpses angel in one lost to routine.

"the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in the glass"

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253. **Ryan Knighton**

Re: bedside manners

Fri 17 Mar 1995

Currently I am re-reading/re-viewing the bp Nichol collection "An H in the Heart". Taken before beddy-byes, this book will allow you to have two to three dreams at once. Or so it seems.

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254. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: "Berdie" and "Berdie, Berdie"

Fri 17 Mar 1995

Dear patrick--interesting question--I always had this hunch that early Rilke, such as "Tombs" is more like O'Hara, whereas Duino Elegies is more like Ashbery. Perloff, I think, links Three Poems to Notebooks of...Brigg...and in her book on O'Hara claims some Rilke influence on him, but this is a question that could be looked into further...Chris

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255. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: Doug Messerli

Fri 17 Mar 1995

on recent visit here to albany, he told me he doesn't have email. Chrisz

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256. **Fred J. Wah**

Doug Messerli

Fri 17 Mar 1995

If anyone knows Doug Messerli's email address, could you post it to [REDACTED].

--

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257. **Spencer Selby**

Re: Reading Selby

Fri 17 Mar 1995

Thanks to Ron, Gary, Colleen, Bill and others for their interest and thoughts about *_Malleable Cast_*. I am flattered by this discussion, which I have hesitated to enter because I believe the work does best on its own and because I don't believe my ideas about it are more valid than others. If not for Gary, I would probably leave it at that. But he has persuaded me to say more, to overcome my hesitation and share a few of my thoughts about the book. Reactions to this work vary quite a bit. Some people think the writing is too fragmentary, interrupted or concealed, and that the images predominate. Others are able to derive a lot meaning from the words and phrases that appear and the way they play off or interact with the images. I prefer the latter approach, but that does not mean I think there's anything wrong with the former, or with just treating these pieces as visual. I believe the words have an effect whether it is consciously recognized or not. (Providing you can read English, which has not always been the case, as these pieces have been published in many foreign countries.) As Gary has pointed out, the title can be a very good place to start. Malleable cast metal and a malleable cast of characters are primary for me. The malleable cast of characters is what is presented in this work. Malleable cast metal evokes a process that is both industrial and that reaches back before modern industry. It evokes a process of fusion thru heat, which is both metaphorical and one of the foundations of modern society. The idea of fusion underpins the entire book and the many linkages that are made or attempted. Central among these are science, alchemy and the quotidian. Searching, building and striving are balanced against disease, blindness and the static normality of American life, which is graphically (and humorously) portrayed by these images from the 30's, 40's and 50's. Many of the images contain their own antithesis, as when this normality appears more bizarre than anything else. Strange juxtapositions abound which link past with present, and which link the social threads with the more immediate issues that center on the nature of this work as art that fuses image and word. This fusing is a kind of alchemy in which the characters and pieces are definitely malleable. The

malleable cast that has a historical foundation is thus integrally related to the malleability of the works themselves. The work is both private and public, mirrorlike and a kind of social biography. Word and image interrogate the relationship between word and world. And that again involves questions about the reader or viewer's relationship with the art or medium which makes the interrogation possible. All of these questions are open-ended, but they also have answers which are embedded in the work. The reader/viewer may pick up a shovel and acknowledge identification with the miner on the cover of the book. In doing that she should be able to tap into more of the ore and treasures that this world/work may offer. Spencer Selby P.S. I did not construct the work as a narrative, at least not at first. The sequence was determined for the book, which was a year after the pieces were completed. There may be some narrative idea behind the sequence. It seems to me a valid way of approaching the work, though not at all necessary.

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258. **George Bowering**

?

Sat 18 Mar 1995

I was just looking at a message from you in late January' and I was thinking that's 3 weeks ago, but really it is 2 months, isn't it? Well, anyway, I heard that you were so amusing when you came home last week from the pub that Joanne turned off the movie and watched you run into things.

Anyway, in that Jan. message, you were arguing with something you think I said about gold and black things; and I cannot remember what the hell you thought you were talking about, and maybe you had me mixed up with some villain in a dream. And just right now it is 9:21 on a Friday night and you and Reg will be your most charming and Willy will be sitting with his chin on his chest.

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259. **George Bowering**

Re: Achilles' shield

Sat 18 Mar 1995

Well, even if we could find out that there were words on Achilles's shield, I am pretty sure that we would find out that they were foreign words, so what would be the use? Or maybe we would find out that he used words AS shields, the way so many of us do, Language poets and shy fellows.

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260. **George Bowering**

Re: Books by my bed

Sat 18 Mar 1995

Kenneth Goldsmith mentuioned Gass's _The Tunnel_

Does this mean that that damned book is out as a book at last? Like a lot of people, I have been reading it for 15 or 20 years, the pieces available here and there, wondering whether it woiuld be publioshed in my lifetime. And now it wd appear that this monster is published to no fanfare? Is this possible?

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261. **Ron Silliman**

Re: Reading Selby

Sat 18 Mar 1995

So, Spencer, what is the PROCESS by which you construct one of these pages? What tools do you use? Physically, I mean. Describe the temporal sequence perhaps.

This has been a great discussion and I hope it's not over.

Ron

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262. **George Bowering**

Re: More Sixties Gold

Sat 18 Mar 1995

Silliman had some beauties on his list.

Is Michael Rumaker's _The Butterfly_ out of print again? My, that was a nice piece of prose at the time. It was so much UNlike what you were reading in your U.S. Lit course.

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263. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 16 Mar 1995 to 17 Mar 1995

Sat 18 Mar 1995

Patrick:

this is proolly like the blind trying to lead the one-eyed (pardon my ablism) but in my scrawled notes on "A Step Away from Them" (in the margins I mean) some made recently but this one made in David Shapiro's amazing seminar about twenty years ago now, I have, laeding out from the beautiful "where the sign /

blows smoke over my head, and higher / the waterfall pours lightly," this: "cf. Rilke, /Duino Elegies,/: "And higher, the news atars in the land of pain." The problem is that David, too, heard echoes everywhere, so who knows? Like Douglas (in this respect though not in many others) he's presumably not on email. As presumably not, too, is Kenneth, who just came up again via Ron Silliman. Apparently there's still time to send on birthday greetings for the 70th birthday celebration mentioned by Marisa Januzzi on this list a couple weeks ago--in c/o her, perhaps, being one possible route.

"ah well, it's a young tree's privilege to climb...."

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264. **Tenney Nathanson**

Re: POETICS Digest - 16 Mar 1995 to 17 Mar 1995

Sat 18 Mar 1995

oops!:

"the news atars in the land of pain"?

undoubtedly. nevertheless,

"the new stars in the land of pain"

is what Rilke (translated) wrote.

and that's all they wrote....

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265. **Patrick Phillips**

Re: the news atars in the land of pain

Sat 18 Mar 1995

I think you've written a interesting line there Tenney

Attar is the perfume/fragrance obtained from a flower and a Persian poet whose major work was "the conference of the birds."

Pat

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266. **Robert Drake**

call for reviewers

Sat 18 Mar 1995

> > > > > > > > CALL FOR REVIEWS < < < < < < < < <

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

folks--

TAPROOT REVIEWS provides access to a wide variety of writing and language-art publications, with short reviews of hundreds of titles in each issue. This is a periodically updated call for submissions. The following titles are among those available for review:

Bruce Andrews	Divestiture--E
Guy R. Beining	To Far to Hear
John Brandi	Shadow Play
Laynie Browne	One Constellation
Marten Clibbens	Sonet
Clark Coolidge	Registers (People In All)
Milo De Angelis	Finite Intuition
Sally Doyle	Under the Neath
Peter Ganick	Cafe Unreal
	No Soap Radio
Susan Gevirtz	Linen Minus
Catherine Harris	Sylvan Delta
Barbara Henning	The Passion of Signs
Emmanuel Hocquard	Theory of Tables
Lisa Houston	Liquid Amber
Laura (Riding) Jackson	Lives of Wives
Paul Keineg	Boudica
Kevin Killian	Santa
Cynthia Kimball	Omen for a Birthday
Tom Lafarge	The Crimson Bears
	A Hundred Doors (crimson bears pt. 2)
Denise Lawson	Where You Form the Letter L
Stacy Levine	My Horse & other stories
Ira Lightman	Psychoanalysis of Oedipus
Lori Lubeski	Stamina
Kimberly Lyons	Rhyme the Laker
Kevin Magee	Sea/Land
Tom Mandel	Letters of the Law
Friedericke Mayrocker	Heiligenanstalt
Sianne Ngai	My Novel
Jena Osman	Amblyopia
John Perlman	Exuvia
	The Natural History of Trees
Randall Potts	Recant: (A Revesion)
Kristin Prevallet	from Perturbation, My Sister

Elena Rivera	Wale
Kim Rosenfield	Two Poems
Joe Ross	Push
Leslie Scalapino	Defoe
Ron Silliman	Jones
J. Spahr et.al.	A Poetics of Criticism
Cole Swenson	Walk
Elizabeth Willis	Second Law

Magazines:

Avec	Vol.8, 1994
CB	#1, fall 1994
Exile	Vol.2 #4, fall 1994
House Organ	#8, fall 1994
The Impercipient	#6, November 1994
North American Idiophonics Annual	1994
Situation	#8

-& this is just a small sampling...

WE WOULD WELCOME short (100-200 word) reviews of any of the above titles, other publications, or related language-arts work: spoken word recordings, artist's books, intermedia, etc... We also run longer "feature" articles (1000-2000 wd.), focusing on particular authors, titles, publishers, or tendencies (Leave Books would be a prime candidate...) The emphasis remains on _access_ to publications. Query first. Samples of TapRoot Reviews Electronic Edition (TRee) can be found at the Electronic Poetry Center, and additional "writer's Guidelines" are available from this address.

luigi-bob drake
Burning Press/TRR



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267. **Marisa A Januzzi**
Koch's Birthday//THE TUNNEL
Sat 18 Mar 1995

Yes, it's true that anyone who wants to convey birthday messages to be read at KK's birthday celebration can e-mail them to me at < >. We're asking that the messages not take more than 3 minutes to read. If anyone plans to be in NYC, the time and place are: 7PM Thursday March 23, Maison Francaise, Columbia University, 116th and Broadway. For more specific info or directions, of course feel free to contact me. Ron Padgett will coordinate various readers

and readings and theatricals and confessions and home movies, and we will have cheese.

Gass gave a reading with Gaddis at the 92Street Y a few weeks ago; don't know if that counts as fanfare for his new book, but it was a good reading with Gaddis acting very grumpy about the whole thing. If anyone gets through the entire TUNNEL I would be very curious to hear about the cumulative effect.

--Marisa Januzzi (very heartened to know so many of you are interested in Mina Loy-- thanks to all for your messages)

PS: "beddy-byes"?!

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268. **maria damon**

what i'm reading

Sat 18 Mar 1995

i like to know what people are reading; it's entertaining and instructive. i'm reading or have recently read cb's a poetics; louis, a book abt. louis armstrong; a ms by lew ellingham about jack spicer's life and circle; ammiel alcalay's after jews and arabs; marilyn halter's between race and ethnicity (a book about cape verdean immigrants to southeastern new england) in connection w/ research on steven jonas; pat shipman's the evolution of racism, a popular-ish history-of-science account of the relationship between darwinism/physical anthropology and ideologies of race and racism (not especially recommended) in connection w/ a project on jewish social scientists, esp. anthropologists. charmed by the discussion of malleable cast so might add that to my list. have ordered some of hannah wiener.--maria damon

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269. **Carl Lynden Peters**

bed riddence

Sat 18 Mar 1995

Ryan,

i read, and have been reading for the past long while, Leonard Cohen's BOOK OF MERCY before going to sleep at night, because, you see, i never know if i'm going to wake up on th' other side. wtch is interesting. i dont really like Leonard Cohen

Carl

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270. **George Bowering**

Re: Poetry and the Page

Sat 18 Mar 1995

H.T. Kirby-Smith mentioned poetry in the 1500s that tried to accomodate appearance on the page to content. Now, I have a lot of trouble with that concept--the idea of poetry's containing something. I know that it is a term long in use, but ever since I first heard it I have wanted to have it explained to me. What is the "content" of a poem. How can a poem be a container? Isn't it words that dissapewar as sound into the air and down people's earholes? As written how will it contain. What would be an example of something contained in a poem-container? I am not fooling here.

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271. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: what i'm reading

Sun 19 Mar 1995

Maria--did CLINT BURNHAM write a book called "a poetics"--I'll be damned...cs.

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272. **Robert Drake**

Re: call for reviewers

Sun 19 Mar 1995

friends--

response to yesterday's call for reviewers has been quick & generous; many thanks to all. mindful of past discussions (and past issues of TRR), i notice that all offers so far have been from men. before i give the boys first pick, i'd like to enter a plea to women on the list to consider contributing... as mentioned, in addition to titles listed in the post, current poetry/lit/language/intermedia releases from any small independent presses would be welcome (tho best to check first, in order to avoid duplication). the aim of TRR is to help connect readers to a variety of new work--a variety of perspectives is essential in reaching that goal.

&, tho i'd not want to see exclusively gender-correlated reviewers, i'll point out that almost half of the authors on the initial list are women.

again, many thanks to the folks who've offered so far--i'm sure you'll understand this as no slight...

sincere

luigi
TRR/Burning Press



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273. **maria damon**
Re: what i'm reading
Sun 19 Mar 1995

who's clint burnham? i'm not so deeply immersed in this POETICS world that i'd know if i were slighting someone,etc.--maria

In message < > UB Poetics discussion group writes:

> Maria--did CLINT BURNHAM write a book called "a poetics"--I'll be
> damned...cs.

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274. **Ryan Knighton**
Re: maria damon's "what I am reading"
Sun 19 Mar 1995

maria--

in your reading list you mention lew ellingham's book on jack spicer. I am currently writing on spicer (or, at least on the cusp of writing) and am interested in hearing what you have to say about ellingham's book. I think I have read more anecdotes than insights on spicer.

Ryan Knighton ()

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275. **maria damon**
Re: maria damon's "what I am reading"
Sun 19 Mar 1995

In message < > UB Poetics discussion group writes:

> maria--

>

> in your reading list you mention lew ellingham's book on
> jack spicer. I am currently writing on spicer (or, at least
> on the cusp of writing) and am interested in hearing what

- > you have to say about ellingham's book. I think I have
- > read more anecdotes than insights on spicer.
- >
- > Ryan Knighton (████████)

ryan: there are 2 versions of ellingham's ms --one a rich and lively (though over-long and unfocused) set of oral histories centered on spicer but addressing the entire gay/beat/bohemian/poetic scene of north beach in the 50s and 60s in much particularity --lots of thumbnail portraits of folks like russell fitzgerald (whose beautiful journals are copiously quoted), bob kaufman (on whom fitzgerald had a mad crush), paul alexander, joanne kyger, etc. the other version is a biographical distillation of the longer ms.--i'm only on p 100 or so of that one. what this version gains in brevity and focus it loses in intensity; there are fewer readings of poems (spicer's and other's) and less in-depth discussion of poetics. what u say about the rich anecdotal lore on spicer outweighing the serious consideration of his poetics is interesting; i think this often happens with "cult figures"; one way of looking at this is to grant that analysis might be embedded in these anecdotes and could be teased out --that these anecdotes are part of the poetics relevant to whatever poet seems to end up being talked about this way. because the layering of legend around a "poet" and his "poems" becomes part of the context that determines the meaning and substance of his/her oeuvre, just as clifford geertz's "thick description" is part of the ethnography the anthropologist generates. what "cultural work" is accomplished by these anecdotes and the need to tell them? whaddya think?--maria

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276. **Tony Green**

Re: close reading

Sun 19 Mar 1995

Dear Chris Stroffolino,

Can you identify what in academia appears to prevent you from sharing your reading-writing practice without let or stay or looking over the shoulder for hindrance? Is there a conflict between poetry as a practice and academic demands?

Tony Green,

e-mail: ████████

post: Dept of Art History,
University of Auckland,
Private Bag 92019,
Auckland, New Zealand

Fax: 64 9-
Telephone: 64 9 ext. 8981 or 7276

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277. **Lisa Samuels**
poetry v the sharp mind
Sun 19 Mar 1995

dear Tony Green --

your question about poetry is addressed to Chris S., but i couldn't let it go. there is, anyway here where i am a dissertator & instructor, zero encouragement to do anything other than these 2 things. & i sense, often, that people who write poetry while they are pursuing academics are seen as double-dippers, can't quite make up their minds, poor things, & after all the creative act can have a kind of dulling, happifying effect on them, when they ought to know it's best to use all one's mental energy to think sharply & clearly, to reach objectivisms of the mind, to EXPLAIN without sievey effect certain small truths about certain pre-written arenas.

pardon the tone, perhaps. but i think i found your question remarkable, & i wonder if there is not this division in NZ? let me add: as academic expands it seems there are some people & places where this conflict is not so evident -- i felt this at the Louisville conference -- & that change makes me more content to be, as it were, institutionalized. & so i continue to write poetry, too.

Lisa Samuels

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278. **Tony Green**
Re: poetry v the sharp mind
Sun 19 Mar 1995

Dear Lisa, NZ has much the same noxious divisions as pretty well anywhere else in English speaking academia -- of the kind you write about. I'm interested in resistances, cross-overs, infiltration strategies. Hence my question on this list (to Chris and anyone else). Charles Bernstein's A Poetics is a point of resistance for me. Looking for professional philosophers to back up an idea I had about Descartes's narrative of doubt and certainty, I found, on Friday, Dalia Judovitz "Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes" C.U.P.1988 (writing that goes back to early 1980's) , proposing to cross frontiers, with: " ...the foundation of subjectivity as a philosophical construct is inseparable from its literary representation as an autobiographical, historical and narrative entity". Sounds promising (intro.p.3) Who made the division

(and when) between literary and philosophical? The questions get to beg for Foucaultian answers pretty fast.

Best wishes

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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279. **Gary Sullivan**

Groovy Books

Sun 19 Mar 1995

An extension of the "Sixties Gold/Classic O.P." discussion:

TEN GROOVY BOOKS

KEY: Groove Factor 1-3 = "Groovy"

Groove Factor 4-6 = "Very Groovy"

Groove Factor 7-9 = "Totally Groovy"

Groove Factor 10 = "Oh My Fucking God That Is Like
Totally *Beyond* Groovy"

Call me a fetishist, but what *I* like are "groovy" books. "What the hell does that mean?" "By what measure--'grooviness'?" "Does the work *in* the book have to be 'good' for a book to be considered groovy?" "Can a 'fine print' edition of something be 'groovy'?" Hey, thanks for asking. Well, first of all, *obviously* everyone's going to have different ideas as to what's "groovy." For me, "groovy's measure" is something I feel first in my gut then, later, spend hours on the phone with friends, "verifying." I'll describe the book, after which point I'll ask, "So, is this groovy, or what?" A "yes" answer from more than 1/2 of all queried friends "verifies" grooviness. Level of queried-friend enthusiasm determines Groove Factor. A "no" answer from more than 1/2 can either (a) lower Groove Factor, or (b) annul said book's "groovy" status. (Book becomes "just-a-book.") No, the work doesn't *necessarily* have to be any good. But, it helps. Lastly, "groovy," like "campy," is a value attributed more by audience member, than maker. Most "fine print" editions--lovely though they might be--are not "groovy." (It's a distinction that admittedly still needs work.) (Chris Stroffolino, as someone in academia who's also interested in contemporary rock

music, you might be the perfect person to--perhaps as a thesis?--hammer out the above admittedly "foggy notion"s of "grooviness" into a "sharp" essay.) So, in no particular order, here are 10 randomly chosen "groovy" books ...

Alfred Tennyson, Lover's Tale, Walton Press, no copyright date. This hardcover (library binding?) of Tennyson's poem includes three "found" photos by Bern Porter. I gave this book 1 Groove Unit for each photo. Three photos x 1 Groove Unit ea. = GROOVE FACTOR 3.

Chris Mason, Click Poems, Shabby Editions, 1982. "The Click Poems were inspired by and are dedicated to the click language of the Bushmen in South Africa, and the Ameslan sign language of the deaf community of the United States." A beautiful mini-chap w/extraordinary work (can't reproduce here; poems use "fermatas", illustrations of lips &etc., scribbled out text) found used in MPLS. GROOVE FACTOR: 5.

Hey, wait! The address says "c/o Cris Cheek"! And Cris is on this list! I've "talked to" Cris! GROOVE FACTOR: 7.

Jack Spicer, After Lorca, (picture of cone = press name?), 1974. A reprint (pirated?). Blue ink. The verso of the title page says: "This book has been typed on an IBM Selectric blah, blah, blah, by Robin Cones and printed by Marco Polio for the Government, with a cover from a photo by blah, blah, blah, in March, 1974." Anyone know who made this book? Delicious! GROOVE FACTOR: 10.

Patti Smith, Seventh Heaven, Telegraph Books, 1972. Patti's first book, I think. GREAT cover photo: looks like Patti hasn't bathed since 1966, struggling to keep eyes open. Dedication: "this book is dedicated to/ Mickey Spillane/ and/ Anita Pallenberg." How groovy? GROOVE FACTOR 8.

James Sherry, In Case, Sun & Moon Press, 1981. Great lurid pulp cover, text pages printed on *pulp stock paper*. Jonathan Brannen (a frequent Groove Consultant) mentioned that he'd seen a review of this book that actually *criticized* the book for having been printed on such "cheap" paper. (Critic obviously didn't "get" it.) GROOVE FACTOR (including Brannen's anecdote): 6.

Maxine Chernoff, A Vegetable Emergency, Beyond Baroque Foundation, 1977. This 8-1/2" x 11" printed on cheap stock was published in an edition of EIGHT THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED copies. *Tell* me that's not groovy. Bonus Groove Unit as I got it signed by Chernoff in '93, who explained the high press run: "Yeah, they, um, they printed an awful lot of these." GROOVE FACTOR: 6.

James Haining (editor), Salt Lick Vol. 2, Nos. 1-2, 1972. Every issue of Salt Lick is groovy, but this one particularly so. Includes Gerald Burns' Boccherini's Minuet as a make-it- yourself chapbook insert (!); also includes poems by Robert Slater, Robert Trammell's "George Washington Trammell," poems by Ann Darr, Stephen Leggett, Bruce Andrews' "Getting Ready To Be Frightened" ("go Gandhi go"), poems by James Haining, drawings by Wilton David, and essays & reviews by Burns, Michael Lally, Al Drake, Andrews, Victor Contoski, Darr, Ron Silliman, Daniel Castelaz, and Haining. Reading this, you get the sense that, in 1972, anything might've happened. Incredible list of Books & Mags received. GROOVE FACTOR: 10.

J H Prynne,

Kitchen Poems, Grossman/Cape Goliard, 1968. Top o' the line poetry, *beautiful* edition (great two-page "trig" drawing in red on title & facing pages). GROOVE FACTOR 9. (Docked one point from perfect score only because I found two copies in the same used bookstore.) (Groove "aura" loss.) Robert Gluck, _Marsha Poems_, Hoddypoll Press, 1973. Instead of stapling this 8-1/2" x 11", the publisher bound it with red string. Also, "Marsha"--the cartoon woman on the cover--has red flowers felt-tip penned onto her dress. GROOVE FACTOR: 5. Tom Weatherly, _Maumau American Cantos_, Corinth Books, 1970. The title? *Way* "seventies." Includes subtitles like: "roi rogers and the warlocks of space." You know what I'm thinkin'? I'm thinkin': GROOVE FACTOR 8. That's ten. Groovy. Yours, Gary

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280. **Chris Stroffolino**
Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Sun 19 Mar 1995

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

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281. **Kevin Killian**
To you

Sun 19 Mar 1995

Hi Gary. You did not mention that you, yourself, Gary Sullivan, have a "groove factor" of about 11 or 12.

And even those numbers are too pubescent to describe the full engorged groove factor you walk amidst, like an angel in a cloud.

Thanks--for being you.

Kevin Killian 1995

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282. **Ryan Knighton**

Re: maria damon's "what I am reading"

Sun 19 Mar 1995

maria--in response to your response re spicer and that "the layering of legend around a 'poet' and his 'poems' becomes part of the context that determines meaning".

Thanks for your thoughts on both versions of Ellingham's book. As for your ideas on anecdotes, it raises an interesting problem. It seems to me, in the reading I have done around Spicer, that anecdotes are the preferred critical point of departure because there isn't really an easily and accessible language to discuss his work with/within. I'm thinking of Blaser's essay at the end of the collected works as perhaps the closest example of writing which comes as close as it can to Spicer's writing against the poem as "container" (to quote another e-list topic). It seems to me that because much of his poetry occurs in disruption, in the space between form/referent, original/translation, world/poem (Lorca's lemons, for instance or the necessity of resonance in the serial poem), a stable, critical discourse is the wrong bone to pick with. Or, maybe not. Any thoughts?

Ryan Knighton

P. S. -- reading my message over I noticed "easily" should be "easy". Feel free to exchange them.

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283. **Rae Armantrout**

Re: Groovy Books

Sun 19 Mar 1995

I think someone should say that Carla Harryman's Memory Play (O Books) is amazing. I guess it will have to be me.

Rae Armantrout

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284. **Tony Green**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Sun 19 Mar 1995

Hi Chris, The question is not quite so easy: If your practice with texts is margin writing, how far does that notion of writing figure in what you do elsewhere in the setting of the academy? Is this a fair statement of a position that some people might hold: "Much of what I am interested in doing as a writer would fit better with some rather different academy than the one I'm actually in --- but I persist. This brings with it some conflict, but in the long term this produces pressure on the academy to change." (Wystan Curnow said something like this in a post a few months ago in a discussion of the academy. It can harbour difference, sometimes.) In the end, the academy cannot do without a renewal of productive activity.

The funny thing about the Descartes book by Judowitz is that so far I can't see it taking advantage of the possibilities of narrative or autobiographical or fictional strategies itself: it remains expository discourse of a familiar enough kind.

But Susan Howe's writing on Emily Dickinson, that's a model that not too many academic readers will happily endorse, and recommend to their students as models....?... (I hope I'm wrong on that).

So Foucault, and what ever else by way of theory, may show where the problem lies, but doesn't necessarily change anything in practice.

Tony Green,
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post: Dept of Art History,
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285. **Tony Green**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Sun 19 Mar 1995

P.S. I've misread you, Chris. Foucault is part of the problem? Oh, I was thinking of the Archaeology of Knowledge and the analysis of the how writing is controlled and authorised by institutional set-ups. So I was seeing the problems

of writing in the academy in terms of what is permitted and what is not by the institution.

I also think now of the evident difficulties that occurred when Charles Olson delivered his Beloit lectures (No theme sentences!) or the account of the last days of Olson by Charles Boer. Olsonian practice looks as remote from academic respectability as ever...raising the question, just how "serious" is he as a historian?....(How many writers on history or mythology cite his views as support?.....)

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286. **Chris Stroffolino**
Re: poetry v the sharp mind
Sun 19 Mar 1995

Dear Tony, Lisa, Gabrielle, etc.-- When Tony writes "If your practice with texts is margin writing..." I wonder IF my practice with texts IS margin writing, and I distrust what i will call my own tendency to introject and/or employ such academic/professional buzzwords...and I'd like to think that in academia the "use" of such terms does not automatically imply a too eager attitude towards "marketability"--etc. I don't think it's just true at my school, (though i may be overgeneralizing--especially in this age of Newt gingrich and Allan Bloom), that there is a lot of discourse that announces itself as "margin writing" because it is fashionable to do so...Whether this really is margin writing of course is a more interesting question because it allows one to see the OLD IN THE NEW and the NEW IN THE OLD...This does not mean that I do not wish my dissertation to "explode academic discourse" as much as MY EMILY DICKINSON does...But I do not want to be self-congratulatory about how "unique" and "new" and "progressive" either "I" or "my people" are--I guess I see such posturing as "getting in the way of the real issues" (as James Sherry read me months ago), and by "real issues" I just mean the possibility of COMMUNICATION of a more intimate sort occurring in institutional contexts....though I also think what is central here is that there is a need to be challenged intellectually as well...It is not a mere question of

"new" and "old" or "margin writing" but of a desire to learn as well as teach and to actually not be one of those who, burdened by professionalism or scarred by academia, can not be fueled or excited by their involvement with it. As if one can play a role one hates in hopes it will catch the ear without killing it...and only then FEEL COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO BE ITSELF (if it knows what it likes anymore---and no I'm not necessarily "privileging" "humanist essentialism" here)....For there is not only McPoetry but McAcademic Discourse it seems to me, and it wants to have the house surrounded, blaring Eddie Cochran's "get to the top I'm too tired to rock," of which this impatience of mine to "correct" myself in public is no doubt part (but smile). Chris

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287. **Chris Stroffolino**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Sun 19 Mar 1995

So, Gabrielle, what SURREALISM are you reading? I'm sure others would like to know too...I'm reading some too--Soupault is getting to me more now....Chris

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288. **Gabrielle Welford**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Sun 19 Mar 1995

I do like Lisa's comparison between the demand to think clearly and objectively (a la science perhaps? or a la someone's misconception of science?) and the fuzzy poor thing double dippers who write--what, for enjoyment? I have hardly written a poetic or fictional word since I came to begin this Fddd. Am finally doing so again because taking a class on surrealism where the prof actually believes in writing like to learn about. But sometimes I feel as though I'm having my bones pared down in an effort to get me to think in a way that don't come naturally.

Gabrielle

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289. **Gabrielle Welford**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Hi Chris. Reading Lautreaumont's Les Chants de Maldorol

On Sun, 19 Mar 1995, Chris Stroffolino wrote:

So, Gabrielle, what SURREALISM are you reading? I'm sure others would like to know too...I'm reading some too--Soupault is getting to me more now....Chris

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290. **Gabrielle Welford**
Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Phewph. My phone lines keep sending stuff off before I'm ready to send it. You may have noticed. Anyway, Maldoror and Le Poet Assassinee/ Apollinaire. Nadeau's History of Surrealism and The Road to the Absolute by I forget. Some Breton. We're attempting a collage novel and several breath poems and begin cut ups. So I'm being ordered to write again. Sigh of relief. I'm taking the class, which is an undergrad one, for no credit which makes it mostly just a joy.

Gabrielle

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291. **Gary Sullivan**
New Lally Reprint

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Since the publisher's not on line, I hope you all won't mind my plugging this new reprint of:

CATCH MY BREATH, Fiction/Poetry/Autobiography from 1960 -1974

by MICHAEL LALLY

Salt Lick Press; 86 pages; perfectbound; \$13.00

Order direct from Salt Lick Press (add \$2.00 shipping)

2107 NE Multnomah Street * Portland, OR 97232-2119 * U.S.A.

Originally published in 1978, the first edition of this selection of Lally's early writing went out of print in three months, and has remained o.p. until this 1995 reprint. Lally is the author of two dozen books, and edited the anthology *None of the Above* in 1976, which included work by Bruce Andrews, Alice Notley & Ron Silliman, among others. He may or may not have been the editor of O Press (my copy of Blaise Cendrars' *At the Heart of the World* ((GROOVE FACTOR: 7)), trans. by Annabel Levitt & published by O Press in 1978, lists its address as "c/o Michael Lally"). (Anyone who knows who **did** edit O Press -- not to be

confused with Leslie's O Books -- let me know.) (BTW: Rae, is that Harryman O Books book new? Can you tell us more about it?)

BLURB-TYPE MATTER: "Lally's 'autobiographical' work is not confessional -- no catharsis, either on his part or the reader's is called for. Less obvious is the structural function of Lally's continual insistence on anchoring himself (chronologically, geographically, politically, sexually): being up-front about his perspective and his prejudices. ... Lally, the narrator, does not transcribe 'raw material' but formally organizes a written story as if it were a spoken one -- with all the personal digressions and asides this implies. ... Lally aims for separation, judgment, the division of reader's intelligence from his own, the active direction of it to his work. It is what his 'anchoring' is all about: here I am, there you are, we are not the same ..." -- Jane DeLynn, from the Afterword.

EXCERPT (from "Empty Closets"):

No more annexing the gris-gris. Me they generally call
THE SHELF. They call him DRY the way your balls feel
when you been put away AGAIN. She forgives the future
when we take out each others eyes
to fill in the blanks. Blue gorges.

"Way uptown on a hundred, hanging from my action back, you're
supposed to watch tv."

Once a year the sharks would come to
singular execution of snow fields,
o, in piles behind the early fifties.
On top of that we move around,
gored silver following ourselves. Getting fucked.

Now, obviously, if you could get the *original* edition of this book, that would be *way* groovy. The reprint isn't what I'd call "groovy," but is a wonderful book nonetheless. Kevin, thank you so much for that thoroughly flattering groove assessment, but the research I've done puts me (a mere "groovetaster") way, way below a Lifetime Achievement Groovemaster like Lally. Did you see him last week on "NYPD Blue"? Most poets, you give them a bit part in some TV cop show, they fuck it up. (I think history has proven *that* much.) When Marta & I watched Lally's "NYPD Blue" performance, we had stacked up all of his books on the floor, "just in case" he started to get "embarrassing," in which case we'd've been forced to read one of his poems over the realer-than-life TV dialog. That never happened. He's not only a wonderful poet, but a stunning TV-cop-show-bit-part-actor, to boot. What am I saying? GROOVE FACTOR: 50. Yours, Gary

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292. **R.I.Caddel @ durham.ac.uk**

Walsh / Scully

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Forget the politicians' handshakes, PIG PRESS has just published two of the most exciting of the younger Irish poets:

CATHERINE WALSH : PITCH

"The writer might be a stone cast into life recording narrative ripples and disturbed reflections of a zoetrope memory... PITCH is worth reading, not least to watch thought select which part of itself to display in language." Tom Raworth

48pp / Five Pounds Ninetyfive / Twelve Dollars Ninety

MAURICE SCULLY : THE BASIC COLOURS

Writing with what one critic has called a "lightfooted rage", Scully chronicles the language shifts of wanderings in Dublin, Lesotho and Ennis. Peter Quartermain writes: "Who but the pained alert could be nightwatchman in these ruins of the future where we dwell?"

60pp / Six Pounds Ninetyfive / Fourteen Dollars Ninety

Also new:

ROY FISHER : IT FOLLOWS THAT

20pp / Two Pounds Ninety / Six Dollars

All Pig Press books are available in the USA from SPD, 1814 San Pablo Ave, Berkeley, CA 94702 - and you can get a sneak preview of these in the "British Poetry Supplement" of NEW AMERICAN WRITING 8/9, 1991.

x	x x Richard Caddel,	E-
mail: R.I.Caddel @ durham.ac.uk	x x Durham University Library,	Phone:
0 [REDACTED]	x x Stockton Rd. Durham DH1 3LY	Fax: 0 [REDACTED]
x x	x x	"Words! Pens are too light.
Take a chisel to write."	x x	- Basil Bunting
x x	x	

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293. **cris cheek**

bedside reading

Mon 20 Mar 1995

A slightly more English list of what's balanced (sometimes toppling) from an upturned and suprisingly robust cardboard box by the bed. I sometimes go to bed in the afternoon so this isn't always night-time reading or pre-sleep

induction. Also just because they're there doesn't mean they'll all get read soon. Some are started, some up for occasional visits and some hot. The piles change over about a six weekly cycle.

Iain Sinclair - Radon Daughters
Roger Griffin - The Nature of Fascism
Kathy Acker - My Mother: demonology, a novel
Jon Rose - Violin Music in the age of SHOPPING
Eric Mottram - Double Your Stake
Tom Leonard - Reports from the Present
Homi Bhabha - The Location of Culture
William Burroughs - The Letters of 1945 to 1959
Bernadette Mayer - Midwinter Day
Allen Fisher - Breadboard
Alan Bullock - Hitler and Stalin, parallel lives
Art & Design Magazine - 'Performance Art Into the 90s'
Macintosh Hypercard User's Guide

this list posting is obviously a trend disguising a stronger fascination with who's reading what. It seems to be an intriguing way of finding out what's just out and coming up? To echo Eric Pape's point about information - little comes this way. Almost only one bookshop stocks any recent U.S. editions and those by only a handful of 'names'. As a small publisher here I'm beginning to sort out swaps through this list. Seems like one useful way forwards. I increasingly value the inter-continental aspects of this list. Ancillary question would be, who apart from SPD might be worth approaching for distribution Stateside of recent English Poets? Any ideas / interest?

best cris

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294. **I.LIGHTMAN**
Re: New Lally Reprint
Mon 20 Mar 1995

I utterly concur with Rae Armantrout that Carla Harryman's Memory Play is very good writing; a lot like Lorca, with reservations. It was a limited edition, though, or so Carla told me when she sent me a copy. I'd love to chat it over, if others have read it. Or with you, Rae, if you've time; for example "memory" of what? Of genre, I think, and thus very interesting as combatting expectations of readers of language writing, taking on the reader...

Ira

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295. **Rae Armantrout**

Re: New Lally Reprint

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Dear Gary,

Carla's book, *Memory Play*, is recent but not brand-new. Copyright 1994. It's a real play which has been performed several times. It's from Leslie Scalapino's O books in Berkeley. I'm surprised you haven't heard of it. Sometimes it seems books just fall into oblivion. As someone with a book just out, I'm concerned about that. Aren't we all?

Rae Armantrout

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296. **Jim Pangborn**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Having hung around academe for many years without managing to buckle down to much "real" scholarship, I feel I have something to contribute to this thread.

(Any excuse not to work on the dissertation . . .)

Lisa Samuels well describes academic culture's supercilious attitude toward the artist-as-academic. Here at U-Buffalo things are supposed to be different: it was a great place to be a writer-professor 10 or 20 yrs ago. Nowadays, though, the tide turns toward a button-down hyperprofessionalism that increasingly regards poetry as perhaps an interesting object of analysis but not as a strong way of thinking in its own right. I don't see Creeley getting the respect he deserves, for example; it would be most interesting to hear from CB (no, not Clive Barnes) and Susan Howe on this topic.

Chris Stroffolino is right, too, to say that Foucauldianism (tho 'haps not Foucault himself, precisely) contributes as much as anything else does to the hostile atmosphere around here. Its undeniably powerful critique seems to delude some followers into regarding themselves as above reproach--as revolutionarily pure (oddly, since the theory would tend to indicate otherwise). I call 'em the "without sin" crowd (and then I duck and cover because they throw hard.)

But, though there are too many of those people about, they are not the main causes of the problem under discussion. I trace it to, not a misunderstanding, but a misapplication of scientific method. Science gets a great part of its explanatory power from its insistence upon tackling nature one well-formed question at a time. Poetry doesn't and shouldn't work this way. Art in general

(yes, there is such a thing) deals with knots of inseparable questions. Tease these all the way apart and you get much less than you start with. Academic disciplines could cope with this, but in the main they do not. That is why academic disciplines understand a lot about nature in terms of necessity, in terms of power--but they do not understand human freedom at all well.

(One small tragedy in this mess is that gradstudents' worries about conforming to theoretical fashion for the sake of marketability are probably misconceived. Here, for instance, faculty often laments the fact that we don't have enough young faculty in the supposedly hot new areas, and so gradstudes are deprived of accreditation in the more marketable perspectives. Trouble is, what's hot changes too fast for us to effectively anticipate it. "Ohmygod we have nobody in Queer Theory!" Well, guess how many noteworthy publications there have been "in" Queer Theory in the past few years: like Stein's Oakland, there's not much of a there there either.)

An adage from the sixties: the only way out is through. Let me suggest some texts that might be useful as ways to fight back--to critique the academic folkways that oppress us:

Charles Bernstein, "What's Art Got to Do With It . . ." , etc.

John Dewey, Art as Experience

Larry Hickman, John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology

Ronald deSouza, The Rationality of Emotion

Mark Johnson, The Body in the Mind (for the basic idea, not the interminable Kant-quibbling)

Peter Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason

Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern

Jacques Derrida, Specters of Marx

. . . many of whom, of copurse, contradict one another completely . . .

(Sorry these are all boys. I wish I had a good explanation for that. I'd add Donna Haraway to this list except I have some fundamental objections I'm still trying to work through. I doubt it's accidental that my favorite women writers are all poets!)

--Jim the Scrivener

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297. **Edward Foster**

Re: Groovy Books

Mon 20 Mar 1995

so good to read gary's groovey. am so tired of all the humble mumble that should stay in university classrooms. thanks, gary.

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298. **OZZIE J. PEREX**

Re: bedside reading

Mon 20 Mar 1995

the question is :

are there any bookstore's informally (if not officially) "on line" (whether here on this list or in general?)

a friend at Powell's in Portland Ore. told me that they spent a million dollars on the software to go "online" in order to do mail-order book sales.

perhaps we should tell Steve Dickison at SPD to pick up the phone as it were (perhaps he is here listening, even)

a million dollars.

then he said they spent 20,000 at one little bay area warehouse called serendipity and that they were buying up whole bookstores in north america only recently rejecting an offer to move into Prague...

so what, we little xroxers are supposed to submit that that ordering structure to make it "easier"

suddenly I wonder if that's the point

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299. **Kenneth Goldsmith**

"The Tunnell" by Wm. Gass

Mon 20 Mar 1995

George inquired about the availability of "The Tunnel". The beast has arrived from Knopf, weighing in at 652 pages. It's full of visuals, both typographical and color maps and "doodles." It lists @ 30 bucks and got a front page NY Times Book Review article a few weeks ago. I cracked it for the first time this weekend and it looks good--although it's weird to think that the opening pages were written thirty years ago...

If anyone else has checked this monster out, I'd be interested in yr initial reaction.

Peace,
Kenny G

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300. **Tony Green**
Re: poetry v the sharp mind
Mon 20 Mar 1995

Dear Jim,

RIFFLING THRU SLOTERDIJK BACKWARDS

"Sapere aude!remains the motto
of an enlightenment that, even in the twilight
of the most recent dangers, resists
intimidation by catastrophe. Only out of its courage
can a future still unfold that would be more than the expanded
reproduction of the worst of the past. Such courage
nourishes itself from the now faint currents of
recollection of a spontaneous ability of life to be-in-order,
an order not constructed by anybody....." Sloterdijk,
Critique,p.546

"Art is the real Gay Science: It stands, as the last guarantor of a sovereign
and realistic consciousness, between religion and science." Ibid. p.179

"Politics is not only the art of the
possible, as has been said, but
just as much the art of seduction. It is the chocolate side of
power that assumes first, that order must
prevail and, second, that
the world wants to be deceived." Ibid. p.147

Questions: Do "education" and "culture" go their present way because the
principle is in force, that only learning that leads to immediate cash benefits is
to be encouraged? Is that why "poetry" (or any of the arts asking for funding
by The State) are likely to get trashed at all levels?

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301. **maria damon**

Re: poetry v the sharp mind

Mon 20 Mar 1995

In message <> UB Poetics discussion group
writes:

> I trace it to, not a
> misunderstanding,
> but a misapplication of scientific method. Science gets a great part of its
> explanatory power from its insistence upon tackling nature one well-formed
> question at a time. Poetry doesn't and shouldn't work this way.

An interesting discussion all around, which i'll save and print out for some of my first-year grad students in culture shock. when u mentioned science i was reminded that, in the strong and large research institutions, which tend to be the prestigious schools where educational paradigms are hegemonically formed, the humanities are always subordinated to the sciences, which are the moneymakers. thus humanists feel under constant pressure to prove that we, too, do "research" etc -- a constant legitimization crisis. among the humanities, the creative and expressive arts are embarrassing evidence of multiple modes of inquiry and apprehension that threaten the hegemonic mode of the production of knowledge --so they have to be repudiated, or, at best, tolerated with a kind of arm's-length condescension by their more analytic discourse-cousins. this is, of course, a simplistic overview. i don't think foucauldianism has anything to do with this --if it weren't foucault's name that were being invoked in the name of some discursive orthodoxy, it wd be someone else's. i myself actually had a rather pleasant graduate experience, in a program that was initially set up to bridge that constructed gap --but then, i keep my "poetic" enterprises pretty private.--maria d

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302. **Charles Bernstein**

Letter from Alan Loney (preface)

Mon 20 Mar 1995

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

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

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

and

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

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

Charles Bernstein

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303. **Alan Loney c/o**

Letter to the Editor (longish): The Panic of Jane Stafford

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Alan Loney

The Panic of Jane Stafford

Re: "The panic of O", Jane Stafford, New Zealand Books, Vol 4 No 3, September 1994.

For the past 25 to 30 years some of "us", i.e. writers who have generally been considered to be working somewhere on the margins of New Zealand literature, have been on the receiving end of a number of, shall I say, negative adjectives attached to our work and the work of others that we respect, by "mainstream" authors and critics in book reviews. It is an impressive list, and maybe it would be best to start by exhibiting it, in all its glory, just so that we know clearly what is being discussed. Here are some of the more frequently applied: solipsistic, elitist, pretentious, obscure, empty, cognoscenti, private reference, no discernible thought, resistance to interpretation, provocative, smart-arse, clever, wilful, self-indulgent, contempt for the reader, ivory tower, writing for a coterie, intellectual, pseudo-intellectual, so-called postmodern, so-called "Language Poets", excluding the average reader, void of meaning, inaccessible, etc etc etc. Jane Stafford's review of Murray Edmond's *The*

Switch and Michele Leggott's *Dia*, both recently published by Auckland University Press, contains the first fifteen of these. They are now, after all these years, nothing more nor less than a set of clichéd insults, and their purpose is invariably to provide excuses for refusing to actually engage with the work being so characterised.

Jane Stafford's review of the Edmond and Leggott texts is argued, detailed, and attempts to get beyond the mere name-calling exercise that I have nevertheless stated that it includes. It is therefore to be welcomed as providing a genuine opportunity for reply in ways that the mere name-calling procedure does not. But these negative terms are so repeated and familiar in New Zealand poetry reviewing that it seems less a matter of *deja vu*, than of a kind of ventriloquism - where the dummy keeps on producing its lines long after the operator has vacated the premises.

Credentials and allegiances

Ms Stafford is at pains to establish a kind of credibility for herself, one that is based on credentials - "I teach a second year university course etc". Ordinarily, such candour is to be welcomed. But one can easily compile other paragraphs, one of which might begin: "Murray Edmond is a lecturer in Drama at the University of Auckland, is convenor of the post-graduate Diploma in Drama programme, and lectures in a stage 3 American poetry course. He is the author of 6 books of poetry (several of them out of print) and so on". Another such paragraph might start with: "Michele Leggott is a lecturer at the University of Auckland in New Zealand poetry, in American poetry, in Australasian Women's Literature, with a PhD from University of British Columbia at Vancouver. She has published 3 books of poetry (the first is out of print), and her major study "Reading Zukosky's 80 Flowers" was published by Johns Hopkins University Press on the recommendation of Hugh Kenner etc etc". It's not my purpose to pit credentials against each other here (that would at the least be silly), but to make the more important point that we all have credentials of one sort or another. In a field like "literature" such credentials do not automatically confer guarantees of appropriate information, approach, or judgement. We are all contestable when discussions about values are taking place.

Whatever else one thinks of the work of Michele Leggott, Murray Edmond, and, let's be clear, Alan Loney and any others with whom we are perceived to have some sort of allegiance, what one cannot say is that they all write in the same way or that the works of each are easily able to be confused with each other's - by any attentive reading. And yet the 'critical' reception of them by most 'mainstream' authors and reviewers is so familiarly uniform that, instead of getting genuine differential readings of these authors in reviews, we're getting

the homogeneous operation of an agenda, a false ideology which specifies these authors as a 'them' which can therefore, according to the normal functioning of 'us and them' patterns, be blithely treated by the same unexamined, unsupported and negative terms and gestures.

What that agenda is I don't much care. What I do care about is the pretence that genuine critical reading is taking place; the pretence that those critics have some sort of 'ownership' of the scope, purpose and condition of poetry in New Zealand; and the presumptive judgment that their reviled authors are not serious about their life's work as poets or writers; that they lack integrity and competence of almost any kind whatever; that they have no respect for the work and works of others who work outside their own writerly project (my respect for John Keats and for Mary Ursula Bethell for instance would not even be conceded as possible); and that they have no other apparent motive for writing but to demonstrate to a small group of people who are equally despicable that they are cleverer than anybody else. These assumptions, running throughout Ms Stafford's review, and through hundreds of reviews of poetry in this country in the last 25 to 30 years, are as cheap and unwarranted as anything she or anyone else directs at such writers as Murray Edmond and Michele Leggott.

A personal disposition or two

Ms Stafford's review begins in a mode of reasonableness and with a proper pedagogical concern for students of literature who are having to learn to engage with unfamiliar texts. It reads like the kind of introduction that might prepare one for the reviewer's own engagement with the work of the authors under discussion. Alas, it does not. What it leads to, almost inexplicably ('almost' as, one tends to expect this sort of response by now), is this: "Which is why I feel angry...". Anger? Why? What business has a professional academic to be 'angry' about texts to be discussed? Are they advocating the pleasures of child abuse? Are they suggesting people would feel better if they beat the hell out of someone rather than having all that pent up feeling floating around? Do they propose ethnic cleansing in their suburb? Wherefore anger? Ms Stafford establishes credentials, I would have thought, for being able to discuss these works. What she actually says is: "I'm trying to make a connection with it. I can't." So. The reviewer's credentials, i.e. her education, her qualifications, her personal predilections, her teachers, her colleagues, her peers, and her reading, have not at all prepared her for the works under review. One could very well be angry about that. Instead of acknowledging her situation however she has chosen to pour scorn on the poets, as if somehow they are to blame for it.

To take this point a bit further, there are other, telling, phrases that support my concern. Ms Stafford sees "a more sinister possibility"; "no discernible thought here"; "so old- fashioned"; "smart-arse elitism"; "got a nasty feeling"; "I'm damned if I'm going to"; "I have this nasty feeling"; "I find these two collections depressing" and so on. Why, exactly, is all this nastiness and bad feeling supposed to function as a proper basis for, or condition of, the elucidation of contemporary poetry for what Ms Stafford deigns to call "the less enlightened reader"? We are not told. It is assumed that the reviewer has these bad feelings in good faith. Ms Stafford has given no one any reason to buy such a proposition.

The ventriloquist's dummy

Does this sub-title merely trade one harshness for another? Perhaps. But it points to a view of things, an agenda, a false and unquestioning ideology. This ideology asserts itself by using a body of cliches, shibboleths even, in order to obscure the meanings of others, and to deny their actual differences. Before I elaborate on this specifically, I want to expose a few carelessnesses and contradictions in Ms Stafford's text.

Keats's poem is "Ode to a Nightingale", not "Ode to the Nightingale"; Sterne's book is "Tristram Shandy", not "Tristan Shandy"; and "Morgenstern" refers directly to the work of Christian Morgenstern, and his wordless piece "Fisches Nachtgesang" (1905) (and no, I did not have to ask the poet for the reference). It is, additionally, usual for assistance from others - "A kind and more literate friend" - to be identified in academic writings. And rather than ask how much less literate is implied by that "more", I would rather know who is doing the talking here? Or, to put it another way, who's the ventriloquist in this instance?

A not uncommon kind of contradiction that appears in negative reviews is exhibited in Ms Stafford's aside (to whom, exactly?) "a little Saussurian reference for the cognoscenti?". It's hard to take seriously the notion that such a statement is directed to "the less enlightened reader". If it is, how do they, outside of, say, an academic environment, understand "Saussurian"? This aside is also, I'm afraid, directed at a "cognoscenti", and a clear distinction is therefore implied, like it or not, between the author's 'cognoscenti' and the poet's 'cognoscenti' - ours and theirs, us and them. But if she is, say, talking to me (and, after all, I too am a 'reader'), then I would say that she is not at all up with the play, either with Saussure (who dealt with spoken, not written language), or with Heidegger (who said "It is in language that things first come into being and are" (Introduction to Metaphysics), or with Charles Olson's reliance on the work of Jane Ellen Harrison for his assertion that myth (the stories that cultures, oral and literate, tell themselves about themselves) comes

first from the mouth. I introduce these other writers here, not to show off my naturally immense erudition, but to signal that we all have such reading lists behind and operative within what we say. For all of us they are different of course, but we all have these alliances, allegiances and engagements to one degree or another. They are not the same kind of thing as 'credentials'. If our 'reading lists' are too different, and I am suggesting that this is likely to be the case as between Ms Stafford and the poets she reviews, then little wonder that the reviewer finds it hard to connect with the work.

However, it is the outright refusals that I find the most interesting aspect of Ms Stafford's review. First, the refusal to be (indeed the specific injunction not to be) literal - "Don't be literal". If the literal is the first thing to be denied of unfamiliar writing, then it's understandable that a reader might find a grasp of its metaphorical content hard to come by. If, as Ms Stafford maintains, "a metaphor should expand meaning" (tho I don't accept this formulation myself) then it's possible that the literal is one of the places from which metaphor can "expand". It is, in any case, a perfectly reasonable place to begin. That it should be precluded, requires more explanation than a list of other options, especially when, for instance, my own teaching experience suggests that it is wise counsel to keep the options open until they falter - in any given instance.

A further type of refusal is performed in the review when, in discussing Leggott, the reviewer writes that a particular passage "would be fine if I knew what the last two words meant". Those two words are "HYDROPHILE PURLING". It is not I think too churlish to propose the use of a dictionary in such a circumstance. 'Hydrophile' is derived from 'hydrophilic', a chemical term meaning 'having a strong affinity for water'. 'Purling' has, as one of its meanings (and the others are pertinent to the poem) 'flowing with a curling or rippling motion, as a shallow stream over stones'. According to Ms Stafford, she should now be in a position to regard the poet's line as "fine". But by refusing to even admit meanings that are accessible to her, she has paved the way for yet another insult to be attached to the work, yet another opportunity for the ventriloquist's dummy to steal the show.

Another line of refusal is the refusal to give the poet the benefit of the reviewer's own insight as exhibited in the review itself. It is this extraordinary strategy that clinches my claims about ventriloquism. Two examples will do. In considering Edmond's poems 43 and 44, Ms Stafford interrogates (properly) the text for meaning. Among her initial notes are language play, sexual content, parallels with other texts in the book, the presence in English of a large number of homographs - all good places to start in establishing a field of meanings for the poems. But just when this beginning is noted she cuts off the flow of elucidatory reading by saying "And it gets worse". Worse? How does a series of valid insights (tho preliminary ones, to be sure) add up automatically

to a bad thing? In considering Leggott, the reviewer states that Elizabeth Barrett Browning is "an obvious figure" in the poem *Dia*, yet notes that the reference to "the Portuguese/wind" etc "may be an allusion", and asks us to note her (Stafford's) "tentativeness" in making the suggestion. Well, what I've already noted is the strength of the phrase "an obvious figure".

The most blatant refusal however is the reviewer's refusal to even consider the poem "*Micromelismata*". 'Concrete' poetry is historically a particular moment, largely in Europe, but extending to Britain and the United States also, within a wider context of shaped poetry, going back to the work of George Herbert (died 1633) in England. Herbert himself knew of at least one predecessor for his work, an edition of *The Greek Anthology, Theocriti Idyllia*, printed by P. Brubacchius, Frankfurt, 1545. To insist that it is legitimate to reduce this tradition to a mere fashion of c.1972, to which no critic need return in order to speak of newer writing is, I am sorry to say, no more than an excuse for one's own ignorance, and an attempt to blame the poet for the critic's failure of nerve in the face of the material reality of the text. One is of course under no obligation to like or admire any given text, but one does, in public, have to deal with it in an open engagement.

What I am bothered about in these refusals is that just at that point when a genuine critical reading looks about to be achieved, Ms Stafford throws in the towel. Again, an opportunity to assist the "unenlightened reader" to deal with a strange looking text is waved away in favour of the agenda that requires that these poets must be belittled and insulted rather than read critically. And of course the problem with reading attentively, generously and critically is that there is the severe danger of having to change one's opinion as the result of reaching genuine findings.

The news about elitism

As a lecturer in English at a university, Ms Stafford is a member of a small band of elite, specialist readers of literature. As an academic, she can claim uncommon status as an expert, and as a professional worker in the field of literary criticism. The number of people who get paid a salary in New Zealand for teaching literature at tertiary level is, in relation to the population at large, very small. Now, books of poems in New Zealand are typically published in editions of between 500 and 1000 copies, and are very rarely (except in the case of anthologies used for teaching purposes) ever reprinted. There are some exceptions above and below these figures, but 500 to 1000 copies is the typical range. There are, at least, 1.5 million literate adults in New Zealand. A thousand copies (let's be kind to the argument) as a percentage of 1.5million, is 0.066% of the literate adult population. Anyone who thinks this constitutes the democratization of poetry in relation to the literate population at large has,

in my view, a lot of explaining to do. If that percentage was closer to 66% for so-called "mainstream" poets and 0.066% for the likes of Edmond and Leggott, I'd have to admit there was a point to be made along these lines. But, it isn't, and there isn't. What it means is that poetry is an elitist proposition per se, at any level at which anyone reads any of it. It also means that 'the general reader' or 'the general public' is not the target group for any publisher of poetry in New Zealand. Those of us who are involved with poetry in any way are all splashing about in the elitist pot together.

The subjectivity at the end of the world

The last comment made by Ms Stafford denies that 'subjectivity' is an interesting issue. What I have attempted to show here is that it is primarily the poets' 'subjectivity' that has been on trial throughout her review. The list of insults given in my first paragraph says it as well as anything I can end with. They are nearly all solely applicable to people, rather than to texts. If poetry needs anything at all from critics these days, it is close reading, clear and attentive critical analysis. One of the characteristics of, as they say, 'our time', is that there are many more and various backgrounds - cultural, geographic, intellectual, and personal and so on - than can be neatly fitted or reduced to some monolithic sense of "mainstream", to which we are all supposed to conform. This does not mean, in my view, that anything goes. What it does mean is that a greater degree of care, of openness, and of courtesy needs to be operating in the field of public letters, if we are not to simply sit back on 'us & them' perches and merely hurl insults at one another under the privilege of having access to print.

-- Alan Loney

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304. **Robert A Harrison**

Fwd> EZLN Communiqué Mar.12 (English)

Mon 20 Mar 1995

I thought some might be interested in seeing the following EZLN communiqué. If you want to see more on a regular basis (10-50 messages a day) send the following command to [REDACTED]

subscribe <your email address> chiapas

The guy who runs the list is Harry Cleaver.

bob harrison

~~~~~

This posting has been forwarded to you as a service of the Austin Comite de Solidaridad con Chiapas y Mexico.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, 20 Mar 1995 13:19:18 -0500 (EST)

From: [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Communique from the CCRI - English

Dear friends -

Normally I would try for a more graceful and natural English, but this time I was trying to keep the structure and rhythm of the original, as far as possible, as it reflects, in Spanish, the way Mayan people would express their thoughts in their own languages. If I knew any of the Mayan tongues I could have done a better job, but since I haven't seen any Maya linguists volunteering, I went ahead.

!Que vivan el corazon y la voz de nuestros hermanos indigenas!

- Que viva un man~ana de paz entre el EZLN y todos los hermanos.

Desde las montan~as del Sureste de Estados Unidos -- Bonnie.

\*\*\*\*\*

Zapatista National Liberation Army

Mexico, March 12 1995

To the people of Mexico:

To the peoples of the world:

Brothers:

With old pain and new death, our heart speaks to you so that your hearts listen. Our pain was in being, hurting it was. Becoming silent, our voice was passing away. Our voice had been of peace, but not of yesterday, not of old peace that was death. Of peace was our voice, of tomorrow's peace. The fire had stayed behind, kept in the days gone by, the fire that spoke for our race when all were deaf to death. Another way our tears asked for, still lost in the arroyos of the mountains. So spoke our dead. The oldest ones then counseled us to look where the sun walks, to ask other brothers of the race, of blood and hope, where our hurt pain should walk, our tired step. This we did, brothers. The silence arrived to put out the fire and there was no arrogance in the word of the true men and women for those who, in other lands and other races, shared the pain and wishes for a tomorrow.

We opened our heart, brothers. We learned to see and to listen to other, different brothers. We listened to their word and saw in their heart. And we saw in their step the same longing that put the fire in our hands, that broke up our

face until it was nothing but a gaze, that hid our name and erased our past: the struggle to command, obeying; to leave free, the free word and heart; to give and receive what is deserved. The struggle for democracy, freedom and justice. No more, never less.

The word of these brothers, your word, asked us to try another path, to leave pending and waiting the fire that armed the breast. To talk, and that through the words, would come the destination. It was they, you, the others. Like us, the always forgotten. The always humiliated, like us. The brothers. This we did. Our voice spoke with the powerful lord. Obeying, we sent our word to the great house of money. We spoke and we listened. We were following that path when the treason, again, put arms above words. Our voice was silenced all at once by the noise of the cars of war. Terror was unleashed again in the Mexican lands. He who from arrogance and power looks at us with contempt, denied our name and gave death as a response to our thought.

It wasn't enough for him to deny us a face and life, he wanted to humble our step of dignity, trample our just demands, take truth from our song, sink our flag in oblivion. With the complicity of the big monies and the foreign vocation, he wanted to impose humiliating conditions on us, just to speak. Turning backward the wheel of history, he wanted to force us, by the power of his bayonets, to deny our history. Our women suffered the harassment and the humiliation of the machines of war. Our children grew with bitterness and impotence between their hands. Some, the ones who didn't die. In the men hate sharpened the breast. The greatest grandparents looked again to the earth and asked counsel of the first dead. They spoke. The dead of forever. We. They said this: "Our hand did not rise armed to listen, kneeling, to insults and humiliations. Our step did not rise so that he who is double in his face and in his word could humiliate us, filling hope with lies.

"For justice our hand was armed and our step raised. And justice is only a false promise that the powerful dresses himself with.

"For freedom our hand was armed and our step raised. And freedom is sold for a fistful of coins to the foreign skin.

"For democracy our hand was armed and our step raised. And democracy is still absent by the work of he who cynicism, crime and lies carried into government.

"Everything, brothers, but dignity trampled again.

"Everything, brothers, but lies again on our table.

"Everything, brothers, but to forget once again tomorrow.

Thus they spoke. This our dead said. The war came. Then again we saw the brother come in other clothing. He came to kill. To die. Our hand did not want to again confront he who was sent to kill and to die among the same. For that reason, our past ones went to the mountains; to the caves of those before, we went. Death cornered us and pursued lives that always passed away obscurely, shades of death and of the shadow of a forgetful country. Death came to wield again its knife-edge of oblivion. To kill memory it came. Now our hand filled again with fire to avenge the pain of our own, animals again eating earth, dying persecuted and forgotten.

Now the drums called to war again. Now the bat men and women prepared again their flight of mortal death. Now the night of pain came again to cover the vengeance of the true men and women.

But there came, from where the sun walks, another voice that was not of death. It came great, with the wind it came. Our hurting heart waited and heard what that voice spoke. That the war not go on, it said. That death wait. That the heart of the true men and women not be, yet, a mirror of pain. This we did. The bitterness was put away in the caves and our pain waited for that voice to shout. The voice spoke strongly. How could we not hear it! Many steps was that voice. Great, the song of its drums. Only the arrogant closed his heart. Without fire, with a name and face, that voice raised again the banner of human dignity. For that voice, we were not animals. Men and women again, we were. From other lands came walking that voice. From far away. From the heart of other lands, from other mountains, from other hopes, sisters to ours. It became strong and great. It is a voice. Relief came to our pain, and the waiting harvested hope. A seed, was that voice, in the collective heart that walks in our step.

Brothers: A name, that voice gives us. No more are we the unmentionables.

A name have we, the forgotten. Now our flag can cover, not hiding itself, our dead and our history. We have now a place in the heart of our brothers, - you - and a small corner in the history that really counts: that of the struggle. Having now a collective name, we discovered that death shrinks, and ends up small on us. The worst death, that of oblivion, flees so that the memory of our dead will never be buried together with their bones. We have now a collective name and our pain has shelter. Now we are larger than death.

We have also the hope that just as we received a name, these brothers, - you - will give us tomorrow a face; finish by putting out the fire that lives in our hands; and, instead of the past, give us a future.

They smile, these lives of tomorrow and dead of forever. They dream, the bones of the men of wood in the mountains. They dance, the men and women of corn.

Joyful is our heart, although the body hurts. A light lights up these shadows that always dance with death, the true men and women, those of forever.

We are named.

Now we will not die.

Come, brothers, we cannot go. Great is the strength of you all if you make yourselves one. Come, there will be no fire to receive your step, nor will our heart be closed to your word. Come.

A name we have. Now we will not die. Let us dance.

Now we shall not die. Named are we.

Health, brothers! Death to Death! Long live the EZLN!

Democracy!

Freedom!

Justice!

| *From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.*

Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee - General Command of the EZLN.

----- RFC822 Header Follows -----

15:56:02 -0500

with SMTP id AA15428

(InterLock SMTP Gateway 3.0 for <[REDACTED]>);

Mon, 20 Mar 1995 15:56:44 -0600

id AA20424; Mon, 20 Mar 95 15:56:37 CST

Date: Mon, 20 Mar 95 15:56:37 CST

From: [REDACTED] (Harry M. Cleaver)

To: "Robert A Harrison" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: EZLN Communique Mar.12 (English)

----- Nested Letter Follows ----- This posting has been forwarded to you as a service of the Austin Comite de Solidaridad con Chiapas y Mexico.

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From: [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Communique from the CCRI - English

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\*\*\*\*\*

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To: "Robert A Harrison" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: EZLN Communique Mar.12 (English)

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305. **Spencer Selby**

***Re: Reading Selby***

*Mon 20 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Ron,

Yr question here has held me up for the past several days. If I am averse to framing or self-interpreting my work, I am even more averse to going into detail about my process. To put it bluntly, I don't believe that this would be helpful to people as reader/viewers of my work.

I will try to elaborate a little on that if you or others want me to.

Spencer

On Fri, 17 Mar 1995, Ron Silliman wrote:

*So, Spencer, what is the PROCESS by which you construct one of these pages? What tools do you use? Physically, I mean. Describe the temporal sequence perhaps.*

*This has been a great discussion and I hope it's not over.*

Ron

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306. **Loss Glazier**  
**"Radiant Textuality" (Announcement)**

Mon 20 Mar 1995

FYI ...

\*\*\*\*\* Announcement \*\*\*\*\*

West Virginia University  
Summer Seminar in Literary and Cultural Studies

presents

RADIANT TEXTUALITY:  
HUMANE STUDIES IN VIRTUAL SPACES

Seminar Leader:

Jerome J. McGann  
Commonwealth Professor of English  
University of Virginia

June 8-11, 1995  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, WV

For seminar rates and more information, contact:

Dr. David C. Stewart  
Department of English  
West Virginia University  
PO Box 6296  
Morgantown, WV 26505-6296



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307. **Gary Sullivan**  
**11 distributors for Cris Cheek & others**

Mon 20 Mar 1995

Dear Cris: Yes, I know of at least 11 other small press & "small press friendly" distributors in the States besides SPD. Some of these places only

distribute magazines, but most, I think, do distribute small press books, even chapbooks:

Anton Mikofsky (magazines, I think)

57 West 84th Street, #1C

New York, NY 10024

Bernhard DeBoer, Inc. (again, mostly magazines)

113 East Centre

Nutley, NJ 07110

Bookpeople

(I don't have address info. Anyone? They're in the Bay Area, I think)

Faxon (mags, maybe chaps, too)

15 Southwest Park

Westwood, MA 02090

Fine Print (books, mags, chaps)

6448 Highway 290 E

Austin, TX 78723

Flatland (books, chapbooks, audiotapes, esp. anything even vaguely "political")

P.O. Box 2420

Fort Bragg, CA 95437-2420

██████████

Inland Book Company (some small press books, not sure about chaps)

P.O. Box 120261

East Haven, CT 06512

Last Gasp (specializes in small press & chaps, somewhere in the Bay Area, maybe Oakland? Anyone with info?)

The Segue Foundation (you know about this one)

300 Bowery

New York, NY 10012

Ubiquity Distributors, Inc. (mags, maybe books?)

607 DeGraw Street

Brooklyn, NY 11217

Word Products (mags, maybe chaps)

P.O. Box 8766

Portland, OR 97207-8766

I haven't dealt with most of these places, so can't tell you much more about them than the above. Maybe some of the other publishers on this list might give you the low-down ...

Yours,

Gary

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### 308. **George Bowering**

#### ***Re: Groovy Books***

*Mon 20 Mar 1995*

---

Here is my nomination for utter you got to kiss the middle of your own back groovesville:

Well, it is called \_2 Poems by H.D.\_

beautiful colourful sewn little tyhing by the amazing and historical Wesley Tanner in an edition of 226 (200 + 26) in 1970. (1971). Remember the imprimateur ARIF? yes. Not a pirate trove as some H.D. things were at the time. Even the peper of this item feels like thick ice cream made with real cream on the tongue. Andrew Hoyem handset the beaut. Oh, Lord, and the poems are Blakean, as they say, from the 20s. Phew.

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### 309. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

#### ***Re: Groovy Books***

*Mon 20 Mar 1995*

---

On Mon, 20 Mar 1995, Edward Foster wrote:

> so good to read gary's groovey. am so tired of all the humble mumble that should

> stay in university classrooms. thanks, gary.

>

Ed, it's not the "humble mumble" that wears on me, rather all the "unhumble mumble." But Gary is hoovey groovey, and probably does the hokey cokey pokey, perhaps even with his whole self.

I'm not certain who the editor of O Press was in 1978. But it's interesting that the translator of the book in question, Gary, was Annabel Levitt. Annabel had a press, I believe, in the late 70's/early 80's. I think it was at the 1982 NY Small Press Book Fair that I met her. I never knew her well, but I remember she was making some exceptional books. I don't remember if her press was O Press, but I'll try to find out.

all best,  
charles alexander

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### 310. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

#### **Re: Groovy Books**

Mon 20 Mar 1995

I don't know how Wesley Tanner would think of being characterized as AMAZING and HISTORICAL. He is alive & well, now in the midwest, but I'm not certain if he's continuing to publish literature via ARIF imprint.

charles alexander

On Mon, 20 Mar 1995, George Bowering wrote:

*Here is my nomination for utter you got to kiss the middle of your own back groovesville:*

*Well, it is called \_2 Poems by H.D.\_*

*beautiful colourful sewn little tyhing by the amazing and historical Wesley Tanner in an edition of 226 (200 + 26) in 1970. (1971). Remember the imprimateur ARIF? yes. Not a pirate trove as some H.D. things were at the time. Even the peper of this item feels like thick ice cream made with real cream on the tongue. Andrew Hoyem handset the beaut. Oh, Lord, and the poems are Blakean, as they say, from the 20s. Phew.*

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### 311. **eric pape**

#### **Re: poetry v the sharp mind**

Tue 21 Mar 1995

This is a discussion that will not go away (various manifestations of which has show up at least three times since I joined the list in Dec.) Some notes towards thoughts about the ethics of poets remaining in the academy: First: both sides depend on a rather simple opposition of real work, vs. work that is unimportant. In that the classroom emphasizes critical work and talks of "creative" work as something resembling a hobby, or play. Depends on the assumption that real work is productive of wages, your critical work pays your bills, thus its your real work. The workshop (an academic sub-genre we can no longer forget) emphasizes "creative" work as real work in a sort of romantic cult of the genius manner: critical work pays the bills, but creative work releases the inner genius of the poet and allows for real change and is thus real

work. At this point, Tony's point about the somewhat specious separation of creative and critical needs to be made. Certainly this separation was/is historical? Maybe you've encountered this as well: in the workshop (whether officially sanctioned by the academy and made a class, or whether a group of folks who meet at the local coffee shop, or some mixture of the two, like this list) offers the only real resistance to the various discourses called theory I've experienced. One must not taint the sanctified ground of the workshop with theory. Also, though, the rather typical CW student may find him/herself somewhat patronized in the classroom as rather cute but not all that important, as has been noticed previously. It occurs to me that the strict separation of theory with poetry may have come about as poetry moved into the academy and was the result of academic positioning? Perhaps a little off chronologically. Why stay in the academy? The answer has to be in my mind economic and political. In here, you have the possibility, however faint, of helping students jump classes, as I did. Get them out of the ghetto/tenant farm. Has been so, I think, since the GI bill. Also to allow them participate in the formation of the, for lack of a better term, canon, the standards of knowledge, thus the multi-cultural wars. This seems to me very positive, but as economic conditions change, and Pell grants and such fall away to pay for patriot missiles, all over again, this justification may well go the way of the trade union. What then do we do then, all of us academics? Thanks, Eric.

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### 312. **cris cheek**

#### ***Memory Play***

*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

Hi Rae,

You aren't alone. I completely agree with you about Memory Play and am planning to publish some of it, and other work by Carla upcoming, this side of the pond. In that performance series I recently posted a Call for submissions to.

It's a terrific work. Have you seen a performance? I saw a video of There's Nothing Better Than A Theory (back on that discussion again) when visiting Carla and Barrett four years back, so I've got some points of reference for spatiality, movement, scenography. Can you describe it, aspects of the performed version? Energies, interfusional textures? Voices? I've got an interest in producing a version here with Carla in the next couple of years. We're talking here about how to make it possible. Be very interested in your response.

best  
cris



313. **I.LIGHTMAN*****Re: Letter to the Editor (longish): The Panic of Jane Stafford****Tue 21 Mar 1995*


---

I have just re-read Alan Loney's long and fascinating letter and would like to respond to it a little. My own perspective on New Zealand writing, different from Tony Green or Wystan Curnow's, is as an ex-resident of Wellington, at the other end of the North Island from Auckland, where Tony and Wystan are, and where the best NZ collection of Language Writing and other post-war American poetry is, where the American avant-gardists tend to be invited and welcomed. I lived in Wellington for 2 years, and indeed taught on the same 2nd year poetry course as Jane Stafford, who in my recollection was one of the best and warmest of the twenty or so staff at Victoria University there. It's true that, like a lot of people I've met all over the university world, she doesn't understand or like much avant-garde work; but she does teach a lot of very good but formally conservative poets very well, and quite gratefully took on some of the twenty or so poets I tried to introduce to the course, and to my knowledge is still teaching them, poets like Louise Bogan and Carol Ann Duffy. Given that, as Alan suggest, few people seem to read poetry, and a lot are put off in school, I myself used Bogan and Duffy to meet and then stretch my students' expectations, as part of a long slow process of warming them to all the things Alan and I both love about currently marginalised work. Jane may well not do this with her teaching, but she at least has Bogan and Duffy in her handouts, and that might inspire some students. What I want to say about Alan's post is that it seems to me that no-one who isn't already a paid lit worker or academic gives a damn about reviews, and they only care about teachers' opinions in so far as the teacher cares about knowing where they're at - which, in the larger context of the dumbing of people by school & state & church, seems fair to me. Students \*fear\* teachers for their grades, and care about their opinions usually only for that reason, and therefore with an underlying short attention span (the length of the course-unit) and underlying contempt. I get as angry as Alan does about these reviews, but I don't think they matter very much. I have to say that one reason poetry goes unread, in what seems even more shocking proportions even than England or parts of the States, is that \*all\* the NZ scene is corrupt, not just the mainstream. I like to think I'm a good acquaintance of Michele Leggott, and I'd be the first to praise her efforts in getting 80 Flowers into print again - by writing the book about it, and by very brilliant diplomatic work with Paul Zukofsky. And the book itself is full of great reference-tracking and research. But I feel less impressed by the writing on the poetics, and by the bulk of her poetry that I've read. The Auckland American Poetry course that friends of mine took is in just as much

danger as any Wellington course, or any other course, of telling you to agree and preaching self-evident quality or cool in its own favoured writers. And the effect may mean that some writers I admire more with the Aucklanders than with my Wellington colleagues get onto bookshelves, yet alas they remain unread or read badly, just as most of the Plath and Heaney required on Wellington courses does. These university courses all fail, in my opinion, to nurture the love of \*whatever poetry each reader could learn from and progress with\*. The ideal would be that teachers give skills in finding poetry and trusting your own reactions to it (I myself \*hated\* a lot of writers I liked later, that doesn't make me a bad person, as they say). What usually happens is you wind up with a book of poems you've had a class about, and you can repeat what the teacher said about it, but couldn't put forward your own opinion, nor could you engage with another poetry student who has a different favourite book, each opening each to each. I'd like to see more emphasis on finding work you love, among students, and \*students\* learning by teaching each other; instead of \*teachers\* finding work they love and teaching it to thirty students at once, with very little reciprocation of student teaching teacher. The rare university teacher, or person, is the one you can come to with your own project, wanting not expertise but an open mind and encouragement. The sad thing about this for me, who's never met Alan though loves his art-letterpress limited editions, is both Jane and he are better than most people I've met at engaging personally with students, with the ideosyncratic mind; and this disagreement masks a potential alliance between people who are both really good \*teachers\* - in a way that is much more important, for me, to the future of poetry than badly written "house-style" reviewing. (I also think every interesting New Zealand poetry person I met or heard about is short-sightedly dismissive about all the British poetry, avant-garde included, that I ever tried to mention..., but that's another story)

Ira Lightman

[↑ Contents](#)

314. **Tony Green**

***Re: Letter from Alan Loney (preface)***

*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Charles,

Posts re- Alan Loney's books will be forwarded. Add to his bibliography:

1        dear Mondrian. (with drawings by Robin Neate). published by Alan's hand-set press: Hawks Press, Taylors Mistake, 1976, a classic now o.p.

2 Shorter Poems 1963-77. Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, 1979. O.P.??

3 Missing Parts poems 1977-1990 Hazard Press 1992

He also made some small edition publications with elaborate colour block printing. Squeezing the Bones (of which I don't have the biblio details) and Swell which I have here published under his imprint Black Light 1987. His fine printed books can be found in major collections, e.g. the Bodlean Library, Oxford. & Buffalo, I guess?

Add to that an essay & The Ampersand Black Light Press 1990 (the poet Denis Glover once dubbed him Ampersand Alan, because of his regular use of the ampersand in print)

His hand-set edition of Robert Creeley's "Hello" (the New Zealand section only) is a particular fetish of mine. It goes back to Creeley's first visit to New Zealand of 1976 (200 years after Cpt. Cook), which was momentous for many here.

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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315. **Tony Green**

***Re: poetry v the sharp mind***

*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

" First: both sides depend on a rather simple opposition of real work, vs. work that is unimportant. In that the classroom emphasizes critical work and talks of "creative" work as something resembling a hobby, or play. Depends on the assumption that real work is productive of wages, your critical work pays your bills, thus its your real work. "

Dear Eric, Your drift is interesting. The problem I start from is not "Creative Writing", but academic arts practice in Art History. The opposition you cite (useful and useless work) hits this practice, by fastening it to pseudo-scientific projects and to pseudo-scientific expository discourse, to make it "useful", i.e. Academically Approved for Publication in Refereed Journals. This

tends to exclude (I'm simplifying like crazy all the way today) narrative structures and close-response writings, or even speculative commentary and ecphrasis, all of which are included in classroom and private study work with any artwork.

But the opposition you cite is also precisely the one most at issue in attempts to silence academic and intellectual institutions under the guise of bottom-line economic measures. Last Saturday's New Zealand Herald (18 March) had a full page story on current attempts to destroy the independence of the Auckland Institute and Museum, a major resource for anthropology, geology, life-sciences etc in the Pacific region. The politics ultimately goes back to your opposition: if it don't earn a quick buck it is not going to get money from the public purse.

Carry the argument over into Information instead of Tangible Product and you get very different answers to its use.

But worst of all, whenever an institution is forced into direct control of local body politicians, it immediately loses its independence of statement on social issues (in this case on environment and social issues, such as race relations).

Resistance in the classroom by any means available has to combat some pretty deeply ingrained notions brought in by students, as regards the uses of education and the discourse systems and the direction and control of intellectual efforts.

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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316. **Lisa Robertson**  
***survival of the quickest?***  
*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

"therefore I give the boys first pick"

Dear Boys,

How do I rate this container? Sievey, real sievey. Or simply spent bait?

Maybe Red Rover would be a better model for editorial methodology than musical chairs--if we persist with schoolyard tactics. But perhaps a close reading of editorial practises would be a more pertinent issue than the accusative sexing of results? At least that's my notion of how we might come to understand the ways we reproduce power and its statistics.

Cheers,

Lisa R.

[↑ Contents](#)

317. **Wystan Curnow**

***Re: Letter to the Editor (longish): The Panic of Jane Staffo***

*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Ira,        Thought I ought to respond some but first to follow through on Charles' ask: Auckland University Press, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, NZ is the publisher of Michele's, Alan's and also Murray Edmond's book SWITCH which was the other work under review by Jane Stafford and which I recommend to the list.        Ira when you say \*all\* the NZ scene is corrupt, not just the mainstream, and as though giving evidence you express reservations about Michele's work, and suggest that our teaching here is as liable to fail as teaching of poetry anywhere, I really don't follow. Even if the quotes were supposed to be around \*corrupt\* rather than \*all\*--were they? The other comment I can't really let go by was 'no one who isn't already a paid lit. worker or academic gives a damn about reviews.' I can't agree. To begin with the poets concerned, and all poets in my experience, \*give a damn\* and so they should.        Your comments are more about teaching, and you do mention the teaching we do do at Auckland. I just thought to say a couple of things about it since you seem to suggest that your general comments about the failures of poetry teaching can be readily applied to practices at Auckland. The course which is liable to be mentioned is our 3rd year, full-year course in contemporary American poetry which begins with the 1950s. Of course, each course constructs a canon, and it is the case the course has one which is more or less the common ground of this list. However, its attention span is longish (24 teaching weeks) and it is seldom one poet is taught more than a week. Many poets are offered, through lectures, through a course library and reading room, tapes of all the poets and some videos, and students are expected to develop enthusiasms, tastes of their own, through a workbook-reading journal (although we're moving away from this toward a portfolio idea at the moment). The course is team taught by three of us, more or less alternating; each has a different approach, some students responding more to one of us than the other two. We teach Wilbur, Lowell, Sexton, Poet's Theatre (O'Hara-O'Harryman),

Holzer, MacLow, Kerouac, in and amongst the mix. But it is better not to talk about the one course because the student chooses what the department more broadly offers and you'll perhaps be reassured to know that Plath and Heaney are both taught here. It is true Auckland's strength is in American rather than British poetry and that was the case even when I was a student here. It is possible to study 20th American poetry at all levels and 8 members of the department do some of their teaching in the field. It's not my impression that poetry readers procuded by the department here are the victims my taste or anyone else. But then I would say that. I'm \*corrupt\*.

It would be good to have some Wellingtonians on the net.  
When were you in the Windy City, Ira? There's too little contact between the two cities, I have to say.

Best

Wystan Curnow

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318. **Edward Foster**

***Re: poetry v the sharp mind***

*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

so why teach? in bronk \_the new world\_: "We tire of the forms we impose upon space and the restricted identities we secure from them. We tire finally even of the act of imposition itself."

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319. **Dodie Bellamy**

***Re: Memory Play***

*Tue 21 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Cris Cheek, I'll jump in & give my 2 cents worth on Memory Play, I am an American actor who was trapped inside the darn thing for ten months in a workshop production here in San Francisco, and I'll tell you, it took me eight and a half months before I figured out what it was "about." Harryman, the author, and Philip Horvitz, our director, were always mum whenever any of us actors asked, two Cheshire cats sitting there creamily on the sidelines, always replying only, "You decide." So finally I did. Hope you're familiar with the film "Mildred Pierce," because "Memory Play" is "Mildred Pierce" with a happy or at any rate conciliatory ending.

However I may be wrong about this. Years ago I wrote a review of Harryman's book "Vice" and stated forthrightly my belief that "Vice" must have been influenced by CH's constant viewing of the US cop show "Miami Vice." Two minutes later the phone was ringing and she denied it, saying she had never

watched MV in her life! Consequently I know a little bit about "Memory Play" but don't go by me.

I played the "Miltonic Humiliator" and had a wonderful costume, designed by John Woodall, a kind of Worth gown and a huge Merlin type hat. I had to sing and dance in several production numbers, and taunt all the other characters; finally, defeated by my own love for the Pelican, I succumbed to a kind of Madama Butterfly swoon and killed myself-off stage. It was great, and Cris, you can see it on video if you have the VHS format over there.

All the other actors were good, and I was a bit abashed because CH and PH, realizing that the Miltonic Humiliator doesn't really have very many lines in the published script, and perhaps not wanting to waste my talents, allowed me, no, ordered me, to make up my own lines.

I remember initially during our first workshop version of "Memory Play," that Kathy Acker was playing the part of the "Pelican,"-I suppose CH couldn't secure Kathy for the ten months it took us to rehearse and present the play. But think of her saying those lines, her great, scabrous energy melting the proscenium.

Thanks for letting me put in my two cents on "Memory Play."

So long now-

Kevin Killian

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### 320. **Spencer Selby**

#### ***Re: poetry v the sharp mind***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

Thank you Ed for one of the best quotes, one of the best, most pertinent statements I've heard since I first signed onto this List. Bronk's statement applies to a lot more than the discussion at hand. The problem isn't just teaching. The problem is how much people seek, crave and demand every conceivable type of imposition.

On Tue, 21 Mar 1995, Edward Foster wrote:

*so why teach? in bronk \_the new world\_: "We tire of the forms we impose upon space and the restricted identities we secure from them. We tire finally even of the act of imposition itself."*

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## 321. **Loss Glazier**

### **EPCNEWS, No. 2**

Wed 22 Mar 1995

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EEEE PPPP CCCC
EE / PP PP CC C/ |
EEE PPPPP CC / | URL=http://writing.upenn.edu/ |
EE / PP | CC C |
/ EEEE/ PP/ CCCCC/ /| internet/library/e-journals/ub/rift |
/ |
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| Electronic Poetry Center | /
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... that the idea of an electronic  
forum for emerging poetries not  
only possible but present

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E P C . N E W S

No. 2 (March, 1995)

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- 

#### 1.0 Intro: Some Dynamics

How does an electronic resource differ from an electronic list? Importantly, the information is there, but YOU HAVE TO SEEK IT. This active participation on your part is an important aspect to the workings of the Center. Enter the web, follow links, send comments. Wouldn't it be more convenient to have material mailed to your e-mail account? In some cases this is preferable, but given the large amount of material at the Center, your account would soon overload. There is also so much material here that few people could store it in their accounts. It's available 24 hours a day, 365 days a week (except for system "down" time), an electronic all-night literary bookstore? Also, unlike material



that may be sent to your account, EPC material is loaded with \*hyperlinks\*, i.e., connections to other places, other times, other texts. Aren't books preferable? In some cases, this is true, however, the book is a fixed object, i.e., electronic documents can be changed, updated, move in time to what is actually happening.

The EPC makes available a wide variety of material. The description of Internet information provided by the Internet Services Frequently Asked Questions And Answers (Version 1.7 - 4 February, 1994) states:

*The type of information you're likely to find on the Internet is free information, such as government documents, works with expired copyrights, works that are in the public domain, and works that authors are making available to the Internet community on an experimental basis. Conversely, some types of information you are not likely to find on the Internet, most notably, commercial works which are protected by copyright law.*

The EPC is testament to the fact that Internet resources do not have to be "throw-away" information. As a working site for active poets, the material here is a good faith exchange of original and current texts (along with literary "classics") provided to you as part of the current conversation that makes poetry and poetics immediate and interactive. These texts, in many cases, are more current than available through any other source. No one in the Center is waiving any copyrights but has trusted you with these emerging texts in the spirit of free exchange that defines our efforts.

---

## 2.0 Projects: Author "Home Page" Project

One of the newest developments at the Electronic Poetry Center is the development of the author library. The goal of this project is to provide authors related to or of interest to the EPC with a "home page," that is a single access point to electronic texts by and about the author.

These author home pages offer access to electronic files by and about the author, bibliographical information about the author, as well as, where available, photographs and other "documentary" information about the author.

We welcome inquiries from authors about allowing us to host your home page. For authors who maintain their own home pages, do let us know so that we might possibly provide a link to your own site.

---

## 3.0 What's New: News of the EPC

### 3.1 News

Congratulations to Luigi Bob Drake, editor of TREE: TapRoot Electronic Edition, which was listed in an article on ten select electronic journals on the Net in the February, 1995 issue of *\_Online Access\_*.

Also to Michael Joyce, a RIF/T and EPC contributor. Joyce's photo appears in "Of Texts and Hypertexts," a Feb. 27 *\_Newsweek\_* article on "Computers and Creativity."

### 3.2 New Additions

Many recent additions have been made to the EPC. These include:

\* A "what's new" feature that links directly to new resources  
\* A facility for EPC visitors to send comments or a contribution to a collaborative poem in progress directly from the Center  
\* Hypertextual versions of RIF/T (in progress) with "literary" links!  
\* Information on the Basil Bunting Poetry Centre / Durham, England  
\* Peter Quartermain's review of Charles Olson's *Selected Poems*  
\* Charles Bernstein's paper, "Warning Poetry Area: Publics Under Construction"  
\* New graphics for the EPC, RIF/T, and other "pages"  
\* New graphical page for Bernstein and Glazier (others forthcoming)  
\* NEW ELECTRONIC JOURNAL (Albany): *\_Passages\_*: A Technopoetics Journal

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### 4.0 RIF/T: RIF/T Notes

RIF/T's Transpoeisis issue, a multi-faceted and multi-format approach to the presentation of translations, has been edited and will be released shortly.

RIFT especially seeks reviews, as well as creative material and essays. These may be submitted to [REDACTED]

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### 5.0 Stats: Poetry and the Electronic Place

*Current RIF/T subscribers: 1000*

*Recent activity at the EPC:*

| Month    | Root<br>Connects | Total<br>Connects |
|----------|------------------|-------------------|
| -----    |                  |                   |
| Feb 1995 | 1283             | 8083              |
| Jan 1995 | 1079             | 6798              |
| -----    |                  |                   |
| Dec 1994 | 746              |                   |
| Nov 1994 | 573              |                   |
| Oct 1994 | 429              |                   |
| Sep 1994 | 367              |                   |
| Aug 1994 | 348              |                   |

Jul 1994          614

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Jun 1994          110

| *EPC Directories with the most traffic for February, 1995:*

Connects/Directory

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1283 rift (EPC Home Page)  
304 rift/authors  
298 rift/rift  
217 rift/documents  
203 rift/.epc.gif  
197 rift/journals  
189 rift/.hotlist  
183 rift/poetics  
178 rift/resources  
168 rift/journals/selected  
141 rift/about  
126 rift/about/about  
117 rift/rift/rift01  
115 rift/sound  
111 rift/documents/conversations  
110 rift/rift/rift03  
102 rift/authors/more  
101 rift/documents/documents

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## 6.0    FAQ: About the EPC

The Electronic Poetry Center seeks to provide a central \_place\_ for Internet resources for poetry and poetics.

The Center continues to provide access to the electronic poetry and poetics journal, RIF/T, and the archives of the POETICS List. Needless to say, the EPC provides quality archival materials for these resources, including search features to allow keyword searching of the Center.

The EPC AUTHOR library offers texts and/or information about contemporary poets in a variety of formats.

A number of electronic JOURNALS are archived and distributed by the EPC. Journals distributed through the EPC differ from other e-journal archives in a significant way: the texts presented here have been checked and verified by their issuing agency thus at least getting to you versions of electronic journals in collaboration with their source.

These journals include:

DIU / Albany  
Experioggi(cyber)cist / Florence, AL  
Inter\face / Albany  
Passages: A Technopoetics Journal / Albany  
Poemata - Canadian Poetry Assoc. / London, Ontario (Info)/  
RIF/T: Electronic Space for New Poetry, Prose, & Poetics  
Segue Foundation/Roof Book News / New York  
TREE: TapRoot Electronic Edition / Lakewood, Ohio  
We Magazine / Santa Cruz  
Witz / Toluca Lake, CA / via Syntax

For RESOURCES outside the EPC, we have written links to make seamless connections to these resources.

The Center also provides information about contemporary print little magazines and SMALL PRESSES engaged in poetry and poetics. Look here also for Selby's List of Experimental Magazines.

The Poetry & Poetics DOCUMENT Archive provides access to a number of documents of use to poets, teachers, and researchers. Here you will find essay material and recent obituaries.

The EPC also presently offers GALLERY, SOUND, EXHIBITS, and an ANNOUNCEMENTS area.

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## 7.0 Access: How to Connect

The Center is located at

<http://writing.upenn.edu/internet/library/e-journals/ub/rift>

(Alternatively, you may gopher to writing.upenn.edu. And use the "Search Wings" feature to locate the EPC. Web access is, however, recommended.)

Check with your system administrator if you have problems with access. Also ask about setting a "bookmark" through your system for quick and easy access to the Center when you log on.

If you have comments or suggestions about sites to be added to the Center, do not hesitate to contact Loss Pequeno Glazier, [REDACTED] or Kenneth Sherwood, [REDACTED]. buffalo.edu

---

The Electronic Poetry Center is administered in Buffalo by E-Poetry and RIF/T in coordination with the Poetics List.

Loss Pequeno Glazier  
for Kenneth Sherwood and Loss Glazier  
in collaboration with Charles Bernstein

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322. **maria damon**  
***Re: what does it do?***  
*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

Now, i wldn't want to discount the importance of emotion, but, as i'm sure  
> we've all encountered, this sort of definition often results in the  
> writing/reading of a lot of "Hallmark verse," as well as in the  
> establishment of a sort of poetry-as-therapy paradigm.  
>  
> steve shoemaker

I'm interested in this recurring formula, the hallmark-card verse, invoked as anathema to all serious modernist/postmodernist sensibilities. when i ask students to research "micro-poetries," i include greetingcard verse as an example of a micro-poetry. how can these despised, commercial fragments --or the paradigm of poetry-as-therapy, as in psychiatric-ward workshops --be understood in terms of the "cultural work" they perform? rather than dismissing them out of hand as trite and derivative, how can we use them to understand, as shoemaker suggests, the multiple "purposes" of poetry.--maria d

[↑ Contents](#)

323. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**  
***what does it do?***  
*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

It occurs to me that it might be useful to frame more directly a question that has been skirted by previous threads on the relations between poetry and experiment, poetry and politics, poetry and theory etc. Namely, what does, or should, poetry do? I wldn't want to skew discussion irrevocably toward the classroom, but my students, it seems to me, bring to their reading of poetry strong, but not particularly well-examined assumptions on this count. The dominant idea seems to be that poetry is written "from the heart," with the purpose of expressing emotions. Now, i wldn't want to discount the importance of emotion, but, as i'm sure we've all encountered, this sort of definition often results in the writing/reading of a lot of "Hallmark verse," as well as in the establishment of a sort of poetry-as-therapy paradigm. So, if these widespread views of what poetry does are inadequate, are we up to formulating more valuable meta-statements? Is there any point in such an attempt?

And how wld these meta-formulations be tied to the sorts of delightful microdynamics on display in the recent close-reading thread?

As for the big question, i suppose my own preference tends toward the Blakean notion of cleansing the doors of perception...

steve shoemaker

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324. **John Cayley**

***Re: Call for (regular) work***

Wed 22 Mar 1995

---

*Visual Poetry Show*

*o*

*All submissions must be in 8 1/2 by 11 format, camera ready.*

Triple sheesh! Talk about dancing in chains. What about a 3.5" format? Even.

PS: BTW of contrast, I've just been asked to contribute to a new London-based magazine (*\_Engaged\_*) which has been published as:

issue 1: a T-Shirt

issue 2: a 35"x52" full-colour poster (supplied with packet of wallpaper paste)

Forthcoming:

issue 3: a CD (yawn)

issue 4: a tin of alphabet spaghetti (and other found objects)

issue 5: a video (zzzz -- However, this is ? the cheapest form of colour publication)

future issues will be published as live performances.

[Remember the Fluxus?]

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325. **braman sandra**

***Re: what does it do?***

Wed 22 Mar 1995

---

Steven Shoemaker -- Of course, as Auden wrote on the death of Yeats, "poetry makes nothing happen....".

A question to all engaged in the academia/non-academia discussion ... has anyone else found the academic experience driving one away from words? I found in my first quarter of graduate school that I wrote about 10X the words I had written in 10 years of adult life completely devoted to the written word, and

remember with horror the day I couldn't locate something in a document using computerized word search because there was no language being used unique enough -- in fact, it often seems the academic task to bring our language into conformity, which to my mind runs directly counter to the poetic task of always trying to use first speech.... My own response has been to move into visual work... Anyone else?

Sandra Braman

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326. **George Bowering**

***Re: Groovy Books***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

When I said that Wesley Tanner is historical I was not saying that he was not alive and well. History does not mean death, at least not in my view. Maybe I have a Special View of History.

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327. **George Bowering**

***Re: "The Tunnell" by Wm. Gass***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

Thanks for info, Ken.

I checked Books in Print, and they had an edition listed for 1992! I guess it was pulled then. It was listing at something like \$24 then. Oh, I am looking forwards to this monster, nfd also for some time when I can read. Anything.

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328. **maria damon**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

> Re Maria Damon's question about the cultural work of Hallmark cards -- I  
> learned what was to me a revelation about this a few years ago when I  
> came to understand that for some folks I met through doing martial arts  
> who are not verbally articulate in any way, hallmark cards -- and popular  
> songs on the radio -- are significant speech. One fellow, in particular,  
> would get enormously upset if he felt that the new hit of each week  
> wasn't expressive of his own perspective, thoughts, and feelings -- like  
> they'd "gotten it wrong" .... This fellow and others used the songs and

> the cards to speak FOR them, felt intimately connected with them, etc.  
> Sandra Braman

in relation to this, there's a scene in the movie Chicks in White Satin, which I didn't see but heard quite a bit about, and which is about the marriage of two women, a "trite" greeting card becomes a focal point of emotion, and, said the friend describing the scene to me, what would otherwise have been laughable became quite transcendently moving and convincingly "authentic." what made the card a conveyor of "authentic" feeling, i believe, was the women's reaction to it --their feelings. these are the kinds of saturated moments that compel my attention. so thanks for your comments above about your acquaintances who you identify as not verbally oriented --can you say more about how their feelings of identification, of being spoken for, were conveyed? if they were convincing to you, what was it that convinced you? the vehemence of your martial arts colleagues' expression? the astuteness of their analyses? --maria d

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329. **braman sandra**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

Re Maria Damon's question about the cultural work of Hallmark cards -- I learned what was to me a revelation about this a few years ago when I came to understand that for some folks I met through doing martial arts who are not verbally articulate in any way, hallmark cards -- and popular songs on the radio -- are significant speech. One fellow, in particular, would get enormously upset if he felt that the new hit of each week wasn't expressive of his own perspective, thoughts, and feelings -- like they'd "gotten it wrong" .... This fellow and others used the songs and the cards to speak FOR them, felt intimately connected with them, etc. Sandra Braman

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330. **Ryan Knighton**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

In response to Steve Shoemaker's question, maria daemon writes:

>

> I'm interested in this recurring formula, the hallmark-card verse, invoked as  
> anathema to all serious modernist/postmodernist sensibilities. when i ask  
> students to research "micro-poetries," i include greetingcard verse as an  
> example of a micro-poetry. how can these despised, commercial fragments --  
or



- > the paradigm of poetry-as-therapy, as in psychiatric-ward workshops --be
- > understood in terms of the "cultural work" they perform? rather than dismissing
- > them out of hand as trite and derivative, how can we use them to understand, as
- > shoemaker suggests, the multiple "purposes" of poetry.--maria d
- >

The value of these forms of writing goes beyond, perhaps, poetry. Grice, for example, used psychiatric-ward writings and taped discussions in his research. This research yielded the expansion and adaptation of Kantian maxims to discourse analysis (i.e. the Cooperative Principles of "relevance", "cohesion", "manner", etc...). His findings are very political insofar as they disclose another relationship between power and language (i.e. rights of passage into discursive communities). As far as Hallmark goes? Who knows?

Ryan Knighton

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331. **Sheila Murphy**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

Steve's question about what poetry should do makes me think immediately of reframing the question to something on the order of "How might poetry surprise us?" or "What COULD any particular entity BECOME?" I think that precalling this would likely phase out (prior to conception) many possibilities.

Of course, I understand that this question relates to levels of truth. At a certain level of consciousness (that of the students to whom Steve alluded), we have to address from square one the expectations of people for whom much of what we suspect ourselves of being fluent in is brand new.

SEM

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332. **Tony Green**

***Coercive teaching***

*Wed 22 Mar 1995*

---

Dear        Yesterday afternoon I said in a tutorial (Art History Stage III): "I heard a discussion recently [in fact Ira Lightman's comments about American Poetry as taught in Auckland] in which someone claimed that every department teaching poetry made students agree with their views, because otherwise they'd give them poor grades". Three students agreed that at St I and II they

felt themselves subjected to some pressure, though one said: "it depends on who you're tutor is" . Another student denied it hotly, saying that in her experience it was not like that at all, she had been encouraged to find out for herself what she thought and what she pursued. She went on to say that this was the Contemporary American Poetry class she was talking about. I've sat in on Roger Horrocks's and Wystan's classes and I've never thought that they were imposing a canon or criteria or opinions on their students. I can't see what the personal warmth of Jane Stafford or the supposed corruption of all New Zealand teaching of poetry has got to do with Alan Loney defending himself as a writer from continuing undermining by largely unsympathetic readers. It is a not insignificant fact that the review that Loney objects to is in a magazine that has public money supporting it, while the attempts to get a magazine published with more supportive attitudes has been rebuffed.

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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333. **braman sandra**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

Maria Damon asks what was so convincing about those folks who used hallmark cards and popular songs as their own expression -- These folks in general had their intelligence largely in their bodies -- the one fellow in particular looked like Baryshnikov when he moved -- more than in their brains, so to speak, so it sure wasn't astuteness of analysis.... I was convinced I guess because of these things: - constancy of attention to and use of popular songs and cards over time as a means of expression - some anxiety each week waiting to see what the hits were on the radio, and discussion as soon as they were known as to their accuracy and appropriateness. when songs weren't appropriate, genuine gut level concern and response -- stomping about, going over and over what was wrong, etcetera -- really upset - in thinking back, one manifestation that should seem particularly familiar to poets -- a fair amount of time spent trying to copy out greetings or write down words to songs in a way that had to be accurate from beginning to end -- one mistake and the paper is crumpled, have to try

again - incorporation of words from cards and songs into daily speech, and some dependence upon those sources of words, which constituted a fair percentage of language used in either oral or written forms

Ultimately I understood that while these folks had all the same emotions as we, they had no original means of verbalizing those emotions and thus relied entirely on the language of mass culture as exhibited particularly in these 2 forms, resulting in a complete identification with mass culture. I've come to understand language use on a spectrum of originality, with poets at one extreme attempting always first speech, and folks such as these at the other extreme, completely mapped onto the most mass of mass culture, with varying degrees of embeddedness in the culture in-between. Academic writing, it seems to me, is writing engaged always in the process of attempting to bring new ideas -- now make sure not too many at one time, or too original -- into embeddedness in the culture through coercion of language use into one might say dogmatic forms.

The impact of exposure to these folks -- and let me emphasize this is of course not everyone involved in martial arts, but a particular group I encountered in a particular place at a particular time (St. Cloud, Minnesota, mid-1980s) -- certainly I've met many, many other folks involved in martial arts of one form or another who are extremely articulate. In fact, I think Daphne Marlatt was the first person to talk to me about Tai Chi, which is what I was studying.... -- anyhow the impact on me of exposure to these folks was to have a completely different appreciation of the role of mass culture. And I have the sneaking suspicion that there are more folks like the ones I'm talking about than there are folks like "us"....

When I say St. Cloud I should also point out that the folks there came actually from all over the country; the one fellow in particular from rural upstate New York. We were all gathered around a brilliant master, the fellow who brought tai chi to this country, Master T. T. Liang, who was then in his late 80s.... and I hear is still teaching, now in Minneapolis, those of you who are there....

Sandra Braman

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334. **Blair Seagram**

***Re: Goya's LA, a play by Leslie Scalapino***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

A reminder that on Friday March the 24th -

Jandova CoMotion Inc.  
and  
Drogue  
present a work in progress  
on scenes from  
Goya's LA  
a play by  
Leslie Scalapino  
at  
Context  
28 Avenue A  
(between 2nd & 3rd)  
New York, NY 10009  
on  
Friday March 24th, 1995  
at 8:30 pm  
For reservations call [REDACTED]  
Suggested donation \$7

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335. **Jeffrey Timmons**

**Re: Why Teach? (fwd)**

Thu 23 Mar 1995

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----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 1995 21:25:10 -0700 (MST)

From: [REDACTED]

To: UB Poetics discussion group <[REDACTED]>

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

Subject: Re: Why Teach?

Because I have been absent so long:

On Tue, 21 Mar 1995, Edward Foster wrote:

*so why teach? in bronk \_the new world\_: "We tire of the forms we impose upon space and the restricted identities we secure from them. We tire finally even of the act of imposition itself."*

To which Jeffrey Timmons replied:

Perhaps "teach" is no longer such a good description of the activity I increasingly find myself interested in. I prefer, however inadequately theory

matches practice, a notion of "shared inquiry." I don't feel I have so much that I can "Teach" others--even those with less experience in academic forms of knowing/saying--as much as I feel competent in asking questions and provoking others to ask their own questions. This is only an initial stage of forming positions, of course, but a more productive location than "teaching" or "professing." For me.

So, why teach? If that term covers the sort of activity I've just described than I would have to agree to eric pape's earlier comments to this issue and add only that there seems a responsibility to encourage those younger than ourselves (or less familiar with the ways of the institutions we work within) to take up--in their own way--their own inquiries. There needs to be those individuals who can provide models of something other than the productions of media personalities that pass for such at present. Perhaps there are other reasons--and I'd be more than happy to hear these--but there seems no other real reason to teach than this: giving opportunity.

Jeffrey Timmons

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336. **Sheila Murphy**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

I keep thinking of the permissible shorthand (code) in place within mass culture. In response to Sandra's thoughts, I'll add a concern that I've watched: people molding their emotions to a set of five or so listed on the multiple choice test implied by, say, country or whatever songs. Learning to feel what the song says. And if a Hallmark card misses, well, why not just adjust a little to the right and then claim/learn to internalize (or whatever verb might be right) THAT emotion. All of this linked to whatever level of empowerment.

This may be ONE of the challenges we face if seeking to share more unusual (relatively speaking) forms of writing. People have no place for it, on account of their having been trained and eventually submitted to a system of simplification which rules out first thoughts and therefore causes blending, shaving, saming (not unlike what happens when construing a "movement").

Well.

Sheila Murphy

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337. **Aldon L. Nielsen**

***Re: Hallmarks and What They Do***

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

Maybe this will link the "academia" question to the "what does it do" question. Some years ago I was asked to give a talk at the MidWest Modern Language Association. They met that year in Kansas City, which happens to be the world headquarters of Hallmark. There was a panel on the subject of Hallmark verse. The subject of the subject was not mentioned. Greeting card verse offers greetings, plain enough. It also generates sales. (Remember the verse by the side of the road? The micropoetics of Burma Shave?)

I prefer Lenin's question, "What is to be done?" Poetry can do just about anything, except perhaps disappear. Asking a poet what poetry "does" is a bit like spraying cat repellent on a cat.

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338. **I.LIGHTMAN**

***Re: Letter to the Editor (longish): The Panic of Jane Staffo***

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

Dear Wystan,

Thanks for your friendly and thoughtful response. You're right that I didn't include the poets in my "no-one gives a damn", I was trying to address Alan's remarks about the effect of reviews on \*readerships\*. In Britain, one seldom gets any reviews at all, and then only hurtful ones, in any bigger funded periodicals, but I don't know one should expect them. Reviewers are hurtful and thoughtless about the poets, just as Alan's letter was hurtful to me as an acquaintance of Jane Stafford, both she and Alan (to my knowledge ) were wrong in their character assessments of each other's motives.

On other points, I was in Wellington in the early Nineties, I actually \*hate\* Plath and Heaney and Lowell myself (which I hoped I'd indicated in my post before, emphasising that Alan and I \*both\* share the love of similar "currently marginalised" work, as I said), and I would like to see other Wellingtonians and Aucklanders on the list, who weren't themselves a bit nervous of offending the Aucklanders already on the list and thus blowing their publication and reading chances - a problem also in existence for the Apex, G2 poets generation in America. I was hoping to flush them out, at least privately, by my posting.

I hear yours and Tony's optimism for the course - it doesn't match however the detailed accounts I've had of it from a good ten or fifteen people I met who had the potential of being great poetry lovers, of avant-garde work especially; that is to say, the ten or fifteen really exciting minds I met. It's, of course, great that

your course exists, and it does do good. But what I said I still hold by. I mentioned Michele Leggott's work not because I don't know the scene thoroughly - I do - but because she is the poet I have the most hope for in NZ, and yet she has stayed only good, when she could have been brilliant - but perhaps the new book proves me emphatically wrong, and I am stereotypically seeing her on a typical decline. Surely it is *\*very\** important that poets be able to take criticism that is hurtful, that is sometimes designed to ask them to win me over, to be really astounding (by which I don't mean mainstream). It is when feelings get hurt too quickly and without discrimination (on the part of the reviewed as well as the reviewer) that there can be corruption, and nobody can be honest, and that is what I meant.

Very best

Ira

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### 339. **Charles Watts**

#### ***Poets' addresses***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

for purposes of notification of the Blaser conference and renewal of old acquaintance i'm hoping to get addresses for Bill Corbett, John Wieners, Charles Boer, Chuck Stein, George Quasha, thanks for any and all help. Billy Little c/o Two Tone House, 5050 Happy Ave, Nowhere, B.C. Canada V0R 1Z0 Charles Watts on the list will forward all messages thanks again, namaste

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### 340. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

#### ***what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

Maria Damon writes:

"I'm interested in this recurring formula, the hallmark-card verse, invoked as anathema to all serious modernist/postmodernist sensibilities. when i ask students to research "micro-poetries," i include greetingcard verse as an example of a micro-poetry. how can these despised, commercial fragments --or the paradigm of poetry-as-therapy, as in psychiatric-ward workshops --be understood in terms of the "cultural work" they perform? rather than dismissing

them out of hand as trite and derivative, how can we use them to understand, as shoemaker suggests, the multiple "purposes" of poetry.--maria d"

I think you're right, Maria, that this kind of poetry can do useful cultural work. And also right that my schematic formulation risks a too easy dismissal of that work and participates in a history of such dismissals, which have, importantly, often been strongly gendered (e.g. Pound and "Amygism"). But what i was objecting to was not the existence of this kind of poetry or its uses, but the \*dominance\* of that sort of definition of poetry in mainstream culture. That dominance often precludes "serious" considerations of other sorts of poetry (i guess we shld watch out for too exclusive definitions all along the spectrum). There are, for ex., always some, often many, students who, with the poetry-as-personal-expression in place, initially resist any in-depth consideration of the \*form\* of the poetry, on the assumption that such considerations are too ingenious, too self-conscious, not-what-the-author-was-thinking- about. It's that sort of reductive approach to poetry that i often find myself needing to work to move beyond by suggesting other goals and possibilities. This movement "beyond" usually involves some intensive "close reading," but a larger sense of other possibilities-for-poetry seems to be necessary for such reading to take place....

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341. **Eric M. Gleason**

***Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

I think Jeffrey hit on a key point: good teachers give opportunities to students that they possibly would not have had. Whether it's leading the student towards good (interesting, important, usefull) reading, introducing them to others with similar interests, or going through some form of a shared inquiry, any little bit helps. Especially so when it opens students to new ideas or communities. Without teachers/writers here like Joe Amato and Andy Levy, I would still be a hyperactive, frustrated engineering student attacking my neighbors with my voice and a copy of "Fox in Socks"

Eryque

--

---

"I was a teenage monkey wrench"

Eryque Gleason

██████

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342. **Chris Stroffolino**

***Re: what does it do?***

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

It's funny, Sandra (Braman)--unlike your "kung fu friend" (if I may so take liberty)--I tend to get "enormously upset" when a pop song DOES express my most intimate feelings--Yet, despite our "pomo" "sophistication" they DO sometimes....No? Chris S.

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343. **Alan Golding**

***Fwd: Newt poll***

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

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

Just a little something for your communal amusement . . .

-----Original message----- To: ACGOLD01--

ULKYVM Alan C. Golding

From: Tom Byers

Department of English, University of Louisville

Phone: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Fax: [REDACTED].

Subject: Fwd: Newt poll

FYI.

bitnet [REDACTED]; internet [REDACTED]

Thomas B. Byers

Department of English/University of Louisville

Louisville KY 40292

\*\*\* Forwarding note from ANDY --CMSNAMES 03/23/95 11:03 \*\*\*

id 1419; Thu, 23 Mar 95 11:03:53 EST

Thu, 23 Mar 95 11:03:48 EST

via XGATE 3.01.b16C MHS to SMTP Gateway;

Thu, 23 Mar 95 11:02:08 -0500

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 95 10:48:38 -0500

From: "Lakritz, Andrew" <[REDACTED]>

Organization: USIA

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Fwd: Newt poll

Dear Tom: I thought you might have some fun with this thing. Enjoy. love andy

~ \*\*\*\*\* ~

Andrew Lakritz  
US Information Agency  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Division for the Study of the United States  
301 4th Street, SW Room 252  
Washington D.C. 20547

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] FAX

~ \*\*\*\*\* ~The following is an e-mail

that John Michael Scalzi, II  
([REDACTED]) sent to Newt Gingrich, in the wake of the discovery of  
his comments on the biological urge of men to "hunt giraffes" and to  
wallow in ditches "like little piglets":

Dear Mr. Gingrich:

My name is John Scalzi, and I am a columnist for the Fresno Bee in Fresno, California. In the days since the unearthing of your comments about men, women, combat, and the biological drive for men to hunt giraffes, I have taken it upon myself to conduct a poll to see whether that innate giraffe-hunting urge (and the little piglet wallowing urge) is in fact alive and well in the average American male.

While the sample polled is statistically small (50 men, basically whomever was handy at the time) and largely comprised of white, college- educated, gainfully employed males, I nevertheless feel that the information gleaned from this poll will be of some value to someone, somewhere, some time. Perhaps you yourself, should the subject of instinctual giraffe slaughtering come up again. Certainly for me, as it takes up the bulk of my column, to be published this Wednesday, January 25.

Thank you for your time, and happy hunting and/or wallowing, whichever the case may be.

1. Have you ever hunted a giraffe?

Yes: 0%

No: 100%

2. Have you ever had the urge to hunt a giraffe?

Yes: 4%

No: 96%

3. Provided the right tools and the time, would you hunt a giraffe?

Yes: 8%

No: 92%

4. If not a giraffe, would you hunt another African savannah animal?

Yes: 20%

No: 80%

5. If you had to hunt an African savannah animal, which of the following would you choose?

a) Zebra: 2%

b) Rhino: 6%

c) Meerkat: 12%

d) Boar: 42%

e) Any creature that appeared in "The Lion King": 36%

6. Do you think giraffe would taste like chicken?

Yes: 38%

No: 62%

7. Might it not make more sense not to hunt giraffe, but rather to set up giraffe ranches?

Yes: 92%

No: 8%

8. When you see Geoffrey, the Toys 'R' Us giraffe, do you ever get the urge to stick him with a spear?

Yes: 40%

No: 60%

9. Do you expect that Newt Gingrich has ever had the urge to hunt a giraffe? Yes: 74%

No: 26%

10. If Newt Gingrich were to hunt a giraffe, would he use tools, or simply his own mouth?

Tools: 48%

Mouth: 52%

11. Would you rather hunt a giraffe, or wallow in a ditch like a little piglet? Hunt: 30%

Wallow: 70%

12. Would you generally describe yourself as a little piglet?

Yes: 22%

No: 78%

13. Would you describe Newt Gingrich as a little piglet?

Yes: 54%

No: 46%

14. If you could, would you hunt Newt Gingrich?

Yes: 58%

No: 42%

15. Would Newt Gingrich taste like chicken?

Yes: 18%

No: 82%

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344. **Kali Tal**

**Re: what does it do?**

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

Maria Damon (hey, are you the Maria Damon who wrote "MIAs and the Body Politic?") asks how can

*the paradigm of poetry-as-therapy, as in psychiatric-ward workshops --be understood in terms of the "cultural work" they perform? rather than dismissing them out of hand as trite and derivative, how can we use them to understand, shoemaker suggests, the multiple "purposes" of poetry.--maria d*

And Ryan Knighton notes:

*The value of these forms of writing goes beyond, perhaps, poetry. Grice, for example, used psychiatric-ward writings and taped discussions in his research. This research yielded the expansion and adaptation of Kantian maxims to discourse analysis (i.e. the Cooperative Principles of "relevance", "cohesion", "manner", etc...). His findings are very political insofar as they disclose another relationship between power and language (i.e. rights of passage into discursive communities).*

I am preoccupied with these questions, working, as I do, primarily with soldier poets and other authors of what I call "literature of trauma." In my forthcoming book, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge, October 1995), I spend a lot of time making connections between poetry and power, therapy and politics. I've done a lengthy study of the work of poet W.D. Ehrhart (probably almost unknown in this crowd), who is one of the most prolific of the Viet Nam veteran poets and who has also, by his editorial efforts and grand collegiality, made it possible for a generation of Viet Nam veteran poets to flourish. The poetry of these veterans is inseparable from their politics, from their strong antiwar stance, from their rage at stupid death and needless destruction; the best of them match Sassoon and Owen and Jarrell and all the other veteran poets who get so little play these days. The same organization (Vietnam Veterans Against the War) which acted as a catalyst for Viet Nam veteran writing was also the birthplace of veterans' "consciousness-raising" groups--a politicized form of therapy in which the power relation of the

therapist and the veterans was deliberately restructured so that all were equal participants in the process of political growth and concomitant healing. It must be emphasized, though, that the healing was believed to come out of political action and that artistic work was political work. The first anthologies of Viet Nam Veteran writing (*\_Free Fire Zone\_* and *\_Hearts and Minds\_*) were published by activist poets as basement editions. *\_Hearts\_* was published by First Casualty Press, and all three founders are still working as poets and writers today: Wayne Karlin, Basil Paquet and Larry Rottmann.

But the invisibility of these poets in the academy is an interesting problem. Of the Viet Nam vet poets, only John Balaban, Bruce Weigl and Yusef Komunyakaa have received much praise in literary academic circles and these three are probably among the less \*activist\* of Viet Nam vet poets (though they are all unabashedly antiwar and "political") and (unsurprisingly) more connected to the writing workshop circles. Those few academics familiar with the field, however, are just as likely to value the work of Ehrhart or Gerald McCarthy, Horace Coleman, D.F. Brown, Jan Barry, Basil Paquet, or Leroy Quintana, and/or the related work of Viet Nam vet "cowboy poets" Rod McQueary and Bill Shields. (Did you know that cowboy poetry readings in the west can draw crowds of thousands?) There are a couple of "pop" Viet Nam war poets, like Steve Mason, who have done well on the trade market, but Ehrhart, for example, has a hard time getting publishers for his poetry although the critics who write about Viet Nam war literature write well of him. (For a good summary of this field of poetry, check out Vince Gotera's *\_Radical Visions\_* [Univ of GA Press, 1994].)

I would not, of course, put "Hallmark poetry" and "poetry-as-therapy" in the same class. It's my guess that most poets find the writing of poetry "therapeutic," and that the confessional/testimonial impulse is at the heart of a great deal of the poetry we read. It makes sense to me that some folks who have experienced trauma (like some Viet Nam combat veterans, rape and incest survivors, and Holocaust survivors) have a passionate commitment to convey their experience in a potent form--to make, quite literally, world-changing fictions/poems. There is "Hallmark" confessional poetry (in which class I'd put Steve Mason, for example), and then there is the work of skilled craftsmen like Ehrhart or Quintana (who is best known as a "Southwestern/Chicano poet"), which equals in power and beauty the work of any of the "best" poets of the day. Somehow, though, these survivor-poets are rarely fashionable, tend not to be studied in the academy, or anthologized regularly. (Who reads Primo Levi's poetry now?) I'd argue that they're buried specifically because they \*are\* political, because their work forces us to confront events-in-the-world and allows no retreat, no relief.

Kali

---

Kali Tal

Sixties Project & Viet Nam Generation, Inc.

18 Center Rd., Woodbridge, CT 06525

203/[REDACTED]; fax 203/[REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

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345. **Tony Green**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

Steven, the old old question, F%O^R\*M ?? Is that what high art's got, that Hallmark cards ain't? Sandra Braman-Maria Damon-Sheila Murphy are talking about the social uses of song/text: I was enjoying that conversation and hoping they'd go on further, without having to get caught up in chestnuts like The Form (don't we read Best Bets or Turf Digest for the Form?)

While I'm at it, and to go on with the "they who use pop and Hallmark" as against "we who could once use Wallace Stevens but who now have learned to use Gertrude Stein etc etc" -- aren't we talking some social distinctions? Maybe contemporary poetry is for people who've learned to read every other kind of text available (including academic expository prose) and are still looking for kicks.

Where do any of us go in the field: classical- modern classical concert-contemporary jazz-bebop- big band jazz-trad jazz-soul-blues-rock-pop-easy listening-classical-.....? Is the question how many of these can we handle ?

Sandra's martial arts people have got a small range? Sandra has a cultivated large range?

And steady on, where did you get "your" language, Sandra, if it wasn't out of reading texts, texts other than Hallmark Cards? If that is so, where's originality come in?

Tony Green,

e-mail: [REDACTED]

post: Dept of Art History,

University of Auckland,

Private Bag 92019,

Auckland, New Zealand

Fax: 64 9-[REDACTED]

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346. **Edward Foster**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

what should poetry do? should? huh?

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347. **Edward Foster**

***Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

why teach? because you get to talk and think about things you like and maybe find students who like those things, too. that, and cash.

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348. **Gabrielle Welford**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

On Thu, 23 Mar 1995, Edward Foster wrote:

> what should poetry do? should? huh?

>

Yes... I was kind of thinking the same thing. What dis should?

What does poetry do?

A short message from a short person.

Gabrielle

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349. **maria damon**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

tony green points out the problems with the "they who use pop and Hallmark" as against "we who could once use Wallace Stevens but who now have learned to use Gertrude Stein etc etc" model of critical inquiry. I agree. I'm uncomfortable with we/theys that imply either monolithic wes & theys or dichotomized wes vs. theys. i love pop songs as i suspect most of the ultra-groovoids on this list do, or have done. "originality" is not the sole purview of modernist poets, though it's their rallying cry. i hesitate to get into this turf here, but i think academic people who are passionate about poetry can only

gain by expanding their embrace of other people's definitions of poetry. Isn't the person who waits anxiously to find out what the pop hits were, or copies greeting card verse into a notebook, just as passionate about poetry as someone who peruses Pound for hours on end to grok his prosodic mastery? --as someone who, until my book came out, thought i was a "cultural studies person" with a private love of poetry and now has a public/professional profile as a "poetry person" with a cultural studies orientation, I feel caught between two discourse communities when previously I didn't personally experience any discontinuity between them. --maria d

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350. **maria damon**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

> (hey, are you the Maria Damon who wrote "MIAs and the Body  
> Politic?)

>

> >>how many maria damons can there be, i hope none others yes' i'm she/her;  
shout out to kali tal, michael bibby and other workers on the viet nam era  
poetry front, the language and trauma front, and the frontal embrace of beauty  
pain and the dark beast of the dawning night,

>

> I am preoccupied with these questions, working, as I do, primarily with  
> soldier poets and other authors of what I call "literature of trauma." In  
> my forthcoming book, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*  
> (Cambridge, October 1995), I spend a lot of time making connections  
between

> poetry and power, therapy and politics. I've done a lengthy study of the  
> work of poet W.D. Ehrhart (probably almost unknown in this crowd)--  
yes, he's a fine and committed poet --

>

> But the invisibility of these poets in the academy is an interesting  
> problem.

See Michael Bibby's article on Viet Nam era poetry in *College English* of a few  
years ago --as you know he addresses this very problem.

>

> I would not, of course, put "Hallmark poetry" and "poetry-as-therapy" in the  
> same class. It's my guess that most poets find the writing of poetry  
> "therapeutic," and that the confessional/testimonial impulse is at the heart



> of a great deal of the poetry we read. It makes sense to me that some folks  
> who have experienced trauma (like some Viet Nam combat veterans, rape  
and  
> incest survivors, and Holocaust survivors) have a passionate commitment to  
> convey their experience in a potent form--to make, quite literally,  
> world-changing fictions/poems. There is "Hallmark" confessional poetry (in  
> which class I'd put Steve Mason, for example), and then there is the work of  
> skilled craftsmen like Ehrhart or Quintana (who is best known as a  
> "Southwestern/Chicano poet"), which equals in power and beauty the work of  
> any of the "best" poets of the day. Somehow, though, these survivor-poets  
> are rarely fashionable, tend not to be studied in the academy, or  
> anthologized regularly. (Who reads Primo Levi's poetry now?) I'd argue  
> that they're buried specifically because they *are* political, because their  
> work forces us to confront events-in-the-world and allows no retreat, no  
> relief.

Yes indeed, it's nice to hear a strong voice, thank you. I bought primo levi's  
translated poems just the other day and was only partly sorry, actually. sorry  
that i had to pay so much for just a few compelling lines.--I'm looking forward  
to your book coming out --and to bibby's from rutgers up. -bst --maria d

>  
>

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### 351. **Jeffrey Timmons**

#### ***Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

On Thu, 23 Mar 1995, Edward Foster wrote:

> why teach? because you get to talk and think about things you like and  
maybe  
find students who like those things, too. that, and cash.

Yeah, sure (and I'll even qualify that...), but the only . . . (dare I say MORAL)  
reason to teach has nothing to do with self-satisfaction (unless it is derived from  
the MORAL) or with cash (though that is necessary). Perhaps MORAL is not  
the right word and I suspect its genealogy. Nevertheless, sometimes we take  
what we can get. I agree with Edward Foster, but beyond that? Doesn't there  
need to be that MORAL responsibility to do more than just earn cash. Isn't that  
what it's about? Please . . . though, I use moral only to suggest the idea. I'd  
gladly exchange it with another terms. Any ideas?

Jeffrey Timmons

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352. **Ryan Knighton**

***Re: what does it do?***

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

Tony Green writes:

>

- > While I'm at it, and to go on with the "they who use pop and
- > Hallmark" as against "we who could once use Wallace Stevens but who now have
- > learned to use Gertrude Stein etc etc" -- aren't we talking some
- > social distinctions? Maybe contemporary poetry is for people who've
- > learned to read every other kind of text available (including
- > academic expository prose) and are still looking for kicks.
- >

Who but Creeley could write the lines "one and one two three" and call it a poem and have it revered as such? Is not the "sophistication" in this poem the reader's? Maybe, to turn Tony's phrase a bit, contemporary poetry is necessarily for people who've learned to read every other kind of text. This poem occurs because of the weight and pressure of a reader's knowledge of poetry. If it anonymously occurred as a Hallmark ditty, would it resound? (I suppose the occasion being "On your fourth child, or birthday or something...) I guess i'm asking, in my ignorance, could any one else have written this and made it the same? (if we are going to make social distinctions)

Ryan "tad" Knighton

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353. **Jeffrey Timmons**

***Re: what does it do?***

Thu 23 Mar 1995

---

On Thu, 23 Mar 1995, maria damon wrote:

*Isn't the person who  
waits anxiously to find out what the pop hits were, or copies greeting card  
verse into a notebook, just as passionate about poetry as someone who peruses  
Pound for hours on end to grok his prosodic mastery?*

I'd agree here, but also--though the division between high and popular culture is problematic to the extent that it denies any validity to the study/appreciation of the latter--note that there is quite a difference between Hallmark and Pound. Though I'll leave that for others to account for. There are differences, certainly, and I, for one, would not want to obscure those--though I am highly interested

in why it is that someone would find such fascination with Hallmark or whatever. How about the hullabaloo about The Brady Bunch? I mean, why? Because . . . .

Jeffrey Timmons

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354. **Lindz Williamson**  
***what does it do? (fwd)***

*Thu 23 Mar 1995*

---

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 1995 19:11:28 -0800 (PST)

From: Lindz Williamson <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Lindz Williamson <[REDACTED]>

Subject: what does it do?

I question the usefulness of asking what should poetry do. Recently in class we were discussing the threatening power of language and poetry was by far the most reckless and endangering of all the genres. Utopian/distopian literature ( We, 1984, Handmaid's Tale, The Republic) Recognizes this immediately. Plato points out that in a perfect world there would be no poetry. There would be nothing to challenge and no tortured artist feeling the unqueachable desire to express their emotion lyrically. it is during times of repression or upheaval that poetry flourishes. Some of the finest examples of the written word have emerged from areas where the mere act of placing pen to paper would sentence the writer to a life of secrecy. An excellent present day example is Cuba, where writers are drooling over donated Ray Brabury paperbacks and the American Lit. display sponsored by the US Embassy. Sources such as this network seem incredibly overwhelming when you realize authors in Cuba hand stitch and bind their works together, often using old cloth as paper.

I then ask not what does poetry do but why do you feel the need to read or write it?

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355. **Jorge Guitart**  
***what does it do?***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

At that time in the province of pleasuregiving prosody some people were neurally programmed to dig the referential & some people were neurally

programmed to dig the unreferential. The former tended to use hallmark cards (influenced in part by the fact that hallmark promoted strongly proreferential TV specials) & the latter tended not to send cards or make their own or send blank cards or send referential cards that sounded unreferential ("season's greetings") Some people who were innately predisposed to dig the unreferential became anti-referential after they majored in "english". When they began to notice the strongly referential quality of hallmark they also became anti-pro-referential. & some people who were innately predisposed to dig the referential became strongly anti-anti-referential after majoring in "english". Oh, in the same province there were some people who were innately neutral between reference and unreference. After some of them majored in "english" they began to question why other people who may or may not have majored in "english" valued hallmark card writers over non hallmark writers like gertrude stein or ezra pound, or the other way around.

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356. **George Bowering**  
***Re: poetry v the sharp mind***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

I am here picking up on a three-day-old item from Tony Green, wherein he asks two questions, one after the other. First, how serious was Olson as a historian, and then, how many historians cite him or his views in support. As a person now writing history, but with only a BA in history as any credentials, I would like to suggest that Tony not see his two questions as two ways of saying the same thing. All thru history we have had serious historians who are not supported or consulted by people who teach history, for example, in a university. In class today (on Susan Howe) I told my students they could do themselves a great favour by reading Olson's *\_Special View of History\_*.

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357. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**  
***Re: what does it do?***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

Tony Green writes:

"Steven, the old old question, F%O^R\*M ?? Is that what high art's got, that Hallmark cards ain't? Sandra Braman-Maria Damon-Sheila Murphy are talking about the social uses of song/text: I was enjoying that conversation and hoping they'd go on further, without having to get caught up in chestnuts like The Form (don't we read Best Bets or Turf Digest for the Form?)..."

I hadn't meant to fetishize, uh, F%O^R\*M, but mentioned it as one example of what i had a hard time getting students to talk about when they were too in thrall to a poetry=emotion equivalence. That presumed equivalence often seems to carry with an assumption of radical transparency that threatens to make the "words themselves" (whatever exactly that means) invisible, and leaves out all sorts of possibilities for what poetry might do/be/seem/seam/dream...

It's interesting that Sandra Bramn brings in Auden because, even tho' i've never been that into his poetry, i cldn't resist picking up (actually putting on "hold" so it's not right in front of me) for cheap from a used bookstore here a dusty 5 vol set of Poetry in the English Language (or something like that) edited by Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson (I think) & published by Viking in the '50s. I'm not sure that qualifies as a groovy find, BUT ANYWAY I've always found it interesting that everyone always quotes that Auden line "poetry makes nothing happen," but they don't quote the rest:

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives  
In the valley of its saying where executives  
Would never want to tamper; it flows south  
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,  
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,  
A way of happening, a mouth.

So, speaking of close reading, anyone have any idea what he "meant" by that?  
steve shoemaker

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358. **Wystan Curnow**

**Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)**

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Jeffrey,                   As perhaps the person who destroyed the best minds of Ira Lightman's generation I am now hesitant of offer an answer to the question. (are you out there, Ira? What can I say?) But for my money yes there has to be I'd say a POLITICAL reason for teaching. Aiming to make people passionate about poetry, or passionate about anything come to that doesn't do it for me. Passionism is too close to consumerism, as is Hallmark poetry. Teaching has to do with the dissemination of ideas, and that includes poetry. Teaching takes place in a culture that is shaped by ideas. The politics comes about through the relation of the ideas taught to the ideas that shape the culture ( a student may well bring just those ideas to the class room). Either the teaching of poems confirms the culture, or it resists it in some fashion. Either act is political. My

interest is in the second of the options. How do we distinguish between consumerism and dissemination? Wystan

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359. **WILLIAM NORTHCUTT**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

Poetry affirmeth roughage. Sour Philip Shidney

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360. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

Yes those pop songs do sometimes express "our" feelings, Chris & Sandra. I'm not so sure about the Hallmark verse, but I find the discussion of such possibilities and inclusions into personal speech marvelous. I certainly find that my family members (I am child of parents who each had eight or more siblings, leaving an extended family mostly in Oklahoma) use such cards quite seriously, not just as a convenience, and that I am sometimes considered odd for sending blank card with longish notes I have written -- odd but welcome.

I think also we take ourselves too seriously in considering our poetry to be "first thoughts" (Sheila Murphy used this term, perhaps not so intentionally moving from the "first speech" Sandra had proposed). I've always liked Robert Duncan's various assertions that he was a "derivative" poet, taking from a great variety of sources (many of which were also derivative). While the linguistic substance/forms we use may have some chance of being original, the thoughts therein have been thought before, I would imagine, more often than not. I'd probably be just as upset or uplifted if another poet captured my exact feelings as if a pop musician did.

charles alexander

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361. **braman sandra**

***Auden and happening***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

Steve Shoemaker -- At 20 I had that entire Auden poem on yeats up on my wall; the year before it had been Gary Snyder's poem about work; perhaps an effort even in the hubris of youth (this now long ago) to seek humility as a goal.... And always took from the Auden the notion that one keeps on doing poetry because

it is a way of being, NOT because it makes something happen... Although even at 20 that was, I confess, colored by acceptance of the notion of Rav Nachman of Bratslav -- the great Hasidic storyteller -- that one never actually knows to whom one is speaking -- one might be answering not the person standing before you, but a question asked by someone else hundreds of years ago....

I like Tony Green's sense that wherever we are on the poetry scale, Hallmark or Olson, we're moving ahead of the language we know, the difference being the range to which the individual has already been exposed.... I think that captures it fairly, without value judgments and in acknowledgment of that entire range as validly poetry....

Sandra Braman

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362. **Marshall H. Reese**

***CONTRACT WITH AMERICA UNDERWEAR***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

CONTRACT WITH AMERICA UNDERWEAR DEBUTS!!!

Center for Book Arts

626 Broadway, 5 Fl, New York, NY 10012 

Pillars of the Clean Order

on view for one week only:

March 28 through April 4, 1995

OPENING RECEPTION: Wednesday, March 29, 6-8 PM

CENTER FOR BOOK ARTS is proud to present, for one week only, an installation by artists Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese. The exhibition incorporates recent publications by leading conservatives, as well as the artists' own limited edition version of the Republican's Contract with America. Ligorano/Reese's recontextualized Contract, however, has the tenets of the Contract printed on the seats of men's and women's pure cotton briefs. The face of Newt Gingrich adorns the crotch.

The Ligorano/Reese Contract with America underwear is published in an edition of 120 signed and numbered copies. These special artists' works will be for sale throughout the run of the exhibition. On the opening night of the exhibition, they will be on sale for a special price. After the opening, they can be found at Exit Art's Apartment Store.

The installation at the Center for Book Arts comments on the overabundance of trade books authored by conservatives. Oliver North, Dan Quayle, Pat Robertson, Rush Limbaugh, John Danforth, and Barbara Bush, to name a few,

have all penned major trade publications promoting conservative thought. The gallery space will be dominated by heaps of dirty laundry overflowing from hampers. Rising from the hampers, classical columns will display the recently published books by John Danforth (Resurrection), William Bennett (Book of Virtue), and Oliver North's (One More Mission). On a clothesline strung above the hampers and stretched throughout the gallery will hang Ligorano/Reese's underwear version of the Contract.

There will also be a point of purchase display video highlighting the underwear. The video recycles imagery from Ronald Reagan's 1984 "Morning In America" spots combined with fashion shots of models wearing the underwear.

The Center for Book Arts is located at 626 Broadway, 5th Fl., between Bleecker and Houston. Gallery hours are 10 am - 6 pm, Monday through Friday, and 10 am - 4 pm on Saturdays.

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363. **Robert A Harrison**  
***Re> Re: Call for (regular) work***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

John Cayley,

In response to your response of my request.

| *Triple sheesh! Talk about dancing in chains. What about a 3.5" format? Even.*

I don't like chains any more than you seem to. Thought it was a reasonable request considering I wanted to have a catalog of the show available soon.

Why don't you send me something in gaseous form? Not too challenging though.

bob harrison

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364. **Edward Foster**  
***Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

has anyone out there looked into the origins/history of the word "responsibility." it's a pernicious term, i think; allows you to run other people's lives (for their own good, of course) without having to admit why. destroys poetry, too, except m. arnold.

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365. **Karlyn Y-Mae Koh**

**Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)**

Fri 24 Mar 1995

---

The question "why teach," for me, begs the question "why learn." A pedagogic practice that only takes into account the shaping of another's (the student's) mind, without the concurrent awareness of power (the teacher's) in a class as well as the willingness (of the teacher) to learn, serves to create institutional clones. That one enters a space with certain assumptions, agendas, positions etc. indeed makes the act of teaching a political one. What is more crucial is whether one teaches to learn, whether one can unlearn the habit of always hearing only what one already understands. On this point, I have to say that I have been a student in Wylan Curnow's now (in)famous course, some years back (team taught, as he pointed out)--and it was marked with an openness not common in many university (poetry) courses. It is the recognition of the power that goes with the privilege of disseminating knowledge, as well as the effort to hear and learn from students (too often seen as blank slates onto which one can inscribe one's cemented ideas) that distinguishes "good" teachers; something I appreciate (as a student--still!) from former teachers like Peter Quartermain, as well as certain profs. here at SFU. Karlyn Koh (long time lurker) Simon Fraser University, Canada

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366. **Alan Golding**

**Re: what does it do?**

Fri 24 Mar 1995

---

Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

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

Ryan:

"Could any one else have written this and made it the same?" Funny that this formulation should come up in the context of Creeley, who has an essay (if I'm remembering right) called "Was that a real poem or did you make it up yourself?" Shades of Pierre Menard's Quixote.

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367. **cris cheek**

**Why Teach?**

Fri 24 Mar 1995

---

| has anyone out there looked into the origins/history of the word  
| "responsibility." it's a pernicious term, i think; allows you to run other

*people's lives (for their own good, of course) without having to admit why.  
destroys poetry, too, except m. arnold.*

Ed - respond - from Latin 'respondere' meaning 'promise in return'. The spondere or promise is source of sponsor and spouse. According to my dictionary of origins (Bloomsbury) the notion of 'obligation' survives in the derivative 'responsible'. But i've always liked Duncan's take from 'The Law I Love Is Major Mover':

'Responsibility is to keep  
the ability to respond.'

from the country where Major has no groove factor whatsoever  
cris

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368. **cris cheek**

### ***A REAL Political Poet (longish post)***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

How are we doing in the Panamerican games? Too bad I couldn't attend. I'm sure I would have done very well in the "cross-country race." You should see the training I've put in since February 10th!

Go on. Health and may the spring in the blood have an addressee.

*| From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.*

Insurgent Subcommander Marcos.

Mexico, March of 1995.

P.S. That, in mourning, cries. I was listening on the little tape-player to that one by Stephen Stills, from the album Four Way Street, that goes: "Find the cost of freedom, buried in the ground. Mother Earth will swallow you, lay your body down.." when my alter ego comes running and tells me: It looks like you got your way...

- Could it be the PRI has already fallen? - I ask with hope.

- No way! ... They killed you - says my alter ego.

- Me! When? Where? - I ask while I go through my memories of where I've been and what I've done.

- Today, in a confrontation... but they don't say just where -, he responds.

- Oh, good!... And did I end up badly hurt or really dead? - I insist.

- Completely dead.. that's what the news says - says my alter ego and leaves.

A narcissistic sob competes with the crickets.

- Why are you crying? - asks Durito while he lights his pipe.

- Because I can't attend my burial. I, who loved me so much...

P.S.: That tells what happened to the Sup and Durito in the 12th day of the withdrawal, of the mysteries of the Cave of Desire, and of other unfortunate events that today make us laugh, but at that time took away even our hunger.

- And if they bomb us? - asked Durito in the early morning of the 12th day of the withdrawal. ("What kind of withdrawal, a pure run," says Durito.) It's cold. A grey wind licks with its icy tongue the darkness of trees and earth.

I'm not sleeping, in solitude the cold hurts twice as much. Nevertheless I keep quiet. Durito comes out from his sheltering leaf and climbs up on top of me. To wake me up, he starts tickling my nose. I sneeze with such emphasis that Durito ends up, tumbling over himself, on my boots. He recovers and gets back to my face.

- What's up? - I ask him before he tickles me again.

- And if they bomb us? - he insists.

- Yes.. well.. well.. we'll look for a cave or something like that to hide ourselves in... or we'll climb in a little hole... or we'll see what to do -, I say with annoyance, and look at my watch to insinuate that it isn't the hour to be worrying about bombings.

- I won't have any problems. I can go anywhere. But you, with those big boots and that nose... I doubt that you'll find a safe place -, says Durito as he covers himself again with a little huapac leaf.

- Psychology of terror -, I think, about the apparent indifference of Durito regarding our fate...

- Our? He's right! He won't have problems, but me... - I think, I get up and speak to Durito: - Psst... Psst... Durito!

- I'm sleeping -, he says from under his leaf.

I ignore his sleep and begin talking to him: - Yesterday I heard Camilo and my alter ego saying that there are a lot of caves around here. Camilo says he knows most of them. There are small ones, where an armadillo would barely fit. And there are big ones like churches. But he says there is one no one dares to enter. He says there is a ugly story about that cave. The cave of desire, he says they call it.

Durito seems to get interested, his passion for detective novels is his ruin.

- And what is the story of that cave? - Well... It's a very long story. I've heard it myself, but that was years ago now...I don't remember it well-, I said, making it interesting.

- Fine, go on, tell it - says Durito, more and more interested.

I light my pipe. From within the aromatic smoke comes the memory, and with it...

The Cave of Desire.

It happened many years ago. It is a story of a love that was not, that was left just like that. It is a sad story... and terrible - says the Sup sitting on one side, with his pipe in his lips. He lights it, and looking at the mountain, continues: "A man came from far away. He came, or he already was there. No one knows. It was back in other times long past and however that may be, in these lands people lived and died just the same, without hope and forgotten. No one knows if he was young or old, that man. Few are those who saw him the first times. It was like that because they say that this man was extremely ugly. Just to see him produced dread in men and revulsion in women. What was it that made him so unpleasant? I don't know, the concepts of beauty and ugliness change so much from one age to another and from one culture to another.. In this case, the people native to these lands avoided him, as did the foreigners who were the owners of land, men, and destinies. The indigenous people called him the Jolmash or Monkey-face; the foreigners called him the Animal.

The man went into the mountains, far from the gaze of all, and set to work there. He made himself a little house, next to one of the many caves that were there. He made the land produce, planted corn and wheat, and hunting animals in the forest gave him enough to get by. Every so often he went down to a stream near the settlements. There he had arranged, with one of the older members of the community, to get salt, sugar, or whatever else the man, the Jolmash, didn't obtain in the mountains. The Jolmash exchanged corn and animal skins for what he needed. The Jolmash arrived at the stream at the time when the evening began to darken and the shadows of the trees advanced night onto the earth. The old man was sick in his eyes and couldn't see well, so that, with the dusk and his illness, he couldn't make out the face of the man who caused so much revulsion in the clear light.

One evening the old man didn't arrive. The Jolmash thought that maybe he had mistaken the hour and arrived when the old man had already gone home. To make no mistake, the next time he made sure to arrive earlier. The sun still had some fingers to go before it wrapped itself in the mountains, when the Jolmash came near the stream. A murmur of laughter and voices grew as he approached. The Jolmash slowed his steps and came silently nearer. Among the branches and vines he made out the pool formed by the waters of the

stream. A group of women were bathing and washing clothes. They were laughing. The Jolmash looked and stayed quiet. His heart became only his gaze, his eyes his voice. It was a while since the women had gone and the Jolmash stayed on, looking... Now the stars rained down on the fields as he returned to the mountains.

I don't know if it came from what he saw, or from what he thought he saw, whether the image that was engraved on his retina corresponded to reality or if it existed only in his desire, but the Jolmash fell in love or thought that he fell in love. And his love was not something idealized or platonic, it was quite earthy, and the call of the feelings that he bore was like a war drum, like a lightning that becomes fierce rain. Passion took his hand and the Jolmash began to write letters, love letters, lettered delirium that filled his hands.

And he wrote, for example, "Oh, lady of the wet glimmer! Desire becomes a proud leaping colt. Sword of a thousand mirrors is the yearning of my appetites for thy body, and in vain rips the double edge of the thousand pantings that fly on the wind. One grace, long sleeplessness! One grace I ask thee, lady, failed repose of my grey existence! Let me come to thy neck.

Allow that to thy ear climbs my clumsy longing. Let my desire tell thee, quiet, very quiet, that which my breast silences. Do not look, lady so not- mine, at the poor mess which adorns my face! Let thy ears become thy gaze; give up thy eyes to see the murmurs that walk within me, longing for thy within. Yes, I wish to enter. To walk thee, with sighs, the path that hands and lips and sex desire. Within the mouth, she wet and I thirsting, to enter with a kiss. On the double hill of thy breast to run lips and fingers, to awaken the cluster of moans that in it hide. To march to the south and to take prisoner thy waist in warm embrace, burning now the skin of the belly, brilliant sun announcing the night that below is born. To evade, diligent and skillful, the scissors on which thy grace goes and whose apex promises and denies. To give thee a tremor of cold heat and arrive, whole, to the moist stirring of desire. To secure the warmth of my palms in the double warmth of flesh and movement. One slow first step, a light trot next. After that the runaway ride of bodies and desire. To reach the sky, and then fall.

One grace, promised tiredness! One grace I ask thee, lady of the quiet sigh!

Let me come to thy neck! In it I am saved, far off I die.."

One night of storms, like his passion burning his hands, a bolt of lightning burnt down the little house of the Jolmash. Wet and shivering, he took refuge in the neighboring cave. With a torch he lit his way in and found there little figures of couples giving and receiving, the pleasure worked in stone and clay. There was a spring, and little boxes that when opened, spoke of terrors and marvels that had passed that and would come to be. The Jolmash now could not or would

not leave the cave. There, he felt the desire fill his hands once more and wrote, weaving bridges to nowhere...

"A pirate am I now, lady of the longed-for port. Tomorrow, a soldier at war. Today, a pirate lost in trees and lands. The ship of desire unfolds its sails. A continual moaning, all tremor and wanting, leads the ship between monsters and storms. Lightning illuminates the flickering sea of desperation. A wet salt takes the command and the helm. Pure wind, word alone, I navigate seeking thee, among sighs and panting, seeking the precise place the body sends thee. Desire, lady of storms to come, is a knot hidden somewhere by thy skin. Find it I must, and muttering spells, untie it. Free then shall be thy longings, feminine swayings, and they will fill thy eyes and mouth, thy womb and innards. Free one moment only, as my hands already come to make them prisoners, to lead them out to sea in my embrace and with my body. A ship shall I be and restless sea, so that in thy body I enter. And there shall be no rest in so much storm, the bodies moved by so many capricious waves. One last and ferocious slap of salty desire hurls us to a beach where sleep arrives. A pirate am I now, lady of tender storm. Don't await my assault, come to it! Let the sea, the wind, and this stone become ship be witnesses! The cave of desire! The horizon clouds over with black wine, now we are arriving, now we go..."

So it happened, they say. And they say that the Jolmash never again left the cave. No one knows whether the woman to whom he wrote the letters existed in truth or was a product of the cave, the Cave of Desire. What they say is that the Jolmash still lives in it, and whoever comes close becomes sick with the same, with desire...

Durito has followed the whole story attentively. When he sees I have finished, he says: We have to go.

- Go? - I ask, surprised - Of course! - says Durito -. I need literary advice to write to my old lady...

- You're crazy! - I protest.

- Are you afraid? - asks Durito ironically.

I waver.

- Well.. afraid, really afraid...no.. but it's very cold... and it looks like it's going to rain... and.. yes, I'm afraid.

- Bah! Don't worry. I'll go with you and I'll be telling you where. I think I know where the Cave of Desire is -, says Durito with certainty.

- All right -, I say, giving in. - You'll be in charge of the expedition-.

- Great! My first order is that you march in the vanguard, in the center nobody, to disconcert the enemy, and I will go in the extreme rearguard-, indicates Durito.

- I? In the vanguard? I protest! - Protest denied! - says Durito with firmness.

- O.K., soldier to the end, I'll go along.

- Good, that's what I like. Attention! This is the plan of attack: First: if there are many, we run.

Second: If there are a few, we hide.

Third: If there isn't anyone, forward, for we were born to die! - dictates Durito while he prepares his little pack.

For a war plan it seemed too cautious for me, but Durito was the chief now, and given the circumstances, I had no reason to object to prudence marching in the vanguard.

Above the stars started to be smudged out...

- It looks like it's going to rain-, I said to Durito, excuse me, to the chief.

- Silence! Nothing will detain us! - shouts Durito with the voice of the sergeant in that Oliver Stone film called Platoon.

A gust of freezing wind and the first drops...

- Haaalt! - orders Durito.

The drops of rain start to multiply...

- I forgot to mention the fourth point of the plan of attack.. - says Durito with doubt.

- Oh yeah? And what is it? - I ask insidiously.

- If it starts to rain... Strategic withdrawal! - The last words are said by Durito now in an open run back to camp.

I ran behind him. It was useless. We got soaked, and shivering, we reached the little plastic roof. It rained as if desire had, at last, been unleashed...

Go on again. Health, and that the hunger for tomorrow be a desire to struggle... today.

The Sup, inside, far inside, of the Cave of Desire.

It's March, it's early morning, and for being dead, I feel verrry well.

-- translated by bonnie schrack  
please advise of errors.

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369. **cris cheek**  
**Re: what does it do?**  
Fri 24 Mar 1995

---

| *Poetry affirmeth roughage. Sour Philip Shidney*

Shidney is an unknown poet to me (or is it he who rote 'The Furry Coin'?).

Is the suggestion that Roughage Factor and Groove Factor are equitable? If so what are their derivatives?

cris

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370. **cris cheek**  
**Re: what does it do?**  
Fri 24 Mar 1995

---

re the Auden quote posted by Stephen Howard Shoe

| *For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives  
In the valley of its saying where executives  
Would never want to tamper; it flows south  
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,  
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,  
A way of happening, a mouth.*

I asked my teacher about this piece today. She assured me that he originally drafted it as part of a bulk commission for Hallmark cards to comfort those who had to make (should that be pay) a visit to the Dentist but Hallmark's response was that (and I quote):

'1) the overall tone is too obtuse for our readers

2) percentage flossers among executives is highest per capita of the population. These being the very people who can afford to afford private health care and are therefore already partially psycho-economically-comforted the target marketing is way off beam

4) double emphasis on 'it survives' might unnerve some purchasers

5) the appeal to oral forms of poetry is inappropriate given the state of the average gum or jaw post dental surgery / cosmetics - when sitting quietly in a darkened room with a 'good' read is the more urgent option.'

Unfortunately this debriefing doesn't develop the obvious paradox of reading in a darkened room. Nor does it sufficiently explicate the 'tongue in cheek' factor required. I believe Auden's next attempt went some way into the rich territory afforded by such. Whatever, the results failed to sell, unlike his rhyming



couplets of 'The Night Train' for the Royal Mail service and being quickly withdrawn from the market his most, arguably, niche work has been lost to us.

Or have I been reading the subject heading all wrong. Is it a rhetorical question that is restricted by the e-format, when it should it fact read

"what does?"

"it do"

love cris

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371. **Aldon L. Nielsen**

***Re: POETICS Digest - 22 Mar 1995 to 23 Mar 1995***

*Fri 24 Mar 1995*

---

What does it do too? It's not quite, as Lindz put it, that Plato "points out that in a perfect world there would be no poetry." Book Ten of the Republic argues that there should be no poets in the ideal republic. Plato, in the end, and speaking thru Soc., invites poets to refute his arguments, in verse, and allows as how he's prepared to relent. Here, then, is at least one project for poets! As Plato knew, we won't leave, even if invited.

As a former resident of the District of Columbia, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the U.S. Congress, I take the question of poets in the Republic rather seriously. We probably don't have to look to far for the reasons that the Library of Congress changed its poetry reading schedules so that most residents of D.C. would no longer be able to attend. Most of our recent U.S. Poet Laureates have made an insistence upon not moving to D.C. a condition of their accepting the position. One thing that D.C. poets try to do, even when living in California as I do, is to render the problematics of language and representation as literally as possible. Newt plans to make D.C. a "lab" for the Republican third wavenewworldordercontractmoralrecission. It is not too hard to imagine the place of D.C. poetry in his vision, just watch him on Empowerment Television. Since Creeley's name has been mentioned much in this correspondence, here's something else poetry can do: the darkness sur- rounds us, what

can we do against

it . . .

but I stray ,,,, greetings to all in Elision Fields

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372. **B. Cass Clarke**

**Sidney**

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

Dear Aldon:

As Sidney's name has been bandied about and you challenge the poets to respond to Plato, I thought a taste of Sidney's *\_Defense of Poetry\_* (c. 1580)

"But now indeed my burden is great; now Plato's name is laid upon me, whom, I must confess, of all philosophers I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence, and with good reason: since of all philosophers he is the most poetical. Yet if he will defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons he did it.... And a man need go no further than to Plato himself to know his meaning: who, in his dialogue called *\_Ion\_* giveth high and rightly divine commendation unto poetry. So as Plato, banishing the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour unto it, shall be our patron, and not our adversary. For indeed I had much rather (since truly I may do it) show their mistaking of Plato (under whose lion's skin they would make an ass-like braying against poesy) than go about to overthrow his authority; whom, the wiser a man is, the more just cause he shall find to have in admiration; especially since he attributeth unto poesy more than myself do, namely, to be a very inspiring of a divine force, far above man's wit, as in the fornamed dialogue is apparent."

For those not satiated by this sound bite, see "A Defense of Poetry," in *\_Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney\_* edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten, for Sidney's full argument, the first of its kind in English.

B. Cass Clarke



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373. **Tom Mandel**

***erase this message, which is a test***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

But you didn't... the system is rejecting posts from me occasionally, depending on ... well, that's what I'm testing!

Tm

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374. **Tom Mandel**

***bedside books***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

The week of March 6 was so busy for me that I had no time to check in here. Then was away for the next week.

Result? Over 200 messages -- worse yet, the discussion was quite interesting! I missed lively topics, too bad for me (tho I'll probably reach back opining in the coming days), but do want to contribute now to the "current reading" query:

I'm in the middle of *\_Intimate Letters\_*, Janacek's correspondence with Kamila Stosslova. Also reading *\_Penser, Classer\_* by Georges Perec. This is a collection of short and occasional essays and is wonderful (but untranslated -- don't miss *\_Avoid\_* however the translation of *La Disparution*, GP's novel without e's: it shd be out just abt now).

Adin Steinsaltz's *\_The Long Shorter Way\_*

Laura (Riding) Jackson's *\_Lives of Wives\_*

Ron Silliman's N/O

Harry Mathews' *\_The Journalist\_*

are stacked up, and I'm waiting for the new books by Rae Armentrout and Carla Harryman (mentioned here w/in the last week; but I'm not near my booklist and alas can't remember the names) as well as Jessica Grim's *Locale*. Also eagerly awaiting the new (18th) volume in Patrick O'Brian's ongoing series of novels about his twin characters Aubrey/Maturin and their lives and adventures in the British navy during the Napoleonic wars. Again, I ccan't recall the name of this not-yet-here volume.

Tom Mandel

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375. **Tom Mandel**

***Re: Hallmarks and What They Do***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

re: what does it do, and Al Nielsen's cat-repellant-on-the-cat metaphor: how did the painter of *vir heroicus sublimis* put it: "aesthetics is to artists as ornithology is to birds"

all the poets I know have been poets since very early in life without knowing why

doing something useless, that is discovering something not devoted to use, is useful too. For one thing, it opens that area up to use (this is called "culture" or "Hallmark"), for another a turn away promotes a turn to. Bending your verse to use, or a sense of use, where this does not mean calculating the reader, may be rephrased as "getting serious."

Tom Mandel

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376. **Tom Mandel**

***Re: what does it do?***

*Sat 25 Mar 1995*

---

Kali Tal writes that...

"...the confessional/testimonial impulse is at the heart of a great deal of the poetry we read. It makes sense to me that some folks who have experienced trauma (like some Viet Nam combat veterans, rape and incest survivors, and Holocaust survivors) have a passionate commitment to convey their experience in a potent form--to make, quite literally, world-changing fictions/poems. There is "Hallmark" confessional poetry (in which class I'd put Steve Mason, for example), and then there is the work of skilled craftsmen like Ehrhart or Quintana (who is best known as a "Southwestern/Chicano poet"), which equals in power and beauty the work of any of the "best" poets of the day. Somehow, though, these survivor-poets are rarely fashionable, tend not to be studied in the academy, or anthologized regularly. (Who reads Primo Levi's poetry now?) I'd argue that they're buried specifically because they *\*are\** political, because their work forces us to confront events-in-the-world and allows no retreat, no relief."

This is terrifyingly interesting territory.

The intersection and differences of "confession/testimony" and the intention of poetry to "force us to confront events-in-the-world"

(perhaps one shd simply say that poetry actually presents events in the world and that this is something that other traditions of expression are not organized to do. Sometimes this is being forced to confront, sometimes it is being allowed, or even enabled/aided to confront)

must account - at least in part - for its persistent recurrence

(tho it is also an example of recurrence, a form of recurrence a practice organized around recurrence)

and for the obsessively recurrent hold this practice has from an early age on those who go on to spend

(in the most generous senses of the word)

their lives on it. And explain our interest in such work of testimony

(for what else sustains the presence of work such as that,  
lets say, of John Wieners, or other poets NOT the subject  
of manufactured conferences)

as tends to unique instance of language, a testimony as in Primo Levi or in Celan, surely not "buried."

Tom Mandel

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377. **Jorge Guitart**  
***the hallmark of a great card***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

re intention of poetry to \*\*\*\*confront\*\*\*\* X in the world

i remember fondly a hallmark card designed for a sister-in-law. the message [at the end] was the sender wanted the addressee to know that the in-law part was of no consequence (& it rhymed)

the memory of that continues to give me a lot more pleasure than reading about anybody's trauma.

[my club dread membership expired a few years ago]

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378. **Kali Tal**  
***Re: the hallmark of a great card***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

Jorge Guitart writes about a hallmark card:

*the memory of that continues to give me a lot more pleasure than reading about anybody's trauma.*

*[my club dread membership expired a few years ago]*

Which, of course, brings into question why we read poetry that is not "pleasurable". Anybody have any ideas what \*that\* is all about?

Kali

Kali Tal  
Sixties Project & Viet Nam Generation, Inc.  
18 Center Rd., Woodbridge, CT 06525  
203/[REDACTED]; fax 203/[REDACTED]  
email: [REDACTED]

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379. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

***Re: the hallmark of a great card***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

Kali Tal wonders why we read poetry which is not "pleasurable."

But do we? What is pleasure? (the pleasure of the text, the pleasure of the senses, the pleasure of the unknown . . .

Is language pleasure? my mouth & ears both believe so, in a fairly uncomplicated sense the intellect and emotions, too, but not in any simple sense at all and altogether now (all together now . . .

Is content any more pleasure than the lingering physicality of language? or is it, in part, the same pleasure?

A

round of fiddles plays Bach

and I am listening reading

charles alexander

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380. **Gary Sullivan**

***Re: the hallmark of a great card***

Sat 25 Mar 1995

---

Dear Kali: I don't think that anyone reads poetry--and by that I mean \*really\* reads it (more than skimming it, or simply noting its presence)--that is not "pleasurable" in some sense. I think people who say that they do read (allegedly) "non-pleasurable" poetry actually derive pleasure from doing that (as well as from thinking/talking/writing about it--"it" being both the poetry & the act of reading it). A poem may well have been written with the intention of "writing against" a reader's pleasure, but the moment one takes that (or anything else the poem brings up directly or indirectly) into consideration, begins \*thinking\* about it, one begins experiencing pleasure...no? Admittedly, my definition of "pleasure" (which includes thinking, considering--a general term might be "engagement"--Charles Bernstein, why don't you--or, do you?--

consider \*engagement\* with a text a kind of absorption?) might be so generalized and/or inclusive as to be ultimately meaningless. Semi-related to this: This idea of "consumerism/ dissemination." (Can't remember now who brought this up! Please re-identify yourself!) My sense is that consumerism with respect to \*anything\* disseminated is unavoidable. If I send out copies of a poem to three or four friends (which is what I do with a certain portion of my work), then I and my three or four friends are engaging in an act of consumerism as well as an act of dissemination. I have almost a whole bookcase devoted to manuscripts I've received, some from friends, some from others, & these are no different to me (in essence) from the "published" things I've got on other bookshelves. (The only reason the mss. are separated is because they're too tall to fit on the other shelves.) I've even written and had published a \*review\* of one manuscript someone sent me to read, & plan to continue doing that when & as possible. What is the difference between paying (say) Station Hill to publish your manuscript and making photocopies of the ms. & sending it out to friends & others potentially interested in reading it? Or, for that matter, what's the difference between finding an editor of a small press to publish your book (including paying for it--& do editors w/out family money, rich friends, or successful nonprofit orgs \*do\* that anymore?--not a rhetorical question, btw)--well, what's the difference between that & sending your work around, in whatever form? As a reader, I have to say I appreciate, even prefer, books w/out blurbs, blurb-like matter, ISBN numbers, LOC info, bar codes, etc. I have more respect for "lower key" magazines like Mirage, lower limit speech, Situation, North American Ideophonics, and Talisman than I do magazines like Zyzyva, Sulfur and Conjunctions. (I also tend to be more interested in the work the former examples publish.) But, I'm also aware of the notion that you might want to sell a few books or mags, especially if you're paying production costs. & bookstores these days are increasingly unwilling to stock books or mags w/out all of the "bullshit." The books my wife Marta & I publish include all of the "bullshit," \*despite\* my sense that it somehow "cheapens" the things. Dissemination--almost all of it, at any level--involves some degree of compromise. It helps, I think, if you can be consistently aware of that, know beforehand what you are or are not willing to do. If you simply want the work out there, in whatever form, available for people to read it, you'll likely be willing to do just about anything to make that happen, including saying things you don't believe, or (just as bad) withholding your real thoughts in fear of offending someone who could "fuck up your career." So, while I do think there's no such thing as dissemination free from consumerism, I don't think consideration of either is pointless. Would like to see more on this topic, actually. Yours, Gary

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381. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**

***Re: what it do? (essay question)***

*Sat 25 Mar 1995*

---

Since the question of what poetry does is a difficult one, I thought it might be useful to provide you with a writing model to guide your responses. So, here is an excerpt from the introduction to Vol 4 of my groovy new/old Poets of the English Language set:

"What is man? How does he differ from the gods on the one hand and from nature on the other? What is the divine element in man? A different set of answers to such questions, or a shift of emphasis in the old answers, changes the style and subject matter of poetry and the poet's conception of his [sic] function. For example, in the age of the heroic epic the difference between gods and men is that the former are immortal and the latter must finally all die like the beasts. In the meantime, however, some men are made godlike and separated from nature by the favor of the gods, becoming heroes who do great deeds. The poet, that is, the man inspired with the gift of tongues, celebrates the hero and his acts. In the Middle Ages, the quality which man shares with God and which the creatures do not have is a will that can make free choices. What separates man from god is sin: that he can and does choose wrongly, love himself, act selfishly. The function of the poet is to exhibit the human soul tempted by competing loves, and to celebrate the ways in which she [sic?] can be redeemed. In the neoclassical period, the divine human quality is reason, the capacity to recognize general laws, and the function of the poet is to celebrate the Rational City and to pour scorn on its enemies. Toward the end of the eighteenth century--Rousseau is one of the first symptoms--a new answer appears. The divine element in man is now held to be neither power nor free will nor reason, but self-consciousness. Like God and unlike the rest of nature, man can say "I": his ego stands over against his self, which to the ego is a part of nature. In this self he can see possibilities; he can imagine it and all things as being other than they are; he runs ahead of himself; he foresees his own death... [omitted citation of Holderlin's *Der Mensch*]. If self-awareness and the power to conceive of possibility is the divine element in man, then the hero whom the poet must celebrate is himself, for the only possible consciousness accessible to him is his own..."

That brings us up to the Romantic Period. With this model before you, it should be a relatively easy matter to define the function of poetry for the modern and contemporary periods in 75 words or less. Additional points will be awarded for effective deployments of such concepts as "postmodernism," "pop culture," and the "death of the author." Points will be deducted for scatological puns on the word "function" (though references to "eschatology" are welcome).



steve shoemaker

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382. **Aldon L. Nielsen**

***Re: POETICS Digest - 23 Mar 1995 to 24 Mar 1995***

*Sat 25 Mar 1995*

---

I'm three hours behind most of you, and reading the predigested POETICS --  
\_but\_

To: Dr. Menard

Re: "Could anyone else have written this and still . . ."

RERE: "Funny that this should come up in the context of Creeley . . ."

Did any of y'all see that egregious piece on the Poetry Scene and Readings in the New York Times Book Review a few weeks back? The hack who wrote it reported the "Was that a real poem or did you write it yourself?" question as having been put to another poet at another time, post-Creeley -- indicating to me (unless it was the case that the questiner was alluding to Creeley and the dimwit poet who retells the story didn't get it) that Creeley's anecdote/title has entered the anecdotage of the MFA/AWP contingency as apocryphal text without attribution,,,rather like hearing Rosa Lopez report, through her interpreter, that O.J. had once told her that "poetry makes nothing happen."

Am I the only one who reads Auden's emphasis this way? that if we want to make "nothing" happen, we should write poems. A neat trick to confound philosophy. Where would we be without that nothing that is so difficult to produce? Thank Allah for the Arabic mathematicians.

Sincerely,

The Mark of Zero

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383. **thomas c. marshall**

***the hallmark of art***

*Sat 25 Mar 1995*

---

Art is form extending content. Many greeting cards, by Hallmark and other corporations, make use of this.

"Greeting" comes from a web of roots with a current usage showing at the surface in Scots dialect, expressing the idea of weeping or lamenting - mostly loudly. Poems have a range of registers.

"Turn that TV down while your sister reads her cards; then, you can have some cake." A Hallmark is not always a verse; is it?

And I would be proud to have written the works of Irving Mills, even when they don't express my sentiments exactly. "Doo wop doo wop, doo wop doo wop, doo wah."

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384. **Dodie Bellamy**

***Mystery Slasher***

*Sat 25 Mar 1995*

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From today's San Francisco Chronicle:

Mystery Slasher Gutting Books in South Bay  
by Michael Taylor, Chronicle Staff Writer

A mysterious literary critic, well versed in poetry, is slicing his way through libraries in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties, chopping out the contents of volumes of modern poetry.

Armed with a razor or matte knife, the unknown slasher has gutted books by such well-known modern poets as Philip Levine, David Shapiro and Philip Booth. The slasher leaves the books' spines and covers on the shelves, but takes the pages.

"Obviously, this is somebody with a problem," said Dave Fishbaugh, director of library services at West Valley College Library in Saratoga. "It's the most outrageous example of book mutilation I've seen."

Fishbaugh said that whoever is doing this has cut up about 150 titles at more than a dozen libraries in Milpitas, Morgan Hill, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, San Jose, Los Gatos and other South Bay cities. No suspect has been identified.

About two-thirds of the books that have been destroyed are out of print, Fishbaugh said, and are effectively irreplaceable.

Fishbaugh and other librarians say the slasher typically cuts out all the pages and then replaces the book on the shelf. The first case of vandalism was discovered at the end of January at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills.

"One of our shelvers-that's a person who puts books back on shelves--came to us and was very alarmed at finding a stack of covers and spines on the shelves," said Karen Gillette, Foothill's public services librarian.

"The books were gutted and then put back on the shelves, but they weren't in the right place. That's how we found out about this."

In addition to cutting up books, the slasher also carved up three years' worth of a monthly publication called Poetry Magazine.

So far, library officials have no motive for the vandalism. Some librarians think the slasher may want to steal the verse without triggering alarm systems that work off magnetic codes in book spines. Others think the thief may be scanning the poetry pages into a computer and creating a home-made poetry database.

Poets whose works were mutilated were perplexed and frightened. One hesitated to talk, thinking the slasher might cut up more of his books. Another said the culprit might be jealous over being rejected for a poetry anthology.

In Castine, Maine, poet Philip Booth—who had some of his nine books slashed at Foothill College—said, "It certainly seems strange to me that a reader of poetry would do this. If this person is going around the country doing this—hitting Levine and me in every collection—than maybe someday Philip Levine and I ought to check and see if there's someone in our deep past who is common to both of us."

At Poetry Magazine in Chicago, managing editor Helen Klaviter said, "The poetry world attracts people on the fringes, and one can never tell exactly what's going to happen. It could be someone who's not getting published or someone who disagrees with the way these people write. Maybe this person thinks these poems should be in a different style or form, or wants them to rhyme."

Asked how she felt about somebody slashing up her magazine, Klaviter said, "I'm floored, I'm speechless. But part of me is very grateful that it's my magazine that's being cut up and not me."

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385. **Jeffrey Timmons**

***Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)***

*Sat 25 Mar 1995*

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I want to thank Wynston Curnow (hope I got that right), Kris Cheek, and especially Karlyn Y-Mae Koh for their posts. Koh's post said all I could have hoped to have said on the matter and would defer to her on this matter—particularly as she articulates what it is I could only vaguely allude to with words like "MORAL" and "RESPONSIBILITY." I meant to be somewhat provocative with them and hoped to avoid being seen as advocating a role of Teacher/Prof as source of info into which it is poured into the student—accompanied by all the power/authority relations therein. My primary motivation—well-intentioned I assure you—was to confront what I see around me in teachers/profs of an attitude of cynicism about the endeavor they are engaged in. If (and this is not directed at any one in particular) teaching and, especially, "teaching" literature is only about making a living (or other narrow purpose) it would seem to me to be a major injustice not only to self but

student. Quite simply, "teaching" (and I prefer shared inquiry") is and should be political--but political precisely to the extent that it challenges the process that produces what Koh refers to as clones. And, further, political to the extent that power/authority in the classroom is shared. These are vague remarks, but I hope their imperatives are clear: responsibility is not ... domination; and moral is not my values are better than your's.

Jeffrey Timmons

"My mother is a fish."

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386. **Dr L.A. Raphals**  
**Joseph Needham (fwd)**

Sun 26 Mar 1995

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----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 1995 17:45:13 -0500 (EST)

From: Nathan Sivin <[REDACTED]>

To: East Asian Science list <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Early East Asia list <[REDACTED]>,

Nakayama Shigeru <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Joseph Needham

A little over an hour ago, Joseph Needham died peacefully in his sleep at his home in Cambridge, England, at the age of ninety-four. Until this last day, he maintained his habit of going to his office in the Needham Research Institute every day. It is too soon for an obituary, but many of those who receive this message will have received his always generous help with their scholarship, and will remember him not only for his enormous contribution to our understanding of Chinese culture, but for his wit, his imagination, and his sympathetic interest in everyone he met.

--

Nathan Sivin

History and Sociology of Science

University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia PA 19104-3325

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387. **I.LIGHTMAN**

**Re: Letter to the Editor (longish): The Panic of Jane Staffo**

Sun 26 Mar 1995

---

Dear Wystan,

Just to say (and in case this seems like just a personal, best backchannelled, NZ chat, I hope others might have seen some of addressing of the teaching issues we've all been discussing, in this discussion of a specific case), that I appreciated your witty "I who have destroyed the best minds of my generation", laughed aloud, in fact, and I appreciate the openness to discussion. I wasn't, in fact, attacking you personally at all, nor any of the persons I mentioned; as I said, I think you do do a really good thing. I was just saying the whole system you and I work in could be better, and perhaps "corruption" was an overly melodramatic word for "missed chances", and the fact that it always galls when it appears that someone one's own age is being preferred, either for classroom attention or publication, because they have honed themselves into a perfect disciple (which is always flattering for a teacher, and it remains, perhaps, the teacher's greatest responsibility to resist it), when their discipleship ultimately fossilises the past (reflecting on what was good about the teacher and his/her favourites) and doesn't release the present (the potential combination in the student of all the things she/he thinks will impress and all the other things she/he is editing out of her/himself). This is a complex issue, since sometimes it is the best thing one can do with one's life to insist on the greater relevance of a neglected past writer over all the writers currently living, eg the rehabilitation of Stein in the eighties. But such a sacrifice is often not what's involved in the teacher/student "missed chances" I'm describing, and usually happens precisely because there is no teacher to impress with one's passion from the past. One might see in this tortuous bad description of mine a way of explaining one kind of inheritance of a national or indigenous experimental or otherwise tradition, and what can go wrong with it. I really think that one of the very best young poets of New Zealand is a Wellingtonian called Max Anderson, who had three poems a few years ago in Landfall, and who I tried to encourage, as a friend not a teacher; as soon as I left Wellington, he gave up poetry completely, and moved to London, pretty much wholly out of lack of encouragement. He was into John Ashbery, Thom Gunn and Allen Curnow, and his own work was just wonderful, but he kept getting told he was too British, despite that being a third of his total influence. And of course in Britain he's not going to start up again, because he keeps getting told he's too kiwi. So it's not you in particular I'm attacking, because it's a kind of pack behaviour that is common all over - I could give examples from this university too, of a student who was the best pop culture theorist, taught me buckets, but who got discouraged and downgraded solely for his choice of subject matter and theoretical bearing (the equivalent of influence for a poet?), and is now a bitter and spiteful man -as he couldn't get funding to continue research without good grades. So what I mean by "corrupt" is exactly what Alan means by corruption in the mainstream, kneejerk phobias and pack behaviour, with really talented individuals discouraged over people who can recite back the formulae but, since they never had to do the work you

yourself did (and I love Cancer Daybook!) to set your own bearings. What a lot of avant-gardists think they're doing, in my experience, is trying to make it easier for the kind of rebel they were when younger, but they in fact don't. But I hope this isn't perceived as a monochromatic attack, just some reservations and criticisms; as i said before, the Auckland library collection is great, and was vital in my own researches and (exhausting, as yet undefeated) attempt to make my own way.

Best,

Ira

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388. **eric pape**

***Re: What does it do?***

*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

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Cris, I think you're dead on. The problem as I see it of Hallmark cards and other such genres (I can't think of anything else to call it) is that their primary function seems to be affirmative. Things aren't as bad as they seem, in fact they are pretty darn good. This is not a problem only related to Hallmark but kid's cartoons (care bears;barney) and sitcoms (where Johnny's anti-social acting out by throwing water balloons off the balcony are resolved when dear old dad turns the hose on his) and talk shows (have a problem with incest, let the expert andthe audience help you!). The function of all of these is to provide pseudo-solutions. This isn't to say that there is not he possibility of finding accurate criticism in these. Beavis and Butthead can be quite critical, and Oprah and Salt and Pepa have provided forums for issues most of us would like to suppress as deeply as possible. But it would be a mistake as I see it to forget their primary purpose which seems clearly to me to reassure. Thanks, Eric.

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389. **eric pape**

***Re: Letter to the Editor (longish): The Panic of Jane Staffo***

*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

---

Maybe the problems we've all been addressing, that of teaching, and what poetry does, can be said to be problems of mastery. Which is how we avoid the "bad faith of the professor," or the assumption that all can be known about anything. Whether we are teaching or writing, thinking can never stop; you can't ever pretend you got it all down. WHICH means sometimes that our students know more than us, in moreways than one.Which means when we are writing, its not always us who is writing, eh? Some thoughts, Eric.

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390. **cris cheek**  
***What does it do?***

Sun 26 Mar 1995

---

The crunch of this question as Kali Tal has focussed it lies in:

*work [which] forces us to confront events-in-the-world and allows no retreat,  
no relief.*

There are multiple ways through which poetry 'allows no retreat, no relief'. But here I feel disadvantaged as, being a limey, I've no idea what Hallmark cards really project. Am I right in thinking that they contain pretty much cliché sentiments to suit 'occasions of passage' or just express goodwill messages in ahandy 'off the peg' fashion?

'The President would like to say  
She hopes that you have a nice day'

If I'm generally at least in the environs of the Hallmark Ballpark then aren't these poetries intended to offer at the least 'relief' if not necessarily 'retreat'?

I'll stop there, in case I'm way off with my projected assumptions re Hallmark. Anybody help me out?

cris

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391. **Jorge Guitart**  
***someone gets a kick out of hallmark texts***

Sun 26 Mar 1995

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people who read work of the 'confront-events-in-the-world-&-allows-no-retreat-&-no-relief' type do so either because it makes them feel good [aesthetically or ethically or both] or because they are forced by others. The latter case includes people who are majoring in 'english' (as a nonforeign language?) & must read that type of work when it is 'required reading' whether or not it makes them feel good.

Not being able to retreat or experiencing relief (even thinking of those situations) makes me feel bad, so i always want to find out which works fall into the no-retreat/no-relief category so I can avoid them.

i am convinced that hallmark poetry belongs in the no retreat/no relief category. Many times it makes you confront events in the world (e.g. birth, death) and there is no retreat & no relief from sending or receiving them.

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392. **cris cheek**

***Re: Letter to the Editor / Why Teach?***

*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

---

>What a lot of avant-gardists think they're doing, in my experience, is trying  
>>to make it easier for the kind of rebel they were when younger, but they in  
>>fact don't.

Posted listwards as there are some general issues here although one or two of the characters are probably anglo-specific.

Ira are you only a rebel when you're younger - have you seen the Tony Hancock movie 'The Rebel'? I'm uncertain as to the applicability of terms such as avant-garde and rebel these days. I'm curious as to what you're suggesting - if you have a positive suggestion in respect of what you appear to articulate as an impasse for teachers as well as peers. Or are we caught in the hollowed walls of academe here?

1. I remember Jeff Nuttall once telling me of how, when he was Head of Department at Liverpool School of Art (or close) there were many students who had astounding facility with a line (drawing) - they could, in his sense, make a line do whatever they wanted. These were, in his view, highly skilled draughtspeople. BUT, he said, the ones with the 'natural born talent' (almost a saleable film title there I think) were often not those who went on to become 'professional artists'. Maybe, you could say, they just had more sense. But his point was that the people who became artists were those who 'wanted' to become artists and who pursued that - .

2. Eric Mottram was one of the poets with whom I made initial contact as a young, nineteen year old (sort of average undergraduate age) would-be poet. I learned a great deal from him and yet he was downright discouraging to my work for about two or three years. He was a useful poet to develop resistances against.

3. Poets who actively encouraged and promoted my emergent practices at that time, Bob Cobbing, Allen Fisher, Ulli Freer among others I considered to be both 'teachers' and 'peers' - although admittedly I never felt myself to be in a formalised teacher-pupil relationship with them. It would be my contention that anybody who enters the institutionalised education system (thereby syllabus, curriculum and government ideology) deserves everything that they get - and I say this as somebody who is now twenty years later enrolled as a student and bugging the hell out of my own 'teachers'.

4. This whole confrontation of being perceived and buttoned as too 'kiwi' or 'brit' and so on astonishes me. I find it difficult (i know I find everything difficult) to understand how anyone can take criticism articulated on such a



basis with anything other than the utter contempt it deserves. At the very least such resistances should be sufficient encouragement.

5. The desire for repetition (to hideously paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari) is the beginnings of the recognition of a need to mutate. The actual citation reads: 'Repetition is not the law, the finality of something; on the contrary, it marks the [I would say 'a'] threshold to "deterritorialization", the indication of a desiring mutation.'

Seems like this begins to propose an approach to the question Why Teach?

6. I do recognise the pack or clique behaviour you mention, the potential claustrophobia of prevalent 'taste' (the 'canon' of any consensual given moment) - happens again and again, particularly among male poets propping up the bar around reading series' notable for 'almost' cover to cover beefcake programming.

love

cris

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393. **Tony Green**

**Re: POETICS Digest - 23 Mar 1995 to 24 Mar 1995**

Sun 26 Mar 1995

---

Dear Aldon,

O.J. reading John Cage's Silence makes transposition from music theory to poetry theory. Good call!

Tony Green,

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394. **Tony Green**

**Who teach?**

Sun 26 Mar 1995

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Dear Eric Pape,           How about going further. Students know lots, but poets, painters, musicians also know things. So who teaches who is an interesting

question. "I am teaching Michelangelo to-day" should read I'm finding out what looking at X or Y or Z by Michelangelo has got to offer? Ergo, "Michelangelo teaches me"? Or you-name-it teaches. This is a problem of positioning of the subjects, -- whose roles in the class room are defined as teachers and students. Teaching is gross when it gets to be indoctrination, isn't that the issue?

Cheers

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395. **Tony Green**  
***Re: poetry v the sharp mind***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

---

Dear George Bowering, I cd check on "copies to self" for what words I used etc, but my point would be not my view of Olson as historian (I reread the Special View book [lacunae? and all]) every now and again)

, but the  
public perception among "bonafide" publishing historians in the  
history trade of Olson or his views. I love in Maximus  
the writing where the I

of the book is reading over manuscript documents in a  
library: ever catch anyone else doing this  
in a history book?

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396. **braman sandra**  
***hallmark and elite art***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

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Here in what, at least up until recently, used to be the center of cultural studies-land in the US, one actually feels quite beleaguered if one prefers Olson to Hallmark, or oil paintings to TV. The editor of the Journal of Communication, for which I edit the book review section, was considering doing a special issue of all those pieces that we'd love to write but are forbidden in today's climate. I proposed a piece on tolerating those who love elite art forms as acceptable deviants in a popular culture world focused on "difference"....

A question to those who run the list -- it seemed to me that while we were discussing whether or not to break the list up into different categories in order to reduce the amount of mail and produce more focused discussions, you've also much expanded the list in terms of numbers, without comment. Comment?

Sandra Braman

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397. **Joseph Conte**  
***Re: POETICS Digest - 22 Mar 1995 to 23 Mar 1995***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

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With regard to the subject of teaching and writing: In an APR interview from 1989, Donald Hall stated that he deplored the separation of creative writing programs from the teaching of literature (to grads or undergrads) because:

"If you teach great literature you live among the great models. You make your living reading Moore and Pound and Hardy and Marvell and Yeats! Incredible. Students ask you questions, and when you answer you discover that you knew something you didn't know you knew. Instead of living with half-baked first drafts by narcissistic teenagers [in workshop classes], you live with the \_greatest art\_. What could be a better way to spend your spare time--when you're not competing directly with Wordsworth--than be reading Wordsworth."

Other than the fact that I find teaching to be more than a "spare time" activity (if it's done well), I find Hall's rationale for the presence of the poet in the English department quite reassuring.

Joseph Conte

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398. **Tony Green**  
***making it up yrself***

Sun 26 Mar 1995

---

Yes, Ryan, anyone, in so far as the text consists of simply readily available words for numbes and a well-known conjunction. But only at a given place in a given situation would anyone think that that was a poem, for Pete's sake! Is that what you are saying? Do you read Thierry de Duve, whose intricate and rich meditations on this problem occur in English in "Pictorial Nominalism". Ready-made are the words, but their positioning, that's something else.

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399. **Tony Green**  
***Re: Hallmarks and What They Do***

Sun 26 Mar 1995

---

Dear Tom Mandel,

Months, it seems years ago, I asked what you meant by use in poetry and your recent post comes close to making something clear.

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400. **David McAleavey**

***DC Poets etc.***

*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

---

Hi Al! Welcome to see you here. In your post last Friday you said something which I've puzzled over, but haven't gotten clear: that DC poets "try to render the problematics and language and representation as literally as possible." I'm not sure I have much stake in the question, since I'm a resident of Arlington VA, but what =is= a literal rendition of the problematics of language and representation? Maybe you're suggesting that DC poets, close to the realities of political action, sense they need to be more straightforward in order to have an impact in the world? That's an interesting idea, and may be true of many poets around here (but not perhaps so true of those DC poets I know who are actually on this list). But I think I just failed to catch the sense you intended to convey.

As for the LC readings, I wonder if you're representing the situation around here accurately -- it's true that most of the readings are held at 6:45 pm, instead of 8 pm. The announced logic for this change (which still corresponds to the closing-for-repairs of the grand Coolidge Auditorium in the old, main Jefferson building of the Library) is that now people who want to attend after work before going home may do so. Apparently it was felt that people wouldn't come back to town, because of the logistics involved in commuting. And most folks who work in the District who have any interest in attending the kinds of readings sponsored by the L.C. face at least some commute, even if only to outer areas of the District. I guess I don't see how a 6:45 reading precludes DC residents from attending the readings. Of course someone may be worried that some people would be reluctant to come to "dangerous" Capitol Hill so late as 8 pm at night, and there would doubtless be some racism involved in such a hypothesis; but 6:45 is nighttime around here during a significant part of the poetry season anyway, and even the 6:45 readings don't get finished till close to 9 pm, certainly dark during the spring and fall portions of the LC schedule.

I don't know why we have a poet laureate -- I should say, I don't think we ever should have had to employ that honorific title. But lots of the Consultants in Poetry, like the current Laureates, kept their residences elsewhere. Some did spend a lot of time here in DC, and were locally admired for it. But the truth is the gig doesn't pay that well -- last I heard it was maybe \$20K-- but that's just a rumor whose truth I can't verify. Not much to live on here in DC -- though OBVIOUSLY more than many poor folks here have to survive on somehow. But if Rita Dove wants to spend a lot of time in Charlottesville, two hours away, that doesn't seem horrific to me.

On Fri, 24 Mar 1995, Aldon L. Nielsen wrote:

*As a former resident of the District of Columbia, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the U.S. Congress, I take the question of poets in the Republic rather seriously. We probably don't have to look to far for the reasons that the Library of Congress changed its poetry reading schedules so that most residents of D.C. would no longer be able to attend. Most of our recent U.S. Poet Laureates have made an insistence upon not moving to D.C. a condition of their accepting the position. One thing that D.C. poets try to do, even when living in California as I do, is to render the problematics of language and representation as literally as possible.*

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401. **Gabrielle Welford**  
***Re: poetry v the sharp mind***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

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Amazing, I just received on this list the message I sent out on the 19th. No wonder I have a weird sense of time.

Gabrielle

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402. **Ryan Knighton**  
***Re: making it up yrself***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

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*Yes, Ryan, anyone, in so far as the text consists of simply readily available words for numbes and a well-known conjunction. But only at a given place in a given situation would anyone think that that was a poem, for Pete's sake! Is that what you are saying?*

Yes this is the question but I'm not sure if that is what I'm saying. In fact, I only posed a question. But I don't know if I agree that "ONLY at a given place in a given situation " do words become poems. I whole-heartedly endorse found poetry: too much rhymes when you mind your prospects. And no I haven't read "Pictorial Nominalism". Should I?

Ryan

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403. **Tony Green**  
***1 & 2 3***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Ryan,

Reading could speed up discussion of the "ready-made" aspect, [not that speed is everything]. And the situation in question in the Creeley poem you introduced in here supposes a cultural situation in which that particular "piece" comes to be interesting, as much as anything for its seeming simplicity, and consequent confusion of the field of "what poetry is".

It still has that effect, I guess. Anyways, Thierry de Duve is a good read. I offer that as a recommendation of something pleasant and interesting for someone who raises the interesting questions you ask (not as some awful academic Duty.)

Cheers.

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404. **Blair Seagram**  
***Re: politics and poetry***  
*Sun 26 Mar 1995*

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I like what Gary Sullivan said to Kali. I know he was talking about reading for enjoyment but the message hits me in the following way.

Political statements can be poetry or propoganda or both. Propoganda can be the truth in a political context. But if it is poetry, the residue that is left will be regarded more for its aesthetic content than its political. Because politics has a way of being current and art has a way of being eternal or out of time.

Some artists or poets or whatever get to their essence by virtue of their politics and others stand outside it. I think someone like Joyce stood outside it but dealt with it continually. Someone like Virginia Woolf had to deal with it more directly, or maybe more personally, because she had a stake in changing a system she considered an injustice to herself and other women. Joyce didn't need to deal with that basic issue. All he needed to do was prove he was the greatest writer of the English language since Shakespeare!

Someone like Gertrude Stein, who I studied pretty heavily my 1st year of college and who gave me my lead into the world of visual arts, got around the women's issue by identifying with men as a man. However she looked down on

women for the most part. Virginia Woolf liked women, she held on to that in her writing. It seems to me she is a woman writer. Gertrude Stein wasn't really gender oriented in her writing. I like her audacity, her assurance and her love of artists and writers.

Then I think their are people who live what might be called poetic lives. In a large sense people like Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela are such people.

bs

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405. **Lindz Williamson**

***Pop will eat itself (fwd)***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

I've been lurking and mulling this whole thing over for a couple of days. I've always been a fan of Popism, Warhol has been my hero since I was a preteen. However I've never been a fan of Hallmark (I like far side cards) but I do see its place in the Forrest Gumpville, USA that has become ever so annoying and popular. But packaging and selling that warm fuzzy feeling is an aspect of Western culture that i look at as a very precise art form. Hallmark has to be given credit for that atleast. Playing off our guilt enough to convince us that Secretary's Day is viable holiday is pretty impressive. I think the reason we can't swallow Hallmark as art is because it masquarades itself as true sentiment. It's sells love and apologies. It prostitutes what is supposed to be near and dear for \$2.50 and seals it in a red envelope. Another amazing and similar consumer frenzy is going on in the long distance phone business, yet we aren't quite as threatened by that surge simply because it doesn't come to us in the form of verse. I don't know I'm sort of babbling, but Hallmark is Hallmark and poetry is . . . well I don't know, but I do agree with Warhol, i like my art with mistakes. The canvas never looks right unless it has streaks and smudges, that's how you tell its authentic.

Lindz Williamson

What I'd like to know is what is with the revial of the Western? I've noticed three definite themes reappearing in poetry, fiction and film using the western genre. 1) The wise old Indian stereo type, return to nature and the mother earth spirit. 2) The independent I am a cow girl so don't mess with me female empowerment in the Wild West, yet I will throw myself down to the one man that can tame me. 3) And finally the its ok white boy your not all that bad, not all of you are blood sucking colonialists, some of you can read keats and castrate a bull all in a days work.

Can anyone give me any insight?



Lindz Williamson

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406. **Lindz Williamson**

***Re: politics and poetry***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

I really like the idea of Hallmark as propaganda. It's a secure medium of which everyone is familiar, a perfect place to hide enforcements of proper social behavior from Middle america. Who knows maybe it's a plot? Or am I just becoming paranoid?

Lindz

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407. **Ron Silliman**

***Espouse NOW!***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

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The following message is from the American Arts Alliance:

URGENT   ACTION ALERT   URGENT

SENATE BEGINS DEBATE ON THE PROPOSED FY 95 RESCISSIONS

GRASSROOTS CONTACTS NEEDED

ISSUE: The Senate Appropriations Committee, chaired by Senator Mark Hatfield (R-OR), just announced that it will consider the FY 95 rescission package this Friday, March 24, with floor consideration anticipated as early as next week. Like the House bill, which passed last week, the Senate proposal is expected to contain \$17 billion in spending cuts -- over \$5 billion to pay for California emergency aid and \$11 billion for deficit reduction. The House bill also contains a \$5 million cut to both the NEA and NEH. (The House NEA cuts are targeted: \$1 million from its administrative budget and \$4 million from unobligated program funds, most of which is directed at individual fellowships.)

Last week, arts advocates scored a victory when the House defeated, by a vote of 260 to 168, an amendment that would have tripled the NEA funding reduction in the House bill from \$5 to \$15 million. Defeat of the NEA amendment is significant because sponsors Phil Crane (R-IL) and Cliff Stearns (R-FL) implored conservative House Democrats and Republicans to support deeper cuts in the NEA's budget.

SENATE ACTION NEEDED: To register broad based support for cultural funding, we need you to get in touch with your Senators and urge them to oppose any funding reductions to the NEA and NEH. WE URGE YOU TO CALL

YOUR SENATORS BY FRIDAY MORNING, MARCH 24. Express your opposition to NEA funding cuts by using the sample message below. The congressional switchboard number is [REDACTED].

#### SAMPLE MESSAGE

The Senate soon will be considering a rescission package to this year's (FY 95) budget. Please oppose any attempt to cut NEA and NEH funding.

The NEA already has suffered budget cuts over the past several years. In fact, the NEA's budget has lost nearly 50 percent of its purchasing power over the past 15 years. The agency is playing its part in deficit reduction.

Such cuts have limited the agency's ability to serve the American public. Both the NEA and the NEH are wise investments that merit national support. These cultural agencies help your constituents. These agencies' investments help generate jobs, create a competitive labor force for the future, revitalize communities, improve education, enhance tax bases and stimulate economic growth, increase tourism, and improve the development and growth of auxiliary services.

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408. **John Geraets**

**(no subject)**

Mon 27 Mar 1995

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409. **John Geraets**

**Letter to the Editor (Longish) re-**

Mon 27 Mar 1995

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Q: What's the difference between a good langpo and a tree?

A1: Nothing.

A2: Everything.

A3: The Answer, like the Question, is beside the point.

A4: The tree, unlike the langpo, isn't preoccupied with defining its position. It occupies it.

Take your pick. I like A4 (& not just cause it's longer). Does theorize mean think about or write about what you think about - or maybe do these things in specific contexts or forums - as per this LIST.

If I ask, what makes me feel welcome here, what's my qualification being here (apart from the gender and de-lurker invitations, which are lovely and help), I'd say it's cos I'm interested in intellectual discussion, specifically langpo-type speculations. This of course means I like the company, very much, even if I don't know the quality of your social or other lives. Right now, don't care.

So, it's a kind of community - I mean, there are commonnesses operating huh, of interests, of reading, of a pleasure in theorizing. Of stimulation and the pleasure - yeah maybe power too - of expression.

Poetry and its theorizing I think don't have social or political or what have you functions. Maybe the sense of responsibility comes from the feeling that we owe our patrons, now that our patrons/the market are in good part the state, hence society.

I mean, it's opportunity and proclivity that connects us. What are the personal costs against the pleasure of being on the LIST - does it come down to being a university-sponsored, mail- (oops, male-) dominated thing.

The loop that leads back from such theory to its sponsoring society must necessarily get mediated beyond recognition, it's dishonest to claim responsibility for ourselves. At most, such responsibility is an indirect thng.

Now maybe it's the processes of mediation running too & from langpo and its theorizers, job appointments, books published, conferences, earnings, what have you. But theory has to do with what it theorizes, in this case literary stuff (&itself).

It seems to me typically literature doesn't do well patronizing the patron.

By the way, Tony, with the place you give sound/voice in poems where do you leave someone who just happens not to have heard poetry aloud, or a deaf someone. I can't see the disadvantage.

Surely one sensitivity being blocked serves well to open others?

John Geraets



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410. **Ron Silliman**

***NEA Appropriations Hearing***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

The House committee on appropriations will hold a meeting to consider '96 funding for the NEA on April 5 at 10:00 AM in Rayburn B308.

As noted previously, getting the House to authorize and appropriate are the two most critical steps in saving the NEA.

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411. **John Geraets**

***re Letter to the Editor (Longish)***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

(oops just sent off the wrong post, bloody unix system, sent this one friday w/o success, here goes again..)

Hi Alan, Wystan, Tony (especially)..

Got to say I feel supportive of Alan's Stafford rebuttal - same time can I push at the side of it rather than just forming a scrum with you guys.

I'd like to speak as a friend and someone with aligned writing intersts.

I'm uncomfortable with indignation as a form of literary address. I think it already assumes a mandate and is too affordable. It knows better than what it addresses. I can't see the writers involved haven't fully adequate resources available. Alan, Wystan, Michele, Murray, Tony, Roger, Alex, all teach at AUckland University. All have texts published, most by reputable publishers. AUP recently published Michele, Murray, Alan. All the writers above have been involved in editing NZ literary magazines - Parallax, And, Splash. I've seen good serious reviews of all writers. I reviewed Alan I think appreciatively in Landfall. You guys - we

guys - have surely been given some chances and taken many more.

Marginalism is as much self-induced as conferred, surely. How do Wystan's demolition job on modernism (in Parallax) and Alan's on CK Stead (in Island) differ from any other attempt to get the high ground? We've gone harder at discrediting other literary practices, at least as hard, I think, as they us.

I'm saying these things cause I'm currently writing on NZ literary practice/s. Also, cause this is something I've talked/mailed about with Wystan and Alan. Also, cause I submitted a proposal for public funding in early '93 for a magazine which involved most of the names above (yes, that was turned down, and wrongly I believe - another story).

Also, I've been writing poetry in and out of this group over several years and while I've felt tremendous personal support it has not been (for me) an endorsement of my achievement as such. How such endorsements work is subtle and of course often sensitive. My books have been self-published and hand-sold. They've been read in public and sometimes reviewed. A brief postcard I received from Charles Bernstein after sending him a copy of Itsan meant maybe more than other responses I got. People support what they like (and what likes them too, which is natural), I like my work so who should I ask to write seriously about it? My sense is, of the people I've mentioned, maybe Tony has had least mainstream recognition of his work/s? Would you care to comment on your experience visavis the mainstream, Tony?

Who's allowed to complain, who's allowed to insist on being read let alone read a certain way? I don't think the values appealed to in the name of poetry have and superior merit. In fact, the ethical dimension of writing as it stands is, I believe, illshaped and outdated. Charles and I both say Alan's a 'terrific' poet: in our game, how does one weigh the sayer with the said?

So, I support Alan but I don't go with the dialectic it espouses. It's too proper an idea of writing and writing's public for me. I place this response here because I'm interested in literary practices and want to say something personal, as a friend and fellow writer,

from Japan, thru a computer based in Buffalo (where?)  
across the screens of a no. of Americans and others  
(what would hold them to read this far?) to my  
mates in Auckland.

John Geraets



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#### 412. **Robert Drake**

##### **Re: westerns**

Mon 27 Mar 1995

---

*What I'd like to know is what is with the revival of the Western?*

*I've noticed three definite themes reappearing in poetry, fiction and film using the western genre.*

*1) The wise old Indian stereo type, return to nature and the mother earth spirit.*

*2) The independent I am a cow girl so don't mess with me female empowerment in the Wild West, yet I will throw myself down to the one man that can tame me.*

*3) And finally the its ok white boy your not all that bad, not all of you are blood sucking colonialists, some of you can read Keats and castrate a bull all in a days work.*

*Can anyone give me any insight?*

*Lindz Williamson*

a book i'm always ready to recommend: Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*, on the ambivalent american relationship to nature/wilderness/"savage", and its expression in AmLit. also, Annette Kolodny's *Lay of the Land*, w/ a feminist analysis of some of the same issues...

lbd

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#### 413. **Edward Foster**

##### **Re: Who teach?**

Mon 27 Mar 1995

---

yes: WHO teach? and when the teaching is by those who are strictly readers/critics, what's taught? mostly ways to read and criticize, in my experience. lots of theory says its all the same game: reading/writing. sure, and the moon is a pumpkin.

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414. **Edward Foster**

***Re: Why Teach?***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

cris: computer acts weird today, so i repeat, differently once more, just in case other message didn't travel: responsibility's become "i respond even if you don't ask," which is arrogance, it may be, of teacher, poet, etc. who is (yr sense) responsible.

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415. **Jim Pangborn**

***Wot Dey Doo***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

Discussion here has come to an interesting pass--step back, observe the weave of many threads:

One set of voices asks what poems/pages/teachers/students/greetingcards/cowboymovies can/may/should/must do. Literally: "what's the use?" The correct answer to these, taken together, is "many things: too many to count on the off-hand." This is a vague answer, thus not very popular in academe. Too bad. Many here voice this position, at least by implication, to which chorus I add my own. I won't tell poets what to do. And I have found, sadly, that academic description all too often turns into prescription. (I have no such compunction, though, against telling critics what to do or where to go.)

But another set of voices, which shares some membership with the first set, answers according to academic habit by specifying one or a few possible uses as if those few were the only correct or worthy ones. Another, only slightly better way of doing this is to rank the potential uses on a seemingly vertical scale, high as opposed to low (and "cultural studies" bouleversement of that scale does nothing to remedy the fundamental authority problem inherent in academic habitude--a rank order turned upside-down is, as has been observed by others here, still a rank order and still dependent upon the criteria that ranked the \*old\* order).

Walk to the front of a classroom and you walk into a role in the imaginary drama each student writes for you--that is, ten, twenty, fifty different roles at once. You'd better believe you're not always going to play the good-guy. Regard yourself as a co-investigator and soon you'll be sued by students who believe they're paying good money to have facts force-fed to them; go the opposite way and you're unjust toward those who would have thriven on co-operation. Sorry: no amount of tips can help you totalize this one. But it's okay. Some of my best teachers were my worst ones: the ones who motivated

me to show that bastard a thing or two. Happens all the time. You cannot control the student's reception of your efforts by applying some particular technique. You (we) can, however, try to respond openly and flexibly to the multiplicity of students' wants and needs. (Again vague, this is as precise a formulation as the problem affords.)

Political responsibility does not amount to either going along with or else opposing a cultural hegemony. It amounts to exercising one's share of power in group decision-making: far more of a gray (grey, for you Kiwis) area than the either/or of hegemony theory. I don't use greeting cards because I would consider it lazy \*for me\* to do so, not necessarily for my neighbor. (I also think Hallmark markets their product in an unethical way by inventing occasions on which my friends and relatives will feel hurt if I don't plunk down my couple of bucks on the right sort of card, but this has nothing to do with the verses per se.) The sentiments they express can support, oppose, or take any number of more complex positions toward "the culture." Generally the funny ones ironize our common problems, which can assuage bad faith or spur good faith efforts to change things; once again, the effect is not and cannot be totally controlled. And that's a good thing.

--Jim the Scrivener

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416. **maria damon**

***Re: Letter to the Editor (Longish) re-***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

to john garaets: this multiple-choice thing reminds me of wole soyinka's famous dismissal of the negritude movement: "the tiger doesn't announce its tigritude, it just pounces." this (which he later qualified to the point of retracting) has always seemed to me disingenuous, in that phatic self-declaration --and indeed self-reflectivity and -reflexivity --are not only a major part of human cognition and expression, but also of non-human animal behavior (the "mating dance," etc --highly ritualized self-representation). how do we know that trees, too, do not exist in the main to announce their tree-ness? best --maria d

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

- > Q: What's the difference between a good langpo
- > and a tree?
- >
- > A1: Nothing.
- > A2: Everything.
- > A3: The Answer, like the Question, is beside the point.



> A4: The tree, unlike the langpo, isn't preoccupied with  
> defining its position. It occupies it.  
>  
>

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417. **Aldon L. Nielsen**

***Re: POETICS Digest - 25 Mar 1995 to 26 Mar 1995***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

Now that Kato's testimony has been interrupted for the day, I want to respond quickly to a number of disparate postings:

Help? Bob Kaufman's poem "The American Sun" includes a ref. to "Arthur Farnsworth Television." Haven't been able to ID this -- Can anybody tell me who Arthur Farnsworth is/was? Maria or any other Kaufman readers??

I'd hate to see such a binary opposition as Olson v Cultural Studies gain currency. Some of you may recall the amusing episode in Olson studies when his ref. to "Durante" was misread till somebody wrote in to the Olson journal to point out the obvious, that Olson's ref. was to the Schnoz himself. I don't happen to find Hallmark verse engaging myself, but it is certainly an interesting cultural phenomenon -- And how will we write those pesky Norton Anthology footnotes if we don't know about this stuff?

Now, in answer to David MacAleavey (who others on the POETICS line will not know was one of my dissertation readers long ago).

Will have to give you a fuller response elsewhere, as I'm on a machine that does not belong to me this week (one that makes it nearly impossible to correct anything!) -- but quickly -- as to point one -- cf, maybe "Can the Subaltern Speak" and \_What Comes After The Subject\_ -- as to the other points (don't have the posting [or postage] in front of me) -- Well, yes, I will admit to hyperbole (this will hardly surprise you) -- but I suspect that the rationale you mention for the change in reading schedules at the Library of Congress, that people could attend on their way home from work, is the sort of thing that seems sensible to a group of people meeting on the Hill before going home to the suburbs. I am prepared to find that I am horribly wrong about that -- I imagine that rationale might hold true for the early shift at the Government Printing Office, but I doubt that this move has demonstrably increased the participation of DC residents in the series. And no, there's nothing particularly horrific in Rita Dove's decision to live at home in C'Ville with her family & near her tenured position -- Things are a bit different (though still not horrific) when the poet lives, say, in a noncontiguous state & makes a point of repeating slighting remarks about the local literary culture to the national press. (For

those not familiar with the odd history of such things, one quickly learns not to make predictions about the matter based on the published verse. William Meredith (who comes in for brutal treatment in an Olson poem) was one of the LOC Poetry Consultants most supportive of area poets.

& No, I see no reason for us to have a Poet Laureate either,,, but I see that as no bar to my interpreting the remarks of Brodsky, Strand and a few others as somewhat shortsighted -- This is in the nature of a symptomatic reading -- We can judge Professor Newt by his first appointment of a House historian, and I think we can derive lessons about governmental attitudes towards the literary arts from the history of the LOC --

anyway, as the unmatched parentheses above confirm, I can't backtrack on this compture to correct anything, and so will speak more directly of these things in person -- will be there in June! Good to hear from you after all these years.

Now, my additions to our group reading lists:

\_Dictee\_ by Theresa Hak-Kyung Cha -- just reissued by 3d Woman Press & available through SPD -- this one is a must!

& from the land of the still out of print --

\_Dunford's Travels Everywhere\_ by William Melvin Kelley -- a real surprise -- check your local university library for a copy.

Lastly, I don't know why the list of participants was expanded without comment, but I will confess to having added myself to the list without comment -- Sorry -- I don't know what came over me --

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#### 418. **Charles Bernstein**

##### ***The List Itself***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

Sandra Braman asks about any increase in the number of people on this list. As of today, there are 200 subscribers to Poetics. So, yes, the list grows by a few people every week. The policy on new subscribers has remained the same all along, and there are no plans to change it: the list is private, but anyone who finds out about it (usually through another list member but also through discovering the list by browsing EPC) is free to subscribe. I continue to see the advantage of keeping the list to a smallish scale, but then I don't know what smallish means in an environment as big as the internet. (In a talk on Friday, at UB's conference on the internet and related issues, Loss Glazier quoted some remarkable statistics on the day by day growth of the internet; perhaps he will post those here.) The paradox is that in an attempt to be open and nonexcluding one can end up excluding those who are unable to handle the

volume: people are drowned out rather than kept out -- until Dreamworks Interactive, Inc., guides us and we asphyxiate. If people on the list have thoughts about this, please let me\us know.

\*\*

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

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

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419. **cris cheek**  
***plus A to Z minus Interpretation***

Mon 27 Mar 1995

Eric, Jorge and Lindz - hope you don't mind. I love it. Thanks I quite agree and somehow understand

*The problem as I see it of Hallmark cards and other such genres (I can't think of anything else to call it) is that their primary function seems to be affirmative. Things aren't as bad as they seem, in fact they are pretty darn good. This is not a problem only related to Hallmark but kid's cartoons (care bears; barney) and sitcoms (where Johnny's anti-social acting out by throwing*

*water balloons off the balcony are resolved when dear old dad turns the hose on >his) and talk shows (have a problem with incest, let the expert and the audience help you!).*

*The function of all of these is to provide pseudo-solutions.*

*i am convinced that hallmark poetry belongs in the no retreat/no relief category. Many times it makes you confront events in the world (e.g. birth, death) and there is no retreat & no relief from sending or receiving them.*

*I really like the idea of Hallmark as propaganda. It's a secure medium of which everyone is familiar, a perfect place to hide enforcements of proper social behavior from Middle america.*

respect  
cris

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420. **Bill Luoma**

***Re: westerns***

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

I was obliged  
by your baked beans.  
They measured out  
to ten tumbleweeds. You  
also bought new fangled  
bedrolls and employed them  
against the coyote sounds  
of the night. I called you  
my little insulite pad.

The prairie gives off long  
when we roam. You built  
a fire to warm our socks.  
Grateful night critters  
blinked at the shadows.  
The buttes got mangy.

Your horse sense  
kept you away from  
the strip mining  
contracts. You got  
nuggets in the pan  
at Trinity Center.  
The mountain folk  
didn't no ways

stand you off.  
Your pockets  
were full  
of gold.

Barkeep, take my gun  
for safekeeping.  
I wish to bathe  
the trained longing  
of my whipper snapper.

I played with the fur  
trappers while you  
were on the trail.  
I struck it up  
with one of the lonely  
girls from Abilene.  
She spoke highly  
of your playing habits.

I want to crouch around  
your merry mack.  
Zoom Zoom  
says the rider.

My strums are for you,  
saloon girl. Fanciful  
flouncing is your game.  
I reckon only your  
bosom is level headed.  
Give me a kiss  
before high noon.

The cook returns  
the ladle to the chuck  
wagon. O friendly  
ground, tonight you'll  
substitute for my lover.

The gray puffy clouds  
roll in the afternoon.  
We don't yield as much  
to the gracious outline  
of the sun. I've seen you  
holding the rifles. You  
learned about animal sex

from hunting. You can  
empty shells.

Our horses break  
the sod. Buzzards  
circle the roundup.  
I wear a Stetson  
in Kansas City  
to impress you.  
This is how I go  
about courting.

The paper fan  
delivers sweet air  
to the back of your neck,  
my angel. Your cowboy  
wings fan the drafts  
of the Southwest. I  
present to you my  
newly-oiled chamber.  
Are you ready for  
the back country  
of my love.

You continuously build  
such campfires. And you  
announce your greed. I am  
all tied up by your silks.  
The big night pretends  
to put it out.

You wear a leather mantle  
against the dust. You make  
coffee in the morning.  
You make the range  
a reflection in your  
golden spurs. Please draw  
that six and squeeze me  
off a few rounds.

You can leave  
your chaps on,  
partner. But that  
gunbelt is in the way.

The rifleman  
is a strong emotion.

We left shotgun  
pellets behind us.  
We left groves  
of trees wondering.  
We left coyotes  
trying to join  
our love yelps.  
You old horny toad,  
wait till after  
I cook up the rabbit  
on a spit.

To stay up with the moon  
and you and tequila. I kept  
feeding the fire.  
The corona broke  
and we saw the sage.  
You said you saw  
everything. Wolves  
were howling.

Remember the buffalo  
bread you baked? I've  
never met a better baker.  
You sure can shoot, too  
and throw a steer  
on its side at the rodeo.

We needed to water  
the horses. You sniffed  
it out. The leaves  
stroked the water  
in its hidden places.  
The animals drank.

The creatures don't protest  
our take over of this spot.  
Not if we deal them in,  
the cicadas, the prairie  
skeeters and the vast  
distance of it all.

My bedroll is wet  
with morning dew.  
I must find my breakfast.  
Nuts and berries are  
plentiful, but the brush  
is rustling with  
animal sound.

I started cooking  
over the fire. I put  
in a few irons too.  
I may do some  
touch-up branding  
of your rustled cattle.

Sing me a song about the range,  
my love. I've heard a few  
sad ones about the Big Valley  
and the Grand Canyon.  
Please, seduce me again  
with your sad songs.

You panned for gold  
in Placerville. Do you  
still have that burning  
pain? I know what  
happened in the mining  
accident wasn't my fault.  
I turned on the high-  
pressure hose out of love.

I would be careful  
of that branding iron  
if I were you, in your 501s  
and sheepskin collar  
jean jacket. The irons  
are hot now. They'll  
be blackened any minute.

The marks of your territory  
stand guard against the squatters.  
Everyday hands are mending  
your fences. I don't mind  
the barbs. I'm your ranch



hand. I do the job  
with pride.

The rushing river ends  
up slow and brown  
in the prairie. I am  
completely in love  
with your profile  
against the mountains.  
Your head moves up  
and down with the horse.

Last night I ate mushrooms  
in honor of the time  
we tripped over the range.  
I stepped in a cow patty  
that reminded me of your hat.  
Diamondbacks were  
hanging from the scrub.  
You dowsed the earth  
and made the heavens roll.

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421. **Gary Sullivan**  
**low?**

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

Sandra, here's some Olson for you t'make you feel better:

"...unlike India, the soil, here, is most shallow, a few inches, & only occasionally, in drift pockets, 6 inches or more. So the struggle of the roots is intense. But a long time ago the boys beat it this way. It's grass that is the big enemy of maize, the only real one, for they burn off the bush, before they plant. But grass keeps coming in. And in the old days, they were able to stand it off - for as long as seven years (the maximum life of milpa) - by weeding out the grass by \*hand\*. But then came the machete. And with it, the victory of grass in \*two\* years. For ever since that iron, the natives cut the grass, and thus, without having thought about it, spread the weed-seed, so that the whole milpa is choked, quickly choked, and gone, forever, for use for, maize (grass is so tough it doesn't even let brush or forest grow again!)

"One curious corollary, that, the Communist future of this peninsula will have to reckon [sic] with: that, the ground is such, and its topography so humped & rocked, that, still, the ancient method of planting - with a pointed stick, and sowing, with the hands - is far superior to any tractor or planter or whatever."

(\_Mayan Letters\_)

So odd, I think, someone (not you, Sandra) complaining weeks ago about this list "degenerating" to discussions re: "crop rotation." Discussion of crops not beneath Olson; why so beneath his readers?

Felt similarly w/respect to your "high" vrs. "low" culture complaint/post. Were "sports" beneath Pindar? Tenth century Japanese "correct" vs. "noncorrect" behavior (read: "gossip"--& her pillow book's filled w/it) beneath Sei Shonagon? Whaling beneath Melville? Sappho, Catullus..."vulgar"? \_I Remember\_ and \_My Life\_ wonderful because about things seen in the Louvre? How much "high" art is, in fact, excusively \*about\* "high" art? Even Joyce wrote lovely little bits about farting. (The topic for two solid weeks on an e-space list devoted to Joyce.)

I love Olson, Sandra, but've found the discussions on this list re: Hallmark much more interesting than the solemn "Achievement of Olson"- acknowledgments here a week or so ago. Just 'cause Olson's name's dragged into the discussion doesn't mean the talk's gonna be all that lively or informative.

I know of no interesting writing that hasn't, specifically, addressed the civilization in which the writing was done. TV & Hallmark (or Hallmark-equivalent) are part of contemporary civilization. Seems natural they come up as topics of discussion here.

The rich  
will make temples for S'iva.  
What shall I,  
a poor man,  
do?

My legs are pillars,  
the body a shrine,  
the head a cupola  
of gold.

Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,  
things standing shall fall,  
but the moving ever shall stay.

--Basavanna 820

Dust or flesh--to use Dahlberg's distinction--, Sandra?

Gotta run, now. Academy Awards start in 15 minutes & I'm popcorn boy.

Yours,

Gary

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422. **braman sandra**

**Re: low?**

*Mon 27 Mar 1995*

---

Gary Sullivan -- Enjoyed your post and I completely agree with you. Was only meaning to say in my recent high/low comment that it shouldn't have to be that one is laughed out of town if one enjoys Pindar and Olson as well as sports and Hallmark. I'd let ALL flowers bloom.... In fact, I about got thrown out of graduate school my first semester in when, as I say in a poem about Rodin's mistress, "never was socialized well," I screamed out "bullshit" in an auditorium full in response to a professor trying to sell the high/low distinction....The guy wouldn't talk to me for two years, and it didn't do much for my effort to get support, either.... There's no dispute between us on this point, Gary. Sandra

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423. **Lindz Williamson**

**Re: Bill's westerns**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Thank you your poem expressed the exact elements of the "Wild West" that I was discussing. I don't want to be mis interpreted, I do like westerns and even more I adore horses. I'm just interested in how the Mythical cowboy has emerged once again in the decade of the politically correct. Not that I want to discuss that nightmare. I just finished Cormac McCarthy's "All the Pretty Horses" and was puzzled by its mass appeal. I found it varying and inconsistent in content and style. I was equally swept away and disappointed. The language of the west is poetic as it combines old world English with New world experience, but being a history major I feel it takes far more than a few catch phrases to represent an era. Historically the representation of the western is very problematic. There are sensitive issues of race, sex, religion and property ownership to be addressed. The western of the 50's and 60's never bothered to address these concerns and that is what has become the stereo type of the perception of the west. Ondaatje has written an excellent docupoem about Billy the Kid, but it content it reinforces the mythology of the Wild West. I'm not sure if this is good, bad, or accurate but it concerns me. Possibly this is because I've been reading Ovid, Tacitus and Virgil, and I've been wondering how much of their poetry, histories and accounts are actual history or gossip or poetic mythology. I spoke once with George Bowering and he told me of a discussion he had with Ondaatje about writing a western without all the "Hoo-ha". Ondaatje replied writing a western without the "hoo-ha" would be total hoo-ha. If this is possible then does that mean the stereotypes are so

ingrained in the genre that to remove them would create something entirely different?

Yippe-kay-ya  
Lindz

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424. **Gary Sullivan**

***Re: low?***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Sandra: Yes, we're definitely in agreement. Great of you to yell bullshit, when most'd only think it, in a crowded room. Reminds me of an anecdote a poet in Hoboken, NJ, Joel Lewis, told me. He was teaching a poetry class (at the Y, I think) and relating an anecdote to his students about the first time he'd seen Sapphire read (or was it lecture?). Sapphire'd started in on some apparently anti-Semitic spiel, and a woman in the audience stood up and started yelling as loudly as she could, no one could figure out what she was saying, just standing there yelling at the top of her lungs. Well, as Joel's relating this anecdote to his class, he notices one woman growing more & more uncomfortable, wanting to say something, and finally she blurts out: "I \*was\* that woman!" She goes on to explain to Joel & the class that she had been so horrified by what Sapphire'd been saying, she'd had to drown it out, but couldn't think of anything to say, so she just "lost it," stood up and began shouting SENTENCE FRAGMENTS off the top of her head to block out the offensive spiel coming from the stage. But, back to the point. Yes, no one should be laughed at for preferring wonderful poetry to drivel. I haven't been in a university for 10 years, so don't know what the climate's like, but it's true enough that poets are often seen, when seen at all at large, as clowns. There's a wonderful bit in *\_The Sullen Art\_*, I think the interview with Rexroth, where Rexroth's complaining about how Ginsberg (this is early 60s) plays into this, by giving magazines like *\_Time\_* ample opportunity to cast him (& I guess, other living poets, by association) in the role of village idiot. (Having just seen his performance yesterday in *\_Poetry in Motion\_*, I've no problem following Rexroth's logic. Ginsberg's no moron, but man can he play one on TV.) Do you know Gerald Burns's book, *\_Shorter Poems\_*? Gerald's on the cover, in clown make-up & bowler-- he wrote me about it once: "Writers are not just ignored. We are laughed at. We're a joke, wear big shoes and red noses." But, given that this is an e-space of POETICS, I don't think you need at all be worried about being laughed out for your "elitist" preferences. I'd \*hope\* not, anyway. Beleaguered on occasion, maybe, & if I've contributed to that, I'm sorry. The only reason I responded to your post as I did was because I'm by nature admittedly paranoid, get a little spooked when people mention anything

smacking of "list management." That probably wasn't even on your mind, & in any case, want to apologize for overreacting. Anyway, Sandra, no big whoop, & best w/your article. (You'll post it when you're through, yes?) Yours,  
Gary

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425. **Wystan Curnow**

**Re: low?**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Gary,            Re-Poetry in Motion and Ginsberg being no moron but playing one on TV. I didn't read it that way. I thought he was great. And THAT suggests something of what's involved in moving across borders between 'high' and 'low'. It's one thing to have the attitude...its another thing to do the hi-lo shuffle. (there was a singing group called the Hi-Los once) It's a good while since I last heard AG perform, but over the years I have greatly admired his risk-taking. Again and again he would prove that someone who won't be embarassed doesn't embarass. A deep confidence that will prove itself. I don't know how long that sort of thing can sustain itself nor what exactly are the conditions which enables to be achieved. Let's imagine a reading of Hallmark verse, what would that be like?            Wystan.

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426. **braman sandra**

**no big whoop**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Gary -- Was referring to Champaign/Urbana, not this welcoming e-space, in my post about feeling beleaguered. Despite the Cary Nelson's of this world, or in some ways because of....

By the way, on the gender issue -- just read that only 5% of net users are women, so it seems to me this list is doing just fine....

Which article is it you wanted to see posted?

Sandra

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427. **braman sandra**

***The West***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Surely, Lindz, you know George Bowering's fabulous CAPRICE, a novel in which all the stereotypes of the West are turned on their heads, and of course Ed Dorn's SLINGER, the epic poem upon which some of us were raised and that does the West the way the West was meant to be done.... And then, if I may, I would recommend Douglas Woolf's WALL TO WALL, a novel which depicts the West as it really was/is.... Sandra B

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428. **Michael Boughn**

***Re: Bill's westerns***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Lindz:

Just caught your latest post after getting back from a matinee of \*The Wild Bunch\* after rereading C. McCarthy's \*Blood Meridian\*. I guess I think it's just too simplistic to speak of some singular "western" of the ninties (as it is to speak of this as "the politcally correct decade"--somehow I don't think that's Newt's agenda). It was wild seeing Bill Holden and the bunch again all these bloody years later, and the ways in which the movie (which seemed so outrageous 25 years ago) is so deeply infused with the romance of 60's "outlaw politics"-- (this on the day after the EU accused Canada of Wild West politics and piracy off the grand banks--yahooooo, get out yer wire cutters, Bri, ain't nobody nettin' us in--the iconographic problem here being, are we the ranchers or the sheepherders?).

Compare it with McCarthy's \*Blood Meridian\* (which is much less sentimental than \*Horses\*) or for that matter Eastwood's \*The Unforgiven\* and you begin to approach the complexity of the issues here. I don't think it's ever been a question of simply deploying "stereotypes" (for the ultimate of that cynicism, see F. Gump). Compare, for instance, \*Wyatt Earp\* with \*Tombstone\* which came out within six months of each other, and which treat all the mythologems of the Earp myth differently (especially the famous shootout story where the Earp gang gets pinned down by the Clantons at the river and Wyatt gets up and walks into a hail of bullets blasting away unscathed. \*Tombstone\* has it as a kind of divine intervention, where Kevin, to give him his due, portrays it as a kind of mindless, desperate luck--but now we're into \*Pulp Fiction\*). Which is the "nineties" version?

Anyway, all this by way of saying, yeah, yahoo, but whose yahoo, and yahoo how?

Best,  
Mike



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429. **Ron Silliman**

**Bob Kaufman & Hallmark**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

>Help? Bob Kaufman's poem "The American Sun" includes a ref. to "Arthur >Farnsworth Television." Haven't been able to ID this -- Can anybody tell me who Arthur Farnsworth is/was? Maria or any other Kauman readers??

>

My posts from work seem not to be getting out to the net. So if you see a second answer to this in the next few days, it's only because some systems engineer has toggled a switch somewhere....

But, Philo T. Farnsworth (a great name) was one of the early inventors of television, did much of his work in SF and has a plaque to his achievements on a wall on Sansome Street in North Beach, just across from the large Hunan Cuisine. Kaufman would have walked past that plaque on a regular basis. Don't know where the Arthur comes in, tho....

Also, back to another post I made that never got out, Darrell Gray worked for Hallmark in the late 60s or early 70s, right after MFA school, and gave me the impression that some of the other Iowa City grads did likewise. When I was in KC two years ago, I stayed at the hotel right next to the big mall that Hallmark "sponsors," and noted that their corporate tagline read:

"Hallmark, America's largest producer of greet cards and social expression products."

Productizing social expression does seem to be what it's all about.

Ron Silliman



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430. **Mn Center For Book Arts**

**Re: The West**

Tue 28 Mar 1995

---

I'd also recommend Dorn's Captain Jack's Chaps, or HOUSTON/MLA, which brings the West into the contemporary Modern Language Association context, Hyatttexture, and more. Also bp Nichol's version of billy the kid , THE TRUE EVENTUAL STORY OF BILLY THE KID, in Nichol's CRAFT DINNER (Aya Press, 1978), is marvelous.

charles alexander

On Tue, 28 Mar 1995, braman sandra wrote:

*Surely, Lindz, you know George Bowering's fabulous CAPRICE, a novel in which all the stereotypes of the West are turned on their heads, and of course Ed Dorn's SLINGER, the epic poem upon which some of us were raised and that does the West the way the West was meant to be done.... And then, if I may, I would recommend Douglas Woolf's WALL TO WALL, a novel which depicts the West as it really was/is....*  
Sandra B

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431. **Edward Foster**

**Re: POETICS Digest - 25 Mar 1995 to 26 Mar 1995**

Tue 28 Mar 1995

---

aldon: philo taylor farnsworth invented the tv, first working model c. 1927. established farnsworth television and radio (research org.) later. don't know the source for "arthur" -- maybe kaufman misremembered. maybe "arthur" made better sound/music.

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432. **Lindz Williamson**

**Thanx pardner**

Tue 28 Mar 1995

---

I agree to dismantle the stereo type the genre is too simplistic, but what I think I'm hung up on is the aspect that this medium is full of myth that a lot of people take as the truth. ( Out of 1000 Americans polled around 49% thought F Gump was a documentary, but after the Oscars last night I will now go into convulsions if I hear one more Gump quote) I suppose part of the building of the west was a dream, the last frontier and all that but it makes me wonder about how I am represented by this. My father grew up along the Oregon trail, living on reservations as his step father built the rail line. The way he describes



it there was no romance to this lifestyle. He spent lonely summers in the hills cooking for the sheep herders and to this day he will not ride a horse again. This was no Wyatt Earp world. My ancestors hailed from Norway and Scotland settling in Utah to do the homestead thing and then pushed on to Central Oregon. What I would give to know how they lived. Looks like I have a western of my own to write.

And for my recommended reading list Howard O'Hagon's \*Tay John\*. This novel is epic tale of Western myth. However, it has been critiqued for slight misogynist undertones, but personally I haven't found one that doesn't find women contemptable.

Lindz

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433. **Ryan Knighton**

***Re: The West***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

I agree with Sandra that there are most definately examples of contemporary gunsmoke engaged in a shootout with the genre. In fact, I wuld go so far as to say that the genre is becoming the story in works like CAPRICE and SLINGER. I suppose its the differnce between writing about the wild west and The Wild West. Lindz, you might also want to take a look at Nichol, Spicer and McClure's \*Billy the Kid\*s. Ah yes, "Billy had a short dick but they did not call him Richard". You card.

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434. **Loss Glazier**

***Chapbooks at EPC***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

This is a call for your out-of-print chapbooks / books that you might like to put in the EPC author library. Here's the scoop, the UB libraries have received authority from the US Dept. of Educ. via OCLC (a library consortium) to catalog Internet resources. We are very lucky that they are considering some of our EPC texts for full-scale cataloguing. What this means is that texts will be noted through a lot of library catalogs. SO send me a note if you are interested in this. It's a terrific opportunity! Loss

---

<< Loss Pequeno Glazier >> . <<  >>

Co-administrator, Electronic Poetry Center

>> <http://writing.upenn.edu/internet/library/e-journals/ub/rift>

Co-editor, RIF/T: An Electronic Space for Poetry and Poetics

>> [REDACTED]

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435. **Gary Sullivan**  
***To Sandra & Wystan***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Sandra & Wystan: Sandra, in your original post you'd mentioned an editor asking you & others to write about something "forbidden," and you'd mentioned possibly writing about the intolerance of elitism. That's the article I'd meant. Would love to read it if you do it. Wystan, I like what you say about Ginsberg's proving time & again that someone who won't be embarrassed doesn't embarrass--I think that's accurate w/respect to his intentions, and I think in some cases he even proved as much; though, I do wonder how much of that gets used as an excuse to sluff off responsibility. I guess I know one too many younger poets he's aggressively hit on, casting-couch style, to give the guy complete benefit of the doubt w/respect to his "good" intentions. W/respect to his performing his "rock music" as "risk taking"--no difference between that & the first-time open-mike-nighter, up there reading the first thing s/he's scrawled to paper. Nothing wrong with it, but can't help but think that if it were anyone but Ginsberg up there being that incompetent, no one'd give him the time of day. My idea of risk-taking involves something more than exercising one's "star power" (a great song by Sonic Youth, btw) and, while I do have a lot of respect for Ginsberg as a poet, I guess I don't see the value in everything he does, myself. Would never ask (or even want) him to "stop the madness" so to speak, but reserve the right to hit the VCR's "mute" button & put on (say) something by the Hi-Los when he gets tedious. Or to question anyone's "Just Do It" approach when it involves (say) sexual harassment.

Yours, Gary

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436. **Michael Boughn**  
***Re: The West***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

To paraphrase Ryan Knighton, west is west and West is West and never the twain, etc. I think Wyatt Earp's got more to do with Enkidu than Oregon.

Onward . . .

Mike  
[REDACTED]

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437. **Edward Foster**

**Re: POETICS Digest - 25 Mar 1995 to 26 Mar 1995**

Tue 28 Mar 1995

---

aldon: re: "arthur" in "arthur farsworth television," i'm wondering if that's arthur godfrey, who was sort of mr. television in the fifties. just a guess.

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438. **braman sandra**

**To Gary**

Tue 28 Mar 1995

---

Well, Gary, of course it's just the problem with forbidden topics that they remain forbidden, and as far as I know that Journal of Communication issue never got beyond pipe dream stage.... Sandra

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439. **Tony Green**

**mainstream avoidance?**

Tue 28 Mar 1995

---

Dear John Geraets,        That question might well be private, but you've asked me on this list, how I've fared with the mainstream : so briefly, I have not been anthologised in NZ (Michael Morrissey asked me for a piece of fiction, I sd no; nobody else has asked me). Three little books were published offset from my old Sharp electronic typewriter (a machine that was subsequently near demolished by my kids). "Software" was published by Splash, but I was an editor and typed it, photo-copied and designed cover from my own photos. Distribution of the first three was by hand, knocking on doors and sales at readings. Software went thru the Splash distribution list, assisted by Segue. Most sales "by hand" or exchanges. One piece in "Landfall" only because Michele Leggott edited a special number. The "her axolotl" poem (20 years ago went where?....)in a magazine. Graham Lindsay gave me space in Morepork, Alan Loney in Parallax, , otherwise that's about it.

I never wanted,don't particularly want, a literary career.

The record for art history is about the same. I edited the Bulletin of New Zealand Art History (with Michael Dunn) for about nine years) and when there was a shortage of copy I wrote more to fill it. The two little Poussin books are in photocopy, A5, off my typewriter, but in the NZ General Assembly for copyright

purposes. These were distributed as gifts mostly, or sold to students by the department of art history for \$1 each, cost.

What I have had printed in quantity here is art criticism and art journalism and essays for catalogues. That's pleasant enough, and what the Mainstream thinks I'm useful for.

John Byrum, in Ohio, was hospitable and included pieces in Generator I and 2. That was through the friendship of Tom Beckett (who introduced me to the extraordinary work of Frank Fecko, and later to Frank, when I visited him in 1987 or 8). I have done very little about trying to publish poems etc otherwise. And I don't work at writing poetry that much anyway.

I have always though my most interesting relation with text is in the classroom esp in seminars.

U.S. readers of this all know by now where the delete button is....but that is about right for the info you asked for.

Best,

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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440. **George Bowering**

***Re: Rilke Quote***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

The quotation I use is one by M.D. Herter Norton. I have no idea whether it is better or worse than others. In the 1984 Continuum edition of the Works.

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441. **Wystan Curnow**

***Re: The West***

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Mike.

I thought that was Hyatt Earp? Could be wrong--it's not my

culture.  
Wystan

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442. **George Bowering**

**AG**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

Of course, sure, Ginsberg often hits on young guys. He never denies that--in fact, mentions it from time to time. What is he supposed to do: hit on old guys? If the young guys are smitten by fame, well, Allen isnt going to make them pay for it.

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443. **Jorge Guitart**

**hallmark and social expression**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

we poets are social expressions of social expressions.  
we consume poetry and are consumed by it  
hallmark users consume hallmark cards but are not consumed by them: they just use them.  
hallmark poetry is applied poetry. nonhallmark poetry is theoretical poetry except for the kind that allows no relief & no retreat which is also applied poetry.

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444. **Jeffrey Timmons**

**Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons) (fwd)**

*Tue 28 Mar 1995*

---

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 1995 21:11:09 -0700 (MST)

From: [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons)

On Tue, 28 Mar 1995 [REDACTED] wrote:

> problem here is suggestion that politics is prior to poetry or that poetry should be used to engender political activism. when poetry is used to illustrate politics or fulfill it, then you don't have poetry

but politics.

>

Oh, you're roping me into territory I'm not responding to directly. I was just taking issue with . . . --god, what was it?--a characterization of teaching as being simply about earning money or some other equally vulgar end (as necessary and nice as earning cash for our labor in that underpaid enterprise is). And now that I think about it perhaps what the real problem is is people who continually try to divorce politics and the classroom and, even poetry from politics (now that you've lured me here), because that seems to me to "aestheticize" aesthetics to the point of triviality that simply reinforces the marginality of the arts to culture and society so that not only are they not studied but continue to fall away from any sense of having to do with people's lives. Separating the areas of life you suggest is the problem. It only reinforces the view that art is art and has nothing to do with anything else. If there were a pernicious "political" view it is this.

I hope you don't mind me posting this to the list . . .

Jeffrey Timmons

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445. **FUNKHOUSER CHRISTOPH**

*I'm a loser, baby / so why not delete me . . .*

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Blame Charles Bernstein who in Buffalo  
friday

asked there be in this space a reminder of the presence of D I U ,  
\_descriptions of an imaginary univercity\_, an electronic  
"poetry" journal assembled by the logic of snowflakes

newest issue featuring ( orange flowers of ) yes!

\*\*\* a communique from Subcommander Guantanamo Bey \*\*\*

! of the anti-hegemony project !! !!!

& other delicacies

Sub via 

also , 2 issues of \_Passages\_, a recently birthed "technopoetics"  
(that's anti-copyright, share-ware to-the-max)

"magazine,"

Conceptedited by Chrissy Funk Funkster

advisory edited by Jellie Belle , Burnin' Beano  
& Donald Jaybird is available at your computer now.



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446. **Aldon L. Nielsen**

***Re: The West & The rest of Us***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Actually, this is a test, late night on the West Coast, of the reply function with a revision in the subject line.

Thanks to Ron & Ed for the PhiloFacts -- Couldn't find "Arthur" in my wife's Television Encyclopedia, and missed Philo all together.

Soyinka will be speaking in L.A. April 13 & 14, in all his tigritude, for any of you in the area who might get there -- UCLA -- check with African Studies Program for info.

Just finished reading Cesaire with mostly white and Asian-American students at San JOse State; found the students interestingly interested in "negritude," far more so than I would have expected in these days of the California Civil Rights Initiative.

Lastly, a title I forgot to include in my brief addition to our reading lists. There's a great chapbook from Chusma House by Alfred Arteaga, titled Cantos. Here's a taste from the first section:

X antecanto: the xicano sign

These cantos chicanos begin with X and end with X. They are examples of xicano verse, verse marked with the cross, the border cross of alambre and rio, the cross of Jesus X in Native America, tha nahuatl X in mexico, mexicano, xicano. It is our mark, our cross, our X, our sign of never ceasing being born at

the point of two arrows colliding, X, and at the gentle laying of one line over another line, X. It is the sound we make to mark one and other. August 29, familia, raza, as well as to exclude ourselves from the patterns of death imposed from without. We sign the X each time we speak we cross at least one border. And because it is our sign andamos cruzando cruzados, naciendo siendo xicanos otra vez, cada vez, esta vez. I am the point of my own X but the arms, los brazos vienen de lejos, and the arms reach far.

Nacido, East Los X3; Escribo, San Jo X4: AA

----- remember Edgar Poe xing his paragraph? Might also look at a collection of essays Arteaga edited, for Duke University Press, titled *\_An Other Tongue\_*, which includes a good essay by Arteaga.

Charles, you know Alfred, tell the Buffalo contingent about him!

xxxx

a.l. nielsen (Al-Don X) \_not\_ Dan

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#### 447. **Lindz Williamson**

##### ***back to poetry***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Blair stated

"Political statements can be poetry or propaganda or both. Propoganda can be the truth in a political context. But if it is poetry, the residue that is left will be regarded more for its aesthetic content than its political. Because politics has a way of being current and art has a way of being eternal or out of time."

I dont believe that I can agree that art or poetry is out of time or eternal. True western culture worships the written word enough to transcribe and save texts, yet so much is lost too. I love the phrases and glips of poetry left behind by Sappho, but I do not know her true intention in writing unless I study the time in which she has written these verses. Her words have lasted time, but has her context?

In English lit we are blessed with an abundance of writers that annoy and study each other so it is easier to preserve the implied connotations or the motive of the writing. In that sense politics of the era, the social mood are essential to eternalizing the "art". Words are words and only become poetry when they have meaning. Cultural aesthetics are needed to appreciate and render something into art, but these are not eternal and definitely not universal.

Lindz



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448. **Mark Roberts**  
**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

*This is a call for your out-of-print chapbooks / books that you might like to put in the EPC author library. Here's the scoop, the UB libraries have received authority from the US Dept. of Educ. via OCLC (a library consortium) to catalog Internet resources. We are very lucky that they are considering some of our EPC texts for full-scale cataloguing. What this means is that texts will be noted through a lot of library catalogs. SO send me a note if you are interested in this. It's a terrific opportunity!*  
Loss

*Hi Loss, yes I'm very interested in this. Can I be naive and ask how do I get involved - I'd be keen to do two things, and they might require completely different approaches.*

*1. To submit a kind of selected of my own work for an author site, would include visual work, text work and sound work - sometimes all three interlinked versions under the same title.*

*2. To have some old chaps both by myself and others I've published - Allen Fisher, P.C.Fencott, Chris Mason and others - catalogued.*

*But you might be confined to U.S. authors or publishers.  
Just curious, as always*

*If you are then in what format would I submit? Who does the formatting?*

*respect  
cris*

Is this just limited to US publishers? I've got a handful of out of print titles that I would be interested in sending in - and I'm sure there would be other small Australian publishers who would be in a similiar position.

Mark Roberts

Australian Writing OnLine

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449. **maria damon**

**Re: POETICS Digest - 25 Mar 1995 to 26 Mar 1995**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

is't possible that "arthur farnsworth television," while being semi or two-thirds historical (minus, apparently, the "arthur") is also an extended anagram for both "art" and "fart"? from kaufman the satirist i'd believe it...--m damon by the way, who was "elissi landi"? i know elissa landi was an italian film actress, but why would kaufman use her name? anything special about her?

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

- > aldon: re: "arthur" in "arthur farsworth television," i'm wondering if that's
- > ar
- > thur godfrey, who was sort of mr. television in the fifties. just a guess.

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450. **maria damon**

**Re: hallmark and social expression**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

lovely!--md

In message <[REDACTED]> UB Poetics discussion group writes:

- > we poets are social expressions of social expressions.
- > we consume poetry and are consumed by it
- > hallmark users consume hallmark cards but are not consumed by them: they just
- > use them.
- > hallmark poetry is applied poetry. nonhallmark poetry is theoretical poetry
- > except for the kind that allows no relief & no retreat which is also applied
- > poetry.

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451. **Ron Silliman**

**Arthur Godfrey, Allen Ginsberg**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

The Arthur Godfrey suggestion (re Kaufman & Farnsworth) is interesting. It set off some loose associations...

I was surprised at how thoroughly Godfrey in particular and his generation of music in general dominated Ted Berrigan's 1959 record collection (see appendix to Padgett's wonderful \_Ted\_) and how much rock and its various

protoancestors were NOT represented there. It made me wonder about musical influences on the poetry. I've heard both Bernstein and Watten wax quite eloquent on the subject of the influence of Bob Dylan on their work. Me too. Meeting Dylan at Newport in '64 was once the highpoint of my life.

And certainly several members of my G1 generation have fantasized themselves as rock stars at one time or another, ranging from the successful (Patti Smith, Jim Carroll, Laurie Anderson) to the whistfully silly (Serpent Power w/ Coolidge & Meltzer). Burroughs collaborating w/ Anderson does seem to show what's possible. And lets not forget the Fugs.

Ginsberg on the harmonium reminds me simultaneously of Bly and his idiot dulcimer, but also of the peculiar problematics of being Allen Ginsberg as well (if I were feeling more generous, I might imagine that Bly faces similar issues). Ginsberg is perpetually confronted with reading to large audiences that have very little knowledge of his genre, his generation, his anything. His performance works of the past 15 years or so seem to me to address precisely that conundrum. They don't work on the page at all, but they aren't really intended to. The Don't Smoke piece (don't even know if this is in print) is a terrific piece of theater, which is really what it is.

On the other hand, Ginsberg is at heart a satirist (this he shares w/ Bernstein & perhaps Perelman also) rather than an epic poet, say, or a lyric one. I've been struck in the past 6 months how much the performance model for both Ginsberg & Bernstein seems to be, say, Lenny Bruce (or George Carlin or Andy Kaufman or Lord Buckley) rather than who? Dylan Thomas? Paul Blackburn? The model seems to propose very difference functions for a text in the setting of performance.

McClure once told me that his generation "missed the boat" when it failed to convince the 60s rockers (thinking, I think, explicitly of the Grateful Dead & the Doors) that they needed to get their lyrics from the poets. All those royalties....

On the other hand, Robert Hunter (who IS the Dead's chief dramaturg) has been a very sympathetic reader of many people on this list & has read in public with the likes of Palmer, Hejinian, Watten, Harryman & Yrs truly.

Go figure.

Ron Silliman



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452. **Jonathan A Levin**

**Buffalo talk**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

List members in Buffalo--

No, it doesn't star Rock Hudson and Doris Day, alas, but my "Wallace Stevens and the Pragmatist Imagination" will come to you live at 2:00 Friday, March 31, at 309 Clemens Hall. To repeat what I've back-channeled some of you, it's adapted from my book-in-progress on pragmatism and American literary modernism (largely, in the book, Henry James, Gertrude Stein, and Stevens). Hope to see some of you there.

Jonathan Levin  
NYC

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453. **Edward Foster**

**Re: Why Teach? (Jeffrey Timmons) (fwd)**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

no, it's not art for art's sake, but a question, literally, of what comes first. no one these days could argue, i trust, that aesthetics are sufficient, but one might argue that the poem is such insofar as it fulfills its own necessities.

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454. **cris cheek**

**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

*This is a call for your out-of-print chapbooks / books that you might like to put in the EPC author library. Here's the scoop, the UB libraries have received authority from the US Dept. of Educ. via OCLC (a library consortium) to catalog Internet resources. We are very lucky that they are considering some of our EPC texts for full-scale cataloguing. What this means is that texts will be noted through a lot of library catalogs. SO send me a note if you are interested in this. It's a terrific opportunity!*  
Loss

Hi Loss, yes I'm very interested in this. Can I be naive and ask how do I get involved - I'd be keen to do two things, and they might require completely different approaches.

1. To submit a kind of selected of my own work for an author site, would include visual work, text work and sound work - sometimes all three interlinked versions under the same title.

2. To have some old chaps both by myself and others I've published - Allen Fisher, P.C.Fencott, Chris Mason and others - catalogued.

But you might be confined to U.S. authors or publishers.

Just curious, as always

If you are then in what format would I submit? Who does the formatting?

respect

cris

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455. **Gary Sullivan**  
***Call for submissions***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Sandra, that's a total bumner about the Journal of Communications. But, if you want to consider writing & publishing such a piece somewhere, here's an address for you:

EXILE

Curt Anderson, editor

P.O. Box 1840

St. Paul, MN 55101

Curt's always looking for material for this quarterly newsletter-style journal, & frankly, as I'm the first person he hits up for work when he (inevitably) finds he needs more material, you'd be doing me a favor writing something for it. That goes for anyone on this list, by the way. The magazine's mostly made up of book reviews & satirical pieces, but Curt wants to publish more "serious" things if he can.

Anyone interested in seeing an issue of the thing can write to the address above, or e-mail me w/your snail-mail (I've got a few extra copies of the last issue sitting around.) Subscriptions are \$2.50 for 4 issues, or the equivalent in stamps.

Also, if anyone'd like their books or MANUSCRIPTS reviewed, send 'em to the same address above. (Curt's especially looking for manuscripts to review.)

Yours,

Gary

PS: Tony Green & other NZers: Worry not about us in the States hitting "delete." Of the posts over the last couple of weeks, I've most enjoyed the NZ stuff, myself. Keep 'em coming.

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456. **Gary Sullivan**  
**Ginsberg, Sorrentino**

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Returned to my copy of *The Sullen Art* to check who'd said what about Ginsberg & discovered it wasn't Rexroth but Gilbert Sorrentino who'd been talking about him. Here's the quote for anyone interested: "Allen has always annoyed me because, of all that group of so-called Beat poets, his is an outstanding intelligence, and it constantly annoys me that he allows himself to be used. Certainly not used by other poets, but by the people who have always hated poetry--the vested interests, the commercialists, the buyers and sellers. Ginsberg can talk for an hour about how he loathes *Life*, *Time*, *Fortune*, money, banking, and *Life* and *Time* will spread-eagle him on the wall with his own words. His words don't have the power to destroy *Life* and *Time*. That's why he gets so much space in them and one of the reasons he is so used by them. He's not an enemy of *Life* and *Time*--he *is* an enemy in his own heart, as every poet must be--but they're not afraid of him and they make the fool of him. "It's very peculiar. It's a reversion to Romanticism. It's the Romantic scream against the watered-down principles of Locke, which controlled the 19th century. As the Romantics screamed against Locke, they made Locke righter. The more they said 'Down With Locke,' in so many different ways: 'I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed,' et cetera, the more they continually made Locke seem right. Locke was wrong. But they didn't prove it so. He said, or was taken to have said, when his philosophy was watered down a hundred years later, as philosophies always are for the people, 'Poetry is junk--evanescent, something to curl up with on a winter's evening. It has nothing to do with life.' The old cry of the businessman. So the Romantics said, 'That's right, Locke, you bet it is.' And they just kept screaming about the wild blue yonder. It wasn't until the 19th century Frenchmen that poetry once again became what it is--something having to do directly with life, something that can be used to control your life, something that can be used to make your life a better thing. They got back to the concrete, they got back to the world that Locke accused them of rejecting." Don't know how much I agree w/the above, especially as I was born after the interview took place so don't know what, specifically, was going on re: *Life* and *Time* and Ginsberg's words being "used against him." Would welcome elaboration or repudiation of what Sorrentino says by anyone who was there at the time. Yours, Gary

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457. **Kit Robinson**

**West**

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Reply to: West

Pardners,

Don't forget Clear the Range, a western novel by Ted Berrigan, written using the cross-out method on a dime paperback.

It's hilarious, stately, and strange. Like Bill Luoma's campfire songs, it says something about formality, loneliness, and wide open space, key elements of the western ethos. Berrigan also speaks often of The Code of the West in his Sonnets.

For a contemporary working out of neighboring thematics, check out Merrill Gilfillan's Sworn Before Cranes (Faber & Faber 1994). It's a beautiful book of short stories set on the High Plains mostly among Indian people the author has known or visited.

See you round the ridges,  
Kit Robinson

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458. **eric pape**

**Re: Thanx pardner**

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

I too feel a kind of personal stake in both the mythicizing (word?) and de-mythicizing of the American west. Up 'till my great grandmother died a few years ago, I heard much of the journey west, but more of what happened once they settled in the California desert. What's interesting for me is that most of these stories fit fairly comfortable within the myth. Hardship overcome and all that. But there have always been disturbing hints of things that might not fit, at least to my family. Hints about family being hung somewhere, a picture of an old man dated 1878 with something scrawled on the back that may be "almost hung," plus a lot of hints about major drinking problems. Further and most disturbing to my grandmother, were the hints of racial mixing. Before GG died, she used to tell stories about being ostracized in her community. When my mother asked why she replied that she was Indian, but no one else in the family talks about this, and most of us are blonde and blue eyed. Also, once when I showed my great uncle a picture of my great great grandmother, his mother, he chuckled and said (please excuse the language but I am only

quoting) "nigger in the wood pile." Hints betray both attitude and uncertainty. My point is that I think there is a reason for a lot of this mythmaking, a lot of the tall tales, and that is to disguise. Disguise exactly what is not the myth: the crimes, the banality. The everyday nature of the murder of native Americans and Chinese, and Mexican Americans, certainly in CA, where it was probably the worst in the country. In my family, the myth certainly had this function. Disguise that the West is still a secret. Two books I would recommend: Richard Drinnon's *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Meridian, 1980) and Lillian Schlissel *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (Schocken, 1992). Drinnon's seems a little obvious now, but still interesting, the Diaries are incredible. Thanks, Eric.

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459. **Tim Waples**  
**Re: Ginsberg's "Don't Smoke"**

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

According to Ron Silliman:

- >
- > Ginsberg is perpetually confronted with reading to
- > large audiences that have very little knowledge of his genre, his
- > generation, his anything. His performance works of the past 15 years or
- > so seem to me to address precisely that conundrum. They don't work on
- > the page at all, but they aren't really intended to. The Don't Smoke
- > piece (don't even know if this is in print) is a terrific piece of
- > theater, which is really what it is.
- >

Ron and others,

I'm enjoying this thread immensely. And I think Don't Smoke -- the real name is "Put Down Yr Cigarette Rag" -- is superb. I believe it's a great way to introduce Ginsberg to students, bringing in political concerns and improv/open field type ideas at once. Even the frat boys in their baseball caps look impressed...

The text is printed in *First Blues* (Full Court Press, 1975). I haven't sprung for the CD box set yet, but I do know you can get the performance on cassette from the Smithsonian's Folkways series. Call [REDACTED] to order or for free Folkways catalog.

Tim Waples  
[REDACTED]

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460. **eric pape**  
**Re: Who teach?**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

Absolutely Tony. Basically all I was saying is that indoctrination is "gross." But I like what you've done with this kind of triadic structure of the classroom (at least as I see it). You've got a text, which is assumed to be known, you've got a teacher which is assumed to be knowing, and you've got a student which is assumed to be unknowing. It's basically an analytical situation of the early Freud years (funny how that works), ie, ucs, analyst, analysand. The problem with this in the classroom is that it is static (and here we are talking about a worst case kind of thing). There seems little room for interaction, and above all for resistance (of the text of the master of the student). It's so darn structural! This is what I think we have to get rid of, perhaps by team teaching, perhaps by more radical methods. It seems to me that to be a teacher means always to be a student of the resistance of the text to interpretation and of the student to indoctrination, and of above of our own resistances to the fact that we aren't masters of the material and that the material cannot be mastered. Thanks, Eric.

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461. **Alan Golding**  
**Arthur Godfrey, Allen Ginsberg**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

Associate Professor of English, U. of Louisville

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

Ron:

Maybe your associations re Allen Ginsberg aren't so loose. Just this past semester a student in my contemporary poetry seminar wrote a paper on Ginsberg and Lenny Bruce as urban Jewish performance poet satirists . . .

Alan

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462. **Tony Green**  
**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

---

Ditto to some of Chris Cheek's qs -- + correct snail-mail address Thanks

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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463. **Tony Green**  
**Re: Thanx pardner**

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Eric,        An NZ equivalent cd be the stories of Spanish ancestry going back to the Spanish Armada of 1588, accounting for dark eyes and colouring among Anglo-Scottish families. One woman that I know who has a Maori grandmother said that that was the story in her family for a long time. My wife's family maintain the same story about themselves, which leads to, as you say, a kind of interesting "uncertainty"....

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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464. **Loss Glazier**  
**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Cris,

I am responding to you via the list since it is an important question. I have gotten a number of questions personally on this but I do want to explain this somewhat more.

Basically, I am a poet and writer, etc. but I have worked for years now in this world of the library. As one might note from my book, *\_Small Press: An Annotated Guide\_*, a lot of my effort has been getting the "marginal" into routes that facilitate people connecting with what I would think we might agree are important works.

Here then, the "rub." That is, this is an unprecedented opportunity. This OCLC project I have mentioned is not only one of the FIRST efforts at making etexts available through library catalogs - as well as world-wide interlibrary loan systems - but it is incredible that we have been able to negotiate the presence of POETRY in this important project.

I have worked very hard for this and I think this is a historic moment, we are seeing a possibility for poetry to be made accessible to many many thousands of people.

OK, more coming further in this post...

*This is a call for your out-of-print chapbooks / books that you might like to put in the EPC author library. Here's the scoop, the UB libraries have received authority from the US Dept. of Educ. via OCLC (a library consortium) to catalog Internet resources. We are very lucky that they are considering some of our EPC texts for full-scale cataloguing. What this means is that texts will be noted through a lot of library catalogs. SO send me a note if you are interested in this. It's a terrific opportunity!*

*Hi Loss, yes I'm very interested in this. Can I be naive and ask how do I get involved - I'd be keen to do two things, and they might require completely different approaches.*

*1. To submit a kind of selected of my own work for an author site, would include visual work, text work and sound work - sometimes all three interlinked versions under the same title.*

*2. To have some old chaps both by myself and others I've published - Allen Fisher, P.C.Fencott, Chris Mason and others - catalogued.*

*But you might be confined to U.S. authors or publishers.  
Just curious, as always*

*If you are then in what format would I submit? Who does the formatting?*

1. There are NO restrictions as to nationality, etc. This is not an "American" thing.

2. I would prefer texts marked up in html but will accept ascii submissions. I would feel even better if you are committed to converting the ascii texts to html; I would of course provide advice and direction.

3. You may conceive of texts - selected, collected, an individual series - however you wish. This is simply like publishing a chapbook. It could be any permutation of your complete work as you see suits your work. (In this regard it is perfect - make your piece and we present it to the world.)

4. Multimedia formats are NO problem. If you are in this situation I will work this out with you individually. You will need to use html though, to present these works. Graphical files must be .gif files. Sound files must be .au (unix format) though I am working endlessly to mount a program here that will convert, so that you may submit these sound files in other formats.

Note: Ken and I ENCOURAGE multimedia gigs. In fact, that is the strenght of the Internet, no?

5. Yes, you may submit work by other authors as long as you have permission.

OK - let's make it happen!

All best to all on the list,

Loss

for Loss Pequeno Glazier and Kenneth Sherwood  
in collaboration with Charles Bernstein

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465. **Tony Green**

***Re: Who teach?***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Eric, assuming in the classroom and out that students know in the sense of are responsive as teachers are is not difficult to do. It's hard to find any evidence for a contrary assumption. What students are unlikely to be able to do is locate a "text" (or "image") within the always ongoing process of criticism/evaluation/history of that "text". Cross-referencing opens the "text" to renewed attention, in which students are often great contributors. Yesterday (anecdote, anecdote....) Anna Tam asks why -- in tutorial after lecture -- the boys (attendants of Flora in a Triumph of Flora have black wings, what is that on the ground, a head?) and the rest of the group climb in. Best thing is I hadn't thought about that (is there an explanatory text somewhere a la Panofsky?) and the current literature doesn't cover it, so this opens questions, and Anna is off to try to make sense of this herself. (If only I weren't so caught up in other classes to-day on something else altogether....) Describing pictures (for M.A.) students has got around to describing a particular small brick wall (prize of \$5 for the "best") this week. The bit I put in was a reading of Pound's Agassiz story (ABC of Reading)-- the fish + discussion on last week's descriptions.... Fine, until someone starts to worry about quantities of information (communication of messages) in the class. Isn't that where the authoritarian structuring of classes has a firm hold; or in the demands for execution of specified form-filling exercises, with the expectation of fulfilling discipline norms established in advance, getting the right answers in one shape

or another. But just in case I sound smug in any way, let me also say, woken by thunder and sounds of heavy rain on the roof, I had trouble getting back to sleep last night, thinking of all the places I'd gone wrong in yesterday's teaching. Got to go and check out the Seven Acts of Mercy: last week in class I couldn't recite them, apropos Caravaggio's painting. The tutorial class concerned is meant to come up with the answer today. Funnily enough, one of them could do the Seven Dwarfs, and another did Santa's reindeers, and I could do the Seven Sacraments, but that's another tale.

Best

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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466. **Gary Sullivan**  
***thesis humor? ha, ha (fwd)***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Teachers, students, grads:

Thought some of you might enjoy this...

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 1995 11:18:50 -0600 (CST)

From: Tommy S Kim <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: thesis humor? ha, ha

something i received from a friend. thought i'd share since, as Barney says, sharing is caring.

*148 THINGS (NOT) TO DO OR SAY AT OR FOR YOUR THESIS DEFENSE*

*Written by Master Peter Dutton*

*contributions by Jim Lalopoulos, Alison Berube, and Jeff Cohen,  
Patricia Whitson and a few others.*

- 1) "Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise for the singing of our National Anthem..."*
- 2) Charge 25 cents a cup for coffee.*

- 3) *"Charge the mound" when a professor beans you with a high fast question.*
- 4) *Describe parts of your thesis using interpretive dance.*
- 5) *"Musical accompaniment provided by..."*
- 6) *Stage your own death/suicide.*
- 7) *Lead the specators in a Wave.*
- 8) *Have a sing-a-long.*
- 9) *"You call THAT a question? How the hell did they make you a professor?"*
- 10) *"Ladies and Gentlemen, as I dim the lights, please hold hands and concentrate so that we may channel the spirit of Lord Kelvin..."*
- 11) *Have bodyguards outside the room to "discourage" certain professors from sitting in.*
- 12) *Puppet show.*
- 13) *Group prayer.*
- 14) *Animal sacrifice to the god of the Underworld.*
- 15) *Sell T-shirts to recoup the cost of copying, binding, etc.*
- 16) *"I'm sorry, I can't hear you - there's a banana in my ear!"*
- 17) *Imitate Groucho Marx.*
- 18) *Mime.*
- 19) *Hold a Tupperware party.*
- 20) *Have a bikini-clad model be in charge of changing the overheads.*
- 21) *"Everybody rhumba!!"*
- 22) *"And it would have worked if it weren't for those meddling kids..."*
- 23) *Charge a cover and check for ID.*
- 24) *"In protest of our government's systematic and brutal opression of minorities..."*
- 25) *"Anybody else as drunk as I am?"*
- 26) *Smoke machines, dramatic lighting, pyrotechnics...*
- 27) *Use a Super Soaker to point at people.*
- 28) *Surreptitioulsy fill the room with laughing gas.*
- 29) *Door prizes and a raffle.*
- 30) *"Please phrase your question in the form of an answer..."*
- 31) *"And now, a word from our sponsor..."*
- 32) *Present your entire talk in iambic pentameter.*
- 33) *Whine piteously, beg, cry...*
- 34) *Switch halfway through your talk to Pig Latin. Or Finnish Pig Latin.*
- 35) *The Emperor's New Slides ("only fools can't see the writing...")*
- 36) *Table dance (you or an exotic dancer).*
- 37) *Fashion show.*
- 38) *"Yo, a smooth shout out to my homies..."*
- 39) *"I'd like to thank the Academy..."*
- 40) *Minstrel show (blackface, etc.).*
- 41) *Previews, cartoons, and the Jimmy Fund.*
- 42) *Pass the collection basket.*
- 43) *Two-drink minimum.*
- 44) *Black tie only.*
- 45) *"Which reminds me of a story - A Black guy, a Chinese guy, and a Jew walked into a bar..."*
- 46) *Incite a revolt.*

- 47) Hire the Goodyear Blimp to circle the building.
- 48) Release a flock of doves.
- 49) Defense by proxy.
- 50) "And now a reading from the Book of Mormon..."
- 51) Leave Jehovah's Witness pamphlets scattered about.
- 52) "There will be a short quiz after my presentation..."
- 53) "Professor Robinson, will you marry me?"
- 54) Bring your pet boa.
- 55) Tell ghost stories.
- 56) Do a "show and tell".
- 57) Food fight.
- 58) Challenge a professor to a duel. Slapping him with a glove is optional.
- 59) Halftime show.
- 60) "Duck, duck, duck, duck... GOOSE!"
- 61) "OK - which one of you farted?"
- 62) Rimshot.
- 63) Sell those big foam "We're number #1 (sic)" hands.
- 64) Pass out souvenir matchbooks.
- 65) 3-ring defense.
- 66) "Tag - you're it!"
- 67) Circulate a vicious rumor that the Dead will be opening, making sure that it gets on the radio stations, and escape during all the commotion.
- 68) Post signs: "Due to a computer error at the Registrar's Office, the original room is not available, and the defense has been relocated to (Made-up non-existent room number)"
- 69) Hang a pinata over the table and have a strolling mariachi band.
- 70) Make each professor remove an item of clothing for each question he asks.
- 71) Rent a billboard on the highway proclaiming "Thanks for passing me Professors X,Y, and Z" - BEFORE your defense happens.
- 72) Have a make-your-own-sundae table during the defense.
- 73) Make committee members wear silly hats.
- 74) Simulate your experiment with a virtual reality system for the spectators.
- 75) Do a soft-shoe routine.
- 76) Throw a masquerade defense, complete with bobbing for apples and pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey.
- 77) Use a Greek Chorus to highlight important points.
- 78) "The responsorial psalm can be found on page 124 of the thesis..."
- 79) Tap dance.
- 80) Vaudeville.
- 81) "I'm sorry Professor Smith, I didn't say 'SIMON SAYS any questions?'. You're out."
- 82) Flex and show off those massive pecs.
- 83) Dress in top hat and tails.
- 84) Hold a pre-defense pep rally, complete with cheerleaders, pep band, and a bonfire.
- 85) Detonate a small nuclear device in the room. Or threaten to.
- 86) Shadow puppets.

- 87) Show slides of your last vacation.
- 88) Put your overheads on a film strip. Designate a professor to be in charge of turning the strip when the tape recording beeps.
- 89) Same as #88, but instead of a tape recorder, go around the room making a different person read the pre-written text for each picture.
- 90) "OK, everybody - heads down on the desk until you show me you can behave."
- 91) Call your advisor "sweetie".
- 92) Have everyone pose for a group photo.
- 93) Instant replay.
- 94) Laugh maniacally.
- 95) Talk with your mouth full.
- 96) Start speaking in tongues.
- 97) Explode.
- 98) Implode.
- 99) Spontaneously combust.
- 100) Answer every question with a question.
- 101) Moon everyone in the room after you are done.
- 102) "Laugh, will you? Well, they laughed at Galileo, they laughed at Einstein..."
- 103) Hand out 3-D glasses.
- 104) "I'm rubber, you're glue..."
- 105) Go into labor (especially for men).
- 106) Give your entire speech in a "Marvin Martian" accent.
- 107) "I don't know - I didn't write this."
- 108) Before your defense, build trapdoors underneath all the seats.
- 109) Swing in through the window, yelling a la Tarzan.
- 110) Lock the department head and his secretary out of the defense room. And the coffee lounge, the department office, the copy room, and the mail room. Heck, lock them out of the building. And refuse to sell them stamps.
- 111) Roll credits at the end. Include a "key grip", and a "best boy".
- 112) Hang a disco ball in the center of the room. John Travolta pose optional.
- 113) Invite the homeless.
- 114) "I could answer that, but then I'd have to kill you"
- 115) Hide.
- 116) Get a friend to ask the first question. Draw a blank-loaded gun and "shoot" him. Have him make a great scene of dying (fake blood helps). Turn to the stunned audience and ask "any other wise-ass remarks?"
- 117) Same as #116, except use real bullets.
- 118) "Well, I saw it on the internet, so I figured it might be a good idea..."
- 119) Wear clown makeup, a clown wig, clown shoes, and a clown nose. And nothing else.
- 120) Use the words "marginalized", "empowerment", and "patriarchy".
- 121) Play Thesis Mad Libs.
- 122) Try to use normal printed paper on the overhead projector.
- 123) Do your entire defense operatically.
- 124) Invite your parents. Especially if they are fond of fawning over you. ("We always knew he was such an intelligent child")



- 125) Flash "APPLAUSE" and "LAUGHTER" signs.
- 126) Mosh pit.
- 127) Have cheerleaders. ("Gimme an 'A'!!")
- 128) Bring Howard Cosell out of retirement to do color commentary.
- 129) "I say Hallelujah, brothers and sisters!"
- 130) Claim political asylum.
- 131) Traffic reports every 10 minutes on the 1's.
- 132) Introduce the "Eyewitness Thesis Team". Near the end of your talk, cut to Jim with sports and Alison with the weather.
- 133) Live radio and TV coverage.
- 134) Hang a sign that says "Thank you for not asking questions"
- 135) Bring a microphone. Point it at the questioner, talk-show style.
- 136) Use a TelePromTer
- 137) "Take my wife - please!"
- 138) Refuse to answer questions unless they phrase the question as a limerick.
- 139) Have everyone bring wine glasses. When they clink the glasses with a spoon, you have to kiss your thesis. Or your advisor.
- 140) Offer a toast.
- 141) Firewalk.
- 142) Start giving your presentation 15 minutes early.
- 143) Play drinking thesis games. Drink for each overhead. Drink for each question. Chug for each awkward pause. This goes for the audience as well.
- 144) Swoop in with a cape and tights, Superman style.
- 145) "By the power of Greyskull..."
- 146) Use any past or present Saturday Night Live catchphrase. Not.
- 147) Stand on the table.
- 148) "You think this defense was bad? Let me read this list to show you what I COULD have done..."

--

Selected by Maddi Hausmann Sojourner with Brad Templeton. MAIL your joke (jokes ONLY) to [REDACTED]. If you see a problem with an RHF posting, reply to the poster please, not to us. Ask the poster to forward comments back to us if this is necessary.

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467. **Lindz Williamson**

**Grandma**

Wed 29 Mar 1995

Eric,

Your personal insight was very helpful. I wish that I had the living sources to discuss the westwad crawl of my relaives, unfortunatly all i have is a family tree. I found a rather intriguing poem in the Utne Reader regarding American myth and I'd like to share it with everyone ,I hope I'm allowed to do this.

Lindz

For Edna and Mildred

Mourning the dying American female names

In the Altha Diner on the Florida panhandle  
a stocky white-haired woman  
with a plastic nameplate "Mildred"  
gently turns my burger, and I fall into grief.  
I remember the long, hot drives to North Carolina  
to visit my Aunt Alma, who put up quarts of peaches,  
and my grandmother Gladys with her peirced quilts  
Many names are almost gone: Gertrude, Myrtle,  
agnes, Bernice, Hortense, Edna, Doris, and Hilda.  
They were wide women, cotton clothed, early rising.  
You had to move your mouth to say their names,  
and they meant strength, spear, battle, and victory.  
When did women stop being Saxons and Goths?  
What frog Fate turned them into Alison, Melissa,  
Valerie, Natalie, Adreinne, and Lucinda,  
diminshed them to Wendy, Cindy, Suzy, and Vicky?  
I look at these young women  
and hope they are headed for the presidnecy,  
but I fear America has other plans in mind,  
that they be no longer at war  
but subdued instead in amorphous corporate work,  
somebodies assistant, something ina bank,  
single parent with word processing skills.  
They must have been made French  
so they could be cheap foriegn labor.

-Hunt Hawkins 1994

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468. **Loss Glazier**

***Re: Chapbooks at EPC***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

| *Ditto to some of Chris Cheek's qs -- + correct snail-mail address*

Electronic Poetry Center  
PO Box 143  
Getzville, NY 14068-0143  
USA

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469. **Tony Green**  
***re Letter to the Editor (Longish)***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

P.S.for John Geraets: " her/axolotl "is in Climate no:30 edited by Alistair Paterson Spring 1979 This was a continuation (kind of ) Bert Hingley's magazine MATE, which in early 70's published young Wystan Curnow on his return from the Americas. I used to read anywhere I could get anything like an ear to read into, hence I also got published by the Titirangi Poets, in 1979 and 1980 a poetry society, that for a short while harboured some unlikely people... (Chris Moisa, Michele & Davina Paterson, Judi Stout, Christian Martin)Ron Riddell at one time the moving force in this, brother of Alistair, you remember Space Waltz. That's all at a level below the magazine mainstream. I stopeed when I realised the responses I was getting were not altogether pleasant from the middle of this, tho the peripheral characters were ok.

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470. **Wystan Curnow**  
***Re: To Sandra & Wystan***

*Wed 29 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Gary, I don't know anything about G. hitting on young people and sexual harassment or any stuff like that. And it seems a ways away from what I was trying to describe which had to do with performance and audience crossover (hi-to-lo, lo-to-high). I brought it up because 'be more popular' is easier said than done, so what are the conditions for doing, and the measures for success? And actually I looked at the tape again--isn't Bukowski an embarrassment? And Ed Sanders's great, and that Kenward Elmslie!!--and the G. clip is fine by me, I think he gets it about right. I found Ron Silliman's comments relevant to the question of conditions. That is, 'popular' means young in the contexts he has in mind. Gotta go now. Wystan.

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471. **cris cheek**

**Responsibility**

Thu 30 Mar 1995

---

Hi Ed, sometimes I wish I had a 3 line limitation. You didn't get anything back from me because I didn't know how to respond to your question. Sometime I feel trapped in an e-mail responsibility of my own darned making. There aren't enough hours in the day and night free to answer and sort and simply digest all the mail. I wasn't sure whether your post was a question 'requiring' an answer or a statement couched in rhetorical terms. And so the issue of response enters this reply right away. Weasels of worlds!

*responsibility's become "i respond even if you do n't ask," which is arrogance, it may be, of teacher, poet, etc. who is (yr sense) responsible.*

I kind of reversed your approach. That is you asked and I didn't respond. It does seem difficult to understand how it can possibly work the other around though. Or am I being typically pedantic? You can see I'm floundering into trying to make a 'proper' response. To think this through.

I want to ask some questions. In the context of a listserv such as this (let's take a trial example that 'might' travel -) is it ok to say that anything posted to Multiple recipients can be responded to. It might well be Eric and Maria and Kali and Tony are discussing a subject but that discussion is posted 'out in the open'. If you and anybody else wanted to comment under that subject heading or break into it to ask a question or beg to disagree - no problem. Yes? Your response hasn't been asked for but you made one. You still had the ability and by responding you kept that ability engaged. Equally your 'response' might be ignored.

Extend that example to conversation. (remember the hit and miss aspects of communication - informational content, misunderstanding, tone, deliberate misreading, diverse personalised interpretation, adoptions of persona and many many others . . . call for submissions) Extend that to education. Current discussions on education seems focussed onto institutional forms - hell! When I left school I set out to learn something - particularly when it came to poetry. Please don't let this board become a counselling lounge for academics! (sorry everyone - myself included) Otherwise - shit I just got deleted!

Now one problem lies in many subscribers (and some have identified themselves as such, including myself) wanting to respond to many more posts than they in fact 'allow' themselves to do. But that is not a withholding of the ability to respond, it is if anything a keening of it. (there's a fun double edge there) And I'm aware this heads back into discussions re list

overload - lurker and poster, representation of diversity of opinion and constituency and so on. And also discussions re - speed of response (gender / reflection / compositional preference / one-up/man/ship and so on). This listserv as a visit to The Boffin Shop.

Which points up one other feature becoming apparent - being the similarity between the public front of the list as a performance space and the familiarity traits of Improvised music becoming more etiquette bound and running to 'similar' boundaries in majority cases. (examine for a moment the mechanics of statement / response / variation / negation and other) A point raised by Ira a couple of months back and left on the ground where its nose dropped. Subjects appear to come around in, albeit buckled, cycles - partly as new subscribers jump on. Partly as variations concur.

It still seems to me that this can become still more of a LIVE space (not as in MOO). Sufficiently subtle and sensitive and robust as to be able to respond to the varied needs of its subscribers. If this listserv is an e-mergent community then issues of responsibility should be discussed.

Call M-e I-r-r-e-s-p-o-n-s-i-b-l-e

then call me e-mail (I can't help it)

cris

p.s. I'm pretty sure I still haven't answered your question

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#### 472. **Tom White**

##### ***Memory Play***

*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

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In regard to the discussion on MEMORY PLAY, this text by Carla Harryman is available from O Books at \$8.50 (plus \$2.00 postage): 5729 Clover Drive, Oakland CA 94618. It is also available from Small Press Distribution in Berkeley, 1814 San Pablo Avenue, CA 94702. What's more, Steve Benson says MEMORY PLAY is "in idiosyncratic motion and congruence much as clouds and birds in flight make sense to that visionary in you ... looking back at its patterns and wondering thru it." Experience the marvels of this text. Not only that, but we have others: recently, MOB by Abigail Child, \$9.50; GROUND AIR by Scott Bentley, \$6.00; CURVE by Andrew Levy, \$10.00; COLLISION CENTER by Randall Potts, \$8.50. Forthcoming is Alice Notley's CLOSE TO ME AND CLOSER ... (THE LANGUAGE OF HEAVEN), \$10.50; P. Inman's VEL, \$8.00; and a first book that's really incredible by John Crouse: LAPSES, \$8.00.

O Books

I received the mail address and the e-mail address of the review magazine TAP ROOT, but unfortunately I lost this information. Could you post this again?  
Thanks.

Tom White

Phone: [REDACTED]

Fax: [REDACTED]

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473. **Gary Sullivan**

***To Wystan, more Ginsberg***

*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

Dear Wystan: I totally, totally appreciate your--& others--going to bat for Ginsberg; I'm well aware I'm expressing (very) personal taste here, & have learned a thing or two from what you & others on this list've said about how they see his work. Maybe "learned..." is the wrong way to put it: more accurately, you all've offered different ways of looking at what he does, different approaches, for which I'm most grateful. "Ginsberg as Bruce-like satirist," for instance, is something I can definitely appreciate, really adds to my sense of the value of his work. Even of *\_Howl\_*--I've got two different recordings of him reading that: one, an early recording, he's very nervous, reading quickly, the work sounding, as read, completely angry & serious; the second a later reading (at Naropa, I think, late '70s, early '80s), he's more laid-back, allowing the humor to come through--almost as though these are two different poems! Wonderful, wonderful to have these, a great reminder for me how easy it is to "pigeonhole" anything, & how wrong that is. G.'s playing the wolf on occasion probably has nothing to do with what you were saying; it does have something to do with how I was reading what you were saying, particularly that wonderful line of yours re: "embarrassment." I read that as including *\*all\** public behavior (G. being a very public figure), & so included instances wherein my sense of his freewheeling public behavior would seem to have destructive/harmful effects. Because I'd read what you'd said earlier as a kind of "Ginsberg as anti-uptight role-model" endorsement (& I'm in agreement w/you about that!), that's why I'd brought up these instances. You say you know nothing about G.'s hitting on young people--well, I happen to know about that; the guy hit on one of my best friends, & I've heard about similar experiences w/a number of other younger poets. I can't erase these instances from my memory; they linger & when people endorse, wholesale, his freewheeling spirit, these instances serve for me as somewhat cautionary reminders. "In dreams begin responsibility," as the saying goes. But, geez, I certainly don't mean to dismiss the guy; his work means a lot to me. & sure, Bukowski's "writing = taking a dump" on that tape is a ridiculous cliché, forgettable. Elmslie's

performance had me rolling on the floor w/laughter--the effect (or one of the effects) he no doubt wanted. Sanders has a lovely & hilarious bit in his novel \_Fame & Love in New York\_ about the need to constantly be \*inventing\* things, starting new projects--his "finger" synthesizer, & tie-keyboard being real- world examples of that. (I never know how "seriously"--at face value, I mean--to take what he does, his having edited \_Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts\_.) (A fairly serious journal actually, despite what the title might lead one to assume.) Anyway, I'd never, never write off Ginsberg as a poet or performer, even though I'm not as interested in everything he does, or am not always convinced his motivation's pure. I wonder, for instance, at his GAP khaki's ad--which you may or may not have seen in NZ. (They appeared here in the States in magazines like \_The New Yorker\_ and \_Interview\_.) When Ginsberg sells his image to corporate interests--when \*anyone\* does that (William Burroughs sold his image to Nike shoes for a TV commercial!), I have to wonder about "motivation." Ginsberg & Burroughs both seem, in their writing, to be thoroughly "anti-corporate." So, what gives? I was living in the Haight-Ashbery district in San Francisco when the GAP opened one of its stores, right there on Haight Street, & my memory was that there was some local resistance--including posting of anti-GAP/corporate interest flyers & the like. So, some of what Ginsberg does doesn't jive w/me, has me "questioning," is what I'm--finally--saying, I guess. When I read that Sonic Youth (my favorite rock & roll band, notorious for their recording \*right over\* a recording of Madonna on their \_Ciccone Youth\_ l.p.) had done a GAP ad, too, it absolutely depressed me; colored--which isn't to say completely "destroyed"--my appreciation of their work. In the PR kit I received w/Ginsberg's latest book, \_Cosmopolitan Greetings\_ (which includes a reprint of that anti-smoking rag, btw), his publicist was actually \*bragging\* about the GAP ad, suggesting it as being indicative of the "complexity" of Ginsberg's character. Well, my take was simply that it was a mistake for him to've done that, not something I'd feel comfortable endorsing. Can't imagine Lenny Bruce appearing in an ad for the GAP, I guess. (Though, God knows, maybe he did appear in an ad or two for something, or would've, if he'd've lived long enough.) (At any rate, the GAP has undoubtedly bought the rights to his image, & plan to use it, if they've not already--corporate interests will get their slimy hands on us one way or the other. Ah, well.)

Yours,

Gary "Windbag, Nonsenso's sister's son" Sullivan

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474. **Tony Green**  
**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**  
*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

| *Ditto to some of Chris Cheek's qs -- + correct snail-mail address*

Thanks, reading you loud and clear.

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475. **Tony Green**  
**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**  
*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

"html"? please help techonolgically barely competent person. I can do ascii.

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476. **Tony Green**  
**Ginsberg quote**  
*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

without permission:

".....and mountains of eggs were reduced to white powder in the halls of  
Congress

no godfearing man will walk there again because of the stink of the rotten  
eggs of America

and the Indians of Chiapas continue to gnaw their vitaminless tortillas



aborigines of Australia perhaps gibber in the eggless wilderness  
and I rarely have an egg for breakfast tho my work requires    infinite eggs to  
come to birth in Eternity  
and the grief of the countless chickens of America is expressed    in the  
screaming of her comedians over the radio ....."  
Death to Van gogh's Ear    Paris 1958    in Kaddish

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477. **Steven Howard Shoemaker**  
**signs**

Thu 30 Mar 1995

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Something floating around the 'net, wending its way toward the poetics list:

*Here are some signs and notices written in English that were discovered  
throughout the world.*

*In a Tokyo Hotel:  
Is forbidden to steal hotel towels please. If you are not a person to do such  
a thing please not to read this.*

*In a Bucharest hotel lobby:  
The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you  
will be unbearable.*

*In a Belgrade hotel elevator:  
To move the cabin, push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter  
more persons, each one should press a number of wishing floor. Driving is then  
going alphabetically by national order.*

*In a Paris hotel elevator:  
Please leave your values at the front desk.*

*In a hotel in Athens:  
Visitors are expected to complain at the office between the hours of 9 and 11*

*A.M. daily.*

*In a Yugoslavian hotel:*

*The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid.*

*In a Japanese hotel:*

*You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.*

*In the lobby of a Moscow hotel across from Russian Orthodox monastery:*

*You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Soviet composers, artists, and writers are buried daily except Thursday.*

*On the menu of a Swiss restaurant:*

*Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.*

*Outside a Hong Kong tailor shop:*

*Ladies may have a fit upstairs.*

*In a Bangkok dry cleaners:*

*Drop your trousers here for best results.*

*In a Rhodes tailor shop:*

*Order your summers suit. Because is big rush we will execute customers in strict rotation.*

*From the Soviet Weekly:*

*There will be a Moscow Exhibition of Arts by 150,000 Soviet Republic painters and sculptors. These were executed over the past two years.*

*A sign posted in Germany's Black Forest:*

*It is strictly forbidden on our black forest camping site that people of different sex, for instance, men and women, live together in one tent unless they are married with each other for that purpose.*

*In a Zurich hotel:*

*Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose.*

*In an advertisement by a Hong Kong dentist:*

*Teeth extracted by the latest Methodists.*

*In a Rome laundry:*

*Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time.*

*In a Czechoslovakian tourist agency:*

*Take one of our horse-driven city tours - we guarantee no miscarriages.*

*Advertisement for donkey rides in Thailand:*

*Would you like to ride on your own ass?*

*In a Swiss mountain inn:  
Special today -- no ice cream.*

*In a Bangkok temple:  
It is forbidden to enter a woman even a foreigner if dressed as a man.*

*In a Tokyo bar:  
Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts.*

*In a Copenhagen airline ticket office:  
We take your bags and send them in all directions.*

*In a Norwegian cocktail lounge:  
Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.*

*In a Budapest zoo:  
Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.*

*In the office of a Roman doctor:  
Specialist in women and other diseases.*

*In an Acapulco hotel:  
The manager has personally passed all the water served here.*

*From a Japanese information booklet about using a hotel air conditioner:  
Cooler and Heater: If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself.*

*From a brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo:  
When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigor.*

*Two signs from a Majorcan shop entrance:  
- English well speaking  
- Here speaking American.*

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478. **Loss Glazier**

**Re: Chapbooks at EPC**

Thu 30 Mar 1995

---

*"html"? please help techonolgically barely competent person. I can do ascii.*

Well yes, then, you would probably want to supply ascii. If you were interested, you might learn html later, which is a mark-up language that permits some basic formatting and the possibility of making links in World-Wide Web documents. (I'm not sure if you even have world-wide web access. Sometimes this is obtained by typing lynx at your system prompt.) One basic use of html is that you can mark your ascii text, for example, so that there is a table of contents and the user can jump to the section of the text indicated by the table of contents. That's one of the basic uses.

You can get more info about html by using the web to go to:  
<http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/demoweb/html-primer.html>

You may wish to submit ascii first and investigate html as time permits; it takes a while to learn but is very useful.

All best,  
Loss

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479. **Tony Green**

**Re: signs**

Thu 30 Mar 1995

---

Dear Steven Shoemaker,            Thanks for the giggle. I wonder how many of the solecisms are genuine found "Signs". ("Is that a real sign or did you make it up yrself?")

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480. **Edward Foster**

***Re: Responsibility***

*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

ya, and then there is the parenthical (hello, \_\_\_\_): hi, there, big friend; everyone watch me wave. let's just measure the rope. so, chris, maybe the problem is the performance and the waving.

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481. **Jeffrey Timmons**

***Rilke Quote***

*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

Hey, Y'all:

I Need HELP!

I'm trying to find a translation from Rilke's Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge; James Wright uses it as an epigraph for his poem "Sappho." I don't speak/read german (I did work in french), so if anyone could be so kind as to either offer a translation or suggest a translated version and where (it's a big work) in the text it occurs I would be eternally grateful. Thanks!

Here's the quote:

"Ach, in den Armen habi ich sie alle verloven [or is it verloren?], du nur, du wirst immer wieder geboren. . . ."

Jeffrey Timmons

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482. **George Bowering**

***Re: poetry v history***

*Thu 30 Mar 1995*

---

Well, Tony, that's funny, re Olson and "real" historians. I am engaged in writingh a history book now, for penguin. I applied for an academic grant, and got turned down, because the granting agency sent my application to some history professors. They were nice enough to send me copies of the profs' reports. One of them, which was filled with very bad English, said I should not get anything because, for instance, I was going to go to local museums instead of a centralized archive, as a real historian would do. So it goes.

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483. **Pierre Joris**

**Re: Rilke Quote**

Fri 31 Mar 1995

Hey, Y'all:

*I Need HELP!*

*I'm trying to find a translation from Rilke's Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge; James Wright uses it as an epigraph for his poem "Sappho." I don't speak/read german (I did work in french), so if anyone could be so kind as to either offer a translation or suggest a translated version and where (it's a big work) in the text it occurs I would be eternally grateful. Thanks!*

*Here's the quote:*

*"Ach, in den Armen hab ich sie alle verloren [or is it verloren?], du nur, du wirst immer wieder geboren. . . ."*

A very quick literal version of the quote would give something like this:

"O, I have lost them all in the arms, only you, you are constantly born anew."

As I don't have the context, this is all I can do at 6 a.m. The awkward "the arms" could possibly become "my arms"

Pierre

=====  
===== Pierre Joris | He who wants to  
escape the world, translates it. Dept. of English | --Henri Michaux SUNY  
Albany | Albany NY 12222 | "Herman has taken to writing poetry.  
You tel&fax: [REDACTED] | need not tell anyone, for you know how email:  
| such things get around." [REDACTED] | --Mrs. Melville in a letter to her mother.  
=====

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484. **Bill Luoma**

**Re: back to poetry**

Fri 31 Mar 1995

Sappho--phainetai moi

It appears to me that his godhead  
divines your little one on one.  
He plays forward on the sweet phone  
of your acuteness

and galling desirability.  
This is my cardiac chest unfeathering.  
When I see you, nothing comes  
to me to speak.

My tongue is broken. Straightway  
a fine flame consumes my skin.  
With my eyes I see nothing and hear  
forebodings of rain.

A cold sweat downs me. A trembling  
seizes all. I am more green than  
grass time. I am dead no less  
than I appear.

Sappho--hoi men hippeon straton

Most men take strategic knights, while others  
claim armymen; the rest hold up battleships  
as the greatest show on earth. But I declaim.  
It's who do you love.

It's no trouble to cinch this once and for all.  
For she was Helena, beauty of the mortal  
elsewhere, who left the man, the aristocrat,  
behind.

And went floating off to Troy, with no  
mind for offspring or beloved parents.  
Love walked her sideways, knowing  
straightway.

For swayed  
    lightly                t                one  
    puts me in mind of Anaktoria, now  
out of sight.

I would rather see her step the lovely  
and do the facial shine more than any  
continental chariot decked with soldiers  
under arms.

Sappho--poikilothron' athanat' aphrodita

Thronechanging amortal Aphrodite,  
child of Zeus deceit weaver, Hey Lady,  
don't break my heart on the yoke  
of grief and ailment.

But come on down. Do you remember when  
you answered my call? It was a long distance  
and you listened and left your father's  
golden dome,

having yoked the chariot. The beauties  
led you, swift sparrows over black earth,  
dense feathers cutting spirals from heaven  
to the middle of air.

They arrived on a dime, with blessed you  
smiling the amortal smile. And you asked:  
"What's all this then? Why do you bother  
to call?

How far across the nation did your heart  
range this time? Whose pretty little head  
can I turn your way? O Sappho, who's been  
so mean to you?

Listen, if she hides now, soon she will seek.  
If she won't say thankyou, soon she'll say please.  
If she doesn't want it now, soon she'll be wanting,  
but not willingly."

Come on. Loose me far away from high  
anxiety. However much my little heart  
wants to consume, you consummate. You,  
yourself, stand by my side.

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485. **cris cheek**  
***Re: Responsibility***

*Fri 31 Mar 1995*

---

*ya, and then there is the parenthical (hello, \_\_\_\_): hi, there, big friend;  
ever  
yone watch me wave. let's just measure the rope. so, chris, maybe the problem  
is  
the performance and the waving.*



can you deconstruct some of this a little further  
sounds as if you're a serious cow'boy'  
or is your tone jussy obliquely stretched? Reels one, where's the hanging party?  
or did you see my performance with the red rope in Toronto?  
I should ask - which performance, what waving?  
best cris

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486. **cris cheek**

**GAPsberg**

*Fri 31 Mar 1995*

---

Gary, the weasel asks:  
when GAP buy Ginsberg don't they also somehow endorse all that he has done  
and 'stands' for?

If that can be true, then what consequent implications does that endorsement  
have for those values which he 'embodies'.? Do GAP realise what they're  
'buying' into? Does Ginsberg have an ironic position with regard to what he's  
selling? Is there some intimation of a Faustian pact? Is he selling his, and  
others', pasts - or a generative (even some might add congenital) bohemian  
undergraduate lifestyle - or a set of ideologies and cultural values? In other  
words if the production and the producer of 'Wichita Vortex Sutra' is 'good' for  
sales how does or can that affect the reception and critiques of his work as a  
poet?

What is lost? What is gained? What can be reclaimed and on what basis?

Can the (sometimes) desperate need for societies to embrace and absorb  
resistance beyond (either internally or externally) accepted margins or  
consensual realities reach a point of untenable, or no longer sustainable,  
flexibility? Is this another strategy for bringing the bourgeoisie to its brink?  
Can a crisis in capitalism be brought about by encouraging it to stretch too far?  
(the weasel notices he's way beyond the canyon's edge - claws at thin air  
before speed lines plunge him out of the frame towards the rapidly approaching  
stream in the canyon's bed)

And to pick up Ron's point about large audiences and the rock axis, hasn't much  
of Ginsberg's career openly engaged with businesses bigger than the small  
press? What price the intergrity of Rolling Thunder - or Dylan himself for that  
matter? Aren't Ginsberg and Dylan already part and parcel of the Capitalist  
fabric of the American dream? I enjoy you teasing these threads apart once  
more but can't we begin to develop other strategies rather than the binary  
'them' and 'us' oppositions.

Doesn't all business involve forms of reification by association with success? Like having a commendation from x on the back of the book - or merely being able to publish something written by x to raise the profile of a press. Whilst, arguably, Consumerism can't be separated from Dissemination it isn't synonymous with Capitalism. This list and e-space more generally has a crucial role to play in developing new relations between process and product, between means of production and modes of consumption between forms of communication, information distribution and ecologies of use.

I appreciate what you posted a week or so back re; the hallmark of a great card:

*The books my wife Marta & I publish include all of the "bullshit,"  
\*despite\* my sense that it somehow "cheapens" the things.  
Dissemination--almost all of it, at any level--involves some degree of  
compromise. It helps, I think, if you can be consistently aware of that,  
know beforehand what you are or are not willing to do.*

There is NO clean money. "It's not YOUR money creep, it's MONEY!". There are huge socio-economic arguments massing and missing here. Alongside which lie various reductive ideologies re- mainstream and margin -

'precious tempered formal radicals  
cleaving to illusory  
obscurity, that being the only  
security they've got' (slim pickens)

cris

p.s. In 1990 I was invited to interview Ginsberg on censorship in the U.S. re Helms and radio 'chilling'. Didn't know what he'd be like 'in person'. I've got to say that warts and all he struck me as to quote you one last time 'a great card' - flawed but then who isn't, and full of the energy to engage - the roughness of the public worlds. He 'hits on' those.

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487. **Gary Sullivan**

**Re: GAPsberg**

Fri 31 Mar 1995

Dear Cris:

Many thanks for your truly thoughtful & hilarious post. (Great Slim Pickens quote, btw. What's it from?) Yes, yes; that "us" & "them" is too, too easy. (My "Windbag" sign-off not just an acknowledgment of my talkativeness, but, as it comes from More's *\_Utopia\_*, a nudge suggesting how ridiculously idealistic I can get, to boot.) (I'm not completely oblivious, though I play ... , etc.)

I have friends who feel that small presses in general suffer from just what that Pickens quote brings up--there are many days when I wholeheartedly agree (& include myself in that, too, btw.) Still, I think you can talk yourself into & out of believing anything, & to quote from something a friend writes (about-to-be, but-not-yet-published) about Olson:

"He knew and taught that where there are no standards there can be, really, no love."

Yours, w/respect

Gary

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488. **Robert Drake**  
***Re: Chapbooks at EPC***  
*Fri 31 Mar 1995*

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appologies in advance to more Web experienced folks, but--

just wanted to add encouragement to folks considering contributing to the EPCs electronic text, and to echo Loss's characterization of this as a pretty special opportunity...

to expand a little on HTML, which is the language used to write World Wide Web documents:

HTML (HYPERTEXT MARKUP LANGUAGE) is much less intimidating than it sounds, even fr technophobes like me--not much more complicated than MLA manuscript conventions... \*(no, really!)\*. basically, it's a set of tags that describe how a text is presented onscreen...

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now, here's the above paragraph in HTML:

<p> <H1>HTML (Hypertext Markup Language)</H1> is <i>much</i> less intimidating than it sounds, even fr technophobes like me--not much more complicated than MLA manuscript conventions... <b>(no, really!)</b>. basically, it's a set of tags describe how a text is presented onscreen.

the "<p>" means "new paragraph"; the text between "<H1>" and "</H1>" will be displayed as a first level heading, like a title; "<i>much</i>" means that "much" will be displayed in italics; "(no, really!)" will appear in bold... all of these tags are hidden when the document is read onscreen, the computer just interprets them & displays the text as specified...

besides online resources, there's a book available, "Teach yourself Web Publishing with HTML in a Week" by Laura Lemay--broken down into "day 1", "day 2"... and all the basic text-oriented stuff is covered by day 3.)

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in addition to formatting, HTML allows you to jump between different "pages" of your document, either in a specified sequence or as a web of interconnections. simple ways of using this would be a table of contents, where each title is linked to it's respective poem-- the reader "clicks" on a title onscreen, and that poem is then displayed. another use would be footnotes that are hidden, and only displayed at the request of the reader... and again, the actual formatused to specify these links is really simple...

which brings me to my real point, to encourage folks to utilize the possibilites of the medium (& harkening back to recent discussions about the physical design of books). when i design a paper chapbook, i work pretty hard to sequence the poems so that the book as a whole "flows". with links that aren't necessarily linear (pg 1, pg 2 etc), whole new schemes are possible. for my initial chap for the EPC, i'm working with the poet--from any given poem, she's suggesting 3 or 4 other possible poems that might make good "segues", readers will be able to jump to any one of them from there... and instead of a straight table of contents, she's gonna write a new piece, sort of a letter amoung her various "selves", which will have links (allusive/suggestive, rather than simply the titles) into the various poems...

i've been working with Loss for the past coupla weeks, figuring out from scratch how this stuff fits together--he's made things very easy. i'd be happy to offer my meager experience to any of you considering taking him up on this offer.

asever  
luigi

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489. **Gary Sullivan**  
***New Johanna Drucker book***  
*Fri 31 Mar 1995*

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\_Dark Decade\_, a novel by Johanna Drucker  
(includes reproductions of 17 paintings by the author)  
Detour Press, 1995, 128 pp., \$10.95.

Order from Small Press Distribution, or postpaid from the publisher:

Detour Press  
1506 Grand Avenue #3  
St. Paul, MN 55105-2222

Excerpt from \_Dark Decade\_ (relevant to a number of threads here, recent & not-so-recent):

THE POET'S CONDITION     His aesthetics were fed by linguistics, not ecstasy, and he banked on the gestures of middle class life. He matched his chairs with the diningroom table while the computer continued its printout unsupervised. Children dropped into the picture in their requisite role as accessories of the age. The macho tactics that had launched his embryonic career also catapulted themselves into the domestic arrangements.     The expectations of a whole generation of forbearers stood ahead of him in the path to glory. The high stakes were all low paying, gambling for the dubious slots in history, and the strategies of youth had all been Oedipal -- taking on masters and then taking aim. What was poetry in this moment but a marginal commentary on a marginal form, smudged against the hallmark of literature, and sleeping undisturbed between the covers of slim volumes? . . .     Dyna is not part of this picture, but is also ready to be described. She begs for pulp terms to break the taboo against violence to women with the glandular vocabulary of the super-market novel. Her moments lend themselves to sensationalism. She lives the very antithesis of the obscure literary genre. Hers is a popular mythological tale, full of glamour, gloss and textural attributes. But feeling correct and circumspect we merely indicate the presence of a woman. The poet, meanwhile, has made it to the kitchen where he takes a hunk of bread and begins to live with it. Frustration spreads itself with the knife of anticipation -- later. Later. The refrain stings his soul, against the strange injustice of a world unwilling to acknowledge the power of the word in its own climate: language. The bread bit into him and we lost the opportunity for elaborate development of character or scenes: while the angel of mercy reserved the loaf along with the goals, aims, and standards that the poet, in a better mood, maintained. In our story he represents the state of fallen virtue and the failed project of art.     The times would gladly obliterate his existence, but we notice that they do not bother. . . .

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