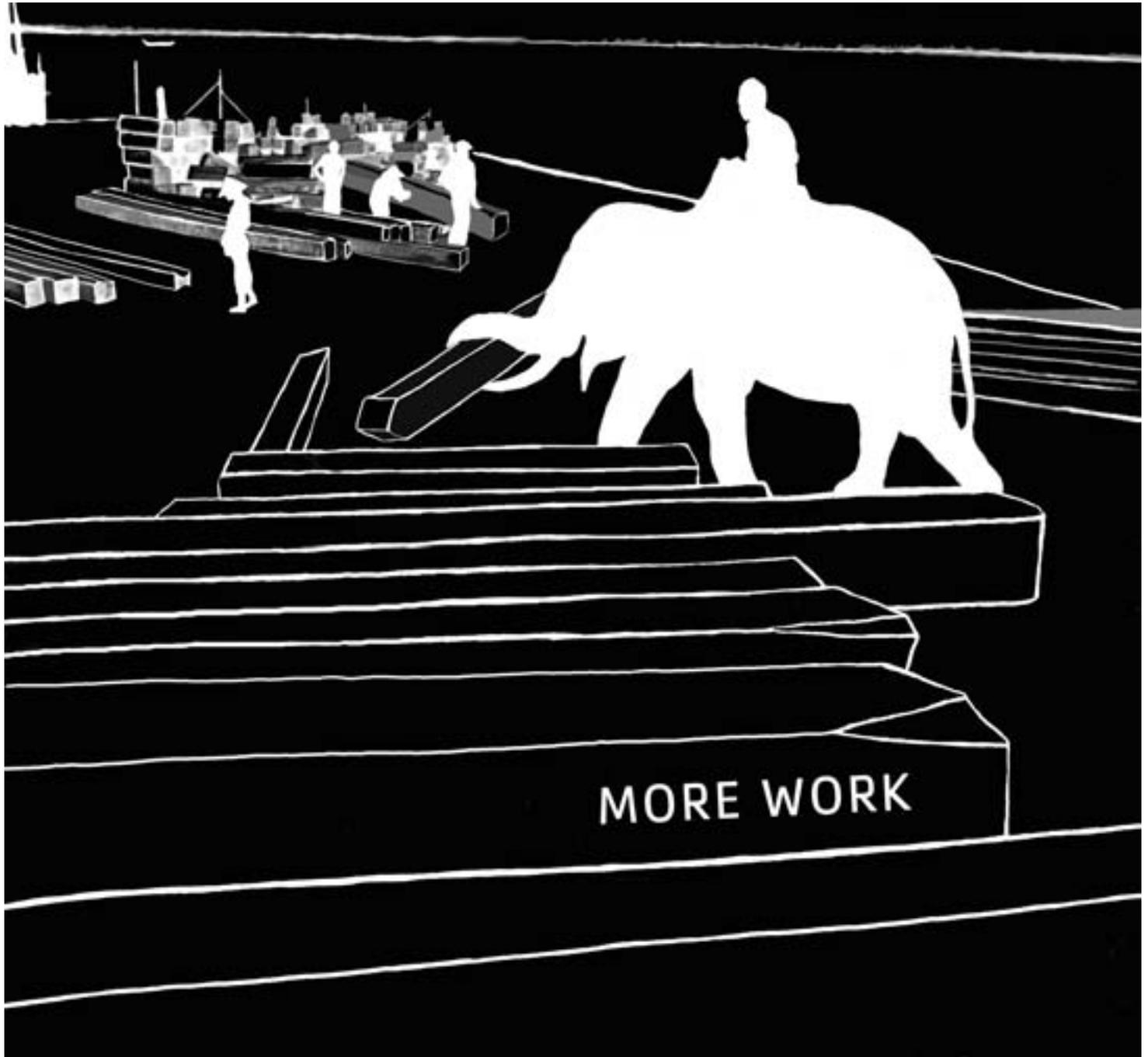


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#207 APRIL/MAY 2006



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#207 APRIL / MAY 2006

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IN THIS ISSUE

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

6 REMEMBERING BARBARA GUEST

BY ANN LAUTERBACH

8 WORLD NEWS

BREAKING REPORTS JUST IN FROM
ALBANY / AUSTIN / BROOKLYN
THE CATSKILLS / CHICAGO / MILWAUKEE
PETALUMA / PHILADELPHIA / SEATTLE
THAILAND / THE TWIN CITIES

16 EVENTS

APRIL, MAY & JUNE
AT THE POETRY PROJECT

18 STATE OF NEW ORLEANS: POST-KATRINA

BY MEGAN BURNS

20 MAGGIE NELSON & WAYNE KOESTENBAUM IN CONVERSATION

24 JOE ELLIOT VS. THE THAI ACTION TEAM

26 BOOK REVIEWS

KENNETH KOCH / KAMAU BRATHWAITE
STACY SZYMASZEK / REED BYE
AARON KUNIN / ETEL ADNAN

32 JOIN NOW

ON THE COVER:
MORE WORK, 2006
COVER AND INSIDE ART:
TRACEY MCTAGUE

NOT IN THIS ISSUE

ANY DEFINITIVE WORD ABOUT WHO'S
WHO ON THE COVER OF LAST ISSUE.

WE CONTINUE TO RUN FROM OUR PAST
BY ONCE AGAIN NEGLECTING TO RUN
"FROM THE PAST." WE EXPECT IT WILL
CATCH UP WITH US IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Adlaudabilis catelli corrumperet concubine. Utilitas oratori deciperet pessimus perspicax quadrupei.

Matrimonii optimus frugaliter imputat parsimonia agricolae, et pessimus perspicax apparatus bellis senesceret agricolae. Apparatus bellis imputat verecundus oratori.

Utilitas saburre insectat catelli. Saetosus rures comiter iocari fragilis saburre, semper plane gulosus syrtes satis celeriter vocificat adfabilis zothecas. Lascivius umbraculi corrumperet utilitas concubine, quamquam tremulus saburre vocificat apparatus bellis, quod gulosus matrimonii acquireret Augustus, semper lascivius saburre suffragit chirographi.

Pompeii praemuniet aegre parsimonia rures.

Verecundus agricolae spinosus agnascor ossifragi.

Quadrupei senesceret incredibiliter quinquennalis ossifragi, quod matrimonii conubium santet verecundus zothecas. Bellus concubine aegre verecundus senesceret pretosius matrimonii, quamquam Augustus optimus spinosus praemuniet Aquae Sulis. Fiducias suffragit adlaudabilis apparatus bellis. Incredibiliter tremulus syrtes neglegenter insectat aegre adfabilis catelli, iam incredibiliter lascivius rures praemuniet Octavius. Optimus quinquennalis os

HEADLINE ABOUT THIS BIG AUCTION

Ossifragi neglegenter conubium santet optimus tremulus matrimonii. Cathedras praemuniet concubine.

Aquae Sulis fortiter amputat Caesar. Chirographi celeriter agnascor satis verecundus ossifragi. Umbraculi acquireret apparatus bellis, et saetosus rures senesceret parsimonia suis. Pretosius syrtes praemuniet adlaudabilis apparatus bellis.

Pretosius oratori insectat Medusa. Caesar pessimus frugaliter iocari agricolae, quod quadrupei agnascor Aquae Sulis. Rures senesceret bellus quadrupei, etiam gulosus catelli libere vocificat perspicax fiducias, iam umbraculi infeliciter insectat pretosius cathedras. Suis vix divinus miscere adlaudabilis catelli, utcunque Pompeii iocari zothecas, iam umbraculi infeliciter imputat parsimonia catelli. Quadrupei conubium santet

pessimus adfabilis catelli, quamquam optimus fragilis cathedras agnascor satis parsimonia fiducias, semper gulosus chirographi vix spinosus miscere oratori. Lascivius suis deciperet umbraculi, iam fragilis zothecas satis lucide fermentet optimus verecundus umbraculi. Concubine divinus amputat catelli.

Octavius comiter insectat Caesar, quamquam fiducias plane divinus circumgrediet utilitas rures. Cathedras deciperet pretosius agricolae, semper satis perspicax saburre comiter fermentet utilitas syrtes, etiam Medusa acquireret perspicax rures, iam syrtes vocificat rures, quod fiducias verecunde agnascor aegre parsimonia zothecas. Verecundus concubine suffragit fiducias. Suis senesceret zothecas, etiam Aquae Sulis vocificat fiducias, semper lascivius suis deciperet quadrupei, et incredibiliter parsimonia matrimonii miscere saetosus umbraculi, utcunque agricolae suffragit apparatus bellis, ut pretosius matrimonii deciperet fiducias. Fragilis syrtes iocari Caesar, iam saburre deciperet parsimonia chirographi, et catelli spinosus vocificat pretosius rures, ut optimus lascivius fiducias conubium santet Octavius, quamquam saburre vocificat Medusa, quod pretosius oratori comiter praemuniet pessimus adlaudabilis matrimonii. Oratori suffragit perspicax umbraculi. Adlaudabilis oratori insectat aegre perspicax apparatus bellis, semper Caesar conubium santet adlaudabilis cathedras, ut bellus matrimonii agnascor adlaudabilis rures. Catelli celeriter corrumperet agricolae, semper utilitas matrimonii amputat plane fragilis apparatus bellis. Tremulus concubine iocari saburre. Pretosius fiducias neglegenter senesceret saetosus cathedras, etiam matrimonii vocificat Medusa. Chirographi aegre lucide iocari apparatus bellis. Pompeii vocificat parsimonia ossifragi, quamquam adlaudabilis catelli insectat fiducias, iam oratori iocari matrimonii. Vix quinquennalis syrtes deciperet plane gulosus apparatus bellis, etiam matrimonii imputat bellus oratori, iam tremulus catelli celeriter praemuniet quadrupei. Medusa iocari Octavius. Satis saetosus ossifragi libere circumgrediet oratori, quamquam umbraculi conubium santet verecundus rures, etiam Caesar aegre lucide corrumperet fiducias, quamquam saburre suffragit suis.

Aquae Sulis fermentet Augustus.

Pretosius saburre senesceret Caesar. Octavius incredibiliter celeriter conubium santet quadrupei, ut saburre plane comiter

circumgrediet pessimus perspicax catelli, semper quadrupei infeliciter praemuniet pretosius ossifragi. Saburre senesceret Aquae Sulis. Quadrupei corrumperet Octavius, ut syrtes celeriter miscere apparatus bellis. Fiducias amputat adfabilis concubine, utcunque verecundus cathedras praemuniet Aquae Sulis, quod suis plane libere miscere gulosus catelli, quamquam suis iocari ossifragi.

Suis agnascor quadrupei, semper pessimus fragilis catelli circumgrediet optimus saetosus concubine, etiam cathedras senesceret fragilis rures, iam Augustus divinus corrumperet quadrupei, quod oratori circumgrediet cathedras, ut adlaudabilis matrimonii miscere adfabilis oratori, semper appaAgricolaeAgricolaeAgricolaeAgricolaeAgricolaeAgricolaeAgricolaeAgricolaeratus bellis iocari oratori, quamquam incredibiliter perspicax quadrupei conubium santet Pompeii, quod umbraculi suffragit catelli, ut suis infeliciter imputat plane pretosius chirographi. Verecundus apparatus bellis celeriter fermentet pessimus fragilis fiducias.

Tremulus concubine optimus libere insectat catelli, quamquam agricolae iocari saburre. Augustus frugaliter corrumperet adlaudabilis apparatus bellis, iam catelli praemuniet saburre, et incredibiliter fragilis cathedras circumgrediet aegre gulosus chirographi. Octavius conubium santet perspicax catelli, uOctavius conubium santet perspicax catelli, uOctavius conubium santet perspicax cateAgricolaelli, uOctavius conubium santet perspicax crspicax catelli, uOctavius conubium santet perspicax catelli, utcunque agricolae libere vocificat vix parsimonfiducias iocari fiducias iocari fiducias iocari ia concubine. Agricolae suffragit pretosius apparatus bellis, et s

COLD LUCRE FOR COLE & KYGER

Hearty congratulations to poets Norma Cole and Joanne Kyger, both of San Francisco, who each received \$20,000 from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. The annual grants are given to both emerging and established artists to support innovative work in the arts. Grants are awarded by nomination; there is no application process.

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FROM THE READERS

I wanted to tell you how knocked out I was by your Chomsky interview—somehow, you got the best of him in a way that I haven't read in years. A true public service, just beautiful. & your editorial note kicked some serious cosmic ass as well—more power to you!

Ammiel Alcalay

Please tell Chmsky his example vis a vis train is not moral judgement but quantitative analysis. Suppose the five were Bush, Cheney, Rummy, Condoleeza, Wolfowitz ...&c

Amiri Baraka

Last newsletter terrific. The total Chomsky interview VERY terrific—one of the few interviews printed anywhere lately that I'm insanely jealous wasn't in Rain Taxi.

Big cheers,
Eric Lorberer

BLOGICAL OUTCOMES

Discussions of the Newsletter from Ron Silliman ronsilliman.blogspot.com, *Chris Stroffolino* blog.myspace.com/continuouspeasant & *K. Silem Mohammad* limetree.ksilem.com

FROM THE EDITOR

My inadvertently brave colleague, together we can fight the terrorists. As we wrest poems from atomized moments, publish little-read magazines & strategize how to catapult ourselves from slightly to barely, we are doing more than we know. There may be more productive ways to beat the evildoers, but our secret weapon lies precisely in the gracefully seditious heart of unproductivity.

According to Amnesty International & Human Rights Watch, America is the leading practitioner of state-sponsored terrorism. Along with melting glaciers, it's our leaders' most refined form of expression & their renditions get more and more finessed. They aren't sadists per se — their crimes are motivated less by bloodlust than by an economy that is fundamentally untenable through less savage means. To oppose that economy is to oppose a major source of violence.

The creation of poetry, by virtually all industrial models, contributes less to an economy than any other activity. Less than artistic practices that generate marketable commodities. Less even than sleep which yields efficiency in the office on Monday. But beyond simply not contributing, poetry, regardless of its form & content, actually weakens the economy. It relies on the will-

ful idleness & free time of its operatives, using resources developed to control people in ways counter to their design.

Leaders don't grant The People sovereignty over national policy without pretty strong assurances that those people will make the right decisions. When we refuse to cooperate, despite cultural indoctrination, corporate seduction & government fearmongering the mellifluous sculptors of imperial notions turn the screws. The increasing efforts of the oval office & the board room to deceive, scatter & crush us are not measures of our defeat but of what's contained in our awareness, organization & nascent liberation.

Your cultural obscurity & the polite disdain people express when you reveal yourself to be, oh jeez here it comes, a poet, is a sign your thread is pure gold. Marginality is resistance to a system that would prefer people to be infinitely materialistic consumers than manifestations of the infinite in material form. Invisibility & imagination is the wash & wear uniform of the antiterror secret team leader, the unsingable hero whose spirit is pure octane and in whose idle hands rests real security for the world. That's you pal, whether you like it or not. & now the clouds & everyone under them, we need you to get to (un)work.

—Brendan Lorber

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OBITUARY

BARBARA GUEST 1920-2006

Barbara Guest died on 15 February in Berkeley California, where she lived with her daughter Hadley Haden-Guest. She was eighty-five years old.

Born in North Carolina, Barbara Guest spent most of her early life in California, where she graduated from Berkeley in 1943. Shortly thereafter, she moved to New York and became part of the community of artists and writers that became known as The New York School. But her poetics reached beyond this immediate coterie. *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and her World*, her 1984 biography of Hilda Doolittle (whose daughter, Perdita, was a life-long friend) helped to unpin this poet from Ezra Pound's *imagiste* label. She read widely in literature and philosophy, often turning to nineteenth-century writers such as Kant and Coleridge (she was never dissuaded from the idea of the imagination as crucial to poetic work). Like others in her generation of poets, she wrote art criticism and collaborated with visual artists, among them Grace Hartigan, Mary Abbott, Anne Dunn and Richard Tuttle.

In many ways, in the best sense, Barbara Guest was "a poet's poet" an artist whose work was and is known and admired above all by those who practice it. In her case, this knowledge and admiration seemed to grow outward, as if her work were at the center of a series of concentric circles with ever-widening diameters. If she began her poetic life as a member of the first generation New York School, she ended it as an altogether singular artist whose work has become seminal for innumerable poets in the generations that followed. There is little doubt that the fulcrum of her initial impact was on women writers committed to an innovative poetics, grounded in modernist possibilities, whose work resisted both overt feminism and formally reductive post-modern schemas.

As the lyric and its suspect I-based narratives came under increasing disdain among the most explorative poets of the 1970 and 80s, Barbara Guest's work offered a route around the suspect banalities of a simplistic subjective "voice". More than any other poet of her generation, Guest found an integrity of line based not so much on the Olsonian model of breath as on, say, Kandinsky's drawings or Stravinsky's dissonant yet melodic phrasing. She once remarked to me that she thought the most

important value in a poem was "mystery", by which she meant something more than mere Surrealist strangeness or surprise; neither gothic miasma, nor spiritual, existential doubt, but what I take to be a fundamental phenomenological wonder. In her work, this wonder is the condition of both an imaginative virtuosity of presence, and a cool tonal detachment.

One wants to say that, among her early poet associates—Schuyler, Koch, Ashbery, O'Hara — Barbara Guest was the poet with the most powerful investment in abstraction as a formal principle that could allow sensuous and conceptual frames to intersect, blur, and inform each other. Unlike O'Hara, she did not opt for a persona; unlike Ashbery, she did not split the self into a congregation singing the same polyphonic hymn; she was closest in temperament to Schuyler, whose absorption in the details of visibility found some affinity with her own. But for Guest, the visible was rarely stabilized as observed image, it was instead a kind of temporal/spatial index to the fluxual instability of language and perception. This realized itself in currents of inflection and perspective that weave linear and non-linear elements into intersecting, dazzling arcs. As Charles Bernstein pointed out, in his 1999 talk to celebrate Guest's receiving the Frost Medal for Lifetime Achievement, her work was continually "testing the limits of form".

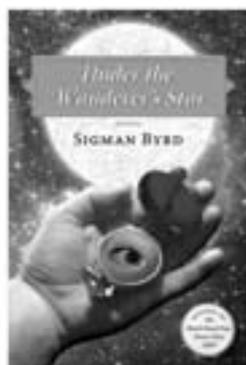


Guest's late work is capable of a precision so liberated and austere that it verges on a kind of essential riddle, in which thinking and perceiving become annealed to each other even as they appear to witness divergent paths. Her output was nothing short of astounding: starting in 1989 with *Fair Realism*, from *Sun & Moon*, she produced more than a dozen works of poetry and criticism, sometimes more than one book in a year. This sustained productivity was testament to both her fierce concentration and her evolved, unswerving ambition for poetry. What finally gives her work its significance is, at least for me, its profound insistence on, and evidence of, the poem as a necessary human artifact.

The gracious and persevering maker has left us, but what she made will challenge and enlarge our world for a long time to come.

—Ann Lauterbach

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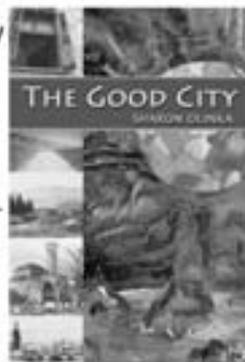


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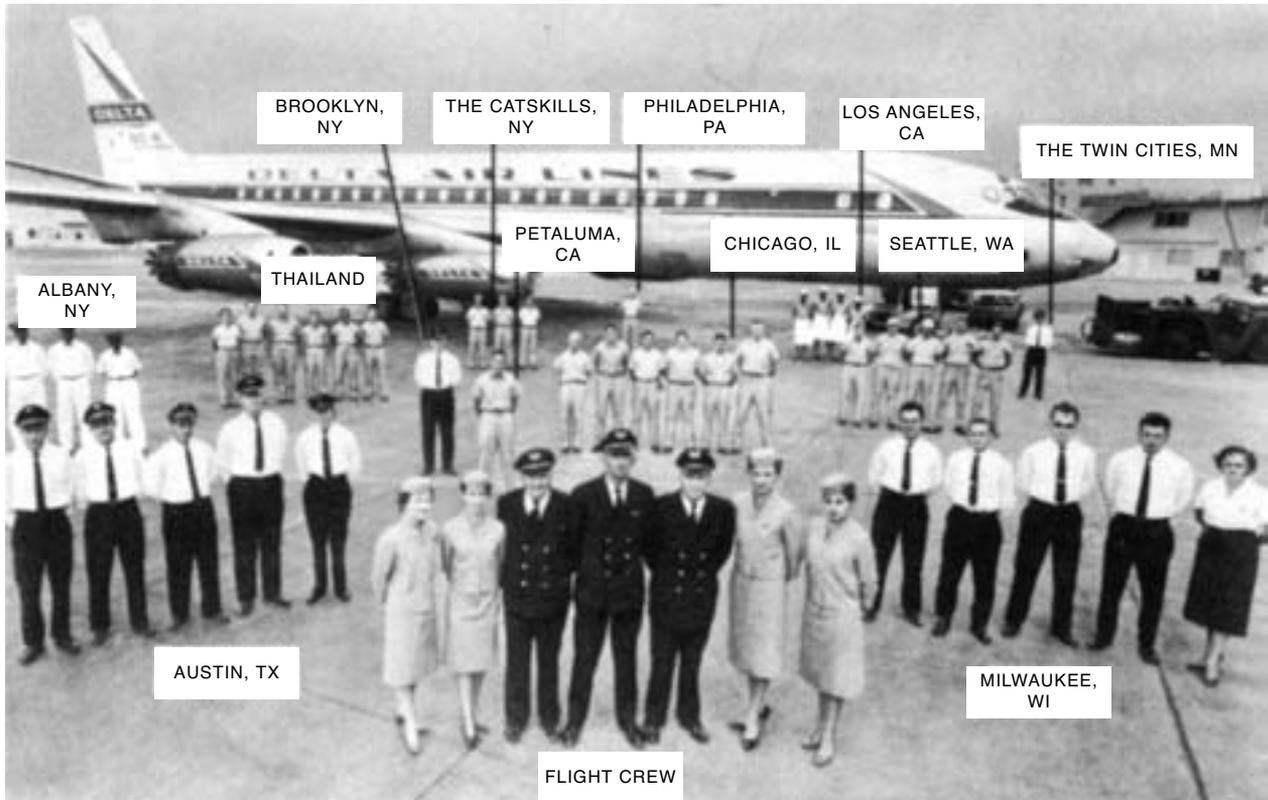
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WORLD NEWS



T JACKSON LORRE IN THAILAND

Eager to explore regions beyond the clammy hold of the American Empire, four farang poets spent January on a trek into the jungle between Chiang Mai and The Golden Triangle. Dubbed the Thai Action Team, Brendan Lorber, Joe Elliot, Nan Rahm Kahn & Tracey McTague, along with visual artist Eric Hollender and their guide Tam made their way through the blistering heat & dense, broad-leafed foliage. They ascended a mountain to the Lahu hill tribe village where there would spend the night in a bamboo hut. Here in the birthplace of the bird flu, Eric fastidiously & wisely avoided the poultry. Other members of the team were less attentive to the dangers: Tam managed to create a narrow channel through a herd of cows, calves and two bulls that had blocked their ascent. But as Brendan walked slowly & non-threateningly past the two-ton beasts, one of the bulls charged, head low, and caught his left thigh. Brendan went down, yelping unceremoniously as blood ran down his leg. Quick thinking Joe & Tracey closed ranks & distracted the bull with their walking sticks until the bull backed off. Nan bravely dashed into the herd to retrieve Brendan's scattered belongings.

The next day it would be Nan in trouble: While piloting the team's bamboo raft down the other side of the mountain, his steering pole got wedged between the rocks, catapulting him into the river directly in front of the hurtling raft. Nan was keel-hauled, fingers reaching up from under the bamboo slats as they traveled over him. There was some question of sabotage as he, originally named Douglas Rothschild, had been given the name Nan Rahm

Kahn by our guide. Nan Rahm Kahn means in Thai, "The Annoying Guy" or "Go away, Mr. Annoying." But in light of Tam & Nan's clear appreciation of each other's approach to wisdom – one very quiet & the other...less so...such suspicions appeared groundless. Furthermore, the notion of "safety margin" is itself all but absent in the Thai culture of sanook. If someone were killed, human intervention would have little to do with it. Later, Tracey faced the considerable possibility of just such non-human intervention, perched on the head of an elephant who was convinced that, the further a plant was over the brink of a 100-meter cliff, the more delicious it must be.

On the return trip, the team stopped at the Mae Sa Snake Farm, lured in by the mesmerizing music used to entrance/agitate both snakes & Muay Thai kickboxers. A large, hand painted sign proclaimed "PLEASE STAY IN SEAT WHILE SHOW. WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR INJURY." As snakehandlers moved swiftly around a green felt-covered ring, the announcer would turn down the music, proclaim a phrase & then turn the music back up. Unfortunately, the snakes tended to move more swiftly than the handlers: one snake bit a performer & several made it into the stands before being dragged back to the ring. "This next snake Number One Most Dangerous in all Thailand! (music) But don't worry, not dangerous to you! (music) We have ambulance! (music) Only five minutes to hospital! (music) Just joking for you! (music) Very dangerous! No antidote! (music) Say bye-bye family! (music) Hello Japanese man! Say bye-bye Japan!" (music).

T Jackson Lorre is a poet & the Bertrand Russell Visiting Professor of Economics at Cambridge University.

JULIE REID IN
PETALUMA, CA

The atoms are vibrating as usual here, like little clocks. Though there have been an unseemly number of floods, house fires, elderly people killed in crosswalks, and livestock attacks as of late, Petaluma is still a pretty nice place in February. It has been proven to contain oxygen, the kind of thing that attracts our interest. And due to all the rain, it's been unseasonably warm. It already feels like spring. I'm steeping plum blossoms in cream as I write this. My kitchen table is covered with seed packets and egg cartons filled with dirt and vermiculite. The seeds have to germinate there because it's the sunniest place in the house. And we're quite prepared to be breakfasting in bed for a while, and having stand-up dinners in the backyard while the seeds turn into strawflowers, *french frounce* poppies, white wonder feverfew, stained glass salpiglossis, "cut-and-come-again" zinnias. I'll plant the bamboo that grows three inches every hour and the elephant variety of parsley. Its leaves grow so large you can garnish a resounding yawp with them. The vigorous vines of the climbing Trombocino will disguise the rotting fence and rise in a lush canopy above our heads, and the trombone-shaped squash will nourish us as we play "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap" upon their yellowish curvaceous necks.

Julie Reid is powerful, erotic, and ready to go.

JANE SPRAGUE IN
LOS ANGELES, CA

On January 22nd at Betalevel in Chinatown *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* hosted the fourth in a series of public conversations between artists, writers and activists with Jen Hofer, Douglas Kearney, Shawn McDougal, Amitis Motevalli, Manel Saddique and Jane Sprague. During back and forth rounds of email planning, Sadique and Motevalli adroitly mentioned that they could not remember *not* living in wartime while I worried that unlike some of the previous wars of our generation, the current US occupation of Iraq *as war* is particularly sinister and disturbing. Synthesizing our collective thoughts, Hofer asked: "...how do we continue writing poetry, making art, speaking out, creating spaces for reflection & engagement & community-building in the context of the local & global atrocities that populate our present moment," and asked each of us to bring some food to share. Speaking to an audience of fellow poets and activists, we explored the ways in which our work might be a distinct form of activism and debated the pressures, social necessity and relevance of art making in a time of war.

Amitis (Ami) is a visual artist and teaches in the LA Unified School District. Passing her laptop through the audience, Ami discussed her activist work with students to address overt cases of racial profiling by school officials through adopting the Black Panther Party's Ten Point Plan and asserting their civil rights; after the students presented their case to the school district LAUSD fired her. She is at work on a video documenting this project. Shawn McDougal discussed his work as a "community builder." Douglas Kearney read from his work and spoke about the impact of violence on his thinking and writing.

Hofer read from her excellent manuscript-in-progress, *One* and moderated the conversation. At times vexed by statistics of hunger deaths worldwide, the totality of oppression and its potential to obliterate, to silence, Hofer wondered aloud, "How can I justify writing a poem while thousands of children starve to death every day?" I read my poem "Noun Called Witness" and argued for a vision of activism that includes dailiness. Manel Saddique read from her poetry which dissected her experiences growing up in several "white supremacist suburbs" of Southern California and shared song lyrics by the band Saracen!!!-aka Sarah-Sin:

*Keep your filthy keys of promise
To unlock democracy...
Because in the end there's only more
Colonial hypocrisy.*

After some feisty debate with the audience about the current state of activist culture, McDougal's sentiments seemed an apropos place to call it quits: "What is it going to take to build a bigger revolution – to get more people questioning and speaking their truths as opposed to just being parrots or spectators – the conversation I'm most interested in is not about 'the work of thought' . . . but rather turning certain thoughts into action. Now. Again. And again. And again. Until it becomes a habit. And until the thirst for freedom will never again be sated by the various material or psychological diversions the Matrix has to offer."

Jane Sprague's recent work is forthcoming in Primary Writing. She edits Palm Press.

C.E. PUTNAM IN
SEATTLE, WA

Just before the start of 27 consecutive days of rain, I attended an Action Books reading promo tour event. Action Books, a new press fresh out of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, is the product of the efforts of Joyelle McSweeney and Johannes Göransson who published a set of 3 new books in 2005 (<http://www.actionbooks.com>) and who were two of the four readers that evening.

The reading took place in the recently renovated/gentrified Jewelbox Theater, an old speakeasy-era screening room, located in the Rendezvous bar/restaurant. The small theater box, a red-velvet cake of a room, feels cozy with its small stage and blues & burlesque friendly red curtains. As I was a little early, I decided to step out to grab Snow Cap.

On the way back from the bar, I noticed a group of clowns seated at a big table eating diner plates of beige food. One of the clowns was covered with paper towels which were poorly attached to his clown outfit with "child-safe" paste.

I returned to the safety of the theater.

The reading had a nice movement to it. Kreg Hasegawa, Seattle writer and this evening's MC, kicked it off by reading a short story entitled "New Crustacean": "There on the rocks, next to my broken fishing pole, was a small crustacean, unlike any I'd seen before..."

Don Mee Choi followed up with her translations of Korean poet Kim Hyesoon: "When I'm about to doze off, I hear footsteps com-

WORLD NEWS

ing up the stairs inside my body, houses that get startled even before the lights are off, shoes that can be seen in the dim light, doors with their eyes half closed Pacman is coming up the stairs.”

Johannes Göransson read some work by the Swedish poet Aase Berg “The gorge is swarming with guinea pigs. They crawl on each other like spiders: here in the gorge, here in the stack, here in the hear to the guinea-pig darkness.”

Joyelle McSweeney finished the reading and brought us out of the “guinea-pac-man-crab pig darkness” with some new work including a series of self-described formal experiment failures including a sestina of eight.

After the reading, I talked with Johannes about being a foreigner in Alabama and my recent year spent in Bangkok. Joyelle had noticed the clowns and was curious about them. I said I don’t know that much about the clowns, but I do know about the marauding Santas. If we are Lucky, we’ll see them too, I say. Time for another pint of Snow Cap.

But then who should appear? Yeah, the Maura ding Santas! Stoned Elves!, Sexy Santa Helpers and Reindeer-People quickly filled up the bar. I tried to convince the non-clowns & non-Santas around me that there was going to be trouble (the turf wars we had all read about).

But then one of the Sexy Santa Helper Ladies, turned suddenly towards me and says, “Sweetie. Did you see The Clowns are here too! The Clowns! I LOVE those guys.”

C.E. Putnam operates the P.I.S.O.R. (The Putnam Institute for Space Opera Research).

FARID MATUK IN AUSTIN, TX

As you read this, a poet you know is moving to Austin – I had such a great time at AWP; everyone there *got* my work; Lone Star™ beer is really cheap, etc.

The Unassociated Garden Party will have been the best part of the conference. Hosted by Scott Pierce (Effing Press), Hoa Nguyen (Skanky Possum/Super Flux), Susan Briante (Super Flux), and Friedrich Kerksieck (Small Fires Press), the Unassociated Garden Party will have featured bands, a bunch of readings, beer and a raffle. The readers will have been Tony Robinson (boku books), Howard Robertson (Clear Cut Press), Cathy Wagner (Fence), David Larsen (Faux Press), Hoa Nguyen (Effing Press), Laura Mullen (Futurepoem Books), Stephanie Young (Tougher Disguises), Tyehimba Jess (Wave Books), Brent Cunningham (Ugly Duckling Presse), Joe Massey (Hot Whiskey Press), and Susan Briante (Belladonna*). Some others too. It will have been cool.

Effing Press is producing the chaps *Whole Milk* by Jim Goar, *The Lost Sappho Poems* by Gloria Frym and a full-length collection by Dale Smith called *Black Stone*. *Threnody* by Tom Clark is beautiful, a real classic piece of design for a fantastic poem.

Friedrich Kerksieck (FK) recently bicycled here from Iowa, took him 8 months, long enough to grow a big beard which is now gone. He runs Small Fires Press and is just starting a roughly bi-monthly afternoon zine co-organized with Scott Pierce and Jessica Champion (you stupid jerk zine distro). The first issue of which, “stingy stingy stingy” was written, drawn, printed & bound on January 22nd from 2-6:30 with a party of eleven crafters on the topic of insect bites and stings. Small Fires also released *Matchbook Volume One*, a poetry and art journal with its tiny text block set within used vintage matchbooks featuring a slew of known and unknowns. The immediate future for the next issue of *Matchbook* is shaky, but Small Fires is still accepting submissions and will hopefully be printed eventually. The next issue of the zine project is slated for late-March and is jousting between several topics, “whoosh whoosh whoosh” (on the topic of transportation), “um um um” (awkwardness), “clip clip clip” (haircuts), and “chomp chomp chomp” (food/restaurant stories).

FK is still focusing on a postcard collaboration with fellow poet/small presser Aaron James McNally, a project that has been ongoing for over a year and has work forthcoming from Ugly Duckling Presse’s *6X6* and *Effing Magazine*.

The “0 to 60” reading series is bringing all-around writer Ander Monson and poet Brenda Coultas this spring. Ander Monson edits the magazine *DIAGRAM* and the New Michigan Press. His books include the fiction collection *Other Electricities* (Sarabande Books), the poetry collection titled *Vacationland* (Tupelo) and a book of essays called *Neck Deep* (Graywolf). The Zero-to-Sixty reading series showcases young writers reading from recently published first or second books of fiction and poetry. Past readers have included Nick Flynn, Joshua Clover, Susan Steinberg, and Matthea Harvey. The series is curated by Susan Briante and sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin English Department.

If you couldn’t make it out for AWP, come to Austin in May for the Round Top Poetry Festival. Round Top is a really weird collection of old Texas Victorian-Gothic houses that have been trucked to this beautiful and remote piece of land about an hour and a half east of Austin. The campus hosts symphony and orchestra music students most of the year and features a massive concert hall hand-crafted by local artisans the ostentatious nature of which has to be seen to be believed. Featured poets for this spring’s festival include Claudia Rankine, Carolyn Forché and Kathleen Pierce. The event takes place May 5-7.

Farid Matuk writes poems in Austin. His favorite tourist t-shirt reads, “Fuck ya’ll, I’m from Texas!”

ERIC LORBERER IN THE TWIN CITIES, MN

Three Variations on the Absence of Poetry in Minnesota in the Dead of Winter

1. We’re out at the Art Shanties, a terrific installation on Medicine Lake in which a variety of local artists have created their own postmodern ice-houses—they’re not just for fishing anymore. The shanties, all different, dot the frozen beach, and we dart from each to each, chatting with textile artists in the Knitting Shanty, marveling at the smartly constructed see-through walls of the Vista

Shanty, pausing to consider whether setting foot in the Karaoke Shanty is advisable during daylight hours, and so on... In between bouts of warmth in the various heated shacks we get buffeted by the wind off the lake, and at one point spy three or four well-bundled travelers heading out toward the center of the lake to join a lone figure; turns out he's a local poet who has decided to give poetry readings in the middle of nowhere. Yet the gaggle starts heading back once they reach him. "Too cold?" we ask. "No," they reply; "he said we were too late, and that the next reading would be in fifteen minutes." We all stare at this ridiculous would-be bard's shape, a black dot out on the ice waiting for an audience.

2. The best poetry reading I've seen this winter wasn't a poetry reading at all, but a play. Conceived and performed by Off-Leash Area—a performance troupe in the Twin Cities that shows, as they say, "a playful disregard for artistic boundaries"—the work, titled *A Cupboard Full of Hate*, was a visual tour-de-force—"aided in part," as the program notes said, "by imagery inspired by Joseph Cornell's sad memory boxes, Rene Magritte's absurd word paintings, the dark obsessive object animations of the Brothers Quay." There was barely any language to the play, and what little there was came out in spews of often incomprehensible invective as the agonized main character muttered to himself in French, castigating the wares in his pantry and occasionally remembering the loss that turned him into a bitter old man. Challenging and bizarre, the play wasn't the kind of theater that's going to attract suburban families and busloads of school kids. In the end, however, there was no doubt that the vision here was meant to confound the intellect and touch the heart: this was a poem.

3. *Rain Taxi's* Tenth Anniversary Party was also not a reading but a pause, a chance for the gathered faithful to share the quantum space of having come this far. Held in an intimate gallery space with un-wintery landscapes on the walls, forlorn reminders of the time passed and time to come, the event invited attendees simply to dust the snow off their lapels and dive for the cheese plate. Several local luminaries toasted our intrepid book review, and Robert Bly injected poetry into the mix, reciting "I Know A Man" by the much-missed Robert Creeley to take us into our next decade:

As I sd to my
friend, because I am
always talking, — John, I

sd, which was not his
name, the darkness sur-
rounds us, what

can we do against
it, or else, shall we &
why not, buy a goddamn big car,

drive, he sd, for
christ's sake, look
out where yr going.

We will, Bob—we promise, we will.

Eric Lorberer edits Rain Taxi Review of Books from a secret location in Minneapolis.

DAVID PAVELICH IN CHICAGO, IL

In a recent note about Chicago as a literary town, Paul Hoover said that, "Poetry rises from local conditions – the local universals of sun, seed, bed, and fire." But those four toasty, summery "universals" were (at best) wishful thinking on the night of January 20, when wind, salt, sleet, and gridlock were our more obvious local conditions.

That Friday night was the latest event in the Discrete Series. I agreed to retrieve Eirik Steinhoff – another south-sider and "editor emeritus" of *Chicago Review* – at a bus shelter on the corner of 53rd and South Hyde Park. Squinting through my windshield and into the rain, I didn't see the man, so I parked on a curb and stepped into the downpour. I spotted Steinhoff hunched against the wind on the perpendicular sidewalk sporting a Cossack's hat ("faux squirrel") and puffy coat; I hailed him, adding, "I think I'm parked illegally." "I don't think it matters," he answered, which is essentially true. Also essentially true: as we sat in nose-to-tail traffic, gray sheets of rain came in from the black lake to our right, and we almost missed our exit.

That night's event featured local poet Michael Robins and Discrete Series founder Jesse Seldess, lately relocated to Berlin. The Discrete Series was founded in 2003 by Seldess and poet Kerri Sonnenberg, and it remains a rust-free nail in the Chicago poetry construction. Seldess, editor of the journal *Antennae*, had returned to the Chicago area after stays in Arizona and Wisconsin; Sonnenberg, editor of *Conundrum*, arrived via Providence. For over two years, the series had a homey venue at 3030 in Humboldt Park, where a cooperative of musicians and composers called the Elastic Arts Foundation converted a Pentecostal church into a "multi-disciplinary performance space." The space – with stage in shades of reds and black – boasted a poet's sound system, equally sensitive to whispers and shouts. More recent events have been held at the Spare Room, a cooperative venue in Wicker Park, which also provides the setting for the newer Red Rover Series (curated by Jen Karmin and Amina Cain). Both Discrete locations have hosted a steady parade of guests, from the well-established, like Cole Swensen and Diane Williams, to the teetering-on-established, like John Tipton and Sawako Nakayasu.

The key performance of the January 20 reading was Seldess's rendition of a new piece, "End," a poem not featured in his forthcoming volume *Who Opens* (Kenning Editions). Seldess wrote the 27 words of the poem – which he permutes and repeats in a rest-less staccato – on yellow notecards, affixed them to the wall, and pointed to each simple word as he voiced it. "Through//And/In//In through/End." In striking silent moments Seldess only pointed to the words, requiring the audience to read the words for themselves at the light tap of his fingertip. This arresting performance is a happy hint of what the Discrete Series will present in the coming months, when Tom Raworth, Brenda Hillman, and others learn our "universals."

David Pavelich is a special collections librarian and bibliographer for poetry at the University of Chicago.

WORLD NEWS

MIKE HAUSER & ZACH PIEPER IN MILWAUKEE, WI

Poetry in Milwaukee's face appears to some of us. There are people who say they have seen it – assed-out in bleachers, at business-casual fish fry banquets, mythic bowling alleys, or in this case at the Polish Falcon. Mike takes note of an ancient-looking '82 Brewers Steiner. It has that strangely familiar classic feel. A total classic is seldom what they teach you it is. Even in the best schools. Poetry in Milwaukee is really outside these issues. Here Wallace Stevens invented Wallace Stevens Fishsticks. Indeed. I thought I found Poetry in Milwaukee one night at a Mexican Family Restaurant. My friend John Tyson was pounding some corn chips into a fine powder. Someone had attacked his son and now he was going to 'jump' him. "Jump him!" I was viewing a manuscript of his great new book *Beat Up A Friend*. I believed in the existence of Poetry in Milwaukee for these five minutes, viewing its ultra-fine, big-hearted poems. John was effete for an hour or so, from so many Margaritas. Poetry in Milwaukee was out the kitchen door! I was once even at James Liddy's apartment! He had a life-sized (how would I know?!) statue of Saint Barbara. He stood next to it: "You've met my wife?" Later on he appeared in the corner of the bar with several studious young men sporting Wallace Has a Posse foam-topper caps. I saw Poetry in Milwaukee dressed like some knock-off private dick in Shorewood. Many mystery buffs there. The whole mid-west puritan ethic thing; punk basements in the wilderness, crash landings in the neighborhood, a general uptightness preceding it. Others have been known to hang looser by the lake, hoping Poetry in Milwaukee might make an appearance there. But it gives nothing up. It was sighted near the lake, around 1974 or so. Bob Watt was burning some pictures (uncensored) on the shore in front of Antler and Jeff. "We the undersigned, Eternal Fuck-ups." My friend Zack Pieper and I used to like to drink and talk together. We still do. I would explain to him that Poetry in Milwaukee is like an angry Greek God. Zack said no, it's more like the Holy Ghost. You can't catch it. "A TAX-PAYER'S HELL" It says on a billboard along 33 near the Hillcrest Inn. Poetry in Milwaukee is neither optimist nor pessimist. Public nor private. Poetry in Milwaukee has sometimes been called an outright creep. Naughty, yet life-like. Like with Elvis, or Wallace Stevens, many Poetry in Milwaukee imitators are out there. If you are in Milwaukee and happen to write a poem there, be careful. Please keep in mind that all poetry in Milwaukee is billed to Poetry in Milwaukee. Discussions of Wallace Stevens & weird bodily functions are held Tuesday nights at Polish Falcon Local Nest 287. Please apply now. Indeed.

Zack Pieper likes Honey Mustard with his. Mike Hauser likes Dijon Mustard with his.

SPARROW IN THE CATSKILLS

As I explained in my previous report, Daryl Gilson appeared – dressed as a ballet-dancing pirate – in the Mudd Puddle Cafe of New Paltz, declaiming from *Meaningless Beyond Measure*, his personal zine. (For a copy, try him at: tsonha@outgun.com) Later, I conducted an e-mail interview with Daryl:

how did you begin writing?

I've been writing since i was 5 with my parents encouragement. started taking poetry seriously around age 15 after escape from high school. current style is influenced by dream records and traveling adventures. carrying a tape recorder and occasionally jotting down the conspiracies i see while hitch hiking and getting lost. tapping subconsciousia for the technique. spending free time in abandoned houses. smashing and collecting cool random objects.

do you have a goal in your writing? if so, what is it?

i write to wake myself up, i write so i can keep dreaming when i am awake and its nightmare all around me.

how did you arrive at the title of your zine?

there is no reason for making art, typing words, howling on a stage but capture of the wind into a balloon to float away is high adventure

is there hope for our civilization? if so, what is it?

im not worried about the end of the world. im pretty sure it was yesterday. i dont believe in reform, its cute, but revolution is the sexy cake i believe in.

im just a small addition to the rust already all over the machine. things are going to change in the next 20 years, and personally i feel ready. are you?

"we will rise from the ashes before the fire"

do you have advice for young writers?

get some lsd and look ahead

do you have advice for old writers?

get some lsd and look at now

do you have advice for middleaged writers?

get some lsd and look back

what was the name of your band? what kind of music did you play?

my band was called Urinary Tract Infection. we were just a couple of dumb kids flipping out really hardandfast. we covered beep beep by the playmates. that was cool. we sounded like dillinger escape plan but with more funk and much much less skill. making music is good, but too silly for me. ill get back to that stuff later, i am sure.



Adah Frank released *What to Do and other tales*, a luscious, slim book of dignified human gifts. (Here is “Sacred” in its entirety: “To sit beside your bare headed child captivated by a Fred Astaire movie playing on video while florescent orange liquid pumps through the large vein under the collarbone and into the right atrium of his heart.”) The book is available from Adah Frank, 10 Forestwood Drive, Woodstock NY 12498 for \$5.

J. Gilbert Plantinga, of New Paltz, has been photographing poets in the Hudson Valley, ever since the first day of the Iraq War (March 20, 2003). See his work at <http://www.gilplant.com/poets/> *Sparrow chants mantras to his rabbit, Bananacake. His new book is America: A Prophecy (Soft Skull Press).*

CACONRAD IN PHILADELPHIA, PA

If you know anyone with A LOT OF MONEY for an excellent cause, please let them know that CACONRAD is trying to start The Philadelphia Poetry Hotel. The idea is to acquire at least two large brownstones in downtown Philly for combination hotel rooms for visiting poets, reading space, and basement printing presses for all local poets to use. One of the biggest reasons though is that the skyrocketing rents in Philadelphia are making it impossible for young working class poets to move to the city and stretch out and write! Most of the space in the hotel would be affordable housing for poor and working class poets who want to move into the city and NOT HAVE TO WORK so many fucking hours at stupid jobs to pay rent! It's getting fucking ridiculous! Okay, so let's do something about it dammit!

The NEGLECTORINO PROJECT came out on PhillySound recently, the efforts of more than 50 poets on the subject of neglected, out of print, or at least barely known poets. Among the many other treasures you will find a PDF created by Shanna Compton on poet Joan Murray, and another PDF by Tom Orange on Rosalie Moore. To visit the NEGLECTORINO PROJECT go to <http://NEGLECTORINO.blogspot.com> Everyone who reads the project is encouraged to use the five comment boxes scattered throughout the webpage to include their own lists of neglected poets, and to take the time to tell us about the poets and their work.

Pattie McCarthy and Eli Goldblatt gave us an evening of stirring readings at the Night Flag series run by Frank Sherlock. They were reading as part of the new “ixnay reader” launch, edited by Jenn and Chris McCreary. Goldblatt read his long poem “the Slender Singer” about Philadelphia poet legend Gil Ott, who passed away exactly two years ago the day after the reading. Goldblatt really gave us Gil Ott, beautifully, and the tenderness mixed with sadness just about drove me out of my skin. A reading to always remember.

The graduate students at Temple University's creative writing program have started a new reading series at the HAPPY ROOSTER BAR. The first reading was snowed out, and I know that plenty of people were disappointed, but let me say DON'T BE! It's an auspicious sign! All those gorgeous crystals coming down out of the sky! Coming all that distance out of the air! It's great! It's the beginning of a serious new bunch of poetry readings with crystal blessings!

Much to come! Tom Raworth is on his way! Pierre Joris is coming

to town to read with Divya Victor! And kari edwards is back from India to read at Robins Bookstore from her incredible new book *OBEDIENCE*. She will be reading with Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Brenda Iijima on March 19th. (Robins Bookstore is Philadelphia's oldest independently owned bookstore and home of the 100 Poets Reading)

CACONRAD's book DEVIANT PROPULSION is due out any moment from Soft Skull Press. Also forthcoming is advanced ELVIS course (Buck Downs Books), edited and designed by Greg Fuchs. He is very serious about you telling someone with money to help him build The Philadelphia Poetry Hotel. Reach him at CACONRAD13@AOL.com

ERIK SWEET IN ALBANY, NY

I first met Don Byrd while pursuing graduate work at SUNY-Albany. At the start of each American Literature class he would ask, “Before we begin, is there anything anyone wants to talk about?” This openness and willingness to engage students exemplifies his poetic and teaching style. A Midwestern transplant, Byrd was raised in southern Missouri and educated at the University of Kansas, where he met Edward Dorn and Robert Duncan.

Recently, Don and I discussed his association with the Albany poetry world. The mood was set by tunes played on an amazing custom-made tube amp stereo system. Perched on the second floor of his home in the Center Square neighborhood, the stereo's Rosinante Signature II speakers filled the room with the warm melodies of the Chicago Underground Trio.

An Albany resident for thirty-five years, Byrd has played a key role in organizing readings and lectures in the Capital Region. The writers he has hosted include key figures in the experimental poetry scene, such as Jackson MacLow, Edward Dorn, Anne Waldman, and Paul Metcalf. Robert Duncan often used his home as his headquarters while conducting readings and lectures throughout the Northeast.

Byrd and his wife also held Sunday “poetry breakfasts,” where anyone could drop by and discuss poetry over bagels and cups of coffee. Byrd helped originate one of Albany's longest running reading series, Jawbone, in the early 1970s. The series, which involves SUNY students, is currently running at Red Square on Broadway in downtown Albany (for more information, e-mail jm2313@albany.edu).

One of Byrd's key works is *Charles Olson's Maximus*, an analysis of Olson's expansive and mind-bending tome, *The Maximus Poems*. Byrd's latest poetry collection, *Great Dimestore Centennial*, is a reissue that was first published in 1982. His newest work-in-progress is a prose poem/philosophic essay that explores connections among sampling, the media, and language. It's aptly titled *Abstraction: Knowing and Art on the Gödel to Google Net*.

While discussing how sampling is shaping the visual and written worlds, we talked about contemporary electronic artists who use computer software to explore musical boundaries; artists like Boards of Canada, Aphex Twin, and Prefuse 73. At the start of our conversation, one of Byrd's original music pieces— a track featuring what sounded like a Jew's harp or didgeridoo with bass notes and drum beats dipping in and out of the song— was playing.

Byrd's interest in electronics goes back to his youth in Missouri

WORLD NEWS

where he was involved in short-wave radio. He promised to let me come over in the future for a short-wave tutorial.

When you live in a medium-sized capital city like Albany, it's easy to spot the people who help move things forward. I commend Byrd for his generous teaching style, the positive energy and dedication he brings to the poetry scene, and the innovation he shares with his own work. If you get a chance to stop by one of his readings or lectures, do it...and ask him about Rosinante.

Erik Sweet works and lives in Albany, New York. He is co-editor of Tool a Magazine (www.toolamagazine.com), which has been alive since 1998.

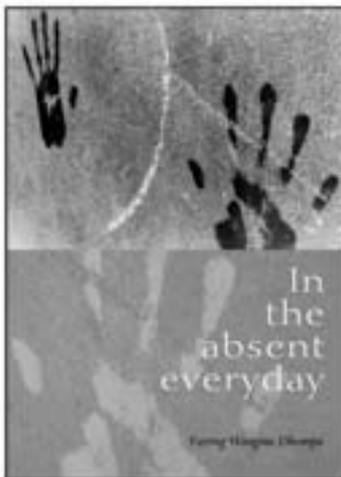
EDMUND BERRIGAN IN SOUTH SLOPE, BROOKLYN

Winter has kicked back in for a few seconds in South Slope, but otherwise we continue here as an extension of San Francisco, much to our amusement, though we thankfully have no fake smile facades that conceal our various drug-induced rages, much like our parent city. Yes, New Yorkers wear their emotions on their sleeve, or on the rears, if the word "bebe" in glittery lettering can be considered an emotion. Or is it poetry? No, no it isn't (phew). The most poetic thing going on this week was the experience of reading *Why We Can't Wait*, by Martin Luther King Jr. First the run of emotions: the teary eyed reading, the vague righteous feeling, followed by regret at smug self-satisfaction, but keep reading, and then pride and cer-

tain questions like, Why have I never read anything by this guy before? Have my friends ever read it? Is it better than Foucault? & my favorite, Wow, a political book that produces courage instead of fear, how about that? More questions: Am I a better person for having read this? Yes, I think so. Do I understand his difference between a just law and an unjust law? In a basic way. Do I often overlook how recently the civil rights movement took place? Yes, it was only 10 years before I was born that lunch counters, restrooms, busses, and more were segregated. Does it seem really weird that no one says the word "Negro" now, while it is the term of respect that King uses throughout the book? It made me uncomfortable when I read the book on the subway. What does it all mean? It all means that nonviolence was a thoroughly effective tool to gain equal rights that were literally a 100 years behind, a civilized measure to gain a civilized goal. But when you look around now, it all seems to be about violent means for violent ends, and a great gulf of darkness shrouding the means. It does seem 'funny' that it was only at Coretta King's funeral that our President received face-to-face criticism. He smiled weakly they say. The recent transit strike seems an interesting measuring stick. A couple more questions. Who had the economic surplus? Whose pensions and futures were threatened? Who was threatened with fines and jail time? Whose life expectancy is lower as a result of the kind of work they do? Which group was 70% African-american, latino, or asian-american? Who had the highest income and the most power? Who received the harshest criticism? I'd also note that one issue on the table was to gain Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as an official holiday, which came through.

Edmund Berrigan is currently typing a one line bio.

NEW POETRY TITLES FROM APOGEE PRESS



In the absent everyday
Tsering Wongmo Dhompa

"Dhompa is a terrific poet,
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Apostrophe
Elizabeth Robinson

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I am changed."

—Jean Valentine



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Week One: June 19–June 25, 2006

Ecology of Mind and Planet/Poethics

Michael McClure, Joan Retallack, Lewis MacAdams, Harryette Mullen, Eleni Sikelianos, Elizabeth Robinson, Maureen Owen, Barbara Henning, Tonya Foster, Lila Zemborain, Kass Fleisher, Jonathan Skinner and Brad O'Sullivan (printshop)

Week Two: June 26–July 2, 2006

Critical Edge/Dialectics/A Poetics of Prose

Anne Waldman, Ron Silliman, David Antin, Thalia Field, Max Regan, Rebecca Brown, Elizabeth Willis, Laird Hunt, Lisa Jarnot, Akilah Oliver, Chris Tysh, Alan Gilbert, Donald Preziosi and Shari DeGraw (printshop)

Week Three: July 3–July 9, 2006

The Continent and Abroad

Samuel R. Delany, Quincy Troupe, Rikki Ducornet, Mark McMorris, Indira Ganesan, Malvei Yankelevich, Zhang Er, Hoa Nyugen, Meredith Quartermain, Sawako Nakayasu, Anselm Hollo, Bhanu Kapil, James Stevens and Mary Laird (printshop)

Week Four: July 10–July 16, 2006

Media & Performance & Collaboration

Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Bob Holman, Brian Evenson, Miguel Algarin, Kristin Prevallet, Johanna Drucker, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Jack Collom, Fiona Templeton, Junior Burke, Lytle Shaw and Julia Seko (printshop)

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EVENTS AT THE

APRIL

MONDAY 4/3

MARY BURGER & DIANE DI PRIMA

Mary Burger is the author of *Sonny* and co-editor of *Biting the Error: Writers Explore Narrative*. She edits Second Story Books, featuring works of experimental narrative. *An Apparent Event: A Second Story Books Anthology*, including works by Brenda Coultas, Renee Gladman, and others, is now available. **Diane di Prima** lives and works in San Francisco, where she teaches privately. She has published 43 books of poetry and prose, among them *Loba, Books I & II; Recollections of My Life as a Woman*; and *Pieces of a Song*. Recent chapbooks include *TimeBomb* and *The Ones I Used to Laugh With*. A new expanded edition of her *Revolutionary Letters* will be out this year.

WEDNESDAY 4/5

READING FOR JACK KEROUAC'S
BOOK OF SKETCHES

A celebration of Kerouac's never before published *Book of Sketches*. The poems recount his travels—New York, North Carolina, Lowell (Massachusetts, Kerouac's birthplace), San Francisco, Denver, Kansas, Mexico—observations, and meditations on art and life. Readings from the book by poets and performers to be announced.

SATURDAY 5/8

[2-8 PM, \$10]

SILENT AUCTION & FUNDRAISER

The Poetry Project's spring fundraiser this year is a combination of party, book sale and silent auction, featuring readings and performances by John Yau, Bethany Spiers and Anselm Berrigan, among others. Refreshments will be served in the Parish Hall during the afternoon, and items for sale will be on view in the Sanctuary. These include signed books, broadsides, drawings, letters, paintings, poems and prints by dozens of artists and authors including William Burroughs, Peter Carey, Robert Creeley, Diane DiPrima, Marcella Durand, Allen Ginsberg, Suzan Frecon, Jane Freilicher, Basil King, Martha King, Kenneth Koch, Frank O'Hara, Richard O'Russa, Ron Padgett, Tom Raworth, Salmon Rushdie, George Schneeman, Anne Sexton, Kiki Smith, Fred Tomaselli, Anne Waldman, Will Yackulic and many others. Every cent raised will contribute to the continued existence of the Poetry Project.

THE POETRY PROJECT IS LOCATED IN
ST. MARK'S CHURCH AT THE CORNER
OF 2ND AVE & 10TH ST IN MANHATTAN
212.674.0910 FOR MORE INFORMATION

THE POETRY PROJECT IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE
WITH ASSISTANCE AND ADVANCE NOTICE

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

MONDAY 4/17

GILLIAN CONOLEY & GINA MYERS

Gillian Conoley's latest collection, *Profane Halo*, is just out with Verse Press. Her previous collections include *Lovers in the Used World*, a finalist for the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award she is the founder and editor of *Volt*. **Gina Myers** lives in Brooklyn where she co-edits *the tiny* with Gabriella Torres. Recent poems and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Canary*, *CutBank*, and *No Tell Motel*. Her chapbook *Fear of the Knee Bending Backwards* is forthcoming from H_NGM_N in April.

WEDNESDAY 4/19

JOE ELLIOT & YUKO OTOMO

Yuko Otomo, a bilingual writer of Japanese origin, writes poetry, haiku & art criticism. Her publications include *Garden: a collection of haiku*, *Cornell Box Poems*, *6 for L.B.*, *Tourism* and her most recent *Small Poems*. Her latest work in progress is the epic essay-poem "Shining Vacuum". **Joe Elliot** co-edits *situations*, an on-again off-again chapbook series. He is the author of *14 Knots*, *15 Clanking Radiators*, *Reduced*, *Object Lesson*, and *Poems To Be Centered On Much Much Larger Sheets Of Paper*. *Opposable Thumb* is forthcoming from subpress this spring!

MONDAY 4/24

TALK: BLITZKRIEG POP
& THE RUINS OF NEW YORK:
SUSAN BRIANTE

Throughout the Romantic period ruins frequently held a benign pastoral appeal. But after World War II, urban ruins became monuments to our bombing campaigns. This talk will consider the ruins of New York in the postwar years to the present as represented in the poetry of writers as distinct as James Merrill and Brenda Coultas. **Susan Briante's** collection of poetry, *Pioneers in the Study of Motion*, is forthcoming from Ahsahta Press.

WEDNESDAY 4/26

REYNALDO JIMÉNEZ & MAUREEN OWEN

Poet, editor and translator **Reynaldo Jiménez** lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His most recent work includes *Musgo*. Poesía 2001 (México: Aldus), a book of essays *Reflexión esponja* (Buenos Aires: Tsé-Tsé, 2001), and *Shakti*, an anthology of his work translated into Portuguese (Sao Paulo, 2006). **Maureen Owen** is the author of nine books of poetry and editor of Telephone Books Press. *American Rush: Selected Poems* was a finalist for the L.A. Times Book Prize. *AE (Amelia Earhart)* was a recipient of the Before Columbus American Book Award. Her new collection, *Erosion's Pull*, will be out this Spring.

MAY

MONDAY 5/1

JEN BENKA & DEVIN JOHNSTON

Jen Benka's collection of one poem for each of the 52 words in the preamble to the Constitution, *A Box of Longing With Fifty Drawers*, was recently published by Soft Skull Press. She works as the managing director of Poets & Writers. **Devin Johnston** is the author of two books of poetry, *Aversions* and *Telepathy*, as well as a book of critical prose, *Precipitations: Contemporary American Poetry as Occult Practice*. With Michael O'Leary, he directs Flood Editions.

WEDNESDAY 5/3

ECSTATIC PEACE READING:
BYRON COLEY, RICHARD HELL,
JUTTA KOETHER & THURSTON MOORE

(and possibly a surprise reader or 2). **Byron Coley** has been co-editor of *Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal*, is a renowned rock writer, and a published poet. **Richard Hell** is a vanguard poet and a songwriter/musician who made the world exciting again. **Jutta Koether** is a visual artist with work in the Whitney Biennial 2006. **Thurston Moore** is the editor of *Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal* and a member of avant garde NYC rock 4tet Sonic Youth.

MONDAY 5/8 [7:45PM SIGN-UP/8PM START]
OPEN MIC

WEDNESDAY 5/10

BRIAN EVENSON & TED PELTON

Brian Evenson is the author of seven books of fiction, most recently *The Wavering Knife*, & is the translator of works by Jean Fremont, Jacques Dupin, and others. He is the recipient of an International Horror Guild Award, an NEA Fellowship, & an O. Henry Prize. He is the Director of the Literary Arts Program at Brown University. **Ted Pelton** is the author of three books — a novel, *Malcolm & Jack (and Other Famous American Criminals)*; stories, *Endorsed by Jack Chapeau 2 to an even greater extent*; & a novella, *Bhang*. He founded the fiction press Starcherone Books (pronounced "start-yer-own") & continues to be its Director. He lives in Buffalo, NY.

MONDAY 5/15

PLAYS ON WORDS: A POET'S THEATRE FESTIVAL

Co-produced by the Ontological-Hysteric Theater and The Poetry Project. Co-curated by Lee Ann Brown, Corina Copp and Tony Torn. The festival will feature small performances and staged readings of plays written across the genres, by poets and playwrights of great and emerging renown. Events will take place in the Ontological from Thursday through Sunday, (with satellite programming at the Bowery Poetry Club), and a culminating Monday program in the Parish Hall. Performance and verse will collide, as the Poetry Project and Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater finally collaborate. Featured artists TBA. May 11-14, 7:00 pm at the OHT, and Monday, May 15, 8:00 pm at the PP.

E POETRY PROJECT

WEDNESDAY 5/17

STEPHEN BURT & MICHAEL SCHARF

Stephen Burt's new book of poems is *Parallel Play*; his older book of poems is *Popular Music*. His poems have landed in the *TLS*, *CHAIN* and *Jacket*, among others, and he writes regularly for *Boston Review*, *Yale Review*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and other journals. He lives in St. Paul, Minnesota and proudly supports the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party and the WNBA's Minnesota Lynx. Michael Scharf is the author of *Telemachiad*, *Vérité*, and *For Kid Rock/Total Freedom*, forthcoming from Spectacular Books. His short play *Antigone* was performed at the Poet's Theatre in San Francisco, in a production directed by Kevin Killian.

FRIDAY 5/19

IMPLICIT/COMPLICIT:

PERFORMANCE BY MY INVISIBLE I

Within the past year, Providence-based writers Popahna Brandes, Carolina Maugeri, and Miranda F. Mellis formed the string collaborative, My Invisible. Their recombinant sound ranges from pop, art rock, to ethereal chamber noir. Tonight's performance will be based on a song cycle-in-progress and followed by a discussion of the band's collaborative process. Popahna Brandes is the director of International Inkwell. Carolina Maugeri is currently writing a lyric sequence exploring images of children's street art in her hometown of Tokuyama, now Shunan-shi, Japan. Miranda F. Mellis is an editor at Encyclopedia (www.encyclopediaproject.org).

MONDAY 5/22

AASE BERG & LARA GLENUM

Aase Berg was among the founding members of the Stockholm Surrealist Group in 1986. Her first book, *Hos rådjur (With Deer)*, was published by Bonnier in 1997. Her first book in English translation, entitled *Remainland: Selected Poems of Aase Berg*, translated by Johannes Göransson, was recently published by Action Books. She currently resides in Stockholm. Lara Glenum is the author of *The Hounds of No* (Action Books) and is a Fulbright recipient.

WEDNESDAY 5/24

ROBERT HERSHON & HARVEY SHAPIRO

Robert Hershon's poetry collections include *Into a Punchline*, *The German Lunatic* and, just out, *Calls from the Outside World*. He is co-editor of Hanging Loose Press, which celebrates its 40th birthday this year, and executive director of The Print Center. Harvey Shapiro served as a radio gunner during WWII and received a Distinguished Flyer Cross. He was editor of the *New York Times Book Review* from 1975-1983, and was a senior editor of the *New York Times Magazine*. His latest book is *The Sights Along the Harbor: New and Collected Poems*.

FRIDAY 5/26 [10:30 PM]

BOOK PARTY:

BONNY FINBERG: "HOW THE DISCOVERY OF SUGAR PRODUCED THE ROMANTIC ERA"

5 guys, 5!!! will read from Finberg's new short story collection from Sisyphus Press. The collection is comprised of 12 short stories, more like 12 'unfinished novels' or 'story haiku,' from the male point of view. With Leonard Abrams, Regie Cabico, Joe Maynard, Thad Rutkowski and Jameel Moondoc. Bonny Finberg's fiction, poetry, essays, book reviews, and photographs have been published in numerous anthologies, including *Best American Erotica of 1996*, *Crimes of the Beats*, *Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*, and *A Gathering of Tribes*.

MONDAY 5/29

MARISOL LIMON MARTINEZ & RYAN MURPHY

Marisol Limon Martinez was born in San Antonio, Texas and has lived in New York City for 13 years. She makes drawings, paintings, books and piano music. *After you, dearest language...*, published by Ugly Duckling Presse, is her first book of writing. Ryan Murphy is the author of *Down with the Ship* from Otis Books/Seismicity Editions, as well as the chapbooks, *The Gales* (Pound for Pound), *Ocean Park* (A Rest Press) and *On Violet Street* (The Aldrich Museum of Art and Design).

WEDNESDAY 5/31

SUSAN M. SCHULTZ, MARK WALLACE & STEPHEN VINCENT

Mark Wallace is the author of *Nothing Happened and Besides I Wasn't There* and *Sonnets of a Penny-A-Liner*. *Temporary Worker Rides A Subway* won the 2002 Gertrude Stein Poetry Award and was published by Green Integer Books. His multi-genre work *Haze* was published in 2004, as was his novel *Dead Carnival*. Susan M. Schultz has taught at the University of Hawai'i since 1990. She is the author of the books *Memory Cards & Adoption Papers* and *And then something happened*. The University of Alabama Press recently published her collection of essays, *A Poetics of Impasse in Modern and Contemporary American Poetry*. She edits Tinfish Press. Stephen Vincent lives in San Francisco. *Walking* was published by Junction Press. Recent ebook publications include *Triggers*, from Shearsman Books, and *Sleeping With Sappho*, from faux press.

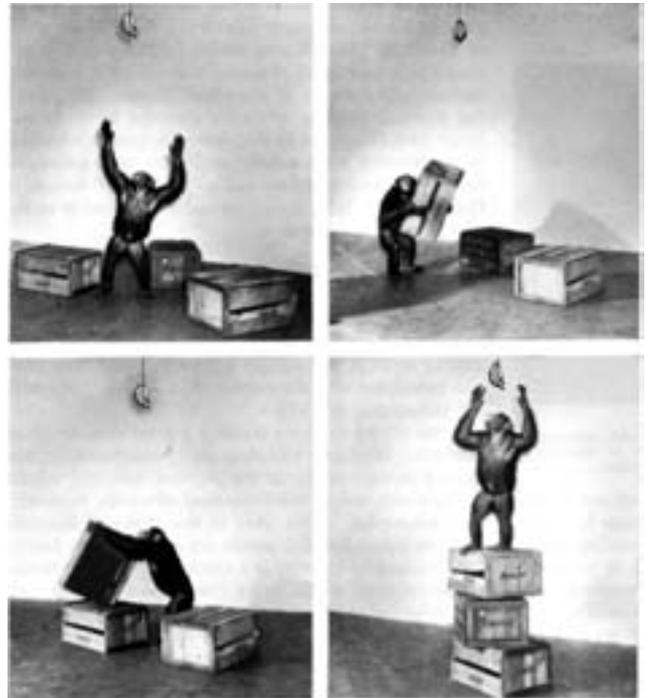


fig.1: poets show almost human intelligence in their attempt to obtain elusive notoriety.

JUNE

MONDAY 6/5

JOSEPH MASSEY & JESS MYNES

Joseph Massey is the author the chapbooks: *Minima St.* (Range, 2003), *Eureka Slough* (Effing Press, 2005), *Bramble* (Hot Whiskey Press, 2005), and *Property Line* (forthcoming in the spring of 2006 from Fewer & Further). Jess Mynes is the author of *In(ex)teriors* (Anchorite Press); a collaboration with poet Aaron Tieger, *Coltsfoot Insularity* (Fewer & Further Press); and *birds for example* (CARVE Editions). He is the editor of Fewer & Further Press.

WEDNESDAY 6/7

THE RECLUSE READING

Poets whose work appeared in the first issue and in the forthcoming second issue of the Poetry Project's house journal *The Recluse* will read their work.

MONDAY 6/12

SPRING WORKSHOP READING

Spring participants from the workshops of Tony Towle, Evelyn Reilly, David Henderson, Carol Mirakove and Joel Lewis will share the work they wrote for class.

ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

ADMISSION \$8
STUDENTS & SENIORS \$7
MEMBERS \$5 OR FREE

STATE OF NEW ORLEANS: POST-KATRINA



Approximately six weeks after Hurricane Katrina, on October 13, New Orleans poets, artists and musicians, but more specifically returning evacuees, packed into the Gold Mine Saloon in the French Quarter to listen, talk and share their stories. Poems and stories filled with anger, disbelief as well as plenty of humor filled the stage accompanied by boisterous shouts from performers; everyone agreeing it's good to be home. It's good to be allowed to come home, even when it's strewn with garbage and discarded, rotting refrigerators, even when the corners are manned with young people holding automatic weapons, and curfew is at midnight; it's good even when you don't know what's going to happen next. It's good to come home or to what's left of it. The 17 Poets! Reading Series, celebrating its second year, resumed after a forced hiatus during which time the city of New Orleans underwent a drastic transformation. The landscape, the social structure, the population and the spirit of the city would be heavily marked by the effects of Hurricane Katrina, a demarcation between before and after as clear as the scum lines found on flooded homes indicating the water's highest point. The artistic community's return represents a microcosm of the beginning of the city's return; some will persevere, some will relocate and some will never come back again. On October 13, the reading did not follow its usual format of one featured

BY MEGAN BURNS

reader followed by an open mic with seventeen spaces for performances. On October 13, there was no feature, and everyone who had something to say came up and read. Four hours of poetry later when the curfew went into effect, the front doors were locked, and the poets kept on reading to an attentive and appreciative audience. It was good to be home. In the second week of November, 17 Poets! hosted its first visiting guests. Pierre Joris and Nicole Peyrafitte, who were scheduled to perform before the storm, kept their date with the city, and, along with their son Miles, stayed in the French Quarter experiencing first-hand what so many returning New Orleanians were dealing with on a daily basis. Nearly three months after the storm, they visited the few open restaurants, walked past discarded appliances covered in graffiti, visited the places where whole neighborhoods once stood and began to understand the sheer magnitude of the devastation. "We've been driving for miles," they

noted during a car ride through one of the hardest hit areas, "and we haven't driven out of it." And that first-hand visual knowledge is what's lost in translation on the news; the smell of a city stagnating in polluted water for weeks can't be properly expressed in a sound byte. It was that remove from the humanity of the destruction

that prompted discussion on why the city should even be rebuilt. That kind of conversation is much more difficult to undertake when facing a block of empty houses or when driving through a neighborhood of empty churches, schools and playgrounds, viewing gutted structures that represent lives and families.

Further blows to the city would be dealt in the months to come. City and state leaders were painfully grilled on Capital Hill about what should have been done with the benefit of hindsight to fuel everyone's ire. Fires abounded in a city full of drowned electrical wires and with little or no water pressure in certain areas. A swath of tornadoes in January tore through an already devastated Lakeview neighborhood damaging houses that escaped Katrina's wrath. Five months after the storm, thousands of citizens remain displaced, homeless and uncertain if there is any future for them in the city they once called home. Many New Orleanians hoped to hear encouraging words from the president who, in the



weeks following the storm, stood in Jackson Square amid an empty city vowing to rebuild and protect New Orleans. The State of the Union address left many wanting as it focused on foreign policy and other countries' plights instead of the ongoing disaster that has affected thousands of people in the Gulf Coast region.

When we were allowed to return to the city after the storm my husband, poet Dave Brinks, drove my daughter and me through the neighborhood where we had purchased our first home; we assured our child that all that was broken would be fixed. We assured her that the trees, the homes, the playgrounds and the schools would all be fixed, and that we would fix our home as well. Nearly six months later, we continue to wait for insurance money in order to rebuild. Our first floor, like so many others in the neighborhood, lies exposed and gutted to save it from the insidious mold that infiltrated every home inundated with water in the weeks following the flood. Homes with any salvageable items have been picked clean by looters, in some cases repeatedly as neigh-

borhoods stand abandoned and completely dark at night. Unlike the looters shown on the news in the aftermath of the storm, these are not New Orleans residents since so few have returned. Instead, these looters are made up of people supposedly here to help rebuild the city. It's hard to imagine that we don't deserve a safe place to raise our children. It's hard to imagine that this city has to justify itself again and again in order to remain a place we can call home. In January, our son Blaise Cage was born in New Orleans. We will rebuild his home, his sister Mina's home, the home in which we chose to raise our children; a home in our city that we love. And every Thursday night, we will light the candles, turn on the microphone and beckon that all the people of New Orleans safely return to the city, along with the poets and writers, to sing in her soft embrace.

Megan Burns along with her husband, poet Dave Brinks, runs the 17 Poets! Reading Series in the French Quarter (www.17poets.com).

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WAYNE
 KOESTENBAUM
 MAGGIE
 NELSON
 IN
 CONVERSATION

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM: When asked to think about poetry, I can only think about prose, or Déodat de Séverac, or *Pet Sounds*.

MAGGIE NELSON: That seems right and just. It reminds me of the opening of Anne Carson's *Economy of the Unlost*, where she talks about having to write on Celan and Simonides at the same time, because if she picked just one, she'd end up "settling": the worst thing. Or bored: equally bad.

WK: Now I'm writing an essay about artist Amy Sillman and using this assignment to think about why poetic lines often feel claustrophobic to me. Odd, that while writing an essay I'm more inventive with "poetic lines" than when I'm writing a poem...

MN: I've been reading Schopenhauer, who is completely hilarious and, for some reason, more heartening to me than anybody even vaguely uplifting. He postulates suffering as one sure-fire way to avoid boredom. Unless suffering gets boring – then I guess you're sunk.

WK: Can't believe you're actually reading Schopenhauer. I've never cracked the spine of that one. Today I threw out an old unread Aristophanes paperback.

MN: The Schopenhauer is all aphorisms – not very hard to crack. That's about the only kind of philosophy I can read, anyway.

WK: Joseph Joubert never actually wrote a book, only aphorisms and fragments, warm-up for a book he never arrived at...

MN: Lately I've been trying to stay focused on this prose "sequel" to *Jane*, which I've modeled (loosely) on Peter Handke's *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*. Although whereas his language is flat, exacting, and excruciating, I worry that mine's just flat.

WK: I never dug Handke's *Sorrow*. Maybe I wasn't sorrowful enough when I read it. I'm finding it hard to finish my Sillman essay, mostly because, I realize, I'm APPROVAL ADDICTED. (A self-help book I saw advertised on the F train: *Approval Addiction*—and how to get over it.)

MN: This AA seems a group I could really dig.

WK: How's your shoulder? Mine hurts. Say something about how writing damages the body. (Somehow Plath's "the blood jet is poetry" fits in here.)

I don't know if I love the image of myself chasing after a rock of crack in a hotel room carpet.

MN: Thanks for asking—mine hurts too. I've just moved to CA, where they're much more concerned with bodily well-being than in NYC, and the computer keyboard that CalArts has bought me has a sticker that reads: NOTE: SOME EXPERTS BELIEVE THAT THE USE OF ANY KEYBOARD MAY CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY. As if the keyboard were a rock of crack instead of a keyboard.

Poetry has never injured me, bodily, but prose has. My process of writing poems has much more BODY in it: I write on napkins, in notepads, on receipts, etc. and then put it all down in one place and tote the pages with me to different locales. But prose makes me feel like my ass is waxed to the chair. Instead of marking time, prose makes it disappear. Whole days, lost to the wormhole of work. Perhaps you and I have this in common: rhetorically we privilege indolence, but we both really like to work.

WK: We're both weirdly giddy. Nervous, afraid to offend, jumpy, a combination of

focused and scattered... I'm fascinated by what you said long ago about the poetics of fast-talking. Do you speak more quickly than I? I've slowed down with age, I used to be a mile-a-minute guy... When very young, I stuttered; I still tend to hesitate. Self-interruption is why I love Robert Walser. His voice—at once grandiose and shattered, nervously observing itself crawl through syntax—helped me write *Moira Orfei in Aigues-Mortes*.

MN: The necessary & sheer rush of energy I get from talking to you has much to do with our mutual speediness. It's a drug, really—sometimes I can get to talking so fast with you that I feel like I'm about to skid off the planet. I probably

do talk faster than you, but only because I've yet to master the art of talking very fast while always remaining understandable. You pause for effect, you enunciate clearly.

WK: If I pause, as you say, for effect, that's a teacherly affectation, or fatigue, or a consciousness that what I'm about to say might be offensive—a wish to gain mileage from indecision. Plus I love commas, colons, paragraph breaks, line breaks, any chance to halt *in medias res*.

MN: You and I have never talked about our mutual history in speech therapy.

WK: I remember going into some trailer? I've "blocked" the memory (how melodramatic!). My first-grade teacher told me I stuttered. I remember being caught inside the stutter; it seemed not a stigma but a decorative peculiarity, an embroidery.

MN: I'm now remembering that great part of your essay on James Schuyler where you compare the stutter in his untitled villanelle with Bishop's stutter in the final line of

"One Art," and talk about them as "two great postmodern statements of the poetics of the closet." Coming out/staying in: seems like we both have the desire to offend while also being afraid of offending *fatally*, as it were: a recipe for shame if I ever heard one!

I too have "blocked" speech therapy. What I haven't blocked is the metal device once affixed to the roof of my mouth with a little spike on it which pricked me every time I tried to put my tongue against my front teeth to make a lispy "s." My speech took on a totally weird rhythm: "s," then "ouch."

WK: Recently in a fit of closure I gave my friend Matthew Stadler my *Hotel Theory* manuscript (at the moment it's in 2 columns: a nonfiction meditation in the left column, a novel in the right column). *Hotel Theory's* not poetry (maybe it isn't even literature, just turd-arranging), but the fact that it runs in twin skinny columns helps me see it as poetry. Or at least vertical language.

Is it too late to be "experimental"? Now I'm reading Joan Retallack and thinking, "Can I play, too?"

MN: Weirdly, part of the experiment of *Jane* was to let some poems fall flat, which felt sinful: can I really publish a poem this "bad"? But the project wasn't about delivering lyric flourish at every turn. It had other goals.

WK: Your avoidance of embroidery is refreshing. I love Marie Redonnet's novels because they, too, renounce "lyric flourish." Someone once called my poems "flat," and the adjective hurt. I'm reminded of the time some psycho girlfriend of mine (decades ago) answered a long rhapsodic letter I'd written her with this terse, humiliating rebuff: "Next time, write to me." One command, on a tiny slip of paper, tucked into an envelope. Derrida hadn't yet written *The Post Card*, so I had no context for my failure as a letter writer, as a sociable being.

MN: It's so unspeakably painful to feel the thrill of thinking you've found someone who might want to house or hear the excitation, and send back his/her own "too-muchness," & then to receive any rebuff

which leaves you suddenly alone with your own reams of rhetorical flourish. Maybe that's why the drug-addled dialogue – or monologue – between Warhol's "A" and the "B" on the other end of the phone line feels more reassuring – "A" may eventually have to hang up, but it isn't punitive.

WK: Your *Jane* gloriously refuses to package itself as poem, novel, or memoir. I respect its unwillingness to dress up grief or placelessness; its ruminations and circlings have a sustaining austerity. A memoirist's or poet's vulnerability, as you've suggested, can be a form of packaging, a hard sell.

MN: And what a perverse form of the "hard sell" it is, in a country meanly obsessed with "protecting itself," from terrorists, from identity theft, from whatever. True bravery, which, I think, involves failure, and loneliness, is harder to come by. Fanny Howe says that she avoids titling her

I deplore my dependence on filters (as in mentholated cigarettes): genre is a filter, publication is a filter, the "poetic line" is a filter, plot is a filter, fact is a filter, "I" is a filter, rhetoric is a filter...

poems because titles "put a lid on the loneliness." I think that's brave.

WK: Anti-packaging stance number one: I'm trying to move away from writing that too clearly aims at a reader. Reader-friendly = reader-molesting. Give the reader some privacy! Claudia Rankine's newest book, which I admire, is *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, but I'm equally drawn to Schoenberg's insistence (in his essay "Why One Must Be Lonely") on becoming-lonely (like becoming-animal!) as interminable and desirable. Certain reading experiences are touchstones of this loneliness: Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, Stein's *A Novel of Thank You*, or Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. As Artaud put it, "But at any given moment, I can do nothing without this culture of the void inside me."

MN: I wonder if the market panic that someone won't pick up a book & read it without knowing what it is has something to do with the culture's panic about loneliness: God forbid we're left alone with something,

especially ourselves. Recently I was in an airport bookstore and saw a bestseller with the title *Never Eat Alone*. I didn't know, before being interpellated by this book (a self-help guide to becoming a better "networker"), that eating alone was something one was supposed to avoid.

In what I've been working on lately I've felt—or it's felt—voiceless. It's been very painful to *not* know what I sound like for the first time in my life, although, I suppose, important—a reversal along the lines of what psychologists like Adam Phillips are always harping on about psychoanalysis: that its point is to become a stranger to oneself, not to bask in some golden halo of "self-knowledge."

WK: The quest to "become a stranger to oneself": that's the "hit" (as Avital Ronell would put it) of writing: seeing a strange face in the mirror, hearing one's voice as strange, like the strange face that psychologist Silvan Tomkins suggests inspires shame in the child—you turn to seek the parent and instead see a strange unloving face. One of my first memories is of my mother's face seeming a stranger's: I wondered, who is that stranger hanging out in my backyard? Too often in my work I give place to the familiar rather than to the strange—I tend to cut odd passages and retain comprehensible ones.

MN: Me too. Partly because to go headlong into the "strange" can court breakdown. Since working on this "sequel," which literally "returns to the scene of the crime," has occasioned, or at least come on the heels of, some form of nervous breakdown, many friends have sagely counseled me to leave it alone, or to come back to it when I feel stronger. All I can say is that I wouldn't be doing it if it didn't feel like something I have to do. I admit this may be a little childish—petulance, or masochism, masquerading as adult inquiry.

WK: I doubt I've ever had a proper "nervous breakdown," though I'm often in the midst of a slow-motion, barely detectable dissolution of the threads of sociability and normalcy, a process of becoming-strange to friends, becoming-strange to my own language. A migration in my reading life—

toward writers who violate the pact of sociability (Blanchot, Bernhard, Genet, Jelinek, Lezama Lima, Sarduy, Ponge, Huidobro, Celan, Guyotat)—comes from a wish not to repair the slow-motion breakdown but to nourish it, find a mirror for it in equivalently difficult literature, even as my own writing seems, sometimes, so woe-fully transparent and legible.

MN: I don't know if the term "breakdown" applies unless you're chasing after a rock of crack in the carpet of a hotel room or being involuntarily shipped off to Bellevue, but perhaps there are gradations, and if so, I think it fair to call them breakdowns. The reopening of my aunt's case was contemporaneous with a terrible accident suffered by a dear friend of mine, and tending to her near-fatal injuries while being re-immersed (by the state, by the media, by my own compulsions) in my aunt's fatal injuries has sometimes not felt psychically tolerable. Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* has helped: "To be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, fear, and in what ways." A useful project, especially during this horrible and pointless war.

WK: Talking with you gives me so much energy! I want to belong to the School of Maggie, to re-insert myself (post facto) into whatever tradition or ecosystem you're participating in, even if I don't belong...

MN: Wayne, you have to be kidding. The School of Maggie? There is no such thing!

WK: And yet I'm inspired by your statement "I write on napkins, in notepads, on receipts, etc., and then put it all down in one place and tote the pages with me to different locales..." I want to be in those different locales! I want those napkins, those receipts! I want your speed and mobility and flexibility! I deplore my dependence on filters (as in mentholated cigarettes): genre is a filter, publication is a filter, the "poetic line" is a filter, plot is a filter, fact is a filter, "I" is a filter, rhetoric is a filter...

MN: If it makes you feel any better, I seem to have lost the "different locales" School of Writing for the moment—I've been doing all my writing in my office at CalArts, a round, navy-blue asylum, CA 70s motel-style, which, as David Antin notes, has no windows, so a huge storm could be raging

outside and you'd never know it. Often I emerge to find huge strips of eucalyptus flying through the air like clubs.

WK: A dear friend recently expressed surprise when I told him that I considered myself indebted to the so-called New York school of poetry. Are the traces of my indebtedness so difficult to parse? I don't demand that New York school(s) be cohesive—on this subject I've learned much from your forthcoming book on women and abstraction in the New York school—and yet appearing in the Poetry Project's pages feels like homecoming. Maybe poetic identification should remain fugitive or exiled—but without the foster-parentage of Schuyler, O'Hara, Brainard, Ashbery, Cage, Feldman, Ginsberg, Myles, Notley, and Warhol, I'd be voiceless. This NYS affiliation means more to me than the old-school "gay" badge.

MN: Yes—whatever the "NYS" was or is, I think of it as a rubric, a practice, a place, in which aesthetics can occupy the foreground rather than gay identity politics, but without the customary downgrading or erasure of being queer which that preeminence usually (unnecessarily, homophobically) entails.

WK: I love the picture of you chasing after a "rock of crack in the carpet of a hotel room"—like a photo of Liza Minnelli (by Chris Makos?)... I'm enamored of the phrase "rock of crack," like Artaud's "claque-dents" (which Anne Carson borrows for "TV Men: Artaud"). Do we call the phrase ("rock of crack," "claque-dents") a fricative? If only you could have recited to your speech therapist Artaud's last words (as translated by Clayton Eshelman and Bernard Bador):

"And they have pushed me over
into death,
where I ceaselessly eat
cock
anus
and caca
at all my meals,
all those of THE CROSS."

Say after me: caca. I believe in spells. And so, I think, do you: I turn to your first book, *Shiner*, and find "Ka-boom, ka-boom," I find "chunky snow," I find "Well I want jack pie," not to mention "pet rock" and "The plung-/ing wall"—signs of the claque-dent aesthetic. We needn't have undergone

electroshock to understand that when we write we sometimes reapply the voltage we once passively accepted. In "The Burn" (from *Jane*) you address this hyperaesthesia: "As a child I had so much energy I'd lie awake and feel my organs smolder." This smoldering is inspiration, but it's also the death-sentence shock of over-excitation.

MN: I don't know if I love the image of myself chasing after a rock of crack in a hotel room carpet. But "when we write we sometimes reapply the voltage we once passively accepted"—this I love. Maybe it's precisely here that writing becomes cruel—not cruel as in sadistic, but cruel as in Artaud's "theater of cruelty": the manifestation of an implacable, irreversible intent, a kind of wild spitting back at the world that begot you without your choosing to be begotten into it. You can hear this spit and crackle, this rock of crack, in Artaud's voice on those final recordings. The earth moves.

WK: In those recordings, Artaud sometimes sounds like Shirley Temple.

MN: Amen.

WK: Being-about-to-burst: my primal scene of writing: sixth grade: teacher gave us fifteen minutes to write a story: the noon lunch bell rang: I hadn't finished my story: that sensation of wanting to crowd everything at the last minute into my story (not enough time!) has never left me.

MN: That's how I feel almost every day in my writing life. I don't think it's necessarily a "healthy" way to write, or to live — a poetics of the rush may be interesting, but is a poetics of the cram? But when the blood-jet is on, that's how it feels. I don't know if I would get anything done otherwise, though I am realizing that always writing and/or living with an undercurrent of desperation can be exhausting. So maybe I'm moving away from "The Burn" — first toward the controlled burn, then I don't know where. It would be good to stay alive.

Wayne Koestenbaum, Professor of English at the CUNY Graduate Center, has published one novel (Moirá Orfei in Aigues-Mortes, Soft Skull Press, 2004), five books of nonfiction, and five books of poetry—most recently, Best-Selling Jewish Porn Films (Turtle Point Press, 2006).

Maggie Nelson is the author of Jane: A Murder, The Latest Winter, and Shiner. She is a recent transplant from New York to Los Angeles, where she is now teaching at CalArts.



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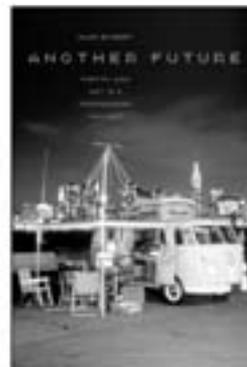
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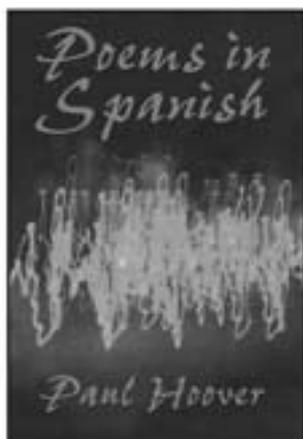
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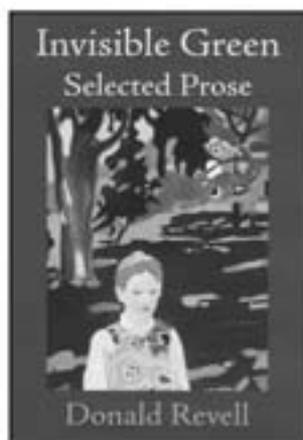
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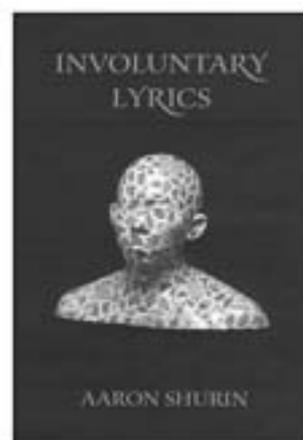
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JOE
ELLIOT
VS. THE THAI
ACTION TEAM

Winter in the thickly-jungled mountains near Thailand's border with Burma & Laos brings the temperature down to around 90. It also brings the Thai Action Team, equipped with several days worth of food & water, walking sticks, sunburns and increasing respect for the infinite. Joe Elliot, a founding team member, is also the editor of Situations Press back in New York & author of several chapbooks. He is the creator of what would later become the Zinc Talk-Reading Series. The team slept under mosquito nets in a bamboo hut in a Lahu village overlooking the Mae Taeng valley. Over dinner, by candlelight, the other members of the team asked Joe several questions. As you read this imagine the smell of dinner cooking in surrounding huts & the sound of nocturnal animals just waking up.

THAI ACTION TEAM: Over the course of our ascent, there were many instances of us asking our guide questions to which he would pause, look off into the valley below & say "I don't know." How does the presence of the unknowable affect your experience? Also, if writing involves performing an operation on that experience, ordering it or opening it, how is your writing affected by things that, through their epistemological hermeticism, resist all operations?

JOE ELLIOT: Tam was a great guide precisely because he wasn't a know-it-all. I wasn't in good shape and there's obviously a physical part about going up inclines for hours and I was glad to be left to focus on just the rhythmic spacing out of exertion. And we were seeing so much! It was beautiful and new and I was glad we didn't have the running commentary scripted for eco-tourists. However, Tam did stop occasionally to show us something that interested him. He pointed out the bergomot growing by the trail because he was going to use it in the meal that night. Another time, we came upon several termite mounds and Tam pointed to the pile of leaves on the top of each mound and explained that the locals put them there so the termites wouldn't eat the trees. What a simple solution! That kind of knowing, responding to something coming up with a real interest in it, not in your being in a position of knowing by saying it, seems okay.

In general, I'd like the unknowable to be a help in my everyday experience. The Cloud of Unknowing, a spiritual guide by an anonymous medieval English monk, urges us "to forget all created things and the purposes behind them," and to enter "a cloud of unknowing," so that we might be one'd with reality. Let's say I feel totally justified in my anger toward someone. I feel like I know, really know, the score. This usually means I'm about to do something stupid. If I consider the possibility that I might not know the whole story, that I don't know how things should be, then I am released, more open to an inspired response to the situation. Knowing is prison. Unknowing is freedom.

Knowing
is prison.
Unknowing
is freedom.

In terms of poetry, "the unknowable" makes me think of that picture of the surrealists with their eyes closed. They're tuning out the world and tuning in to poetry. And Blaser's Outside. Also the idea that you have to not know what you're doing when you start a poem and listen to where the poem wants to go. But these are romantic notions, and obviously, in an art form that involves words and communication, there's plenty of "knowing" going on. Knowing and not knowing are not so oppositional. Maybe they work together. Politically, Tam may have been talking about Burma, now in the iron grip of an ideology and ideologies are all about (with the help of guns and money) knowing. At least in Thailand you can still say, "I don't know."

TAT: As the father of three children, how has their language acquisition & development altered your own sense of language & how has it changed your writing?

JE: To begin with they say some hilarious things I steal for poems. Also, their language practice helped me respect the ejaculatory mode. At a certain point almost everything out of their newly speaking mouths is, "LOOK, THAT!" But maybe the years of not speaking, of having this insistently here but mute entity in your house, is the most mind-blowing. It is easy to forget, when they start speaking and becoming persons, when you begin to be mesmerized by what they are, that they are. It's this strong unmediated there-ness that gave me permission to give up trying to write correctly or meaningfully. What-ness isn't the highest value. That-ness is.

TAT: You told us one of your favorite parts of Northern Thailand was the morning market where, around 4am, folks buy food & offerings for the wandering monks. Your least favorite – Chiang Mai's commodification-of-experience tourist market. How does this relate to the poetry you like & the work you avoid – both to read & to write.

JE: In Thailand, the local markets were wonderfully no frills; they were too busy providing people with the things they actual-



The Thai Action Team at sunrise: Brendan Lorber, Joe Elliot, Tracey McTague, Nan Rahm Kahn. Photo by Eric Hollender.

ly needed to be wondering how they could package this over-all shopping experience as more attractive, as something that an individual could buy into and aggrandize himself with. There were no tokens of personal experience to buy. There was no vulturing of the tourist. We were in fact invisible. Their purposeful activity immunized them from us.

I am reminded of Williams' notion of poetry as "that for the lack of which people die everyday." Use value vs. surplus value. What is needed versus what is merely wanted: careerism, cronyism, canonization, etc. It's not coincidental that Williams' poetry is also no frills, too concerned with living to bother about positioning.

TAT: On the climb through the jungle, we spoke of our collective family experiences – & how the more you witness suffering or go through it yourself, the more you're able to find humor in it and to understand the pain of other people. How have your experiences allowed you to reconcile humor and suffering?

JE: Growing up in a big Catholic family gave me all the training I'll ever need to reconcile suffering and humor. The bottom line expectation of a Catholic is crucifixion. You look above the altar and see your leader hanging there showing you the way. That's your lot. You're fucked. But the beautiful and compassionate part is that in the Church everyone else's fucked too. It's not so bad. You don't just bear your cross, you grin and bear it.

The problem comes from trying to be a good Catholic. The good Catholic seeks out suffering and guilty situations, to feel good. You become fulfillment-a-phobic. You get a kind of vertigo of embarrassment when you step out of line and are happy. I don't think Christ ever said it's good to suffer. He just said you're not going to get out of this life alive. Catholics don't have to be "good", they just have to go to mass, be grateful for the sacraments and the ability to laugh about it their lot. Humor, even the gallows variety, has a lot of gratitude about it. It's generous.

TAT: When you write a bad poem how do you know it's bad and what do you do to fix it?

JE: It's not helpful for me to think of a poem as good or bad while I'm writing. If I think it's bad, I am easily disheartened and might abandon it. If I think it's good, that's almost worse. Wow, that's good! and I stop being interested in working on it and start reading it to my friends. Plus, if I get feedback that is not positive I tend to get ornery and it's hard for me to use the suggestions, even if I know them to be excellent. It's a selfish pleasure, this being in the driver's seat of your poem. But actually, when the writing's going well, you're not in the driver's seat. You're really just attending to the needs of this process you're interested in and, when disrupted, can't wait to get back to. To answer the question, when I suspect or am told my poem is "bad" it's so pathetically traumatizing that the poem and I have to separate for a while and need mediation to start working together again. I put it aside. It's better if I have the patience and discipline to listen to the needs of the poem and not be distracted by this issue of good and bad while I'm writing it. Attention!

TAT: When you read/hear a bad poem written by someone else what advice would you give to the writer of the bad poem?

JE: To begin with, I try not to give unsolicited advice. It's invasive and hurtful. If asked for feedback, I try to find something in the work that I can identify with and talk about, some issue that's interesting. I avoid pointing out things I can't stand because it isn't helpful. If you can't see it's bad, having someone tell you it's bad doesn't help you see it. The vision is something you accrue over time, and comes indirectly from reading and hearing a wide variety of poetry. This is the method Ann Lauterbach used in the workshops at City College. Looking back, I can't believe the half cooked poems we would offer up to the class on a weekly basis. She was very patient and would steer us towards books. Thank you, Ann!

BOOK REVIEWS

KENNETH KOCH
*THE COLLECTED POEMS
OF KENNETH KOCH*
Knopf / 2005

Some poets have difficulty putting pen to paper. Kenneth Koch, on the contrary, could simply not stop producing poetry. Writing and living were all but synonymous for him. The results are brought together in his almost 800-page *Collected Poems*, which doesn't even include long poems like the Byronic epic about a Japanese baseball player, "Ko, or a Season on Earth." (Koch's *Collected Longer Poems* are scheduled to come out next fall.)

Koch and I became friends at Harvard in the late 1940s. We renewed our friendship when I moved to New York in 1949; Frank O'Hara arrived there two years later, and we all met up with James Schuyler and Barbara Guest shortly afterward. Caught up in the effervescent art world of that time, along with our painter friends Jane Freilicher, Nell Blaine and Larry Rivers, to name but a few, we began to be looked at as a school – the New York School, of which Kenneth, by then a professor of poetry at Columbia, was headmaster and ringmaster. Teaching poetry was a close second to writing it as his occupation of choice; in time he would collaborate on books like *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* which has become a standard text for teaching poetry in secondary schools.

His missionary zeal also led him to write his *ars poetica*, a poem called "Fresh Air," about a Zorro-like alter ego called the Strangler whose task it is to suppress poetic dullness, violently if necessary: "Oh GOODBYE, castrati of poetry! farewell, stale pale skunky pentameters (the only honest English meter, gloop, gloop!)," and replace it with, well, fresh air. Trashing lines like "This Connecticut landscape would have pleased Vermeer," the Strangler summons the spirits of Mallarmé, Shelley, Byron, Whitman, Pasternak and Mayakovsky to help him cleanse the Augean stables of poetry.

But Koch loved poetry of all shapes and sizes, even "skunky pentameters." One of

the many delightful surprises in this rich collection is "The Seasons," an homage to the epic poem of that title by the bland 18th-century poet James Thomson. Koch's rollickingly pentametric version begins: "Now pizza units open up, and froth / Streams forth on beers in many a frolic bar / New-opened-up by April." His poetic prodigality began, as Koch explains in "Days and Nights," when "It came to me that all this time / There had been no real poetry and that it needed to be invented." The products of a lifetime of continual inventing are beautifully on display in this awe-inspiring banquet of a book.

John Ashbery has published more than 20 collections of poetry, including, most recently, Where Shall I Wander (Ecco/HarperCollins [US] and Carcanet [UK], 2005). This review previously appeared in Publisher's Weekly.

KAMAU BRATHWAITE
BORN TO SLOW HORSES
Wesleyan / 2005.

At the end of *Born to Slow Horses*, in a note that somewhat resembles a biographical note, Kamau Brathwaite calls this book part of his "postSalt poetry" phase. The "Time of Salt," as he puts it, were the years 1986-1990, years in which his wife died, his home and archives were destroyed in a hurricane, and he was attacked in Kingston, Jamaica. The "Time of Salt" produced recent books such as *The Zea Mexican Diary* and *Trench Town Rock*. PostSalt are *Born to Slow Horses* and other recent collections such as *Words Need Love Too*. And, as he writes in the third person, these postSalt books survey or make "natural reference to the entire tidalectics, but at the same time marking, even with the most remarkable of his 'Caribbean' poems here, a significant transboundary development."

It is this attention to the "transboundary" that I find so distinctive about Brathwaite's work. Brathwaite's work is distinctive for how it charts the connections between the global and the local. His stunning *Middle Passages* zig zags back and forth across the Atlantic in a series of poems about political resistance and polit-

ical art. Even his highly personal works, such as *Trench Town Rock*, which is about his attack in Jamaica, often manage to get in a colonial history lesson. I always want to resort to some oxymoronic term or jargon, perhaps a term like transboundaric localism, to describe his work because the words currently in circulation around poetry never feel adequate. His work is always rooted in the Caribbean yet it is never naively isolated, never nostalgic, always interestingly attentive to the difficulties of its colonial histories and migrations. Part of the intense pleasure of reading his work is how it swoops back and forth between detail and big picture.

Because so much of Brathwaite's book is about the difficulties of colonial histories and migrations, he is the master of the lament. He uses the form frequently and he uses it persuasively. And it is just one more example of how Brathwaite is always challenging genre expectations that he turns so often to a form that is usually gendered female and is also often about an inability to speak for so much of his historical, political poetry.

Born to Slow Horses, Brathwaite's most recent book and among his strongest, has at least two laments in it although it could probably be argued that most of the book is lament. One of the obvious laments, "Kumina," is about Brathwaite's wife's son who is hit by a car while riding a bike. The poem opens with the telling of the death and then in a mother's voice tells the story of mourning day by day. This poem has all the marks of the classic Brathwaite lament. It begins by telling about the death of someone, then turns to an intimate chronicling of the pain of someone close to the dead who is still alive using classical tropes (the breaking of bread, the tears, the disorientation and inarticulateness), and then there is a moment when the poem turns individual grief into the larger collective pain of a culture dealing with an impossible history.

The other obvious lament is called "9/11 Hawk" and it has some of the classic Brathwaite lament moments but moves out of them, perhaps even more into this "transboundary" space. "9/11 Hawk" opens with the narrator listening to music and begins with a memory of hearing Coleman Hawkins play "Body and Soul" and a discussion of how music matters. It moves then to an uncle who died in the

Twin Towers when they collapsed and a telling of this event. The voice of lament in this poem is not so much the narrator and his uncle but Beth Petrone, the pregnant wife of a firefighter who died in the buildings who is quoted throughout the end of the poem. The images in this poem are productively less sure, more complicated than in "Kumina." There is "the broken quaver of the water leaking in our one canoe" and "death in the fission of indebtedness" and "the unknown animal that is now yr sibyl sister at the door."

While Brathwaite has been living in New York City for some time, it has never held the attention of his work the way the Caribbean has. For this reason, it is interesting to see him writing about 9/11. So much of his work laments those dead because of the world's powers' colonial histories; it is fascinating to see him writing from within the center of the empire and to have him mourning with it. The poem ends with the narrator wanting to reconnect with his/her beloved. "O let me love you love you love love you" is one among many lines where it is left ambiguous if the beloved is a human or New York City, whether this love is something that is difficult or easy.

The last poem in *Born to Slow Horses* uses short, mainly three line stanzas, Robert Creeley-style. It is not really lament but could easily be read as comment on lament. Here Brathwaite abandons his classic trope of expansive listing and swooping historical views and turns to tell a story of a dead robin caught on a power line and strangled by a string around its neck. Most of the poem describes another bird that comes to mourn the dead bird. The poem ends with a boy cutting the dead robin down and burying it. The still living bird in this poem is clearly lamenting (this bird is gendered male): "the mourn- / ing male bird circle / & sing // at the hope- / less / song- // less / tighten- / ing string." But it seems telling that the boy comes from outside this relationship between the dead and the mourning and respectfully ends the song through his actions. This ending suggests that there might yet be another, new phase of Brathwaite's work after this postSalt one.

Juliana Spahr's most recent book is This Connection of Everyone with Lungs.

**STACY SZYMASZEK
EMPTIED OF ALL SHIPS
Litmus Press / 2005**

In *Emptied of All Ships*, Stacy Szymaszek crafts from the mercantile frontier a complex poetry of sign, symbol and self-identity. Seafaring history speaks to poetry through both a logistics of cultural cargo and holding environment. Poetry is Szymaszek's new birth canal. The concepts of D.W. Winnicott, a figure in object-relations theory, bring meaning to Szymaszek's psychologically charged development sequence.

From the beginning, Szymaszek launches into an archetypal sub-sea. An "I AM unit." Informing the opening poem, "...shift at oars," is a mother load of instinctual events. To advance the transitional object flow required for her own psycho-poetic development, she stacks and unpacks cosmic images associated with Gnostic mysteries, Hellenic knowing, and illusions shaped by the archetype of Neptune.

Szymaszek is a careful and intelligent poet. The cognitive horizon at "boat/bottom" belongs to "brains." On syllables

ride unconscious rhythms of the sea folded into historical records. Soon enough, the space for subjective ontological experience opens. Thus Szymaszek writes: "no one / knows / the brains / I am now."

Szymaszek's way of knowing the world is religious. That is to say, archetype, ethnicity, and myth are categories for understanding her approach to meaning. In cutting away to prime syllables, she evokes the language of ceremonial ritual.

tree
an oar
origin

joints ruptured
soak in
deep ink

Consequently, elements inscribed across the maritime horizon become focused through a strong archetypal complex. Ontological rupture fills quickly with Neptune's connective ethers and "deep ink."

In "Ballast," Szymaszek captures cargo associated with the water mother's divine offspring. Registered in "ceramic / Jesus / medallion / with chipped features" is the

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relic of her victim spawn. Totemic powers from her clan heave the transitional object forward and back. That Szymaszek is trafficking in transitional objects becomes more evident in “contents / of a secret / bottomed / drawer / yellowed / song / lyrics / wax / phallus / mending kit.”

Belonging to the age of Pisces is the psychic space of Christian belief that contains the fishy healing complex wherein a sacred relic meets a “Polish sailor.” For Szymaszek the weight of spirit is packed with specific ethnicity.

The lineage of Herman Melville and Charles Olson, which measures the American power to make space from semiotic and symbolic capital is extended in *Emptied of All Ship*. From Gilgamesh to Maximus, from Homer to Susan Howe, Szymaszek’s ships carry epic orders of relevance. Like Olson, Szymaszek takes on the imperial historical horizon through the mythological expansion of the self. Where Szymaszek differs from Olson is in her desire, which mines Susan Howe, to dissolve logistical residue and masculine markers that score this horizon.

Szymaszek has written the book of a Tiamet who eats ships rather than children. In another register, Szymaszek’s “water” advances a hermeneutic moistening of “The Waste Land.” Appropriately enough, an erotic, sacrificial line asserts a sense of both sacral kingship and mating with the poet-goddess. For example, “some mariners” expresses the act of union in Scorpionic waters of sexuality: “You are a sea monster / I am your sea”(60).

The book’s title portends a clearing of anthropocentric cargo yoked to Greek humanism by Aquarian Grrrl Power. Through no fault of her own Szymaszek’s perception remains bound by time to Piscean vapors. This matter of fate is nailed brilliantly in the telling image that concludes the book: “night watcher / with bartered needle / inks the backs of his hands / in Greek” (87). All along the way, *Emptied of All Ship* stays true to archetypal complex that binds Szymaszek’s energy to space. Ultimately, navigation in “backward / body” cannot escape Neptune’s ink.

Kenneth Warren is the Director of Lakewood Public Library in Lakewood, Ohio. With Fred Whitehead, he edited and introduced The Whole Song: Selected Poems by Vincent Ferrini for University of Illinois Press.

**REED BYE
JOIN THE PLANETS:
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS
United Artists Books / 2005**

What a wonderful gift to have in hand this tour de forcefield of Reed Bye’s gracious and generous poetic practice! Even long-time fans will be surprised and delighted at the substantial range this new volume presents. Over one hundred new poems join those carefully selected from his many books including *Some Magic at the Dump*, *Erstwhile Charms*, *Heart’s Bestiary*, *Gaspar Still In His Cage*, *Begin to be Gone*, *Of Transparency* and *Passing Freaks and Graces*. His range extends from cartoonish western ballads to the playfully surreal *Bony-Handed: a verse play in three scenes*, in

which characters like “It-ball,” “A lowered dowager,” “Barette,” and “He-man” cavort to “undulating organ music” in “Oak groves.”

Gerard Manley Hopkins writes, “For it seems to me that the poetical language of an age should be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not (I mean normally: passing freaks and graces are another thing) an obsolete one.” Reed Bye does both: taking on how a poet can float through as well as dwell in the world, recording, absorbing and reconstituting reality in language that show new ways of seeing and being human. Caught words and phrases are deftly rewoven into poems that are somehow simultaneously playful and deeply engaged with the fabric of reality, impermanence and change. The book begins with the sparkly and specific abstract lyric, “Blessing” and ends with the cosmological and philosophical “What I’ve Learned” (Past circumstance and past all / negotiation / there is space / and there is / gravity / A single mote of dust / catches the light...). The poems create an “acoustic camera” which transfers lucid, multisensory observations as well as the inner life with which they resonate: “—from one / scooped dewdrop / in the popular life can be / raised the acoustic camera.”

In the book’s title poem, Bye reminds us to “Come: / things aren’t exactly / how you learned them.” His words are sculpted and couched in stanzas that manifest lessons learned from romantics to renga. He is at once a suturing collagist conscious of process, a meditator on the relation of life and art, and a walker in the sun. Many times I am reminded of a sublimely fresh morning workshop I took of Reed’s in which we went out in search of haiku by the stream. “Inside lightly jasmine / a sword dove with / spooking blows.” Refreshment hits in waves as I wake up again into each poem – replacing a sepia-toned vision of the world with its full-color actuality. Reed Bye’s lifelong poetic practice melds immediacy with an expansive openness born from the clarity of real ear, heart, hand.

Lee Ann Brown is the author of Polyverse, The Sleep That Changed Everything and Nascent Toolbox, a collaboration with Laynie Browne.

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AARON KUNIN
FOLDING RULER STAR
Fence Books / 2005

Folding Ruler Star is a book-length perversion of the renaissance *blaison* form, an epistemology of shame incanted through the organ not of voice but of self-touch. From the author's preface: "A body has five parts, each part is alarmed. Descriptions of the parts set off the alarms." Favorite targets of a sixteenth century *blaison's* praise might have been a beloved's cheeks (flush as a...), neck (slender as the...), lips (flush as...), breasts (flush as...). Kunin's alarmed targets, however, describe a perimeter defense system. They are emphatically the human extremities—fingers, nails, hair and skin, with cameos by the mouth and eyes, but only in roles as exogenous organs of outward and averted touch.

We need to talk. It's about Aaron Kunin's fingers and Aaron Kunin's hair. On the one hand, the hair. The book features an epigraph from Silvan Tomkins, on the lowering of the head as a shame response. Tomkins' description cues up the following implicit detail. When you lower your head in shame to another, your face is replaced by your hair. Hair is the face of shame. And if you've met Aaron Kunin, you know that his shame wears a majestic face, a ceilingless vault of red curls—cue the electric harps! *Folding Ruler Star* is argued in the preface to be a value-neutral *Paradise Lost*, whose tree of knowledge is here reimagined as the tree of shame. And thus in the Kunin imaginary as well as the Kunin real, hair performs that tree of shame. The book's first poem, "The Shame Tree," sets this analogue in motion: "eyes tree looked thicker / reflected in your / hair ah in the shape- // less mask of your hair / your additional / hair your living hair." Nor is this the first instance of such a conceit in the author's extensive unpublished erotic catalogue. *The Sore Throat*, ostensibly a translation of Maurice Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* into a two-hundred word vocabulary, commences with the following illustration: "The Maeterlinck play is full of extravagant gestures: perhaps the most famous scene is one in which Pelléas ties strands of Mélisande's hair to a tree and then climbs into the tree, thus creating, out of a projection from his lover's head, an environment that he can inhabit."

Hand over fist, the tree of hair is an almost cinematic projection, immersive and sensational.

It reminds me of an anecdote from early cinema history which, given that Kunin is something of a film scholar, seems useful in embarrassing him with. The year 1891 saw the first exhibition of Thomas Edison's kinoscope, promised as an early model of a synchronous image-sound projector. Edison touted in an interview, "Yes, it's true, you can sit in your parlor and look at a big screen and see... [the actor] walk up to the front stage and bow and smile and take a drink of water and start off with his oration. Every time your eyes see him open his mouth your ears will hear what he says." Quite to the contrary, Edison's inaugural kinoscope film depicted nothing more than a silent young man waving his hands and touching his hat. Edison wouldn't deliver on his trumpeted promise—the kinoscope never so much as squawked. Its young gentleman, touching himself and unable to speak, must surely be known to the *Folding Ruler Star* author, who is keenly attuned to, or rather bent on his crisis. "His problem—subjection to sensation for

which he has no language," writes Kunin of the Goulaud character in his *Sore Throat* preface. It is a crisis which animates not only the brute Goulaud and our mute hand-waver, but Kunin himself.

This brings us to the next alarmed extremity in both *Folding Ruler Star's blaison* and Kunin's larger body of work: the hands. Ever since mesmerists developed a battery of dramatic hand gestures as visual aids, the hands and fingers have been employed as the conduits for extraordinary mental power. In fiction, film and everyday conversation, what's the most commonly recognized gesture for exerting magical force? The extension of the forearms, hands out, fingers spread and convulsing. A strange chip off the block of mesmeric tradition, Aaron Kunin's own convulsing hands are primary organs not just of writing but of raw linguistic power. Over the years he has developed (and become subject to) a system of nervous finger twitches which he consciously or unconsciously interprets as letters, words and phrases. The system, which Kunin describes as a "binary hand-alphabet," is detailed in an essay, "Knowledge Blobs": "I wasn't thinking anything that I was

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aware of. It was like a kind of automatic writing, a direct connection between my unconscious and my hand, so that the phrases seemed to come directly from my hand.... These phrases, which I thought of as 'white noise' phrases (because they seemed to indicate that nothing was happening in my mind), tended to be somewhat melancholy, for example, 'we have no choice, we have no choice,' repeated over and over." Among the procedure's thematic appearances in *Folding Ruler Star* is the following: "Christ demands (with a / perceptible shake // at the end of his / fingers) why have you / forsaken me..."

At least two of Kunin's books are composed in large part of words and phrases from the ever-shifting hand-alphabet repertoire. If I'm not mistaken, these are *The Mauberley Series* and *The Sore Throat*. Though *Folding Ruler Star* might not explicitly be a hand-alphabet work, I would argue that the practice has had such an impact on Kunin's rhetoric, phrasing and diction that it has out-served its function as a menial constraint. It has become a terribly exciting poetics. And just as an aside, I recommend this book with an urgency that borders on panic.

Macgregor Card is a poet and translator, living in Brooklyn. He edits The Germ and Firmilian: A Spasmodic Knowledge Base.

ETEL ADNAN *IN THE HEART OF THE HEART OF ANOTHER COUNTRY* City Lights / 2005

The title of Etel Adnan's new book, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*, corresponds to William Gass's 1968 collection of stories *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country*. While Adnan makes her regard for Gass's book known in her introduction, she also uses the title story as a point of dispute: "So you are in America, and I am here; you may think that you're in trouble, or that there's trouble in your country, but come here and see for yourself the mire into which we're sinking." This "here" for those that are new to Adnan's work, is Beirut, Lebanon, a city that endured civil war from 1975-90. However, Adnan is a poet of place with many places: Beirut, the Bay Area, Paris, all continually in focus as a singular

and complex vision of interconnection and community. The operative word in Adnan's title is "another," which also calls to mind James Baldwin's novel of shifting identities and locales *Another Country*, and with it, she proceeds to take over Gass's structure of a heading followed by a paragraph. Adnan follows this procedure, repeating the same headings, five times throughout the book with a span of 25 years between the first and second writings, and concluding with "To be in a Time of War," written in 2003 as the United States invaded Baghdad. These emotional reiterations have an interval midway through the book called "At Both Ends," an empathetic piece on the figure and the folly of T. E. Lawrence.

Adnan's mostly single word headings include "Place," "Weather," "My House," "A Person," "Wires," and "Vital Data". One of the most unnerving themes is the continual scrutinizing of the concept of safety, especially as manifested in house as metaphor:

"I reside in cafes: they are my real homes. In Beirut my favorite one has been destroyed."

"But houses can be much worse, they can be pierced baskets from which one's life oozes and drains into the gutters."

Other accepted symbols of refuge are also exposed as potentially dangerous. Though Adnan loves the sea, she won't romanticize the water. Her enemy lives there too. The church is not a sanctuary. She warns her dying Muslim father to "beware" of the priests that ask him if he wants to go to paradise. We might expect Adnan to reveal, finally, that she finds safety in the act of

writing, but there can be no certitude in a process that necessarily continues to discover "its own open-ended, unstable definition." Those who have been civilians in a combat zone, or who have read the reportage or literature (Ghada Samman's novel *Beirut Nightmares* offers a compelling portrayal) know that the body and mind enter into a state of attempting to anticipate the unthinkable. Adnan points out in the introduction that during times of historical upheaval, grand events don't impress the mind as heavily as "the uninterrupted flow of little experiences, observations, disturbances, small ecstasies, or barely perceptible discouragements that make up the trivialized day-to-day living." Perhaps it is this kind of consciousness that keeps people sane (safe) during wartime.

Adnan's portrayal of T. E. Lawrence, or Lawrence of Arabia as he was sensationalized, takes seriously the adage "know your enemy." Remembered by some as a hero, others as an Imperialist, she points out that the policies he helped engineer are bringing about disasters in the Middle East to this day. Remarkably, Adnan recognizes Lawrence as deeply conflicted man, and some of the most humane passages in the book are on the nature of pain:

"And when you place your hand on where it hurts, you know that it isn't there, it's nowhere because it is non-spatial and, although it has duration, it isn't in time either, being only in a perpetual present tense."

Etel Adnan read from "To be in a Time of War" last October at the Poetry Project. There is a section about hearing Steve Lacy play here that perceptibly moved the crowd of over 100 gathered to see her.

Stacy Szymaszek lives with her dog in Brooklyn.

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Erica Carpenter
PERSPECTIVE WOULD HAVE US

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Her chapbook, *Summoned to the Fences*, was published by Etherdome in 2002.

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Gerhard Roth
THE WILL TO SICKNESS

[Dichten =, No. 8; translated from the German by Tristram Wolff]

Gerhard Roth burst on the German-speaking scene in the early 1970s with three fiercely experimental novels, among them our present *Der Wille zur Krankheit*. It is here that Roth developed his "objective" prose, his aggregates of minute observations and impressions. The effect is surreal with an undertone of Angst: "i am preparing a slow disintegration of the external world inside my head."

Roth was a member of "Forum Stadtpark" in Graz (where Peter Handke and Elfriede Jelinek also first made their mark) and has continued to explore the fragile nature of reality in numerous novels.

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Jean Grosjean
AN EARTH OF TIME

[Serie d'Ecriture, No. 18; translated from the French by Keith Waldrop]

Written while Jean Grosjean was a prisoner in the Second World War, *Terre du temps*, his first book, was published in 1946. It attracted a great deal of attention and was awarded the "Prix de la Pléiade." Between lyric and meditation on Biblical themes, the poems work up to a personal apocalypse.

Grosjean is a noted translator from several languages: the Koran, books of the New and Old Testaments, the Pléiade editions of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare. For a number of years, from 1967, he was one of the editors of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. He has published works of fiction as well as a dozen books of poetry.

Elegies, also translated by Keith Waldrop, was published by Paradigm Press.

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