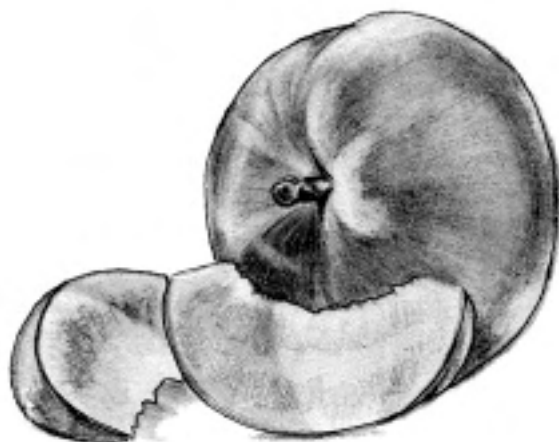




THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

#209 DECEMBER 2006 - JANUARY 2007



PRICE \$5.00



ATELOS '06

22. BRADY

Brady, Taylor
Occupational Therapy
1-891190-22-9, \$13.50, 279pp

Hopping from fragmented shards of poetry to cerebral prose to an odd and funny one-act play, **OCCUPATIONAL TREATMENT** sardonically explores the follies and momentary pleasures of existing in a jarring landscape saturated by media, detritus, and other humans.



23. ROBBERSON

Roberson, Ed
City Eclogue
1-891190-23-7, \$12.95, 136pp

Ed Roberson might no longer live in Pittsburgh, but the city in which he was born and raised still leaves its fragmented structures etched throughout his poetry. Beauty, music, poverty, blood, and concrete seem to live within the line breaks.

24. MORIARTY

Moriarty, Laura
Ultravioleta
1-891190-24-5, \$13.50, 262pp

"[Moriarty] has invented a new kind of tale in which the materiality of language and the magic of story combine in ever more wonderful arrangements. **Ultravioleta** is an instant classic." - Robert Gluck.



25. SAIDENBERG

Saidenberg, Jocelyn
Negativity
1-891190-25-3, \$13.50, pp.

"Saidenberg's 3rd book of poetry begins, very much like Dante's, in a 'dusky' wood, but instead of descending to hell she takes the reader on a...journey through the negativity of earthly relations." -Brent Cunningham.

26. SPAHR

Spahr, Juliana
The Transformation
1-891190-26-1, \$13.50, 208pp

Juliana Spahr has lived in many places, including Chillicothe (Ohio), Buffalo (New York), Honolulu (Hawai'i), and Brooklyn (New York). She has absorbed, participated in, and been transformed by the politics and ecologies of each. **The Transformation** is about that process.



27. MANDEL

Mandel, Tom
To the Cognoscenti
1-891190-27-X, \$13.50, 165pp

Tom Mandel's first book in nearly 10 years brings together two long poems and a series of 'first works' as volume one of 'a vertical epic-dense but fun to read.' Educated in Chicago's jazz and blues clubs and at the University of Chicago, Tom lives in a small village on the Atlantic coast.

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Day | 8. Coolidge | 15. Toscano |
| 2. Watten | 9. Toufic | 16. Howe |
| 3. Armantrout | 10. Harryman | 17. Green |
| 4. Lu | 11. Mara-Ann | 18. Lin |
| 5. Shaw | 12. Schultz | 19. Greenwald |
| 6. Scalapino | 13. Robinson | 20. Edmond |
| 7. Tu | 14. Stefans | 21. Benson |

...and counting.

www.atelos.org

ST. MARK'S CHURCH IN-THE-BOWERY
131 EAST 10TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10003
www.poetryproject.com

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR Brendan Lorber

DISTRIBUTION Small Press Distribution,
1341 Seventh St., Berkeley, CA 94710

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THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER is published four times a year and mailed free of charge to members of and contributors to the Poetry Project. Subscriptions are available for \$25/year domestic, \$35/year international. Checks should be made payable to The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 131 East 10th St., NYC, NY 10003. The views and opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of the individual authors and, while everyone in their right mind might be like, of course, duh!, they are not necessarily those of the Poetry Project itself. For more information call (212) 674-0910, or e-mail info@poetryproject.com.

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FUNDERS The Aeroflex Foundation; the Axe-Houghton Foundation; Brooke Alexander Gallery/Brooke Alexander Editions; The American-Scandinavian Foundation; Erato Press; Farrar, Straus and Giroux; the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Inc.; Edge Books; The Herman Goldman Foundation; Granary Books; The Greenwich Collection, Ltd.; The Heyday Foundation; Instance Press; Irwin, Lewin, Cohn & Lewis; the Laura (Riding) Jackson Board of Literary Management; Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; the Lila Acheson Wallace Theater Fund; Nenaker & Herrmann; Penguin; Poets & Writers, Inc.; Scribner; Soho Letterpress; Studio One; Talisman House; The Tomorrow Foundation; Vehicle Editions; The Winslow Family Foundation; Anonymous Foundations and Corporations; Russell Banks; Dianne Benson; Katherine Bradford; Mary Rose Brusewitz; Rosemary Carroll; Willem Dafoe; Peggy DeCoursey; Georgia & Bill Delano; Anne Delaney & Steve Staso; Agnes Gund & Daniel Shapiro; Ada & Alex Katz; Mary and Dave Kite; The Estate of Kenneth Koch; Michel de Konkoly Thege; Vicki Hudspeth & Wallace Turbeville; Jonathan Lasker; Katy Lederer; Mark McCain; Deborah Berg McCarthy & Michael McCarthy; Jerome & Diane Rothenberg; Jeannette Sanger; Hank O'Neal & Shelley Shier; Simon Schuchat; Andre Spears; Peter & Susan Straub; The Harold & Alma White Memorial Fund; Joan Wilentz; members of the Poetry Project; and other individual contributors..

The Poetry Project's programs and publications are made possible, in part, with public funds from: the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts; the City of New York's Department of Cultural Affairs; and the Materials for the Arts/New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Sanitation.

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ED ROBBERSON / LYTLE SHAW
SAMIH AL QASIM / ANNE PORTER



ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

As we go to press with the *Poetry Project Newsletter* in early November we are saddened by the news of Brad Will's death. Many readers of the *Newsletter* will likely recognize Brad as the journalist and activist who was shot and killed by paramilitaries in Oaxaca, Mexico on Friday, October 27 while reporting for Indymedia.com, but unless you happened to know Brad – and he did make a large number of friends during his 36 years – you're less likely to know that he was also a poet and musician who supported the arts and artists from the ground up. Brad hosted a terrific radio show that mixed music with live readings of poetry and fiction in the late nineties on Steal This Radio (a pirate radio station shut down in 1998), worked as a stagehand and lighting engineer in order to finance his journalistic endeavors, and was a gracious and generous reader, performer, audience member and volunteer at dozens of Poetry Project events over the years. He also had strong ties with the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, and was a good friend to many in the broader poetry community.

Brad's company was a pleasure and, as can be gathered by the many reports and tributes circulating on the web since his untimely and utterly unjustified death, he had a knack for bringing and tailing news of various kinds. I knew Brad as a person committed to direct action and devoted to the tenements and community gardens of Manhattan's lower east side. His focus seemed, from a distance, to be sharpening all the time. At the 2006 New Year's Day Marathon he read from a longer prose piece detailing his harrowing experiences documenting the plight of Brazilian squatters in Goiania, Brazil, and a version of it can be read at the Boog City blog: bradwillboogcity.blogspot.com/. Another site, www.friendsofbradwill.org/, has been set up to spread the word about the circumstances of Brad's death and, by extension, the political situation he was documenting in Oaxaca – a situation Brad obviously believed demanded greater attention from the world. A clear way to honor Brad's life and death is to look closely then, and move forward from there.

—Anselm Berrigan



NEW YEARS IRON MAN TRIATHALON ENDS IN DISASTER. POOR TRAINING, DEHYDRATION CITED. POETRY PROJECT RETURNS TO MARATHON FORMAT

Mice are popping out of the garbage cans and flies are desperate to winter in Corrine's hair. We're going to get her a hair net, and the mice, well, they've been blessed at St. Mark's Celebration of Saint Francis of Assisi, they're peace loving. All these cues lead us to believe it's time to start planning for our **33rd Annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading**. Our email invitations went out a week earlier than last year (we revel in achieving simple goals) and the yeses are streaming in – see who will be reading so far in the calendar listing. It will take place on **Monday, January 1st, 2007** from 2 pm till 2 am.

As always, we are appealing to the community for donations of labor, food and books. The Marathon Reading is the Poetry Project's major fundraising event, and it continues to take place thanks to the support of writers, artists, musicians, publishers and vendors, and the very upright backbone of the event, volunteers. We need at least 10 people an hour to make people wonder "how do they do it, it seems to have organized itself?" That's more than 100 volunteers total over the course of the day. Historically, the community response has equaled our resounding need so we hope you will continue to be compelled by the promise of a poem or two or three opening your mind as well as by the aroma of Bob and Don's vegetarian chili and the exquisite melt of Gillian's Oreo Truffles in your mouth. Your senses will be frenzied! We will be accepting donations of other food to sell as well. Sadly, with the closing of Second Avenue Deli, we will be without the W.H. Auden Tuna Mold. Tuna mold anyone?

The book table is a greatly anticipated part of the event, a rare bookshop that manifests one day per year, and we are counting on the generosity of poets, publishers and patrons to donate chapbooks, broadsides, out of print classics or any other printed matter of interest.

We have a lot of poets and performers participating in the event for the first time this year as well as your some of your past favorites. We will have people stamping your hand "paid" so you can come and go at leisure.

Make a day of it with us, and remember, the Marathon can't and won't happen without your help! Please be interested in volunteering or making a food or book donation and email info@poetryproject.com or call 212-674-0910. Thank you friends.

—Stacy Szymaszek

MUCH ADO ABOUT BOSTON

Unlike responses to other world news reports, most complaints about Boston coverage revolve around who *was* mentioned rather than who *wasn't*. One notable exception was our neglect of Derek Fenner's role as cohost of the Union Square Poetry Reading series in Somerville with Daniel Bouchard. Perhaps Derek was enjoying the invisiblity among poets who would otherwise have harassed him for readings & now we've blown it. Apologies both for the initial omission & for the subsequent exposition. Another reader asserts our reports are "New York-centric" and suggests that we mention the Ibbetson Street Press, the Bagel Bards Anthology, the Out of the Blue Gallery series, the Lizard Lounge open mike, Club Passim's Poetry theatre, and the Cantab slam as examples of readings that are the real Boston events. Never! Oh shit, we just did. But from now on we're committed to coverage of no events except those

that, like Scorsese's *The Departed*, have Southie accents while actually being produced in New York. Yet another reader thinks maybe we ought to not be so glib about the lack of oral sex in Boston. Everyone else who complained about the wrong people being mentioned in (or authoring) any of the Boston reports gets our apologies & as a consolation prize: they get to keep living in Boston with each other. Have fun!

SINGING SHANXING'S PRAISES

Shanxing Wang's book *Mad Science in Imperial City* from Futurepoem just won the 2006 Asian American Literature Award for Poetry. Congratulations! There will be an official awards ceremony at the Asian Society on December 4th.

40 CHEERS FOR 40 YEARS OF UNITED ARTISTS BOOKS

Founded as Angel Hair Books in 1967 they've been bringing great books down to earth from heaven since before a lot of us were born. Perhaps you were seduced from the bardo by their bards, lured back for one

more go at enlightenment. While you're here you oughta pick up a copy of everything they've published & see how it's done for real real.

TO ERR IS LUNGFULL!

Please go back in time & distract the staff of the Poetry Project as they proofread the Newsletter so that this announcement is allowed to run: Lungfull!15 will arrive on December 10 7pm. At Zinc (90 West Houston, NYC). Full of rough drafts & letters published without permission it will be a night of mortal embarrassment for all. Now's your chance to give the finger to the editor of the Newsletter AND Lungfull! in the same ergonomic gesture.

FROM THE EDITOR: THE DIRTY HAND OF THE POET

Morning already? (100 more deaths in Iraq while you slept). Shower, brush teeth, walk to subway (21 deaths). Because of a sick passenger at 34th Street...(18 deaths). Pick up coffee & bagel (\$3 plus 24 cents tax. Round of ammo in Iraq=21 cents of tax money). Go to job/class (210 deaths). Go home (10 deaths). Open mail...rejected poems! (1 death) Check email (11 deaths). Read blogs

(8 deaths) Compose angry email to editor & send without proofreading (2 deaths). Blog about the sick passenger this morning (4 deaths) and the new Important Book (3 deaths). Go get a slice (.16 tax = almost another bullet). Go to reading. Such brave poems! (8 deaths) Have a smoke at the break \$2.11 tax/pack=10 bullets). Return to reading. Climber poet who once rejected you reads long (How'm I for time? Plenty of time!) (12 deaths). Go out for drinks with friends. (42 deaths). Buy a round (\$1.68 tax = 8 bullets). Write a drunken collaborative poem that takes real risks (15 deaths). Get with cute poet in bar (25 deaths). Cab it back to cute poets apartment (8 deaths). Things get kind of foggy from here (102 deaths). Wake up hungover. It's New Years Eve. It's against the law to suggest you not pay war taxes. (Schiff v. United States (2005)). It is against the law to suggest you not sign up to fight or refuse to fight if you already signed up (Schenck v. United States, 249 U.S. 47 (1919)). So I won't. And neither will the 500 people who died today, the 500 yesterday & the 500 tomorrow. On January 1, 2007 the toll will be 695,500. Happy New Year, ye who still live. Good job "opposing the war."

—Brendan Lorber

sources: The Lancet, US OMB.

FROM THE PAST

26 YEARS AGO

At the Gotham book party for Maureen Owen's new book, Hearts in Space, George Schneeman told me he intended to write the newsletter a letter to the editor. He wanted to point out that Gary Lenhart's comment at the end of his review of Ted Berrigan's So Going Around Cities, that the George Schneeman drawings might have been used differently, showed insight. As it turns out, the drawings were intended for different points in the book. Mr. Schneeman [with Berrigan] had carefully chosen specific pages with which to accompany specific poems and the publisher, without consulting the artist, rearranged them to satisfy his own lay-out needs. George just wanted to point out in this letter the disrespect that an artist's work can suffer in an editor/publisher's hands. Ron Padgett said George didn't know how to write and probably would never do it.

—Greg Masters 12/1980

6 YEARS AGO

What is your pet aversion?

Dale Smith: Working the room.

Lila Zemborain: Cats.

Jack Collum: Cats.

Edwin Torres: His name is Harry and I feed him a version of food. 12/2000

21 YEARS AGO

The Poetry Project is not great because Patti Smith started here, or because Yoko Ono was in a benefit, or because we are the living canon, or the poetry revival is just around the corner, so you better start watching now. We are not the only show in town, but we are the only show like this. For twenty years the version of American poetry authorized by those who make it, gets play here.

—Eileen Myles 1/1986

12 YEARS AGO

Darius James went from being a panelist on the **Revolutionary Poetry Symposium** to a guest reader on **The Jon Stewart Show** in honor of Banned Book Week. No, he wasn't reading from **Negrophobia**, he was reading from Doris day's autobiography which was recently banned from a public library in California...

—Gillian McCain 12/1994



CE PUTNAM IN SEATTLE, WA

It had already been a terrific Seattle summer, and everything was about to get better. There was a new reading series in town, and it seemed like a great night for its debut.

AP_O_STR_O_PHE is a new series in which a writer, a dancer, and a musician (curated by Melanie Noel, Michele Steinwald and Gust Burns) each perform their own short set in the space of one hour. The event took place at the 1412 Gallery, a Spartan “white box” performance space: folding chairs, cinderblock walls, a water cooler backstage, etc.

Tari Nelson-Zagar began the evening with a violin performance featuring unusual bow work, overtone creating string-plucking ending with a frustrated cacophony of desperate screeches and sonorous drones.

Then without introduction, Ying Zhou appeared from behind a curtain dressed in only a long white lab coat and danced unaccompanied in a series of disquieting repetitive gestures. Her performance was based on the character from Wang Xiaobo’s, (The Golden Age) a yet to be translated into English Chinese novel that takes place during the cultural revolution! sex! humor! a remote southwest province location (YunNan)! In part of the novel, Chen Qingyang runs through the mountains searching for her lover wearing only a white lab coat. During the performance, the room was so quiet that the audience could hear the smallest sounds, breath, a foot scraping against a carpeted floor. Disquieting and delightful.

Christine Deavel, co-operator of Open Books, one of the nation’s only poetry-only bookstores, then read from her latest chapbook, Box of Little Spruce. Her surreal, quotidian and sparse lyrics collaborated nicely with the sun going down.

In the soup pot, the wood is a tree again

and finds its water,
and its little bit
of sustenance
from the garlic and ginger.

O the wooden spoon is a tree again

and
who can keep from crying.

Wonderful Loss. All in all, a great night. I was especially impressed by AP_O_STR_O_PHE’s aleatory format of putting three artists together without theme or connection and just seeing “what happens.” And yes, the whole thing did wrap up in under an hour.

Afterwards, we ended up at the Twilight Exit, a bar decorated with a 70s-decrepit basement-bar tropical theme, but with well-sauced “punk rock” DJ’s spinning The Stooges, MC5, etc. Joshua Beckman and Travis Nichols, from Seattle based Wave Books, were along for the ride. They were excited about their upcoming US Poetry Bus Tour giving readings with over 100 other poets in 50 cities in 50 days at bookstores, galleries, bars, prisons and schools in the US and Canada. After showing them some Anaglyph 3-D art I’d created for an upcoming book project, they suggested that I check out

the “art” in the mensroom. OK. The walls were painted a day-glo orange and someone had drawn an abstract shape in bright blue over one of the urinals. True found op art (I’m still seeing the tracers). I wonder what they’ll find on their bus tour?

C.E. Putnam lives in Seattle, WA. Crawlspace is coming! <eom>

LAYNIE BROWNE IN THE BAY AREA

On this Septembr day in Oakland the fog is starting to lift at 10:25 am. Poets abound in my neighborhood within walking distances which feel distinctly different than walking distances anywhere else. So what’s new here, besides frequent bridge closings and more muggings than usual? There seems to be a movement toward reading series hosted in private living space, a movement I applaud. And because we are so nomadic these venues shift and change, causing us to pay attention to where we are going when driving at night or on public transit. Also to know who is living with who and so on. These are all good things, waking up, paying attention. It makes us more likely to listen deeply once we arrive. There have been wonderfully crowded readings hosted by Stephanie Young, and Kelly Holt. Now there is the Artifact Reading Series in S.F. (the latest announcement for an upcoming reading warns readers that there is limited space).

One of my favorite venues is the New Yipes series. Look down a dark alley behind “God’s Gym” and see people smoking to know you have arrived. Although this is not the literal residence of any poet, I am at home amid the inspired improvisational introductions, often in dialogue with the audience and the readers, the mixture of experimental film and poetry and the gallery back room vibe. Also, the word “yipes” is inherently non-hierarchical. It’s a word for garages and not auditoriums. Not that I have anything against auditoriums. But garages make for particular epiphanies found nowhere else. Meaning we walk off of the page or the screen and into each other spilling our drinks.

Some new books & presses: Suzanne Stein has started TAXT press, a series of free chapbooks, beginning with works by David Buuck, Stefani Barber, and Magdalena Zurawski. Also look for new books from Taylor Brady, Judith Goldman, Dana Teen Lomax and Joseph Noble. Jaime Robles has started Woodland Editions with chapbooks by Todd Melicker and Brian Teare. Which brings me to memorable events recently– including a triple press book party at Cansessa Park in S.F. to celebrate books by Woodland Editions, Etherdome authors, Kate Greenstreet and Susanne Dyckman, and from Instance Press a new full-length collection from Beverly Dahlen, *A Reading 18-20*. The very missed Elizabeth Robinson was returned to us from far off Colorado for the occasion. It was uncannily sunny in San Francisco and hearing Beverly Dahlen read was like a sharp reminder of what we have been missing for every day that she is not reading to us.

On my fanciful California map Big Sur is in the Bay Area, and there I recently attended a weekend of events including a terrific reading from Joanne Kyger. Falling into her work is remembering a long-lost cadence and affinity. I’ll call it a spidery filament because that sounds more in keeping with the exact turning of sum-

mer here, meaning fog–then brilliant sun. Kyger’s work is like that sun which keeps appearing and offering us another inclination to wake up.

Laynie Browne’s eldest son wants to initiate legislation to protect the lives of bunnies. Her younger son asks, is it tomorrow yet? Her book Daily Sonnets is forthcoming from Counterpath Books.

JULIE REID IN PETALUMA, CA

In our neck of the woods the seaside is a far better place to go in October or November than anytime in the summer. The cool advance of autumn inland almost always promises a mild and windless excursion to our otherwise brisk coast, making it the perfect setting for a petticoat party and scavenger hunt. This is exactly what we did this past week. We floated candles and flowers in the surf for ephemeral decorations. Then we lugged our old piano out of the pickup and dragged it down to the sand. It’s in bad need of tuning, but then so is my singing voice. For games we stuck the name of a famous person on everybody’s back, and in a certain length of time, by asking yes and no questions of the others, we tried to guess who we were. Swimmers carried hot dog buns in their mouths in our famous relay of which the object is to complete the race first with the driest bun. Another favorite was the greased watermelon toss, but nothing was as funny as the putting on pantyhose with oversized men’s work gloves game, which all by itself was almost enough excitement for one evening. When it was time to start the scavenger hunt, everyone received a list of unusual but not impossible objects to find. These included: an English walnut in the shell, a toy raygun that shot real sparks (it didn’t count unless it still shot real sparks), an envelope with a window, a jar that once held capers, and a set of red plastic measuring spoons. Amazingly these things had just washed ashore. It was as if the ocean was our own private pinata, and the objects were our prizes–small items with no real value, just symbolic of the victory.

Julie Reid has gone to Paris at last.

JOHN COLBURN IN THE TWIN CITIES

I would like to tell you what’s been happening in the Minneapolis poetry scene, but I work for a living goddamnit. Here is what I know: Somewhere inside the color silver, the people of Minneapolis have built several art galleries. We have toiled to build these galleries, often at less than union wages. Despite this effort, we have not found ourselves. We are people of the prairie. We communicate telepathically with rabbits. Our food does not believe in us. When strangers pass through, we gape or mock. Our poetry has become formless as lakewater, obscure as seed hybrids, and that’s how we like it.

On Thursday September 14th, normally my basketball night, we received a curious visitor to one of our many silver art galleries/pleasure domes. A group of traveling poets passed through, in a bus. They wore the normal clothes and talked appro-

priately about the weather, but we knew something was up. They told us they were the Wave Poetry Bus and flashed around a lot of money that later proved to be mostly rolls of KFC coupons. We didn’t trust them but we loved them. It is our duty as Midwesterners to love the beings of earth.

Sponsored by ordinary local citizens working for such ideologically pristine organizations as the Walker Art Center and Rain Taxi, some poets of Minneapolis (including Chris Fishbach, Amanda Nadelberg, Brian Engel, G. E. Patterson, Kelly Everding and yours truly) collaborated on a reading with the interlopers. Incidentally, guns were banned at the reading.

For each performance, a Minneapolis poet held hands with a Wave Poetry Bus poet, in a show of solidarity. The poets read in the outdoor sculpture garden, inside the museum, in the auditorium, even in the rest rooms. But then Kelly Everding’s poem “Puppet Corrupter” scared the hell out of everybody. Afterward the usual hyperbolic rumors surfaced – that several audience members had been bleeding from the eyes. The crowd diminished. But the Minneapolis poets had already been “brilliant.” That is a direct quote from an ordinary citizen.

Later, deep in the silver gallery, there was an amazing pop art influenced foodfight, that in its pastiche use of pop art instantly became super postmodern. Then it got awesomer. The real poetry started. We trudged waist deep in snow to a speakeasy beneath the 394 overpass. It was all improv. It was all silver.

Eventually the mayor of Minneapolis, using an elaborate system of mirrors and a revolving stage and wearing a really hot black jumpsuit, made the poetry bus disappear. We don’t know where they are now. And since that night, I’ve kept my distance from poetry. In fact, this may be my last report. Several people in “the community” have expressed the feeling that an evil presence has surfaced. We know that poetry still happens in our city, but now we have larger concerns – security. We’ve become obsessively worried about poets crossing the Canadian Border. And we’re considering building a snow fence. Now let’s all get back to work.

John Colburn has 3 jobs: Editor for Spout Press, instructor at the Perpich Center for Arts Education and oppressor of Dobby Gibson.

RODNEY PHILLIPS AND FRANCES SJOBERG IN TUCSON, AZ

For all of the obvious reasons, we don’t want to say that Tucson is a literary oasis, but, well, it’s kind of a literary oasis. Tucson is the most beautiful and least spoiled (this last being a relative term) of Arizona’s two major cities. Since 1960, The University of Arizona Poetry Center has provided a poetry library and, since 1962, has presented a series of free readings. Over 500 writers have read in

the series which is nationally renowned. This coming year, the Poetry Center will feature readings and classes with Albert Goldbarth; Jimmy Santiago Baca; Carolyn Forché; Naomi Shihab Nye; Tracie Morris; *Next Word* poets Srikanth Reedy, Joshua Marie Wilkinson, Deborah Bernhardt, and Brian Turner; as well as Native Voices, a symposium of poets who write in indigenous languages.

Tucson is a thriving locale for small presses and journals. Richard Siken, who was last year’s Yale Younger Poet, (and also won the Lambda Literary Award this year, as well as the Thom Gunn award), is co-editor, with Drew Burk, of *Spork*, a terrific magazine with incredible “production values.” *Cue* is edited by Morgan Schuldt, and is a simple and elegant journal (a black dress with diamonds) publishing work by important contemporaries. *The Sonora Review* is the longest running student edited poetry journal in the country and has a great sense of the moment. The latest issue has a beautiful piece of conceptual art on its cover and spine. The undergraduates here also produce a magazine, *Persona*.

Long a flower of Tucson, is Charles Alexander’s Chax Press, which publishes poetry of the avant-garde. This year’s big books for Charles were Linh Dinh’s *American Tatts* and Tenney Nathanson’s *Erased Art*. Nathanson teaches in the English Department at the University and is a primary force in POG, an alternative poetry group which hosts readings and other activities.

Tucson is also home to Kore Press, which publishes handmade and trade editions by women. Kore’s catalogue represents a diversity of aesthetics and their projects include broadsides, chapbooks, an essay pamphlet series, and, recently, a first book prize.

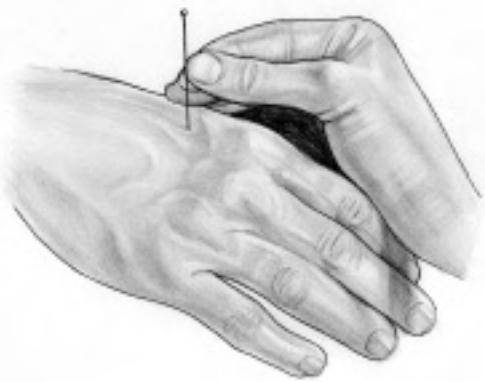
The MFA program at the University of Arizona, founded in 1974, includes nationally known writers Richard Shelton, Alison Deming and Fenton Johnson. The UA also has poets Barbara Cully, Boyer Rickel, Luci Tapahonso, and Ofelia Zepeda on hand. Among Creative Writing’s major attractions is Jane Miller, who last year lectured on Federico Garcia Lorca for the Poetry Center and Tucson Writers’ Project’s *Poetry Lecture Series*. This year Jane won the Audre Lorde Award.

Tucson has any number of poetry bloggers, including but not limited to: Kristi Maxwell (oar), Morgan Lucas Schuldt (A Peek of Reach), Stephanie Balzer (Textisle), Ann M. Fine (Epistle Whipped), Rodney Phillips (elephan’twirl), Richard Siken (Aye, Wobot).

The annual Tucson Poetry Festival is more than 25 years old now, and presents an exciting roster of poets every year. Casa Libre en la Solana, an inn for writers, widens Tucson’s aperture by providing residencies and affordable accommodations for writers.

Hola!

Frances Sjoberg is Literary Director and Rodney Phillips is Librarian at the University of Arizona Poetry Center, Tucson.



DAVE BRINKS IN NEW ORLEANS, LA

the caveat onus ::: one hundred and fourteen

a hurricane blows in from the south
a wide flat river sits down in the room
now it’s a year later and Mina asks
“When did the storm come?”
“Did it come when you & Mommy were little?”
back in Natchez last Sept the answers
to our own questions seemed further away
Paul & Beth & Andy & Khaled & I
sat at a table in the *Under the Hill Saloon*
trying to figure out where the rest of our friends were
it was around that time
the days of the week had names
but I couldn’t tell you which one it was

the caveat onus ::: one hundred and eighteen

I’ve become an expert at self-hypnosis
my fingers feel like Edgar Allen Poe
beating time with a coffin lid
sometimes it takes all day
to realize it’s not a bad trip
water where the swell says heavy things
children calling their mother
stairwell filled with cement chunks & dirt
a pink & purple scooter
put a candle between your eyes
blow the flame out
the storm’s been gone a year
and that’s a third of my daughter’s life

the caveat onus ::: one hundred and nineteen

it’s natural & exciting to be alert
the duck quacks
the lizard ambles through leafy cover
the dog chases its tongue
I too am the product of my own
catalog of survival
my vocabulary did this to me
there are no medium-sized emotions
how does your family
spend the afternoon
becalmed or not becalmed
the waves coming up
then sweeping them away

the caveat onus ::: one hundred and twenty

pulled down from a knowledge
whose eye is the moon
there’s no need to properly introduce
myself to myself
the moan is in the oak tree’s crotch
the watermarks from the storm
are nearly invisible now
whether I am alive or not
is no longer a guess
what’s your neighborhood look like
born raised and hope to die here
is what most New Orleanians say
and you can see it for miles

the caveat onus ::: one hundred and twenty-three
for Lenny Emmanuel

summer goes by simple as a hello
the light entering the holes in my head
seems brighter
I dress myself up in a hammock for the afternoon
everything that’s gone
goes on from a distance
today I’m staring at childhood pictures
looking for clues
rise up carcass and walk
put on your finest robes
you are a ghost in splendid form
an arithmetic of wind & water
twisting under the trees

the caveat onus ::: one hundred and twenty-four

born from an unnatural scenery
seen from all sides
inside this house without floors or walls
turn in any direction
stand on the front porch
note the crepe myrtles’ growth
inspect the limbs that are without flower
remove the leaves near both storm drains
for the unobstructed flow of water
retrace your steps
between the sidewalk and the curb
there are only two paths
one is a flatboat going by over my head

Dave lives in New Orleans with his wife Megan Burns and their two kids, Mina and Blaise.

DAVID PAVELICH IN CHICAGO, IL

To me – a squinting and griping Mr. Magoo – the defining feature of Danny’s Tavern is darkness. I groped, I stumbled, I humbugged. Beer in hand, I tripped up the step that leads to level two, and saw a tiny spotlight shining on a bar stool. “So this is where William Fuller will read,” I thought as I sipped the foam. It was Wednesday, September 13.

Then a surprise: in the violent flash of my digital camera I discovered that Danny’s walls are plaid – a shocking plaid of Pepto pink, black, and lemon-lime green on a cornflower ground. And at Danny’s, in the heart of Bucktown, everyone sits on toadstools (and the smokers were straight out of Lewis Carroll), except for the bravest of the latecomers who actually sat on the gritty floor of the bar that night. I was on a toadstool in a kind of cubby, surrounded by friends, staring at a motionless Mylar star balloon that was stuck at the juncture of the wall and the ceiling.

Before poet Michael Theune opened with his comic aphorisms, Joel Craig, one of the Danny’s Series founders, began the evening with a sad announcement. John Beer, longtime co-curator of the series, is moving to New York City. The reading, then, opened properly with Beer reading his work to a cheering crowd, and everyone wished him luck with their clapping. Still, from darkness comes light, and we were happy to learn that Chris Glomski, author of *Transparencies Lifted from Noon* (MEB/Spuyten Duyvil), is joining Joel Craig in coordinating this series.

William Fuller’s reading promoted the publication of his fifth book, *Watchword*, published by Chicago’s own Flood Editions (www.floodeditions.com). Straight off we were amazed – Fuller’s reading style had an edgy quickness (reminiscent of Tom Raworth’s), which transformed his short poems into nearly ephemeral pieces, thrown off like parade candy. A short seven-couplet poem like Fuller’s “Traherne” – named for the 17th century English poet Thomas Traherne who wrote lines like, “My naked simple life was I” – was nearly outrun by the poet’s voice. It may be that this rendition is fitting, because “Traherne” is a beautifully balanced poem about our brief moment on earth: “Clouds Air / Light Rain seemed tending / and gliding toward poles of / self-preservation.”

But when Fuller read his prose poem “Ode (At Work),” his rapid delivery enhanced the poem’s vying elements instead of outrunning them. Perhaps more than any poem performed that night, “Ode” incorporated a full spectrum from Fuller’s lexical paint box: finance (“And thanks to our partners in Attrition Management”), 17th century English (“And take this bloodstained broadsheet”), the basics in modern living (“And do I smell bacon?”). Importantly, the humor in these poems became even clearer. I say *importantly*

because the humor worked masterfully to offset the dry lines and the dreadful lines (and these poems are full of sin and dread). Looking over his reading glasses, Fuller’s poem tumbled to its close – “For covetousness is all.”

David Pavelich is a librarian at the University of Chicago.

MATT HART IN CINCINNATI, OH

Autumn has arrived, and here in Cincinnati (a.k.a. the Queen City of the West, a.k.a. Porkopolis, a.k.a. Forklift, Ohio—official home of Poetry, Cooking, and Light Industrial Safety) all the poetry talk is centered (as it is every year at this time) on only one thing—CHILI!

So here it is, from our city to yours, Eric Appleby & Tricia Suit’s recently declassified recipe for *Oktober Revolution Chili*. Enjoy.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 3 Tbl | extra virgin olive oil |
| 6-8 | cloves of garlic |
| 2 | yellow onions |
| 1 | bunch fresh cilantro |
| dash | salt & black pepper |
| 1 tsp | cumin seed |
| 1 tsp | crushed red pepper |
| 2 Tbl | dried oregano (or use fresh to taste) |
| 1 Tbl | white sugar |
| 1 tsp | unsweetened cocoa |
| 1/2 tsp | cinnamon |
| 1/2 cup | VODKA! |
| 2 | limes, quartered |
| 3 | red bell peppers |
| 1-2 | habanero peppers |
| 2 | Anaheim peppers |
| 1-2 | jalapeno peppers |
| 1 lg. & 1 reg. | can whole or diced tomatoes (with the juice) |
| 2 cans | pinto beans, rinsed |
| 1 can | black beans, rinsed |

1. Play some cooking music. Here in Cincinnati all the poets are talking about the new Ornette Coleman record, *Sound Grammar*, and also Yo La Tengo’s latest offering, *I Am Not Afraid of You and I Will Beat Your Ass*. But the real deal is Extra Golden’s OK-OYOT SYSTEM. Extra Golden, who just played last week at Publico Gallery (where the Clay Poetry Series readings are held) tore the place apart. Even the hipsters were shaking their butts. Of course, if none of this sounds good to you, pick your own damn music. You know what you like.

Now for the main event:

2. Cut in half, remove seeds, and roast in a broiler the red bell peppers, habanero(s – if you want the chili really friggin’ hot), Anaheim peppers, and jalapenos (again, watch the heat). When the skins of the peppers turn black (about 10-15 minutes), remove



the peppers from the broiler. Place them in a brown paper bag. Shake them gently. Then refrigerate the peppers for 15 minutes. Peel and chop. Set aside.

3. In your chili pot, heat the extra virgin olive oil. Chop the garlic and the onions and sauté them in the oil (DO NOT BURN YOUR GARLIC!). Add the salt and a pepper and half of the vodka. When the onions are translucent, add the chopped roasted peppers, the cumin, the crushed red pepper, ? cup of chopped cilantro, and 2-3 quarter wedges of lime. Sauté for another 2-3 minutes.

4. Over the next 10 minutes or so, have some drinks (I prefer beer, but again, you know what you like). Then add, at your leisure, in the following order: the tomatoes with juice (if using whole tomatoes, tear them into smallish chunks with your hands), the beans, oregano, sugar, cocoa, cinnamon and the rest of the vodka. Simmer 45-60 minutes. If the chili becomes too thick, just add water.

5. Serve with shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, chopped cilantro, lime wedges and your favorite cornbread and cold beer.

Matt Hart is the executive director of the Greater Cincinnati Chili Council.

ERIK SWEET IN ALBANY, NY

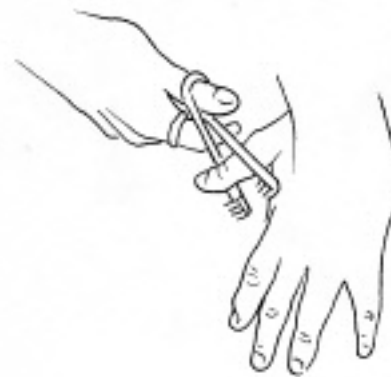
If a poet sees a flash in Albany, chances are good that Dan Wilcox is behind the lens. While Wilcox cannot be described as *The Flash* (according to my research, that moniker goes to Jay Garrick), since moving to the city over two decades ago he has been a tireless presence on the Albany poetry scene.

Wilcox is the proud owner of what he refers to as, “the world’s largest collection of unknown poet photographs.” The snapshots are taken the old fashioned way and filed neatly in boxes according to date, name, and venue. By his estimation, the collection includes over 8,000 shots. Here, among his boxes, local poets and up-and-comers rub shoulders with luminaries like Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg.

The man behind the lens also plays an active role in organizing Albany’s open mic readings. Wilcox’s latest offering is held every third Thursday at the Social Justice Center, located at 33 Central Avenue. Each summer, he runs the Poets in the Park series, held in Washington Park near the statue of lyric-poet Robert Burns.

Wilcox is also part of a collaboration called *3 Guys from Albany*. Their mission is to travel to the 18 towns, cities, or villages named Albany in the U.S. and perform their poetry. So far, they’ve visited over half of them. Founding member Tom Nattell passed away last year, but Wilcox and Charlie Rossiter will continue the quest.

Some poets who have noticed Wilcox’s flashbulbs have kept in contact with him, requesting photos after the events. Anne Waldman used one of his images in her recent collection, *In the*



Room of Never Grieve. Allen Ginsberg was generous enough to let Wilcox raffle off photos of him for a local charity.

As we conversed, Wilcox looked me up in his archive. Within moments, he produced an image from nearly five years ago, when I was presenting Anselm and Edmund Berrigan at the now defunct Loft. I don’t recall there being a camera in the room, yet there I am, a bit younger, a bit greener, caught in the moment.

Wilcox’s overarching goal with his collection has always been to share his images. He is in the process of putting together a proposal to have them made into a book that celebrates the many poets who take the mic to share their ideas with the world.

His collection is an amazing resource for poets who want to rewind time and visit a past event. It is not simply evidence of what has happened, but a reminder that poetry is active and will always be happening.

You can reach Dan Wilcox at dwlcx@earthlink.net.

Erik Sweet lives in Albany, N.Y. where he just made a nice pot of iced green tea. He also co-edits Tool a Magazine (toolamagazine.com) and is co-organizer of Behind the Egg, a monthly reading series.

SPARROW IN THE CATSKILLS

Damien T. Toman, 24, is a poet, musician and journalism student. I interviewed him recently, under a linden tree.

Sparrow: Perhaps we can discuss your new band.

Toman: The new band, we call it The Stratford Brats. It currently consists of my wife Dorothy and myself. And the pretext for the band is to play knockoffish late-’70s punk rock with lyrics directly lifted from the works of Shakespeare.

Sparrow: And who’s going to sing?

Toman: Dorothy is going to do the lead singing, and I may do backup vocals.

Sparrow: So what’s the goal of your Shakespearean punk band?

Toman: The goal, I suppose, is both personal and social. Dorothy comes from a highly trained theatrical background – where she holds her B.A. from – and I recently decided to end my individual musical pursuits, because they were making me antisocial. I decided that if I’m to continue

playing music, it needs to be in the context of a band, and that I’d be happiest if I didn’t have to write lyrics, because my lyrics depress me, as well as the listener. Dot mentioned offhandedly that she didn’t care if we had to borrow the lyrics from Shakespeare – and I thought about that for a moment, and decided it was too brilliant to pass on.

Sparrow: Do you think Shakespeare was punk?

Toman: No. I have my qualms with Shakespeare, in the same way I have my qualms with Mozart, in that everything that he did, he did commercially. But at the same time, he was philosophically extraordinarily well-rounded, and every view that he had in mind, he presented thoroughly and beautifully.

Sparrow: What is the function of your poetry?

Toman: My goal as a poet now is, in a very real sense, to erase the metaphor from poetry. I'm trying to write poetry that directly presents its message, however facile and inane that message is.

Sparrow: Are you replacing metaphor with something else?

Toman: I'm replacing metaphor with impartial observation. (I was tempted to refer to it as "journalistic poetry.") I believe that especially with our language being as advanced and complex as it is, there is positively nothing that cannot be described. Baudelaire said about his mentor, to whom he devoted his *Les fleurs du mal*, that he had such a grasp of the French language that he never needed to resort to making comparisons — alluding to one picture by painting another. And I think it's frightful if every passion we feel needs to be communicated in terms of this vulgarly, blindly accepted language of metaphor. Especially when we drag the most majestic aspects of nature, for instance, into the muck of our own feelings.

I write poems that are often about the little things I'm experiencing within myself, but I try to describe them with the pettiness that they deserve.

Damien's recent book of poems, *Œc.*, may be ordered for two dollars from: Damien T. Toman 41 Howland Ave. Kingston, NY 12401

Sparrow is quickly growing tired of wind chimes.

CACONRAD IN PHILADELPHIA, PA

Soon you will be hearing more about PHILADELPHIA SUPERNATURAL CITY POETRY WORKSHOPS where I take groups into the subway to write a collaborative poem on the floor of moving cars IN THE VIBRATION, then up to the feet of William Penn's statue atop city hall for a 360 view of where words kaleidoscope back at you INTO you AS they ARE you! We'll be eating and drinking all through the workshops, discussing

how what we ingest helps or hinders our experience with making poems, hoping to find newer and NEWER understandings about ourselves, to understand the best food for the best poems. We'll be using 9 different gem stones to toss onto a Philadelphia map to grip a new understanding of location-poem-gem, the properties of gem to location. At Logan Circle Fountain we will meditate Reiki Energy onto one another and write another collaborative poem. We'll investigate the INCREDIBLE trees of the city, and how touching them, being with them taps into poetry. We'll go to Benjamin Franklin's first library to create INSTANT poems with

random book choices from the shelves. SO MANY OTHER THINGS WE WILL DO! Also we will work on drafting a missionary statement aiding EVERYONE we know to be as creative as possible, as THIS is what we have GOT to GET to in order to make the Real Changes needed in this disintegrating world we all Love SO FUCKING MUCH! Missionaries for self actualization, for the TRUE FUCKING GIFTS each human being has within! Poetry as one of the best weapons in a fascist regime!

Recently I dreamt that there was a poetry library in Philadelphia, and Cathleen Miller (the AMAZING Cathleen Miller) was the librarian. But she was more than a librarian, she was the keeper of an extraordinary door, I mean literally a door with living coral and crustaceans bubbling on its surface. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the library. When I asked Cathleen if we could have a Chocolate

Conservatory she seemed happy about the idea, and what I remember of the dream fizzles out in that conversation for the new CHOCOLATE wing. Oh, and I was wearing sandals, which I never wear, which makes me suspicious of everything now, but, no less happy. Learning to be suspicious and happy at the same time might be the real lesson of the dream.

Joseph Massey JUST came to Philadelphia to read from his FANTASTIC new book *Property Line* (fewfurpress.blogspot.com)! We miss seeing him in Philadelphia, now that he's moved to California. And he read with one of Philly's newest resident poets, the one, the only, the fucking wild-ASSED swami-animal-totem-namer poet DOROTHEA LASKY! Have you ever heard her read? CHECK YOUR LISTINGS! Missing Dorothea (Dottie as she likes to be called) is like missing an essential part of yourself, poets! She will give you an animal totem if you ask. She said to me, "CACONrad, yes, you are flamingo!" HEHEHE! Oh, I LOVE that! And of course I'm hoping to be a plastic one, in a trailer park! But her BOOM at the microphone is really a BOOM, it's Janis Joplin meets Mina Loy! She's chocolate and whiskey, good whiskey, and she's going to leave you thinking about PLENTY of things you had no idea you would be thinking about, and leave you wanting much more!

There's always so much I forget and more that the cruel editor

made me cut for space If people hate me they have to let me know. Don't keep your hate of me to yourself, it's bad for you. Besides, I have VERY thick skin!

CACONrad has a new project which you can see online: <http://DEVIANCCE4U.blogspot.com>

EDMUND BERRIGAN IN BROOKLYN, NY

Fall is here in South Slope, & the poems are rejoicing. The fall of civilization? No, not yet, just some strategic teetering on the part of the nuclear jerks. The fall of the republican party, the party of Lincoln, etc? No, not really, they'll just be hanging around in second place until a Democrat gets caught with their pants down, virtual or otherwise, and then the trend will reverse, to be reversed again and again until several someones have the heart to buck our grand lack of vision. The fall of Atheism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, et al? Well, if you don't believe in something, can it fall? We're all about nihilist gravity in south slope, or at least I am, and my cats would probably agree, or else bite each other on the spine. But no, I don't think a belief can fall, since it's not an object. A believer (or non) sure can fall though, and there's a lot of that to go around, but violence is only and always violence, solving nothing. So no outs for our moral, political, religious straits here, forsooth.

Of course it should be winter by the time you peruse of this report. Yet Fall is here still in South Slope nonetheless (South Slope not being on the neighborhood maps, I take great license in its expanse). The leaves are falling, the wind is blowing, paper is falling to the floor from the table, and we're picking up some of it to see what it says.

Here's one: a bill from the IRS. I'll put it back down—I prefer to conduct my own internal revenue. Here's some more: a wedding invitation, some copies of *YAWP* magazine, and a copy of *1602*, a Marvel graphic novel in which characters from the so-called Marvel Universe are recast as if living in 1602.

What about us in that light? Would our president be a prince or king in 1602? Or a soldier perhaps? I'm guessing draft-dodging and non combat status were harder to attain back in ye olde world, & political power had not quite the same substance. Would he be a poet, perhaps, then a more prestigious and less bloody occupation. I imagine myself to be a minstrel, if not a toad, and a blind one as glasses technology was not quite up to par yet. What would you be doing, dear reader? Hunting game to help your family survive? Or perhaps already in the afterlife, due to some incurable condition (influenza), or some unchecked emotion that got the better of you (or someone else).

Well, alas or thankfully, we're all still here, stuck in the present (to each their own). Deception and news are intertwined like a thorn-bush and rose growing from a cold and buried heart (or so Barbara Allen told me). I'll likely be taking a walk in the cemetery soon with my friend, checking out the Fall that I prefer, left up to gravity and wind, covering the already covered bodies in more colorful and transient clutter.

Edmund Berrigan is currently transitioning from Quark to Indesign.

TISA BRYANT IN PROVIDENCE, RI

This report of Providence's literary activity takes the form of a review capsule: breaking news rewound in slow-motion, as shot through a wistful eye that missed as much as it saw.

(Missed: Jennifer Moxley and Jennifer Martenson, the staged adaptation of Kevin Young's *Black Maria* poems at the Providence Black Repertory Theatre, Kate Schapira's poetry parties, Jen Tynes and Erica Carpenter at Myopic Books, Mark McMorris at Brown, Mairead Byrne, everywhere, the whole time I lived there!)

The review capsule is also perfect for the limbic space I now occupy, barely two months transplanted from Providence to New York. I went back to ol' PVD September 23rd 2006 for the The Encyclopedia Project's launch party for *Vol. 1 A-E*, at space AS220, featuring readings by Popahna Brandes, Melissa Buzzeo, Mary Cappello, Matt Derby, Brian Evenson, Renee Gladman and EE Miller, wry fun music by Sara Jaffe, the lovely sounds of the band Callers, a rather champagne-soaked celebrity play by Encyclo editor Kate Schatz, the curly specter created by the absence of Encyclo editor Miranda Mellis, aided and abetted by the scent of delicious fruit pies baked by Encyclo editor Joanna Howard. Surely I toot the horn for the fantastic project I also co-edit, but the event was wonderful, and made me sad to no longer live in the city. It reminded me of AS220 just two months prior, during an impromptu show by Dave Rawlings and Gillian Welch, intimately peopled by many of the same blissfully swaying poets and writers (Tod Edgerton, Jen Haley, Nicole Terez, Lynn Xu, Sarah Madsen) whose presence girded almost all the literary events Providence offered in the land of spectacular maples, historic houses and fine gatherings. Thanks to the efforts of Mike Magee and Michael Gizzi, the Downcity Poetry Series provided a succession of such events, thankfully attended by a variety of Providence's schools of fish, as well as those who swim freely without academic affiliation. I especially liked observing people who were at the venue, Tazza, sitting at the bar, for reasons completely unrelated to hearing, say, Anne Waldman's impassioned aria, *I want to straaaangle George Bush*, Mary Burger's treatise on passion and the existence of the universe vis-à-vis Yoko Ono, or Gary Lutz, reading what I can only describe as "very bodily" stories from crumpled sheets produced from his front pocket. The facial expressions among the incidental audience were at once puzzled, intrigued, and occasionally scandalized, not unlike those on the faces of the evening's more intentional audience. I'd wonder, "Why aren't we all friends here?" But then we were, weren't we, Providence? I remember a Trinity Rep dress rehearsal of WWII-era *Hamlet* with Wendy Walters, and marveling at how her mind works its way through poetic forms and stages. I remember poet/actor Nehessaiu deGannes' indignance in Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* at the Black Rep. I remember sitting under a tree with Khalil Huffman, wondering where we'd all end up, wondering what it would all look like from the outside.

Tisa Bryant is a poet.

WHY MOST POETRY IS SO BORING, AGAIN

BY AMIRI BARAKA

You look at these various chapbooks and magazines, with wild titles, titles that announce that the titlers think they're "way out," with "work" inside that these same folks and their "critical" extensions think is "the cat's pajamas." But if, like me, you receive maybe a hundred such works per year, what you notice is that after a few minutes of perusal or a few more if there's some sign of life, you can close the opus with out much reflection.

The crux is that we're caught between two trends which are actually forces. The dialectic of the world permits not only of the objective, the actual, the real, world, but also of subjective, distorted reflections of that objective reality.

Of course, reality itself, though diverse, can still be objectively determined in terms of the exact context of time, place and condition. Mao sd that art is an ideological reflection of the world in the mind of the artist. The key phrase here is "ideological reflection." What you think is what you see. But then the measure of sanity must be how close one's perception & rationalization of the world corresponds to objective reality.

The bourgeois intellectual (or to place it at the level of bar room dialogue) viz. most of these dull ass writers, eschew the actual for some tamponed version which pleasures their ideological & socio-psychological persona.

Another, more or less spontaneous aspect of this dullness includes the desire to be "included" in the social diarrheic of the society's value and meaning. This isn't limited to "Academic Cowards of Reaction" – the title of a poem of mine about e.g., the conjurers of the phrase "post modern" which cd only mean a society in retrograde, where the believers in such are passive road warriors of tenured security. They provide answers to the Bushmen's need for "intellectual" justification for the march to fascism.

This would include certain babbling crypto-Babbits – of the so called L*A*N*G*U*A*G*E poets whose theoretical quasi "Left" masquerade seeks to obscure a limp conservatism that opposes political activism by artists (e.g., Ginsberg) as "an impossible ideology." And with that construe their dullness to be profoundly arty.

There is certainly the blunt consideration of "being safe," not rocking career, academic, employment, boats by "saying something."

As the poet Michael Pingarron sd, in a poem defending me (*Big Hammer*, 4/05) "we're free to speak/provided we keep our mouths shut."

In the case(s) I speak of, poetry has become the devil's tail wagging flashily out of Bush's behind, like Gerald 2X's 60's devil cartoons. One wonders, is it still called "high art?" Now too high to deal with the angst and pain and ignorance of the real world – though certainly an obtuse registry of it. Content with the masturbatory inoffensiveness of an actual *loyal opposition*, inferred loudly as "deep" intellectualism. Childish feints at surrealism, useless abstraction, jokey pop art, inside jokes for the uncognoscenti, all pass as, wow, poetry!

For all the self hype that such posturing is "far out," in reality it is all the way in. As Brecht sd, how much safer is abstract red, because it does not have to "take sides," like blood pumping out of the slain worker's chest. Duchamps commode is

in the most revered of bourgeois showplaces, and, after a brief shuffle of recognition, the banks much prefer abstraction, pop art, the weirder the better, so that there are no living images of this hell we inhabit.

Part of the impetus of the Black Arts Movement, created after Malcolm X's murder by the same forces that control the white house today, was that we wanted an art that actually reflected the culture & feeling of the Afro-American people, and by extension what existed in America itself. An art that wd come out of the classrooms & elitist dens of obscurity & help move the masses of people to revolutionary positions.

Today, that movement & its paradigm are either covered or reviled, usually by establishment call persons. One such person sd he didn't know anything about the Black Arts Movement but he was sure Black people didn't dig it! But these kinds of attacks are not just aimed at the BAM – also targeted are the most moving arts of that generation of whatever nationality (e.g., The Beats, SF School, Black Mountain, New York School). The whole generation that formed an active United Front against boring academia are dissed directly by the New York Times in their critiques of Frank O'Hara and Ginsberg. The entire generation of artists who actually worked to register some understanding of "the great outdoors" i.e., the real

world (outside the classroom) & all its bloody turbulence and contradiction, have been systematically kicked to the curb.

The literary establishment has always tried to do this, but there has always been a parallel movement by those artists concerned with transforming the world by trying to create an alternative superstructure. The generation of the 60's were exploding in reaction to the pit of abstruse irrelevance the academic conservative, often Anglophilic literature that dominated in the 50's which co existed with and was a microcosm of the vicious backwardness of McCarthyism.

In part such a literary trend, in itself, was a repudiation of the socially engaged and experimental writing of the 20's and 30's, just as McCarthyism was a "correction" to the red 30's and the US war against Nazi fascism which hoisted expectations of a post war progressive democracy. But the retrograde superstructure and political fortress of monopoly capitalism opposed such idealism. BeBop, one anti progressive sd in the

40's, was another form of Stalinism.

But just as Langston Hughes and William Carlos Williams were in the Real World. Likewise writers like Henry Dumas, Ed Dorn, Larry Neal and Charles Olson were also in the real world. In fact DuBois was excluded (just as those other writers I mention are) from the Britannica's list of the "100 Greatest Writers in The World" for the reason that like those other writers he stooped to talk about the real world. The institutions, publications, media of the bourgeois superstructure influence and dictate to artists and intellectuals that art should not be used to directly transform society, but is more profound when it is a solipsistic individual gratification, a mantra of the grand isolated elitism of aesthetic billionaires.

The "Thermidor" to the revolutionary period is being insufficiently resisted by all of us, particularly the artists. Ironically, the civil rights and anti imperialist movements of that period have, at worst, enabled a class of neo-con slackers to step into positions of

prominence and power, claiming to be "new" but actually carrying the very ancient baggage of minority rule.

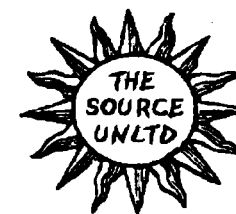
Amiri Baraka has two books oncoming. Tales of The Out & The Gone: short stories (Akashic) Jan 07 and Digging: The Afro American Soul of American Classical Mussic (Agincourt) Spring 07. His play Dutchman is being revived where it began: Cherry Lane Theater NYC in Jan 07



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EVENTS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

DECEMBER

MONDAY 12/4

RODNEY KOENEKE & ARTHUR SZE

Rodney Koeneke is the author of *Musee Mechanique* and *Rouge State. Empires of the Mind*. I.A. Richards and *Basic English in China* is a souvenir from his History days that's unlikely to have much bearing on this reading. He has recently left San Francisco for Portland, OR. **Arthur Sze** is the author of eight books of poetry, most recently *Quipu*, *The Silk Dragon: Translations from the Chinese*, *The Redshifting Web: Poems and Archipelago*. He has conducted residencies at Brown University, Bard College, and Naropa University, and is a professor emeritus at the Institute of American Indian Art. He is currently poet laureate of Santa Fe.

WEDNESDAY 12/6

EDWARD FOSTER & JOHN HIGH

Edward Foster is the founding editor of *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, Talisman House, Publishers, and Jensen/Daniels, Publishers. He is the author or editor of two dozen books, the most recent of which include *Answerable to None: Berrigan, Bronk, and the American Real*, *The Angelus Bell*, *Mahrem: Things Men Should Do for Men: A Suite for O*, and *What He Ought to Know: New and Selected Poems*. With Joseph Donahue, he edited *The World in Time and Space: Towards a History of Innovative Poetry in Our Time*. **John High** is the author of eight books, including *The Desire Notebooks* (Village Voice top 25 books of the year). A translator of several books of contemporary Russian poetry, he was the chief editor of *Crossing Centuries: The New Generation in Russian Poetry*. A Zen practitioner, he is on the faculty of the English Department at Long Island University, Brooklyn where he teaches creative writing and literature.

MONDAY 12/11

MICHAEL CROSS & MYUNG MI KIM

Michael Cross edited *Involuntary Vision: after Akira Kurosawa's Dreams* and is currently editing an anthology of the George Oppen Memorial Lectures at San Francisco State University. He publishes Atticus/Finch Chapbooks, and his first book, *in felt treeling*, is forthcoming. He is a Ph.D. candidate in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo. **Myung Mi Kim** is the author of the latest Atticus/Finch book, *River Antes*, as well as the collections *Commons*, *Spelt*, *The Bounty*, and *Under Flag*. She is presently on faculty in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo.

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

WEDNESDAY 12/13

MARK PAWLAK & BILL ZAVATSKY

Mark Pawlak is the author of five poetry collections, most recently, *Official Versions*. He is the editor of four anthologies, most recently, *Present/Tense: Poets in the World*, an anthology of contemporary American political poetry. He also co-edited *Shooting the Rat: Outstanding Poems and Stories by High School Writers*, the third in a series of anthologies drawn from the celebrated high school section of *Hanging Loose* magazine, of which he has been an editor since 1980. **Bill Zavatsky** has published two collections of poems, *Theories of Rain and Other Poems* and *Where X Marks the Spot*. His co-translation of *Earthlight: Poems by André Breton*, with Zack Rogow, won the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Translation Prize in 1993. Zavatsky has published poems as liner notes to six CDs by the jazz pianist Marc Copland, most recently Copland's duo-piano CD with Bill Carrothers, *No Choice*, and the trio album called *Modinha*.

FRIDAY 12/15

A VERY BRODEY CHRISTMAS (10:30 PM)

HAVE YOURSELF A VERY BRODEY CHRISTMAS! Celebrate any holiday with the poems of **Jim Brodey** and music by **Dear Old Stockholm Syndrome**. Featuring **Richard Hell**, **John Coletti**, **Lewis Warsh**, **Erica Kaufman**, **Dustin Williamson**, **Anselm Berrigan** and many more. Co-curated with **Jim Behrle**. For bios of all participants see www.poetryproject.com.

JANUARY

MONDAY 1/1

33RD ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON READING (2 PM – 2 AM)

with John Coletti, Erica Kaufman, Jenny Smith, Dael Orlandersmith, Edwin Torres, Chris Martin, Anne Tardos, Tracey McTague, Rebecca Moore, Nina Karacosta, Bob Hershon, Filip Marinovic, Wanda Phipps, Shanxing Wang, John Giorno, Jen Benka, Tim Peterson, Michael Scharf, R. Erica Doyle, Simone White, Joanna Fuhrman, Frank Sherlock, Brendan Lorber, Todd Colby, Ed Friedman, Eliot Katz, Michael Cirelli, Steve Earle, Chris Rael, Joshua Clover, Lenny Kaye, Lytle Shaw, Donna Brook, Dale Sherrard, Murat Nemet-Nejat, John S. Hall, Eve Packer, Steven Hall and Ernie Brooks, Dustin Williamson, Brenda Bordofsky, CA Conrad, Hassen, Patti Smith, Maggie Dubris, Evan Kennedy, Susan Briante, Simon Pettet, Merry Fortune, Nathaniel Siegel, Rodrigo Toscano, Stephanie Gray, Dan Machlin, Stefania Marthakis, Elinor Nauen, David Cameron, David Vogen, Urayoan Noel, Patricia Spears Jones, Carol Mirakove, Farid Matuk, Tracie Morris, Barbara Blatner, Elliott Sharp, Tisa Bryant, Jim Carroll, Brenda Coultas, Mónica de la Torre, Kimiko Hahn, Tony Hoffman, Amy King, Rachel Levitsky, Eileen Myles, Lee Ranaldo, Gillian McCain, Erika Recordon, Evelyn Reilly, Keith Roach, Renato Rosaldo, Lauren Russell, Elliott Sharp, Brian Kim Stefans, Anne Waldman, John Sinclair, Chris Stackhouse, Marisol Limon Martinez, Lourdes Vazquez, Judith Malina & Hanon Reznikov, Bruce Weber, Tony Towle, Janet Hamill, Billy Lamont, Jeffrey Jullich, Vicki Hudspith, Michael Lydon & Ellen Mandel, Guillermo Castro, Nada & Gary, Peter Bushyeager, Cliff Fyman, Samantha Barrow, Kim Lyons, Arlo Quint, Regie Cabico, Bob Rosenthal, Harris Schiff, Tom Savage, Susan Landers, Bill Kushner, Ted Greenwald, Jackie Waters and so many more!



ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

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

WEDNESDAY 1/3

JOANNA FUHRMAN & DAVID SHAPIRO

Joanna Fuhrman is the author of three books of poetry published by Hanging Loose Press, *Freud in Brooklyn*, *Ugh Ugh Ocean* and *Moraine*. She has an essay forthcoming in *Burning Interiors: The Poetry and Poetics of David Shapiro*. Recent poems have appeared in *Conduit*, *American Letters and Commentary* and *Traffic*. **David Shapiro** is the author of thirty books of poetry and criticism. He recently wrote *Rabbit/Duck* with Richard Hell and his *New and Selected Poems* is forthcoming from Overlook Press. He co-edited the *Anthology of New York Poets* with Ron Padgett. His movies with Rudy Burckhardt include *Mobile Homes*, *Dandelions* and *Great Regular Flavor*.

MONDAY 1/8

OPEN READING

(SIGN-UP 7:45 PM, READING AT 8 PM)

WEDNESDAY 1/10

CAMILLE GUTHRIE & SUSAN WHEELER

Camille Guthrie is the author of *In Captivity* and *The Master Thief* both published by Subpress. She also has a chapbook, "Defending Oneself," from Beardofbees.com. Recent poems have appeared in *Bird Dog*, *The Gig*, and *Radical Society*. She grew up in Seattle and Pittsburgh, was schooled in Poughkeepsie and Providence, and now lives in Brooklyn with her husband and son. **Susan Wheeler** is the author of four collections of poetry, *Bag 'o' Diamonds*, *Smokes*, *Source Codes*, and *Ledger*; and of *Record Palace*, a novel. Her work has appeared in eight editions of the Scribner anthology *Best American Poetry*, as well as in *The Paris Review*, *London Review of Books*, *Verse*, *Talisman*, *The New Yorker* and many other journals.

FRIDAY 1/12

THIS IS THE BIKE RIDE TO WORK:

PROSE POEMS & SUPER 8: STEPHANIE GRAY (10:30 PM)

An evening of poems, super 8 shorts (silent & sound, shown on a real film projector), poems read live with films, a keyboard and surprises. Work will tackle Joan of Arc, Buffalo, Metallica, grain elevators, a bike ride to work, and include a film set to the words of Eileen Myles' School of Fish. **Stephanie Gray** writes mostly prose poems and makes super 8 films. She works at Anthology Film Archives.

MONDAY 1/15

CHARLES ALEXANDER & TIM PETERSON

Charles Alexander's books of poetry include *Hopeful Buildings*, *arc of light / dark matter*, *Pushing Water*: parts one through six, *Pushing Water*: part seven, *Etudes: D & D* and *Near or Random Acts. Certain Slants* (Junction Press) is forthcoming. Alexander is founder, director, and book artist of Chax Press. **Tim Peterson**'s book

Since I Moved In is forthcoming from Chax Press in 2006. He edits *EOAGH: A Journal of the Arts* and acts as a curator for the Segue Reading Series. Other recent work has been published by Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs, Faux Press/e, and Transgender Tapestry.

WEDNESDAY 1/17

KAMAU BRATHWAITE & SUSAN HOWE

Kamau Brathwaite is an internationally celebrated poet, performer, and cultural theorist. His book *The Zea Mexican Diary* (1993) was the *Village Voice* Book of the Year. Some of his many works include *Middle Passages*, *Ancestors*, and *The Development of Creole Society, 1770-1820*. Co-founder of the Caribbean Artists Movement, Brathwaite is currently a professor of comparative literature at New York University, and shares his time between CowPastor, Barbados, and New York City. His latest book, *Born to Slow Horses*, won the International Griffin Poetry Prize in 2006. **Susan Howe's** most recent books are *The Midnight* published by New Directions, and *Kidnapped* from Coracle Books. She is also the author of two books of criticism, *My Emily Dickinson*, and *The Birth-Mark: unsettling the wilderness in American literary expression*. A CD called *Thieft*h in collaboration with the musician/composer David Grubbs was released from Blue Chopsticks in 2005 and *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, another collaboration with Grubbs will be released this February.

MONDAY 1/22

GREGG BIGLIERI & EVELYN REILLY

Gregg Biglieri is the author of five chapbooks: *Profession*, *Roma*, *Los Books*, *Reading Keats to Sleep* and *I Heart My Zeppelin*. He currently lives in Buffalo, where he is finishing a dissertation on Louis Zukofsky's *Bottom: On Shakespeare* in the English Department at Temple University. **Evelyn Reilly's** first book, *Hiatus*, was published in 2004. A chapbook, *Fervent Remnants of Reflective Surfaces*, is just out. Reilly co-curates the winter segment of the Segue Reading Series. She is currently pondering the relation of ecology and poetry, and is editing ((eco (lang) (uage (reader))), a collection of essays on the subject, with Brenda Iijima.

WEDNESDAY 1/24

ALAN GILBERT, BILL MOHR & ROBERTO TEJADA

Alan Gilbert's book of critical writings, *Another Future: Poetry and Art in a Postmodern Twilight*, was published in the spring of 2006 by Wesleyan University Press. He is currently a Creative Capital Foundation grantee in the field of Innovative Literature (poetry). **Bill Mohr** has worked as a teacher of creative writing since 1974. As the editor and publisher of Momentum Press from 1974-1988, he published two major anthologies of Los Angeles poets as well as individual titles by over twenty poets and writers. His collections of poetry include *Bittersweet Kaleidoscope*, *Thoughtful Outlaw*, *Vehemence*,

Penetralia, and *Hidden Proofs*. From 1987 to 1997 **Roberto Tejada** lived and worked in Mexico City where he founded the journal *Mandorla: New Writing From the Americas*, a forum for advanced poetry and translation. He teaches Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the University of California, San Diego, where he is faculty in the Visual Arts Department. He is the author of the *Gift & Verdict*, *Amulet Anatomy*, and *Mirrors for Gold*.

FRIDAY 1/26

UP IS UP, BUT SO IS DOWN (10:30 PM)

Contributors **Maggie Dubris**, **Richard Hell**, **Eileen Myles**, **Susie Timmons** and **David Trinidad**, join editor **Brandon Stosuy** in a celebratory reading for the recently published *Up Is Up, But So Is Down: New York's Downtown Literary Scene, 1974-1992* (NYU Press). Using the book as a launching pad, the authors will step outside its table of contents, selecting and reading key New York texts from their own oeuvres. A reception, co-sponsored by NYU Press, will follow. For bios of all participants see www.poetryproject.com.

MONDAY 1/29

CORRINE FITZPATRICK & HEATHER NAGAMI

Corrine Fitzpatrick can often be found lugging amps at Poetry Project events. Her poems can be found or are forthcoming in *Cock Now*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *sonaweb* and *EOAGH*. She has a chapbook in the works from Sona Books and is the Program Assistant and Friday Late Night Series Coordinator at the Poetry Project. **Heather Nagami's** first book, *Hostile*, was published in 2005. Her poetry and reviews have appeared in *Antennae*, *Galatea Resurrects*, *Rattle*, *Shifter*, and *Xcp (Cross-Cultural Poetics)*. Nagami currently lives near Boston with her husband Bryan, where they run overhere press, a small press that publishes chapbooks by people of color and other underrepresented individuals.

WEDNESDAY 1/31

C.S. GISCOMBE & LESLIE SCALAPINO

C. S. Giscombe's recent poetry books are *Here*, *Giscombe Road*, *Two Sections from Practical Geography*, and *Inland*. A new book, *Prairie Style*, is awaiting publication. He's recently returned from half a year spent in Halifax among the descendants of the Black Loyalists (the American slaves who fought on the side of Britain against George Washington and who then went into exile in Nova Scotia). He will be teaching, as of fall 2007, at the University of California at Berkeley. **Leslie Scalapino** is the author of thirty books of poetry and inter-genre fiction-poetry-plays-criticism. Recent books include *Zither & Autobiography* and *The Tango*. Forthcoming from Green Integer is a collection of eight years of poetry titled *Day Ocean State Of Stars' Night* and from UC Berkeley Press, her *Selected Poems*.

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INTERVIEW

THE POLITICS OF "POLITICS"

A CONVERSATION WITH HERETICAL TEXTS EDITOR BILL MARSH

Shortly after Bill Marsh's arrival in New York City, he met with Newsletter editor Brendan Lorber to set up the parameters of an email interview. They convened at The Subway Inn, a seedy throwback to 1970's dive bar culture tucked amid the corporate petting zoo of the Upper East Side. Having never met before, they both idled at the bar for a long time unaware of the other's presence. They spoke to several people none of whom were editors of anything but the whiskey in front of them. Finally, Lorber called Marsh's cell & heard the phone ring about five feet away. Marsh edits Factory School's Heretical Texts series, a series that will ultimately number 20 books and which, according to their site, operates "in the tradition of modernist documentarist poetics, ethnopoetics, and sub-cultural resistance poetics. The series intends to investigate and challenge the notion that poetry, as art and communication activity, is political."

Brendan Lorber: You've told me you no longer identify primarily as a poet. There are plenty of other identities that come to mind: editor, traveler, saxophone player, plagiarism expert. While most Americans are dismissive of poets, many poets are dismissive of anyone who claims to be anything but a poet. Yet there are discoveries that are impossible through poetry alone. Are there experiences that have only been allowed to emerge through the syncretism of your many states of being?

Bill Marsh: The question has me thinking about some early desktop publishing work—chapbooks and rough ephemera, a lot of which never made it to the streets. I remember having some genuine eureka moments about the possibilities of DIY publishing, and that led me to look a little deeper into small and micro-press print culture, both the history and what people were doing at the time (mid-Nineties). Factory School in fact came out of a small press merger and some common interests among the founding members to combine resources and skill sets and see what (else) might come of it. I don't see this as an outgrowth of poetry so much—though the connections to poetry and poetics were certainly there—but rather as a focusing of other impulses toward organization and collaboration, as well as a big interest in design technologies as they relate to given structures and infrastructures of publishing.

Lorber: The books within your latest publishing exploration, the Heretical Texts series, vary sharply in terms of the subject and nature of their investigations. Is there a central guiding principle that unites the syndicate of Heretical Texts authors?

Marsh: The series started with a prompt: Write and send work that breaks down (in) communication as a precedent and accompaniment to revolution. A tall order, and I

agree there are sharp variations between books (with even more variation on the way in Volume 3, I'm happy to report). I had hoped that the prompt would motivate authors to write specifically for the series, and with some books that's the case, while others collect work often years in the making.

What unites I guess is the provocation of "political poetry" as a guiding theme or channel of inquiry. The prompt came out of the idea that we (authors, editors, designers) would all investigate and challenge that concept and not take for granted that poetry is inherently political in either some loose rhetorical sense or via the particular political/activist projects of those involved. In my initial call, I proposed a pretty broad definition of political poetry as radical (root-work) considerations of writing as a mode of social resistance and public intervention. The tenuous nature of this language points, for me at least, to problems of imagining poetry in relation to political action. As an editor (and teacher, writer, parent, etc.), I wasn't prepared, for example, to accept at face value Charles Bernstein's claim that as poets, we "affect the public sphere with each reader, with the fact of the poem" and through those forms we choose to "legitimate" in our poems.

I wasn't ready to ditch this idea either, so the series has that ambivalence and skepticism written into it. And this unites the

"syndicate" of authors, too, in so far as each book is a strategic response to these initial provocations, realized in ways I couldn't have imagined.

Lorber: One connotation of heretical pertains to the departure from orthodox belief systems into sorcery. Insofar as such practices involve the use of specific language

(i.e., spells, invocation) to generate marvelous effects, the production of the books could be seen as the act of an adept. Anthropologists describe such measures as the exertion of the practitioner's will upon "key joints." What are the social, economic and political key joints upon which the series focuses its will?

Corporate gangsterism,
diversionary wars,
voter fraud, ownership
societies, privatized public
schools, college loan
sharking, surveillance
bubbles (within bubbles),
"life" brokers, activist
generals, Hotel Halliburton
— the joints go on and on

Marsh: Enchanting question. For starters, there was the "case" of Terri Schiavo, which

reached peak absurdity in March 05 and got me thinking back then about the pure poetry of right-wing God speak. The series name was born in that moment of anger and amusement. Otherwise, it's really tough to pinpoint the "heretical" these days as anything more than "connotation." Still I thought it worth trying to document, in poetry, the culture of systematic "departure"—to use that word in a slightly different way—that seems to permeate everything. Corporate gangsterism, diversionary wars, voter fraud, ownership societies, privatized public schools, college loan sharking, surveillance bubbles (within bubbles), "life" brokers, activist generals, Hotel Halliburton—the joints go on and on. If the poetry can't put pressure on all this—blast it

open somehow—then what good’s the poetry?

Lorber: What would a society be like in which the Heretical Texts series was superfluous? That is, what changes would we see in the social landscape if industrial capitalism were the heretical idea and the theoretical tendrils that run through these books were the dominant ideology? If they paved Hotel Halliburton & put up Zero Star Hotel and the Hotel Wentley?

Marsh: I’ve been impressed with the fluctuating historical status of literacy and literacy training as both agent for and agent against the propagation of dominant ideologies. Books weren’t systematically banned, for example, until 10th-century “silent reading” techniques paved the way for individualized textual practices and people started authoring and reading books that spoke to what today might be called personal opinion. Medieval monks saw reading (with the eyes alone) as a private “abuse” requiring strict regulations. New intimacies linking author, text and reader – in silent communion – nudged aside older public reading practices and later became the dominant pedagogical technique in Renaissance universities. New juristic controls were required to keep all this private study (reading, learning) in check. Michel de Montaigne, one of my favorite examples for all this, developed a nasty reputation by assaying on topics like farting and haircuts (from a decidedly personal point of view, no doubt) but also because he poked fun at 16th-century university scholasticism (not too far removed from NCLB testing protocols) because it taught reading and writing as “foraging” practices that ended in the neat accumulation and classification of knowledge.

More recently, textbooks, public school classrooms, standardized curricula, writing programs (including creative writing factories), plagiarism detection devices... all these and other administrative therapies help to constrain and regulate reading and writing activities even while western, industrialized nations strive for 100% literacy rates. Everybody must read—this IS a democracy, after all—and if they can’t, then we sure as hell better teach them! And what

better way to do that than to apply point values to books read (like they did for my 4th and 6th grade kids) and distribute Pizza Hut coupons in accordance with accumulated totals. Where private, silent reading was once considered heretical, it is now nothing short of “fundamental” (a divine RIGHT even)—but fundamental, of course, to the “new freedom” of corporate capitalism* if not the liberation and enlightenment of every soul on the planet.

we’re all
eager and
charged but
also humbled by
the sheer volume
of what’s here.

So, in answer to what I think would pass as a version of your question, a ubiquitous Heretical Texts curriculum would mean that by the age of 15 every kid in this country could not only read and write fluently but could read and write “heretical texts” that would, among other things, challenge the contradictions and assumptions (not to mention dominant ideologies) inherent to the artifacts that currently operate under the HT banner. With all due respect to poetry and poets (including those in this series), the HT books, as books of poetry, are not solutions or roadmaps to utopian social-democratic futures – much as they emerge, by and large, either out of or in relation to broader commitments to social justice, equity, confederal coordination, and other democratic principles. They deliver nothing, in and of themselves, that would administer or legislate social “change,” much as they speak to social problems in need of careful and thoughtful response. These books, in fact, are thoughtful responses, but I don’t think that makes them “political” or politically efficacious in any active sense.

Which is not to say that they shouldn’t be read with “change” in mind—deep, structural, socially meaningful change. I would hope that the series offers this kind of activist orientation toward reading, writing, and production as coordinated, structurally resistant activities. Reading away from ideology—and toward the revision and extension of “our convictions as to the state of things,” as John Dewey put it—is the basic promise, maybe, of experimental and political poetries. Poetry helps bring those “things” into focus. But in an age when poets can write and publish just about anything, there’s nothing all that heretical, or even risky, in writing and publishing anti-ideological refrains for a captured audience of converts. Something else is required—

new “cultural adjustment tactics,” as Mark Nowak recently urged, to match our ongoing textual work. Here’s, I think, where distribution and design come in, as well as pedagogy and curriculum.

[*See Fredy Perlman’s book on the topic, released soon as a Factory School / Southpaw Culture reprint.]

Lorber: You and other operatives of Factory School just moved to New York City. Beyond the obvious benefits (cultural incursion, dense human ecology) and pitfalls (how to earn enough to continue living indoors without forsaking the reasons to have moved here in the first place), what are your expectations & how do you anticipate being changed? By you I mean you, your writing, Heretical Texts, Factory School, and perhaps, through those changes, life as everyone else knows it.

Marsh: The move here was so abrupt and unexpected that we’re still reeling – we meaning Octavia (Davis), my partner in literary crime (and also one of the founding FS members), and me. You’ll have to ask Joel (Kuszai) how he’s feeling about the whole thing. I suspect from recent conversations that we’re all eager and charged but also humbled by the sheer volume of what’s here. I expect good things—let’s put it that way. We moved here for a bunch of reasons, including the good fortune of landing jobs that help us avoid those “pitfalls” of NYC, for the time being at least. Changes I anticipate include new formulae for and attitudes about production work fueled by the work I’m doing (teaching writing at a university in Queens) and, quite simply, the eye-opening truths and beauties of life in this town.

As for Factory School, what we need (in addition to donations and book purchases, I should say) are more people involved—helping out with current projects, proposing new ones, assuming editorial and advisory roles. I would guess that we’re most commonly viewed as a small press imprint, and while that’s a large component of what we do, we’re also committed to the idea of “learning and production” as a means of building community, reclaiming history, conducting research, and pursuing social-democratic ideals in ways more than just theoretical or aesthetically fashionable. If there’s going to be change (in me, FS, the HT series), I suspect it will come from the entrenchment and (re)deployment of that basic Factory School mission in this amazing locale.

Heretical Texts, as one facet of all that, has a

half-life of twenty books, published over the course of what I think will be twenty months (late 2005 thru early 2007). As I noted above, the series started with the idea of documenting a historical moment (in poetry mostly, but not entirely). I anticipate radical changes in the way this basic strategy plays out—not only in the remaining titles but also in whatever new shape/direction the series takes after that initial “life” has ended. One thing I can say for certain is that late-night subway rides (from Queens to Manhattan and back again) have changed my thinking entirely. I love this town!

Lorber: Factory School exists more conceptually than physically, yet it has had plans in the past for the construction of actual schools and utopian communities. My sources tell me that you are connected to Factory Farm, a real place in Ottawa, Illinois. What are your plans for it? & how are you going to entice people to get with the program?

Marsh: FS has always been a play of concepts, initiatives, projects, programs, dreams, plans, fantasies, and intrigues, but all anchored somehow to particular, if often shifting, locales. This makes it “physical”—maybe corporeal—in ways that are hard to describe. But as for actual, physical schools taking up space on real dirt, etc.,... well, let’s say they’re in the works.

Joel and I used to talk about opening a storefront somewhere in San Diego—or closer to the border, National City or San Ysidro—but then the price of real estate went up. Joel had this wonderful scheme for an underground campus at the Salton Sea in Southern California. That’s been a model, of sorts, for all other in-potentia utopian projects. Factory Farm was something of a no-brainer when I moved back to the Midwest (before moving out here, that is). My grandparents ran a farm in the Illinois Valley, at the junction of the Illinois and Fox Rivers, and left behind all this infrastructure in the form of abandoned barns, corn cribs and silos, sheds, coops, pens... you name it. So yeah, this is a “real place” that basically came ready-made with a plan: organize a yearly rainbow gathering of sorts but with a more focused agenda and without any inherent prejudice against dogs.

Enticement will not be a problem. Everyone will want to show up for the second one once they find out what a wonderful flop the first one will be.

Lorber: In societies that demand allegiance to policies that are inhumane, which is a better tactic, mutiny or draft dodging? That

is, is it better to actively resist the oppression of coercive force or to choose non-participation?

Marsh: Non-participation is the anti-force of oppression. To choose it is to participate in the inhumane, to coerce resistance. Therefore, in dodging policy, humans must also mutiny, and actively. This requires better tactics, demanding more of society. I pledge allegiance to this laundered logic.

Lorber: You are finishing up your dissertation on plagiarism. Most people look at vicking other people’s work as a bad thing. But Bernadette Mayer’s encomium, “Experiment with theft and plagiarism in any form that occurs to you” and Ted Berrigan’s “Great poets steal” opens things up a bit. What’s the interplay between your sense of plagiarism and your work at Factory School?

Marsh: Actually, the diss is done and the book version is due out soon from SUNY, copyright 2007 (thus plugged). Plagiarism is a funny thing, and you’d be surprised how little it has to do, really, with cribbing other people’s work. It’s usually more about status and money and knowledge hierarchies... controlling information flows and re/deploying age-old administrative therapies to generate revenue. In education, for example, plagiarism is an excuse for raising tuitions to pay for plagiarism-detection software. (Compare terrorism.)

Odder still in poetry. Great poets can “steal” precisely because they’re not plagiarizing, they’re borrowing – and the rhetorical nuances are great fodder for cocktail party chit-chat. More important, the premium on the poem itself, as material artifact, is negligible compared to, say, an original Magritte. Donald Hall loses nothing if I crib these lines: “Then we row for years on the midsummer / pond, ignorant and content.” Which has as much to do with economies of textual reproduction as it does with Hall’s pilfering of Wordsworth’s “Lines Written While Sailing in a Boat at Evening.”

Interplay with Factory School? Joel’s introduced the idea of “fostering” out-of-print, sometimes “orphaned,” texts via reproduction techniques that, arguably, verge on piracy, but this would be an indirect connection, particularly given the serious historical and practical differences between

plagiarism and piracy. On my end, I’ve recently taken to the idea of “knowledge laundering” as a way into theorizing and mobilizing the retrieval of genre or disciplinary secrets wrongfully stolen—and commodified—by textbook companies and other info-racketeers. However, the kinds of genre knowledge I’m looking to borrow back (for a community handbook/resource database of sorts, for students and teachers) are not explicitly owned or authored in any sense that classify their taking/stealing as either an IP or plagiarism offense. I could be wrong on that, though, so we’ll see.

And didn’t Berrigan lift that line from Eliot?

Lorber: As poets we’ve made a choice to be cultural dissidents. Yet many poets seek to replicate the same kind of vertical hierarchy you’d expect in an office. What are you doing about that?

Marsh: The question is usefully at odds with itself, since obviously there are plenty of poets who make no such choice, or who having made that choice are nonetheless de facto agents of hierarchy and replication in their daily practices, and still others who believe that in choosing to be poets they have thereby assumed, by default, a life of cultural dissidence, etcetera. I’m not so sure what choices we’ve made, but I’d rather separate the choices we make “as poets” from those we make otherwise, under different arrangements, in the sway, let’s say, of different itineraries, agendas, lifelines. As a writer the only thing I can do is try to write through this stuff, ear to ground basically. As a series curator I try hard to keep the questions open: How might we “affect” change with “the fact of the poem”? How does the poem change the way we think about facts, and effects? What effects do our choices as poets—regardless of poetry—have on other choices? on how we go about imagining, mobilizing for change?

Lorber: How long will the series run and what will be the conditions under which you’d end it? If it ends, are we to suspect that someone got to you?

Marsh: As a series of five-book volumes, it ends after volume four. I have ideas for a post-mortem corpus, if conditions are right, but much depends. If it ends, I’ve either gone fishing or gone to sleep with the fishes.

Solution Simulacra by Gloria Frym



This poet’s brilliant solution in *Solution Simulacra* is to invent a parallel and much more exciting ethos to the prevailing ill winds of a culture gone awry with war and little tolerance for dissent. Poetry, prose poems, polemic exist in a polyvalent, quotidian, urgent universe. Poetry is, in this visionary powerful response, the rival government. Gloria Frym is the patriot I’ll vote for, every time.

Anne Waldman

Like in the aftermath of a “mesmerizing theater of operations,” Gloria Frym’s solutions tread the water of a flood inundating what we once considered our life. Angry, playful, and unforgiving, these words we thought belonged to us now see only “orphans as far as the future can go.”

Ammiel Alcalay

Simulation Simulacra deepens the sensibility that so disingushed Gloria Frym’s award winning collection *Homeless at Home*. The work here moves between poetry and prose to capture the difficult of a time in which, as she writes, perhaps in the voice of a soldier and perhaps in the voice of a citizen, “no history will forgive me, no history will absolve me, no history cares for me.” A great book.

Juliana Spahr

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BOOK REVIEWS

TOM CLARK
LIGHT & SHADE: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS
Coffee House Press / 2006

Tom Clark’s poetry provides an eloquent emotional connection to things, people, animals, and places. He complicates any easy notion of the self, exploring lyric form as a vehicle that relates the myriad facets of poetic identity in language. The message Clark communicates comes from the formal and rhetorical surface of the poem, sounded with etymological resonance. The occasion of writing presents itself through him, and yet he vanishes under the weight of words he brings to the work. This self-effacing lightness-of-touch defines his approach to the poem with a thoughtful sensitivity to patterns of feeling and perception.

Many have noted Clark’s literary connections to the *Paris Review*, the New York School, and Black Mountain. Elaine Equi recently acknowledged his influence on her generation by referring to him in a *Jacket Magazine* article as the “Godfather of Metaphysical Pop.” Her claim for Clark pays homage to his seminal influence on the poetics of the 1970s, and she finds in him “one of the great poet/painters of California and the American West” for whom “the truest beauty of all turns out to be that of *form*.”

The attention to form remains evident in a new book, *Light & Shade: New and Selected Poems*. Clark plays over his linguistic surfaces with great skill, tempting a reader to engage the poem’s facade, but beneath this many forces are at work that render greater depth. Because he is a master lyricist we are often left by poem’s end apprehending a process that leaves us hanging in the air, with no great certainty. His poems challenge our habits of perception by showing us how to read and think. A short poem, “Sky” (1968), extends a formal surface that is composed of surreal-ish metaphorical imagery. Such disjunctive word placement nonetheless persuades readers of the fragile, ever-shifting nature of perception. He writes:

The green world thinks the sun
Into one flower, then outraces
It to the sea in sunken pipes.
But twisting in sleep to poetry
The blood pumps its flares out
Of earth and scatters them. And
They become, when they shine on
Beauty to honor her, a part of
Her laconic azure, her façade. (68)

In all daylight accuracy, the “green world,” of course, does not *think* “the sun.” But such pedantic accuracies are beyond the point here. Instead the surprising verbal shifts argue for a fresh perception by turning thought outward from the usual reasonable assurances of impressions the mind receives. Those “sunken pipes” could also refer to the poet’s musical instrument, submerged as it deepens into a kind of experience of the unconscious. “Beauty” figures as a dom-

inant personification here and throughout the book, for she appears in other poems such as “One” and “Nimble Rays” where she is particularly identified as “wife.” In her “honor” the poem relates “the laconic azure” of the sky and argues for a renewal of perception that is guided by the active imagination. The surface language, with surreal amplification and the etymological complication of “pipes” and “pumps,” sounds the message. “Sky” does not objectively render the blue dome above our heads. It enacts particular relationships in language that show sky’s influence inwardly. The sky’s vast apparentness leaves the poem quite alone, a confluence of lyric song in dissolution.

A selection from 1972’s “Smack” offers epigrammatic analysis of poetic vision in a world dominated by other social and biological necessities. “It / is not / surprising / that faced / with / universal / destruction / our art / should / at last / speak / with unimpeded / force / and unveiled / honesty / to a future / which / may well / be non-existent” (88-9). This frustration between individual art and the forces of interference that impede such poetic practice haunt Clark’s work. “The sky is blue / there is no one to talk to,” he writes in “Safari,” suggesting a lonely tension in subjective experience unanswered by the impressions of the world that populate attention. While other writers might focus on social responses to this situation, Clark imposes philosophical measure. The tension of experience and the pleasure of words join in lyric consequence to find meaning through the tool of self. It’s the fleeting pleasure of that word surface that obsesses Clark, even as personal experience provides uncertain ground for the poetic play of a mind that is keenly observant.

Later poems continue to explore the theme of the individual in conflict with forces of annihilation. This works in many different ways—at the level of the lyric, for instance, which since the 19th century has operated under the unique assumption of the subject’s exteriority to words in a kind of trade of presence for an obliterating utterance. In Clark’s poems the threat of dissolution simultaneously lifts the burden of self and its otherness by forcing words to interfere with such awareness at the very limits of perception and articulation. So we arrive at poems like “Prolepsis,” where Clark’s local, personal grief receives magnification through the lyric to express “days atonal as white noise,” expanding self-experience into universal gesture. The poem like a force of nature appears with startling presence: “Melodious liquid warble in the plum / Tree tells the sinking year how to feel / Its recession into grief as if a thorn / Poked a nester in an old wounded heart” (254). The essential gift of this work in *Light & Shade* is Clark’s sacrifice of an easily constructed self for that surface play of forms in which self’s renewal is dispersed through the interference of language. This is the message—the “news”—of his work, and it should be evaluated in this context as a significant contribution to late 20th century American poetics.

Dale Smith is a poet who lives in Austin, Texas.

BOOK REVIEWS

ROBERT FITTERMAN
& DIRK ROWNTREE
WAR, THE MUSICAL
Subpress / 2006

Consider a musical as the pop opera of modernism—a hybrid form, it combines aspects of stagecraft, instrumental performance and dance; as such, it is a genre that is equal parts visual and aural. As noted in the preface, the authors “...[were] struck by how the American subjects have, throughout the ages, regarding attitudes and manners, delighted their understanding of war through entertainment.” Comprised of an overture, nine songs, and a libretto, *War, the musical* tells an “unoriginal tragic love story” of Robert and Rachel, who work together in a restaurant, experience the inflation and burst of the dotcom bubble, join the military and perish in an ensuing war.

Lest you think this just another easy satire of the memorable wreck that is the state of our union, consider again the notion of a citizenry that “delighted their understanding of war through entertainment.” This Fitterman/Rowntree vehicle patterns itself after nothing so much as the television wars that are scripted by Pentagon-approved embedded reporters, reassembled as heroic narrative and exported via satellite for domestic consumption. Adapting war to the small screen requires the existence of plot, which reduces war’s unimaginable horrors to newsreel realism and renders it as entertainment.

But to call *War, the musical* a book is to burden it with semantics. A *book* brings with it centuries of post-Gutenberg baggage: its functional elements—the cover, table of contents, front matter and typographical

aspects—are treated as regrettable but necessary byproducts of the publishing process, ones that the reader bypasses in his haste to get to the real “work.”

Instead, *War, the musical* begins where most books don’t: on the cover. With its innocuous yellow spine and chlorophyll matte, it appears, from a distance, to be a handbook of plant species or a how-to volume on gardening. Proceed to the front matter and you’re in for another surprise: the book’s title, which usually appears directly after the fly leaf, is lavishly splashed, one letter at a time, across the first fifteen pages. It’s not until twenty-five pages into the book that we encounter the metadata: the ISBN, acknowledgments and so forth.

These formal provocations continue throughout: certain letters are replaced with nonstandard symbols to create a typography that makes this book almost unquotable; pages—often as many as ten in a row—are left blank or blacked out, creating an unsettling tension that is no less a part of the action for being silent. At other times, a sentence slices through the right margin, plunges into the gutter and runs onto the opposite page. This is a work whose formal elements are at war with its subject matter, and the proceeding friction makes reading *War, the musical* like eating a sockful of broken glass. It tastes like chicken but it hurts going down.

Like a musical, this book is infused with a rich variety of visuals: countless photographs, fragments, and collages. While there is something early Atari about the pixilated way that the images strafe the page, they serve as contrast to the highly-pureed montage through which modern war is

commonly imparted. A highly literate work, *War* recognizes that literacy is more than the ability to read text; it must, by necessity, include visual literacy, cultural literacy, and above all, critical literacy. *War, the musical* excoriates the modern media machine even as it declares a war of its own on the traditional form of the book. In doing so, it provides a blueprint of where the book has been and gives hints as to its future whereabouts.

Chris Pusateri’s most recent chapbooks are Flowers in Miniature (Big Game) and VI Fictions (Gong).

NATHANIEL MACKEY
SPLAY ANTHEM
New Directions / 2006

In the preface to Nathaniel Mackey’s latest collection of poems, *Splay Anthem*, the author describes the relationship between the book’s two serial poems, “Song of the Andoumboulou” and “Mu” this way: “Each is the other, each is both, announcedly so in this book by way of number, in earlier books not so announcedly so.” Even in a piece of ostensibly informational writing Mackey proceeds by assonant play, really, just a hair’s breadth away from Stein’s “and also and so and so and also.” Everything moves forward in Mackey’s poetry through “sonic semblance” — a following of sound’s suggested path outward — and thus the logocentric reader can sometimes feel awash and adrift, even “played.” A better option though is to treat these poems as an invitation to move neither forward nor back but rather to step with their author eccentrically to the side. With the smallest turn of phrase — “Clavicle spill,” say (4) — Mackey provokes you to immerse yourself, to go to school on its true and false etymologies, search out its anagrams and puns, to *splay* it and see where it leads. *That* path is yours. The alternative is “ansonance,” that which is lacking sound, the thing that the Andoumboulou find “walling their way” (7) until assonance — a semblance of sounds but also “sounding in answer” as with the call-and-response form central to black music — somewhat mysteriously shows them a way out, through, or around.

The “Song of the Andoumboulou,” part of

the Dogon funeral rites, tells the story of “a failed, earlier form of human being in Dogon cosmogony.” Mackey has been fascinated by it since the 1970s and the Andoumboulou have been on stage in his earlier poetry collections while also informing his fiction and criticism. In *Splay Anthem*, Mackey has foregrounded moreso than in previous books how closely the Andoumboulou resemble *us*. “I couldn’t help thinking of the Andoumboulou as not simply a failed, or flawed, earlier form of human being,” he writes in his preface, “but a rough draft of human being, the work-in-progress we continue to be. The commonplace expression ‘man’s inhumanity to man’ has long acknowledged our andoumboulouness” (xi).

By tightly interweaving “Song of the Andoumboulou” with his other on-going series of poems “Mu” (based more explicitly in the contemporary world, on two Don Cherry compositions), Mackey makes “our Andoumboulouness” overt.

The mood Mackey evokes in *Splay Anthem* is of a world increasingly characterized by “fugitivity” (a word he himself uses in his recent conversation with Sarah Rosenthal in *New American Writing* 24). What seemed to this reader primarily mythological/philosophical in Mackey’s earlier books now seems prophetic and actual. The final section of *Splay Anthem*, “Nub”, puts us right where we seem to be: “the ballot-box opening grinned / and grinned again” (124) and I can’t think of a better expression of our commonly felt disenchantment with what the powerful have recently wrought than the following:

Back seemed all there was, alive
begun to appear to be ember, interregnum,
deathroll exception, proof... Terrain
like no other, nubscape. Flags
filled
Up the sky... (110)

Unlike, say, Amiri Baraka’s or June Jordan’s seminal political poetry, Mackey’s poems do not scream. But the effect is similar — because Mackey’s is the poetry of someone listening to screams and registering them as dis-orientation while proposing subsequent re-orientations for us, the readers. This latter communion and communication is our latest best hope.

Michael Magee is the author of a book of literary criticism, Emancipating Pragmatism, and four books of poetry including most recently Mainstream and the forthcoming My Angie Dickinson.

E. TRACY GRINNELL
SOME CLEAR SOUVENIR
O Books / 2006

E. Tracy Grinnell’s *Some Clear Souvenir* continues the peregrinations in time, memory and place that she began in *music or forgetting*, published by O Books in 2001. A Jasper Johns quote in the front matter suggests a direction: “Think of the edge of the city, and the traffic there. Some clear souvenir—A photograph. (A newspaper clipping caught in the frame of the mirror).” Follow that car! And this poet.

Written in “clips” followed by “examples,” we get the sense that Grinnell has just expanded the possibilities of what the designation “city poet” could mean. The narrator in this series moves through the landscape with an intimate remove, an archivist looking for, if it exists, some clear souvenir, and “to gather / what epics / I will.” The reader doesn’t find the candid, urbane ache of Jacques Roubaud for Paris, in his also recently published, *The form of a city changes faster, alas, than the human heart* (Dalkey Archive), nor do we find any trace of the revelry in friendship and conversation associated with the New York School, the city where Grinnell lives and works. This poet’s sight, directed outward, seems to be refracted inward by the site. The sustained line of energy creates a space comprised of reportage and solipsism where all varieties

of sensory experience are reconciled: “pigeons at four o’clock / a dream about bow ties / flying / my former residence.” It is interesting to consider here that a woman walking alone in the city has a unique set of concerns about safety, and that an ingrained vigilance to accessing environs and gauging response could be a factor in the creation of this remarkable poetic consciousness. However, the sense of the ominous in this work is free-floating and manifests in images of “the owl / around / me / for / the heart / of my / thief,” “a fugue / empty of organs,” and a proliferation of tombs, cemeteries and obituaries.

With Dickinsonian symmetry she writes in “*Clip 13*”:

my interior surrounds me
then impossibility, being such
a troubled boundary

Souvenirs becomes relics over time and we quickly discern that Grinnell isn’t after a deck of The Cyclone playing cards, but the parts of speech themselves, and to write through the organic experience of emotional and physical disorientation/reorientation. Grinnell is one of our most perceptive word-workers, and reading these poems in the context of delving into the conception of language and the psychological imprint of sound proves rewarding over multiple readings. The sorrowful mood infused in these poems seems to be located in the bittersweet inscrutabilities of language, after all, a poet’s true love: “or perhaps a swallow understands the intimacy / of sentences.” A tenet of linguistics is that a sign is the basic unit of language. As we know, a sign stands in for something else. It is this inherent lacunae between the thing and itself that gener-

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ates a sense of loss. There is a delightful slip-page that serves to illustrate how words can haunt us as well as each other: “rupture is / rapture,” “violet light, violent / night,” and another clue, “no one word settles / me.” Nor does the sight of flags, those infamous signs, flying out train windows, and a tattoo only recovers a scar. Cole Swenson notes that in this work “every naming becomes a complex failure of communication,” but Grinnell handles the human condition of suffering with an uncommon emotional intelligence and grace. As the same sentence is “accelerated to silence” her role is “to still go on, enumerating / things.”

*Stacy Szymaszek is the author of*Emptied of All Ships.

**BENJAMIN HOLLANDER
VIGILANCE
Beyond Baroque / 2005**

Benjamin Hollander has lived and worked in San Francisco for the past twenty-eight years and he’s been everything a poet should be—trying to get out, trying to let the outside in, keeping his own counsel.

The mind sees the mind sees the mind watching the stars and pretty soon a wall rises up with a sign on it that says, *Do Something*. And that’s what writing poetry is, really, performing in front of the wall.

Hollander has the stuff to do it—he knows about things—history, politics, science, sports, art, gossip—and is always ready when the poem arrives to let it rearrange as it sees fit. This is important. He also believes in truth, which is difficult and generally unfashionable in any age.

Readers are conditioned to recognize poems by how they look on the page, but how it looks has nothing at all to do with the presence or absence of poetry, the only measure of what is or isn’t a poem. The real poem is a measure of the substance called poetry in a set of words that try to say what can’t be said. Sometimes the content, the poetry, is so fugitive as to be just the haunting of a demanding ghost that breathes on its own in a corner.

Vigilance breathes that way. It consists of two poems, *Onome* and *Levinas and the Police*. Each considers, among myriad shifting rela-

tionships, the endless voice of power to which non-communication is essential.

The voices of the powerless get lost in the fugue states of the vocabularies that have been inflicted on them. The weak come to understand that not only are they invisible to power, they can’t be heard either through the rituals of prompt and response that go nowhere, finally, and leave them twisting on lines, like fish.

Hollander is working this ground pretty much by himself, and he gives himself up to the voices admirably and painfully. It’s really quite terrifying. It’s the poem of the poem’s opposite—the poem requires you to be able to say whatever it needs you to say, but the discourses of power require that you say what you’re expected to say.

There’s been a strain of high bloodlessness running through American poetry—as if *communication is impossible*, were a real answer to a real question. Fortunately, the real question rises immediately—*if it’s impossible, how come it happens all the time?* Despair is only fashionable to those who haven’t felt it, and evasion is not the work of poetry—evasion is the work of the state. Never ask a question if you don’t know the answer, the prosecutor says.

In a movie the hood makes the guy laugh then says “What am I? Funny? Do I amuse you?” and the game is crystal clear, for an instant.

In the playground the kid is five years older than you and he says, *Hey kid, nice bike*, and the words you use to answer will be disjointed because he knows all they mean is fear. You’re thinking they mean, *give me a little time and maybe I can change things and get away. He knows that too*, because power imposes the form of the call and response.

This is history—the child standing helpless and frightened in the middle of the endless, leaden, false dialogue that will bring him eventually to what he fears most. When the words are empty, nothing happens.

So impossible communication is the fondest hope of the state, and jargon is the currency of the bureaucracy. Watch the movies called *noir* in which brutality belongs half to the underworld and half to the powers that be. They’re dreams of the industrial revolution

and World War II and the sudden shrieks of the loved ones who don’t know you anymore. And they’re true, and the kids who saw them first, unwillingly, won’t forget easily. They’re the real March of Time newsreels, and if the camera lingers on a pair of bronzed baby shoes you can feel reasonably certain that the baby’s father will be beaten to death with them, inevitably, so that all the words exchanged are as nothing.

Vigilance, on the other hand, is more complex so the voices have flashes of light. Above all they jump and flicker, so that sometimes we can hear the outside coming in ambiguously, and the possibility of grace.

and to me it was said in the world design

*there is a sign for every occasion
and this one happened to be on you*

for all the thrownness of being there is in being

this one.

And despite the focus on our anguish and avoidance and the final helplessness and invisibility of the suffering *other*, the poems are open for poetry to snake through them on its own.

their bones get hummed in them.

Vigilance is the real thing, and there’s nothing higher you can say about a book of poetry.

Take a look too at Hollander’s *The Book of Who Are Was*, an investigation of family, the Holocaust, Celan, identity, and the endless hallways and apartments words make. Or his *Rituals of Truce and the Other Israeli*, a cold and passionate look at the traps of history and language in the Middle East—the endlessly dictated and evasive conversation around and through a mound of corpses.

Larry Kearney was born in Brooklyn, moved to San Francisco in 1964, and has written a number of books.

**GLORIA FRYM
SOLUTION SIMULACRA
United Artists Books /2006**

Gloria Frym’s new book of poems *Solution Simulacra* is a yowl, a scream and a stamping of the foot at the U.S. government and its stupid citizens. Murder, mayhem, destruction and we go on shopping and

believing our myths about freedom (“I don’t understand why I can’t buy a burka in the surplus store. Did Milan or Paris get hold of them?”).

Frym opens the book with an overture, looking back on the present as many historians will surely see it: Afghanistan occupied, the US terrorizing it’s own citizens and others, the whole world fracturing into a state of hostility, violence and suicidal activity. It doesn’t have to be like this. She invokes Emerson: “A rush of thoughts is the only conceivable prosperity that can come to us.” Frym uses all of her poetic tools, repetition, rap, word play, concrete manipulations of the alphabet and symbols in an active, engaged response to daily news, reports, overheard conversations, hammering away at those words, fracturing the glib lies and excuses.

Homer’s rosy fingered dawn appears when heroes return from having ransacked far off places. But here there are no heroes. “Dawn seemed as though it would never arrive.... One’s empire [is] choking. One doesn’t believe one’s president who attends church, his slightly perfumed wife by his side, his daughters stoned out on downers. He read the bible in Cliff’s Notes. Forgot the past about gluttony as a sin” (23). She imagines punishing the politicians for catapulting us into a disastrous future.

And we’re standing there like a bunch of dummies. Frym ruminates, “Why should dawn want to face the day, considering its quiet, fragile light? Dawn can’t save one civilization from unraveling, or another from erasing words for a living.” This is a classic Frym move, a spiritual understanding that segues immediately into a political observation. I stand back watching the sun rise and then set again, as humans do what humans are doing. But while I stand here on my porch, shop for groceries, read the newspapers, groups of people are working in think tanks to come up with ways of maneuvering and manipulating the public. “A government goes after an enemy it installed itself” (38). “Frustrated with one’s adversary? Annihilate him. Otherwise one will remain impotent, and that will disturb one’s sleep” (42).

You can put your finger into this book, begin anywhere and experience a type of revelation, the work so witty it might make you laugh, but it’s that kind of laugh that in the next second, hey you’re shaking your head with your tongue stuck in your mouth. “I is mad at I’s country” (68). Yes. Yes.

Day-by-day, poem-by-poem, Frym cracks apart the way we talk and the lies we hear. In the title poem,” *Solution Simulacra*”, she elaborates on a recipe for empire building.

First, suck all the money out of the house to fashion the haute couture weapons. . . . Color in the sections of the world one would like to have. . . . Demand that first adversary hand over his arms and the arms of all his doubles, and send them Fed Ex. When they arrive, thank him, and demand he do the same with his head and the heads of all his doubles and theirs. When they arrive, have these parts well-photographed in color and printed on the front page of The New York Times and every other medium will follow suit. Eliminate the text. No one wants to read seventeen pages about reasons. Reading is treason in a simulated solution. (42)

Solution Simulacra is cathartic, as well as an exposé. This book should be required reading in as many college and high school lit and poetry classes as possible. Then there might be a chance that some folks might actually start to read the world and the word as the great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire advocated, their thoughts and dialogue rushing in between Gloria Frym’s sharp analytic thought twisting poems.

Maybe then dawn could come sooner with a lot less grief.

Barbara Henning is the author of several books of poetry and two novels, the latest, You, Me and the Insects (Spuyten Duyvil).

**PETER LAMBORN WILSON
GOTHICK INSTITUTIONS
Xexoxial Editions / 2005**

Gothick Institutions is unlike any book I have ever held. [But I mostly read Agatha Christie, the *New York Post*, and old *Thor* comics.] According to a Chinese tale, Lao Tzu (the Taoist master) was escaping the Imperial City, when a guard commanded: “Before you leave, first summarize your teachings!” The resulting book is the *Tao Te Ching* (awkwardly translated as “The Way of Life”), possibly the first self-help manual. *Gothick Institutions* has a similar air – as if Peter Lamborn Wilson were fleeing Brooklyn on camelback, only to be ordered by a gatekeeper of the Williamsburg Bridge to first indite his wisdom. For example:

Knowledge of mountains as source of pain
but dreamy (an anesthetic revelation)
as real estate itself.

Gothick Institutions is a book, mostly in verse, confiding ways to reach the Fairy realms. It is a compendium of esoteric knowledge. Or maybe a hoax? (Or maybe the true esoteric path *posing* as a hoax?)

One theme is the link between botany and hallucination. Many human souls awaken by ingesting plants – especially flowers:

Incense – the trembling butler in a trance
serves cakes & tea – like mist between the hills



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The second issue of Vanitas includes poetry by **Anne Waldman, Bill Berkson, Brendan Lorber, Duncan McNaughton, Ed Sanders, Elaine Equi, Jack Collom, Jeni Olin, Jerome Sala, Joanne Kyger, Laura Moriarty, Lewis MacAdams, Lewis Warsh, Maureen Owen, Norma Cole, Peter Lamborn Wilson, Prageeta Sharma, Ron Silliman, Stephanie Young, Tom Clark**, and the first chapter of **Richard Hell's** memoir. The featured visual artist for the issue is **Kiki Smith**, who did original work for the cover and a seven page color insert.

BOOK REVIEWS

tea spills on the flowers – wisps of steam...

Flowers are befriended by fairies. If we have courage, and gentleness – guided by precise insight – fairies will visit us. Of course, fairies are not the only subtle Citizens of air:

Gnomes Sylphs Salamanders Undines
in dream or waking vision or reverie
in abandoned mines or palaces of clouds
athanor's glow or glimmer of rain
gravity & levity: one great animal

Peter is best known as a social visionkeeper, so this is not a lonely story. The first segment of the book, "Sion County: Fragment of a Pastoral Letter," describes a "remote, rural, and poor" region with a secretly socialist government (nominally part of the Republican Party) financed through marijuana. Like the rest of the book, it is both impossible and eminently reasonable.

Within Sion County is the Monastery of St. John-in-the-Wilderness, built in 1910 and fallen into ruin when a new self-created reli-

gious community, the Order of the Resurrection, Anglican Benedictine (Non-Juring) – a.k.a. the "Greenfriars" – repopulate it, living in "anarcho-monachism" & experimenting with dream-inducing plants.

Peter is right. Why not just call paganism "Christianity"?

Sparrow just began a new career as an anti-war floutist. His latest book is America: A Prophecy – The Sparrow Reader (Soft Skull Press).

MAUREEN OWEN *EROSION'S PULL* Coffee House Press / 2006

"I'm not alone," writes Maureen Owen, "When I'm on the phone." *Erosion's Pull*, the tenth book of Owen's career, finds her contemplating themes of solitude and connectedness—along with, to name a few others, trains, snow, fire, leftovers, lights, the conditional tenses, and the modern

Catholic church ("Pope Paul has cleared the way for dozens/of martyrs to become saints what can you say about a situation like/that"). Her considerations create glimpses of womanhood, artishood, and humanhood deserving of careful attention.

One hears in these poems the conviction of someone who, from her early writing days, has been uninterested in accepting exclusion. Arriving in New York City in the 1960s, she faced a writing community that seemed less than enthusiastic about women's work. ("The Beats may have had a lot to do with it.... A lot [of them] didn't like women. Burroughs, Corso—he loved women, but did he really like them?" Owen wondered aloud in a recent interview with poet Marcella Durand.) Her solution was to establish, edit, and publish the now legendary Telephone Books press and *Telephone* zine. Her dedication to the notion of an open "poetry community" led her to work in various capacities at the Poetry Project.

Considering how men and women interact as artists, Owen remembers Dora Maar, a lover and model of Picasso's. Maar was a noted photographer, established well before she and Picasso met. Recognizing the importance of "Guernica," she photographed it in progressive stages of completion. In "Picasso's Chair or Breaking out in thorns," Owen imagines a lovers' fight preempting this:

he paints for hours then does sit-ups
she doesn't come back that night or the next
doesn't return to pose for 'Weeping Woman'

In this scenario, the painter's dedication to his own work falters:

without her record he finds it less interesting
to continue
gradually he abandons the painting Guernica
in the corner unfinished

But in life as it actually unfolded, Picasso's confidence in his work and in his right to behave as he pleased, regardless of others, seems to have been unbridled:

He is said to have remarked he could
never see her
never imagine her except crying..."

The "ifs" of life seem much on Owen's mind, whether or not we have power to act on them:

(If she had sent the tulips if she had not
worn the shirt...
if she had not
laughed at the small electrical smoke
plume rising from
the dashboard of his brother's
car...)

Such writing is an act of defiance against the past's stubborn immutability. For Owen, the record of bygone events takes on a life of its own, one that cannot help but affect future conditions. And sometimes, even apparent calamities pave the way—literally—for improvements:

When the eldest daughter lost control of
the diesel tractor with the front loader &
came through the wall of the dark living
room they

said hmmmmmm & put in a big picture
window

That we're no experts on our own circumstances, past or present, is made clear in one of the collection's loveliest couplets:

it's pitch outside until I turn off the light
inside.

Still, we try to see and to connect. Owen ends this collection with the hopeful imaginings of "for Ulysses and Georgia O'Keeffe"

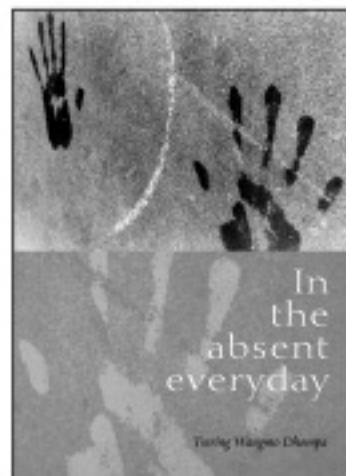
From the window of Ulysses' room
a garage light has been
left on by someone for
someone who has yet to come home

a garage light left on
for someone by someone

In the blackness of night
a solid bar of light

Pamela Grossman regularly publishes poems and essays and is a contributing arts writer for Seed magazine.

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BOOK REVIEWS

JEN BENKA
*A BOX OF LONGING
WITH 50 DRAWERS*
Soft Skull Press / 2005

“AMERICA” is the last word in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, and the last poem in Jen Benka’s sequentially-ordered 52-word pick up. But we arrive there only after having passed through Benka’s thorough re-mem-ber-ing of America’s varying visions of itself. “promised land lemonade stand / Auction block stew pot”

Benka, a poet, performer and activist, distills a message from each word of the Preamble. She opens these word-drawers, labeled “We,” “the,” “People” and hears their essences. Benka begins “WE” with a question: “Where were we during the convening / two hundred years ago or today.”

Benka’s trajectory is about framing pre-destined territory. She traces and whispers suggestive plots of our history. Benka links forgotten, overlooked, or estranged associations, locates the underside of the Preamble, re-stitches truths.

A favorite aunt of mine often says, “I love you to pieces!” Love, pieces, you, I, to. Benka’s examination of the Preamble separates each word out, in order to stop their never before questioned drone. Just as Humpty Dumpty’s great fall reveals the limitations of the king’s men, so too does Benka’s process of breaking open, and then putting back together, the Constitution. This breakdown and reassembly provides a sightline to the social truth in our collective history revealing the faces inside the drawers of longing.

Benka’s poems belie their titles and mindfully jumble their original context, triggering unpredictable memories. Her wordplay and ripe minimalism recall Harryette Mullen’s *Trim-mings*. However, where Mullen trips and drools purposely over embedded hypocrisy with a bawdy poetic tongue, to jut out the truth, Benka’s tone rifts and subtly burns its way into our conception of U.S. territory. Her words can generate abstract visions, but more often they land before us as tangibly as a stop sign. We can look through her

gaze inside each drawer, see what is hidden in the big box of longing. We get glimmers of scenes to imagine. Bring your imagination to this word, she suggests. This poem/scene/site could be about Slave ships from Africa, Mayflower Pilgrims, caravans to the West, immigration now. This is creating a history, a timeline, perhaps with a different kind of glory, and always with traces of consequence.

Benka explores what it is to write a Constitution – or anything with words – and arrives at an examination of the very nature of verbal promises. How would we rewrite that document now? What do we do with the Constitution that we have? How are we integrating our lives with the first hopes of our early history as expressed by the framers? In “CONSTITUTION” Benka sets the scene:

Come to the blank page and write the first words
There in the blind dark of our history—
Order sprung from the center of chaos.

And in “DO” she brings us into it, instructing:

command this page into action.
Give it purpose beyond its meaning.
Perform this word.

Benka’s formulaic undertaking, a poetics of the Preamble, shakes up and shifts our whereabouts, our wherewithal, and our sense of this limited yet open-ended document.

The poems re-pattern our views by revisiting constructs taken for granted or simply ignored. How do we embrace a US Constitution that appears to support political, religious, racial, class, and other transgressions like wars that have cast a pall over the nation even just in our lifetime? How can we accept the dominant interpretations of this manuscript, interpretations that appear to yield the absolute non-embodiment of the ideas and ideals the framers called for? Let’s redefine it, Benka says, by asking what the words themselves want to say. By this parceling out of the truer nature of the Constitution’s language, she rewrites the forest for the trees.

Alstyre Julian lives on MacDougal St. below Houston as a writer and a yoga teacher.

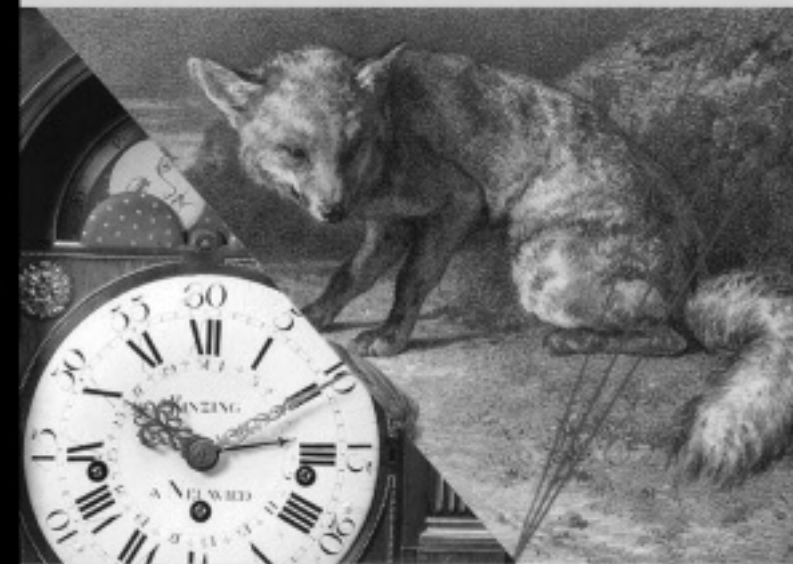
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