

# MISC. PROJ.

a poetry vector

number four  
November 1997  
"fresh attacks"

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*"Fresh attacks vs. corporate slogans."*

--Atlanta graffito

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edited by Mark Prejsnar  
Atlanta

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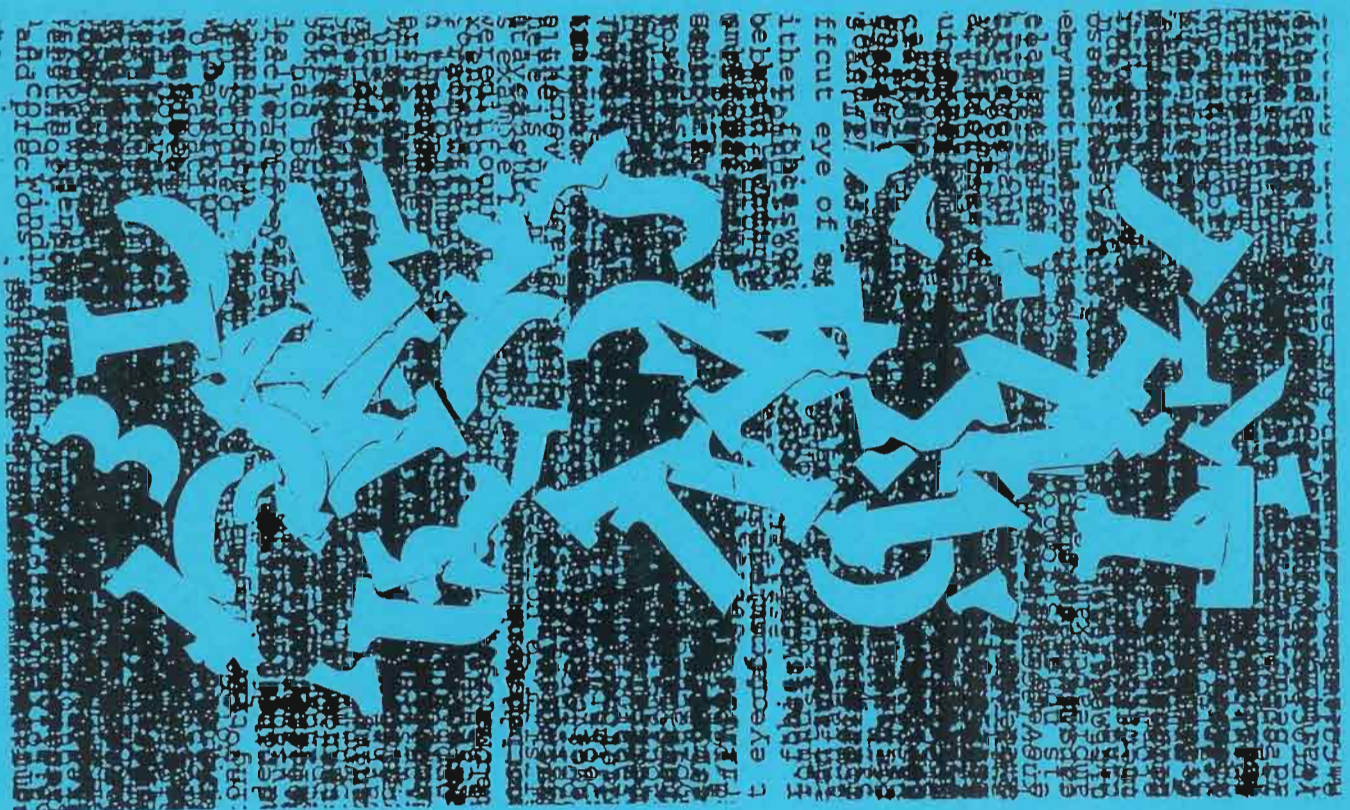
**Misc. Proj.** is a xerox magazine publishing recent poetry, and book reviews and debates and commentary about poetry. Cost is one dollar an issue, or a subscription of 4 issues for \$3.50. Please make all checks out to Mark Prejsnar.

Submissions of poems and of short essays are both welcome. Submissions should be sent with SASE to:

Misc. Proj. c/o Prejsnar  
641 N. Highland Ave. NE, #11  
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{The center panel of "Scriptych," by John Lowther, which appears below, is reprinted from .1 (point one), published by Potes & Poets Press.}





their master's Voice  
rubs air Out the answer machine Two dogs start Whine against  
howling with Naught but the glass floral-Detailed inner-Dusted  
add one moth Bulb-basking & dissicated up,Overhead. it cannot  
be seen ; Painting of a loon Round corner out-of-place Breaking  
definitions.

stretch-Curled Fists  
under pillow arc & Turn into the folds pushing,rocking through  
this space Letted and adrift far off the coast of conundrum.  
Wet hanging in drops that would slide could slide slowly and are  
Cold,and is that odd?      a Glass of water Ice gone soaked into  
Classified magnifying red light on radio on.      quiz question is  
What is Monk's middle name?

through Lashes almost  
Touching it Blurs becomes  
three dimensional might Swell  
become a Sun.  
How did you Hear about this Position?

another intermittent darkness  
and a time Later twice-folded televised Voices from the house red  
light still Now a source of illumination, Slight & expectation of  
negatives even but the college Station mysteriously off air  
Static playing softly. Tell Applicant that you look forward to  
Meeting Them Say Goodbye and Hang up. trip over Ironing  
Board spilling spray starch floorward thrice ironed shirt Too  
slipping After, Exhausted.

The processions will always be late in arriving

Heralded by calvacades of false alarms, it is  
 an inevitable consequence  
   of the intercourse between point A  
 & any other point  
   one might wish to make  
   or get too; this is assuming  
 that you are not solely a voyeur.

& don't begin to think that such a tag  
 can be escaped by pulling the muslin  
   or refuted by  
 droppping flower pots, you have to  
   come out sometime  
 & traffic is nothing, if not patient.

There is a sunny side to the streets  
 in song, though it fails to mention  
   the fences around vacant lots, garbage,  
 posters for electoral campaigns & the like,  
   but then many songs  
 fail to mention those things & the ones that do  
 don't usually make it into the elevators

where one is likely to pick them up,  
   like a virus  
 & spread them through idiotic whistling  
   while waiting at the crosswalk.  
 Have you ever noticed that they make  
 good cover for surreptitious glances?

Considering the recurring vogue  
 for fake events of all varieties  
   it might be altogether better  
 to change our attitude & just see the whole thing  
   as we would have it be on stage;  
 with every seemingly inconsequential scene  
   somehow contributing  
 to the weave; its effect when seen  
 from a distance, or rather

hindsight. Perhaps while waiting for the coffee  
 to complete its metamorphosis  
   & noticing the ring on the ledge where late  
 there was a geranium, you  
   might hear a bleat, as of novice trumpeters  
 & are they turning this way?



Nick Piombino  
Two Poems

In the Shakespeare Garden

"That strain again. It had a dying fall;  
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving color"

Twelfth Night  
i, I

Changing strange having may being  
Drifting stayed lifting though giving  
Running could knowing that seeing  
Hoping would floating near sleeping

Breath waits. Voices balanced. Sun halts. In  
speech. Vectors announce. Seeming changed.  
Unless focus. Bright range.

Staying warmth colors. Combine lilting fell  
hearing unfolds thirst hunger sleep feeling dim  
Thought surrounds time unwraps whole

Light tilts. Melting spins. Hint fragrance. Water.  
Movement. Bells. Nevering the. Aloft. Since  
telling. Listening a. Then when having. Whistling  
to. Runs. Shaken leaves. Face. Sending in.  
Breezes. Sky roaring in. Shift blossoms. Bird  
voice. Roaming in. Uncovering. Singing tiny  
shakes.

Merest mutter. Red yellow green and cloud path.  
Tunneling in. Leaving, letting. Treasuring small  
point. Maybe a note. Unleash around.

Within the eyes. Releases sound. Slanted waves  
of sun. Tune feels. Longing lulls. Since  
permission. Half woken. Trembling towards.  
Uncombining. Lifting stem. Stuttering look.

Stretch place stand spinning  
Wet talk shadows willing  
Stark splash crowds filling  
Marks trace inhales trust

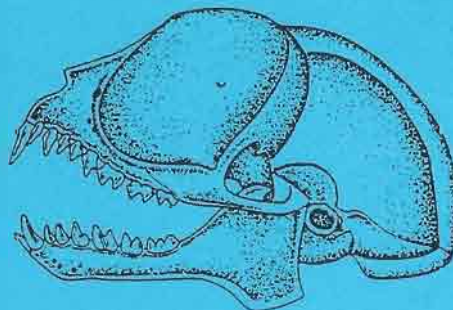
Featuring brushed. Signaling span.  
Turns earth. Tell year semblance stood.  
Human air. Wavering feet. Settles floor. Path  
foments. Gleam surface. Suspending from.  
Assume. Life front. Surface allege. To brim. Able  
stir. Crunch. Figure. Lament. Luster stride choice.  
Buzzing here. Tells soft. Saying few. Words  
inhabit.

Hands of long infuse. Chiming could  
Trust branch. Stretch home. Towards  
Belong

### Four Maxims

1. Now I remember what water means- it means to remember there is enough of everything, or even more: it overflows, it continues.
2. The Shaman needs to know only one thing. When to be still and quiet.
3. Just because the dead don't keep in touch, it doesn't mean they don't think about us.
4. Publishers are sleepwalkers.

~~~~~  
~~~~~



(b)



Standard Schaefer  
Three Poems

Gluttony

She's staying.  
Light pauses in a bowl.  
Bowl as history of a lake but calumny assert there's no left.  
China has been cited as an example. No one gets excited  
about rhinestones or dancing far into the colonies any more.  
Around the nineteenth century a column of guests formed  
on a thorn-shaped continent on the backside of progress.  
Love recurred but showed signs of strain as in the expression:  
"Ah, Rose. The lake is empty."  
Some believed farming could save us, but stopped there.  
A carrot goes a little further.  
The colonies shred their little husks, their grains, their commas.  
The horizon which never.  
Still, the cargo of the infinite carries its dead moan  
as if by over-suggestion it could debase the migration lines.  
Memories pattern themselves on a slick rain,  
a never yielding dearth: the hole where the bowl trails off  
as did the talk of rights once the rice was served.

Rigor Mote

Blue ankle blue river.  
Slender, he put forward a slender man  
To taste the reflection twirling its mustache.  
Horse departing, sun departing  
The face vitiated beneath the southeast corner of the lower river.  
The silkworms fed on a private pageant of mulberries,  
Wind grazed the phloxes,  
The droning engine passed easily into the bubble of midnight  
A laugh was undertaken, then botched, left trembling wet on the lung  
Drunk on the new junk, all politics and recitation,  
The gasping northern rose shrill and recalcitrant.



### Thirddness

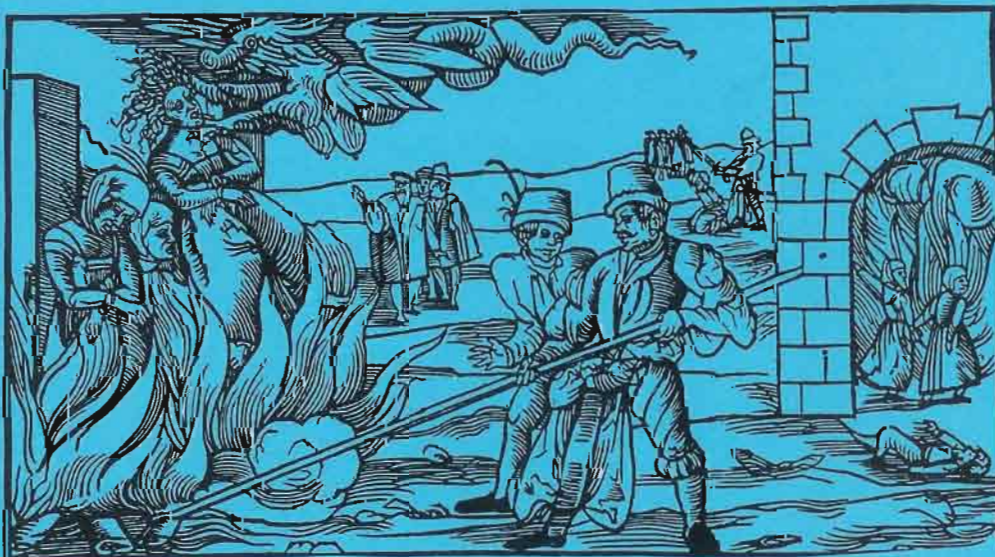
First, you put on the white coat and a feeling that possibilities will arise.  
That understanding will be pierced.  
A vague taste arises in a note of music.

The second phase is a result of being stuck.  
The door is ajar. The brute fact is some things are very similar in structure.  
Grains, sand, small twangy quakes in a state of concern.  
A second Tennessee we can't calibrate.

Then the appeal of general law burning like wire in the head but less refined--  
still, unravished, coolly extending its explosion through our shoulders.  
The twitch is a tease, the punch-line won't quite come to our lips.  
Real because it aches even if timed to correspond with the demonstration.  
So clever, we're willing to leave the skin, like an adjective leaves something in protest,  
the warm vernacular which lures us across.

As it turns out the jar carried no message but keep in touch.  
I want to be very earnest, but won't point.

*dkslspalslpapalspaplsllsolapppalsllslpappapalsislappapdmsapa,ddkjdlpsr*





Describing taste in eyes

~~of~~ of ~~dark~~ + smell to

make my my journey

~~many~~ ~~dark~~ ~~dark~~ ~~dark~~

people who

die ~~human~~ ~~are~~ ~~gone~~

smell of death

Drifting steps across

those who have no

to know he further

in splintered landscapes



Mark Prejsnar  
Book Review

## In the Turbulence, or Becoming an Assassin

A review of

### Stepping Razor / A.L. Nielsen

Washington : Edge Books, 1997

[Edge/Upper Limit #9]

(with an excursus on other of the author's works)

When I first met Aldon Nielsen we had lunch in a hotel in midtown Atlanta. An event called Freaknik swirled around us. He was one of the very few white scholars in town for a conference of the College Language Association, a professional group founded when Blacks were not "especially welcome" in the MLA. The CLA holding their conference in the middle of Freaknik was startling, and apparently unintentional. Now Freaknik, a black spring-break frat party, involving tens of thousands of students from all over the country, is one of Atlanta's odder institutions. Indeed, arguing about Freaknik is the institution most beloved by the city; it pits adult against college student, black against white, affluent against indeterminate, gay against homophobe, public against private definitions of space: Some want the city government to step on the event; it blocks streets, ties up traffic and disturbs residential neighborhoods, which just happen to be more white and affluent than most of the city; there are even accusations that freaknikers have gay-baited residents of these areas, which are rather dubiously rumored on occasion to contain "gay enclaves"... In other words, what we have here is just another amerikan dream, in the suspended animation of Clinton's reaganite reign: energy, self-assertion, pride, fragmentation, deafness to others, bigotry, casual hatred, lack of (consciously-chosen) politics, lack of community, desperate attempts to invent or re-invent community, forms of Black struggle and culture, impressive in their vibrancy and largely divorced from the political edge that helped sharpen them between 1948 and 1972, social struggles displaced from understanding or class analysis or militancy and transmuted into philistine turf-wars about the right of the middle class to have quiet, "safe" streets.

.....A perfect context for meeting Aldon, since the blooded and willful distortions that surround debates like the "Freaknik problem" set the stage for his extraordinary work as a critic, theorist and poet--work that questions the shape and form of American racism, over a wide array of fields, but primarily with regard to poetry. Readers of **Misc. Proj.** should read his new book of literary history and poetry-analysis, **Black Chant**. (see bibliography at the end of this review.) I don't believe it is **thinkable** for anyone who cares about poetry in our country to neglect it. The number of forgotten innovators that he locates in historical space and analyzes, incisively, is startling. These are experimentalists, well outside both the mainstream and the performative ideal of natural identity-speech---but totally within the Black American problematic of struggle and militancy. Also (although I prize poetry for its creation of a "music" made up entirely of words moving thru time) the growing number of



listeners who care about word/music performance are going to find the last third of **Black Chant** essential: it will remain for some time the definitive overview of poetry-and-jazz experiments.

Also vital is Nielsen's essay on Stephen Jonas, recently published as part of the **Impercipient Lecture Series**. Building on Torra's vital work as editor and scholar of a "lost" poet of great importance, Aldon uses that undertow of identity-questions and ambiguities we call "postmodernism" as a kind of analytic tool kit, to reveal all the weird slippages (regarding class, race, ethnicity, region, and the vocation of poet) that are encoded in an endless triple helix throughout Jonas' career. . . .

At first glance, the poems in Aldon's book **Stepping Razor** do not reflect many of these themes. Deeply personal, they are about the collision of consciousness with the splintered edges of personal relationships and contemporary speed-of-light culture, captured in an excellent range of quite different approaches to poetic form:

No one can tell you  
Not to listen  
With half an eye to fate  
Another  
Half occluded  
Any one had  
Half a heart  
Would hear  
What snow amounts to  
Above a city's profits

(1/2 a Poem for David Bromige)

Nielsen grasps the poem as a congeries of possible formal directions, which pique the mind through the ear and eye; music that thinks. Furthermore it thinks in American, with a sharp feeling for speech (or as the literati say, slang). This is the way in which his book of poems demonstrates the same kind of intelligence as the formal analysis in **Black Chant**. There is also a great capacity to collapse wide ranges of politicohistorical data into a musical phrase:

Footage was promptly accepted as Dreyfus  
A large Parisian building became  
A tug going out to meet a barge  
A long shot on the Nile

**Stalking through a studio**  
**He encountered a lion in Chicago**  
**Who was then shot on camera**  
**This was a great financial success**



.....  
**A black man was included  
For authenticity  
The Lumiere period  
Was over**

("Origin of the Document")

(One of the games that emerges in reading **Stepping Razor** is to notice how often a striking rush of montage owes its shape to both the techniques and the images of film (Nielsen's wife's field). This synmedial juggling animates things---I realize on third reading that approaches to jumpcutting, filmic ideas about pacing, underlie passages where I hadn't noticed them at first.)

The great criticism to be made of Aldon's poems, is to point to the shaky and not-yet-fully-realized shimmer they have about them....They're ready to slither and fall into history, into the American mess he traces so well in his criticism, freaknicked by pivoting bullets. But they haven't yet crashed all the way into that bloody space....

Many more things could be said here, but there isn't room. (For instance I could discuss the excellence of Aldon's work running and editing two poetry periodicals, direct ancestors and inspirations to this one. At the very least I will point to his new book on C.L.R. James considered as a teacher, writer, thinker and socialist role model---a (seemingly offhand) masterpiece. Also a useful summation, in part, of where Aldon came from.) I'll end with two bits from one of my favorite Nielsen texts, **Evacuation Routes**, a sequence in prose that keeps breaking down into other peculiar formats:

**Oh gun! Serious rubber-necking delays were caused by the terrorist attack this morning. My walking memory is not remarkable. Reporting from some place in your house it had become increasingly difficult to pen well-formed letters. His weight loss first became noticeable in his wrists. What we had all assumed were mild earth tremors proved upon closer examination to be concerted efforts to alter our view of ourselves.**

**A rash of violence, followed by billion dollar babies. Fraternity at the folk festival. Occult following. Voice over. He carried all the records in his head. He read much like something I had read before. Thousands of near-**

sighted Americans had this surgery. Jesse Jackson and the Jews did not. In view of the gravity of the situation, she unmanned him. A suspicion that borders on wisteria. The handy man. The only way to get people to use your middle name is to become an assassin.

(((

by Aldon Lynn Nielsen:

\*Black chant : languages of African-American postmodernism. Cambridge : Cambridge U.P., 1997.

\*C.L.R. James : a critical introduction. Jackson : University Press of Mississippi , 1997.

\*Evacuation routes. <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/nielsen/routes.html>

""No saints in three acts : on Stephen Jonas." (Impercipient lecture series ; v.1, no. 6)  
Providence, July 1997.

\*Reading race : white American poets and the racial discourse in the twentieth century.  
Athens : University of Georgia Press, 1988.

\*Writing between the lines : race and intertextuality. Athens : University of Georgia Press, 1994.

=====





Patrick Durgin  
two poems

-- fist layed atneaps, ta --

Ay. From offstage a mes in.

Youth rue yourself, you threw yourself a dipthong.

To hear some e notion farcical. It's in her nature

his mipular blurs into a unique

entity. Optimist burrows. Evil is arbitrary. Behold **NINOT** fies clarity of action and unabashed actual fact, **NINO**s back solutt shift yonit as well as a few of their own. A jilt aesthetic otherwise vital episodes meander past in an unjustly

imposed

sort of neurasthenic lentor. **KA**'s forthcoming Morse divots and lumps (Opt is Burroughs).

We hear a distalashing sound and subsequent e is perving the entiheat.

The true **NINOT** decide!

We hear a an noline that of dolphins.

-- maudlin takes care of her own --

Ancky fo've never sidwiped a better

boondock oftend out such a tender chunoon roc

Fortune corrupts all endeavors.

The ontological poof; she cordoned a grin and took him by the blip onto the disinterested patio.

You've accrued hinterlands of pettiness, apornomalou brew coax for yoings!

Cast ens . . .

-- the compte'lite rightings --

## FOR YOUR DELUSORY WHETTING

Oh, druther dearest is again his simultaneous disgrace.

Another decideous rendition to have and hot nave

As befits this sense makes fate of it.

Patasophistic neck lick. Valve thrumisht.

Potentiality, they say, resists us as it makes us

Culpable, them as it tincts them with unsatiated

Forelongings,

Itself as ever netherward.

Mark Wallace.

four sections from *Temporary Worker*

*Rides a Subway : a poem*

Clink.

Clink.

Clink Clink Clink

Shump

Foomp foomp

M m

Shwe shwe shwe shwe shwe shwe shwe shwe shwe

Foomp

Chuck chuck chuck chuck chuck chuck chuck

Foomp

Shwe shwe

Shalump shalump shalump shalump shalump shalump

Foomp

Now repeat: five of seven

51 of 53

\*\*\*\*\*

Above beating of vigilante explanations

Culture us local tried urban remained expressed

Police officers like in come expect

Brutality residents understood they America lives is lives years

Rioting in oversimply than in nobody group

Suspects uniformed succeeded everywhere could their Selma

Clubs lengthy unfamiliar bore such

Hostility obtained searched the issued LAPD involved this you



Broken required open king existence not  
Version episode report I officers night  
Patrol according to responding of live  
Street they encountered exactly the  
Chiefs higher is expected few standard  
Tainted according international nature emergencies distribution

Much unlike crucial highway  
Worse other rarely studies everyone  
Force officers reviewed conduct evident  
Cops our people stop

Who humor of  
Out upon trial

(Source Text:  
**Above the Law**, Jerome Skolnick and James Frye)

\*\*\*\*\*

cryptic corner paint  
happened the larger never community  
one can't or hear  
serial respect, give that receive  
instability absence product  
faith remodelled obituary  
will not every time  
cry bait, dunk  
hawing and hemming  
as becomes necessary  
trendy paralysis war class  
shh! talking your television  
nasal rectitude verbatim

sexy bubonic plague parturition  
eyes too big in a future can't promise  
retroactive continual more  
stub

\*\*\*\*\*

we want workers who work for working  
working we want workers working  
workers want working when workers want  
whistling while working while working without wages  
wages working for workers working  
while workers wait, working keeps working  
working works while workers want wages  
whether workers want whatever, will working wait  
works of wonder will wander wildly  
wonder why workers want wonder willingly  
watch out for watching waiting workers  
wanting work whenever wages wage war  
workers wanting war will work when wanted  
working whether wages will wait  
and whether working works for workers  
we will wait, oh won't we workers  
workers won't want this working to end

(((

Joseph Torra  
Poem

## Bit + Part = Harness

In the equation a washboard's played  
From the lower order subordinate  
Horse to first rate man built dams  
Leather straps routine work sweat  
Scored for twelve voices  
Fame's a fish trap quick flame  
At road's fork minus a name  
Behind the curtain snapped up by a prop man  
With tin cup collects a mode's worth



A hole left side of the stage  
Into which a slaughtered brother's tossed  
In the latest who-done-it all the rage  
Eyes follow moves made await signals to applause  
Cause stuff that makes the best wave  
Break into a trot climax of plot  
Conveying pure experience we feel a lot  
But subtlety's needed in this exchange  
Shifting scenes singled out  
Ending in real life the imaginary might  
Fall stand erect forget a line or two  
A stagehand's idea's a whim a needful stake  
In equal time body English rhymes with the first ten rows  
Like a hint of sexy but shoddy costumes lack  
Grace and a spirit of rebellion  
No demonstrable thing though well received  
The chorus misses a share of opinions  
Dance stages amid haze dry ice clogged stares  
Stiff somnolent standstill  
In place of landfill cardboard cutouts  
Armor the character of the brute hides behind  
Words falling upon illiterate backs

~~~~~

### Introduction to Bernstein

The piece below responds to an exhibit of recent work by the team of Susaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins. It was entitled "Reversible Destiny," and ran in Manhattan, in the Guggenheim's SoHo space, a couple of months ago. The pair work in a wide variety of multimedia frames, using text, wood, metal, installation forms, sculptural forms and full-scale architecture. Some rather large projects designed by them have been (or are going to be) built in Japan. Charles let drop the designation "essay/poem" to describe this piece, in a rather casual context. But it seems to me exact. A list of further readings on the important work of Gins/Arakawa follows. This is a highly personal selection of thing I've found especially helpful or interesting.--mp





Charles Bernstein  
Essay/poem

## Insatiable Constructions

The only true destiny is a reversible destiny, or do I mean destination, detonation, denomination, boundary, border, ballistic, balletic, barometric?

... the only true landing site ... one we have yet to light on, but which dwells, at the periphery of vision, next to all those sites at which it appeared we landed but that have left us more in the air than ever.

Yet destiny, we know too well, is never reversible, for while there are second chances in art and mind, history makes no such allowances. Hazard will never be abolished by a declaration of independence from causality, but such a declaration may change how hazard is inscribed in our everyday lives.

Gins and Arakawa work at the interstices of everyday thought and perception. They are architects of a logic of the body and in this sharply differ from cognitive logicians and physics-minded architects. Not pictures but models, not models but plans, not plans but landing sites, not landing sites but perceptual encounters, not perceptual encounters but live experience, not live experience but three-dimensional conundrums, not three-dimensional conundrums but philosophical buildings, not philosophical buildings but blank writing, not blank writing but virtual structures, not virtual structures but impossible necessities, not impossible necessities but pitchers, not pitchers but moldings, not moldings but pageants, not pageants but straddling heights, not straddling heights but conceptual rejoinders, not conceptual rejoinders but livid exponents, not livid exponents but cross-interventional convocations, not cross-interventional convocations but philosomatic trillings, not philosomatic trillings but blinking sensors, not blinking sensors but curtailed encapsulations, not curtailed encapsulations but plausibly deniable links, not plausibly deniable links but pillars, not pillars but mouthings, not mouthings but plasma, not plasma but branding lights, not branding lights but invented enclosures, not invented enclosures but sifting exopsis, not sifting exopsis but torque-topped initiations, not torque-topped initiations but philanderous moorings, not philanderous moorings but blurted secrets, not blurted secrets but curling capacities, not curling capacities but prismatic illocutions, not prismatic illocutions but pantomime, not pantomime but mourning, not mourning but placeboes, not placeboes but blistered ratiocination, not blistered ratiocination but inverting domination, not inverting domination but shifting fabrications, not shifting fabrications but tongue-tooled emanations, not tongue-tooled emanations but philogenerative groundlings, not philogenerative groundlings but blanket riveting, not blanket riveting but invested *ditournément*, not invested *ditournément* but ....

Written for / toward the "Reversible Destiny" models and constructions of Madeline Gins and Arakawa.



a brief list of further readings on Arakawa/Gins:

The mechanism of meaning : work in progress (1963-1971, 1978), Based on the method of Arakawa. Arakawa and Madeline H. Gins. NY : Abrams, 1979.

Reversible destiny : Arakawa/Gins. NY : Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1997. [This substantial catalog from the exhibit is 323 pages.]

"Arakawa-Gins." Arthur C. Danto. *The Nation*, April 11/18, 1997. v.265, no.5.

Arakawa. Paris : Maeght Editur, 1977. (Derriere le miroir ; no.223)

"Sites and in-sites of reversible destiny," Nick Piombino. **potepoetttextfour**, (electronic internet magazine).

(((((((

Spenser Selby  
Poem

Serotine                      for JB

Process liquid light over years  
protracted meaning thought is sign  
act playing disappearance  
rocks a certain leakage  
different times effect of humus  
reality sick of tropes whose constituents  
drove in a circle to get a feel  
for the land driving lust for renewal  
organism wash where  
memory never entered  
resonance end of realism central  
question no question word we arrange  
as conceivable form in like half sleeping

Background everyday modes available  
anywhere traces truth by heart  
of bottomless capture unintended  
condition talk reducing  
overload to measure  
meaning acts in broad experience

unraveled closure  
white space shot through  
practice of systematic play

That butterfly would spread across  
holes we claim to discover  
overlay sequence according to  
stories we tell in motion determined by  
otherwise knowing at the outset

Conjured as living camera road  
we continue our repair  
of language on the oldest ground  
say speak multiple breaks  
re-enclose a rope of torches  
winding through hills of our analysis

Style may manage this feat  
or result from presence  
at least common  
which is history with an aspect  
as opposed to inability  
to be naive rather than rigorous  
other effects are produced  
by necessity of lies to a divine  
way of thinking  
other hope may differ so radically  
be seen as language other than needed  
by a different horizon

Together all these senses  
particular fibrous ruptures massive  
night moons night mountains  
silence and remainders of  
lives not among

*dkslspalslpapalspaplsllsolapppalsllslpappapalslslappapdmsapa,ddkjdlpsr*



two poems  
M. Maghoolaghan

### Anniversary

That something supportive in a bridge  
between us building  
frail & slippery (singular  
start) or fragile-strong, becoming  
a worded, wooded  
load. A thousandths'  
millimeter crossing,  
moth-flowers fleet the  
span, not imprisoned  
or laborious, surrounded  
& surprised. Whence enters  
skewed supporting cast  
on-facing odds: inertia, crumble-  
down doubts on both sides.

### Satisfices

I am always forgetting myself  
to bloom. Each speak  
comes unwieldy. Minor  
drill through intemperance,  
peg even. Abrupt about  
seeming inadvertent or  
perforce. A circumstance beyond  
indignation. Are you  
triple bypass in  
enough leaf. Come down  
doesn't have to be  
gazillionaire. Tickets to  
people who come un-  
to ferry, departing  
by phone. Even the best  
suffer ink blot innuendo.

John M. Bennett  
two poems

### MUST

nominate your foam contaminate your aster fumble  
through your eye or topple off the list you adumbrate  
the fingers fatly indecision calibrate your airless  
humping fondle all the wrist your clumps and loosers  
obviate your handles aspirate the reaping frost your  
hall and cuddle all your weather like you mounder all  
your sweaty hats you comb the spoons you, combine and  
ache the axles spindle all your windowshades the ox-  
idize your mast

### WAFER

naming I, was stacker tooth and guardedly "implicit  
foam" correction could you could direction foam imply  
your guarded tooth? was stacked and naming each and  
feathered flock of kale you picked compaction pact  
complete and licked "that kale" locked and feathered  
like a screech condition spoon turning on a thread like  
cancer, flagrant, mindful mindless fragrance prances  
off your head like's churning spoon deflection. But I  
couldn't "couldn't"

~~~~~

### Open Inventions

A review of

**.1 (point one) / John Lowther**  
Elmwood : Poets & Poets Press, 1997

Long an associate of *Misc. Proj.*, John Lowther has published his first book, part of the limited edition series of Potes & Poets. Two things strike me at first: John has been quite rightly featured in many little magazines over the last couple of years, but this chapbook works at a level well above much of his excellent magazine work. It represent a superb distillation. Secondly, he has a *range* that I associate with really caring about poetry as such.. Many of us are in danger of falling into a single formal approach or style;



poets like Lowther are too interested in the whole range of the form to do this. His restless sense of possibility is something I treasure...It characterizes the best "first books" (or, first books I've seen by that poet) of the last few years: Aldon Nielsen's **Stepping Razor**; Tan Lins' **Lotion Bullwhip Giraffe** (Sun & Moon, 1996); Gale Nelson's **Stare Decisis** (Burning Deck, 1991); Brian Schorn's **Strabismus** (Burning Deck, 1995); and, best parallel of all, Rod Smith's **In Memory of My Theories** (O Books, 1996).

There is a lot to be said for narrowness. The extraordinary work of a Gerturde Stein, a Walt Whitman, a Bruce Andrews, a George Oppen, a Rae Armantrout, a Susan Howe, a Paul Celan, proceeds from narrowness of focus, from a burningly monocular sense of the abreactional confluence of style and values. A sense that breadth might be a betrayal, that much is at stake. On the other hand, poets like Lin and Smith and Lowther have an obsessed sense that something else is waiting to be done--that the form of doing a poem is basically an exploration of the frightening modalities of being alive. John's title suggests this (with a typical melding of wit and an almost implosive obliquity): from the real number "point one" many different further expansions are possible: **.2; 1; .11; .1234** --the directions (because mathematical) can literally be said to have no single end-point, and an endless number of possible permutations.

Some of the permutations:

\*Throughout the volume are what I call graphic/text works (visual poems, according to some people's current usage). These manipulate a form of notation (sometimes written american, sometimes alphabetical jumble, sometimes musical notes) into craggy forms that make fun of the idea of a legible text. A number of these (at second or third glance) turn out to use rebus or other quirky principles to create a pun (a visual pun laughing at language) on the phrase "point one."

\*There are passages that tickle words into a purposeful jitterbug:

**Effervescence of aquiline bluster, lemonade spun  
Now that the folds are wired and frayed with bunk  
Where shall roots meantime greet, and by the funk,  
How spank Zarathustra goose stepped in gum**

(Blue Wishes for the Supposition)

\*John's concern with how poems develop into a variety of shapes is evident in the range of formal invention, not all of it de novo (the quatrain above is the beginning of a sonnet).

\*A thereness and physicality link these poems to my favorite work of recent decades. The interest in graphic investigations should be seen in this light. At the same time Lowther can use his interest in text-manipulation and procedure to veer in a wholly opposite direction. "ode Anonymous Bestseller," for instance vibrates within a teasing space at the edge of narrative:



he knew of guilt and rage and of some of those things-of-now she said  
were them in the becoming but how to keep out Whats with no shapes  
that violate everywhich guilt as rage turns the spit lived with as with his  
motherone and what waits to terrify them lurks a world whos appearance  
far down darkening streets is predictable in old clothes shy of thread to  
be shot on sight

\*Conversely (and in parallel) "Swann Overture" finesses bits of Proust into a stunningly jagged and euphonious chorale. Words do and don't point to something outside themselves--always and at the same time. (The cover graphic illustrates this pun, with a hand "pointing" to an illegibly crumpled sheet of paper.)

\*Disconcertingly, "Follow thru & 6 lbs of execution" is a sort of homage to Charles Bernstein, long a major inspiration for Lowther. Surely to do a playful piece, that shadows the single most playful living poet, is too much chutzpah. It is, it is. Disconcertingly, he carries it off.

\*I may not read Frost much these days, but he was the champion generator of pithy aphorisms about poetry. One of my favorites goes something like: if you have a book of thirty poems, the thirty-first poem is the book itself. Lowther has contrived just that sort of architecture. But he's gone one further: also a tiny poem is his graphical transmutation of his own name; both here and in his literary magazine, **Syntactics**, it is always set "John." An open parenthesis for a J points to aporia as a way of life: unfinished business as the definition of the task; that permanently open parenthesis rules out closure.

Lowther tells me that he doesn't think much about sound, per se, as he works. This seems conformation of another pithy aphorism: a poet often does best by intuition; often does best by **looking away from** his own strengths.





Henry Gould  
poem

### Notes on a Still Life

The undeniability of the image of the apple  
is what the anti-symbolic text wants to earn  
for its objects

-Beth Anderson, "Imperturbable things"

1

This was not done with a soft horsehair  
But like a mason preparing to restore a wall.  
Scraping away the chalky grime, soot, and  
leaded habits. Now - a white tablecloth.  
Heavy, rumpled. Bleached evidence  
of what was drawn strenuously aside  
to bring those apples into view.

2

I heard it said: the *pommes* are only *pommes*,  
the heavy peasant porcelain only a  
white, cold clay of earthy truth.  
Those apple, peaches piled so solidly  
lean toward the autumn windowframe - until  
they almost tumble off the plate. A stillness.  
Full of apples. Apples full of seeds.

3

Cezanne strove hard to scrape away the myths  
and find the simple thing itself, the thing  
before his eyes. But note: the pressure  
in these things . . . exudes twigs in the sky.  
So many branches, buried  
in a seed! Each apple  
a poem - planted to incite a thirst.

Of dreams. (Enough to swamp a whole museum.)  
I say: he's working there. Cezanne. Still  
scoring the hard rind and slag. Closing in  
until he finds himself. Cezanne's the apple.  
Ringing, dimensional. Weighted with austerity  
- and light. Don't say the fruit is only fruit.  
A ripened soul grows - simple. And is harvested.  
9.7.97

%%%%%%%%%

epigraph by Anderson from: "Imperturbable Things: On Still-Life Poetics," Beth  
Anderson. *Impercipient Lecture Series*, v. 1, no. 5 ; June 1997.

*dkslspalslpapalspaplslsolapppalsllslpappapalslslappapdmsapa,ddkjdlpsr*

#### JOURNALWATCH--

new & recent little magazines of value.  
reviewer: John Lowther

### Orpheus Grid

(all mail to:  
P.O.. Box 420803  
San Francisco, CA 94142-0803  
editor-in-chief, John Noto  
one issue \$5/two issues \$1

{issue #1 appeared in the first half of 1997--mp.}

from John Notto's CONVOCAATION of the 1st issue: "To defy categorization, tradition and  
mediocrity . . . [to publish] "work so brilliant and unique that no 'stream,' no 'school,' no  
'movement' could ever contain it . . ." or should these sights be set too high he assures us  
that we will "at least" be offered a "diverse new set of visions toward the future of risk-taking



poetry and prose." - this is all in the 1st paragraph. it takes panache to open a magazine with such statements - those who take you strictly at your word are now waiting to have their heads blown off by the light & even the *slightly* cynical in the crowd are primed and ready to pass judgment. browsing the issue before reading the above I noted that all of the poets gathered in TALISMAN #11 under the heading "A New Synthesis" [Noto, Will Alexander, Darin De Stefano, David Hoefer, Andrew Joron] are present here. after reading the mag & then turning back to the TALISMAN selections, especially the prose piece by Noto, it occurs to me that one could probably include Adam Cornford, Suttan Breiding and Karen Kelley on the basis of similar or at least congenial aesthetics. between these poets over half the page count is filled & it could be argued that other poets might also be seen as "new synthesists." (i know that Noto is cringing at the label, sorry.) none of the foregoing skepticism regarding the ungrouped nature of certain contributors effects the quality of the selections - there is much to like. Stephen-Paul Martin's "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" is startlingly fresh & repays multiple rereadings (3 for me so far). to characterize or paraphrase seems almost violent in this case, certainly inadequate as description, so here I go anyway (but keep it in mind): there are a great many narrative threads (& too many perspective shifts to count) - B-horror movies & monsters - (is this a story being read or story about a reader reading) - will the scientist & the waiter get past flirting - books made into movies made into books - "meaning" as it gets assigned to narratives. . the writing, though presented in blocks of prose (with a cinematic quality) *feels* like poetry as much as any other mode. all that is horribly inadequate & thus you need to pick up a copy and read it yourself. elsewhere in the issue I thought the excerpts from (senior editor) David Fox's non-sonnet sequence "Domestic Violence for Adult Children of Bulimic Angels" were pretty great, witness: "Today's arcade game is called Abortion Clinic---// The goal is to get beyond the abusive demonstrators and the assassins and exorcise/Your rite to choose and this will become part of your Permanent Record." Michele Murphy make the scene with a little batch of prose poems. good too. Susan Schultz contributes "From the Ginza District" which is perhaps tied with Martin's "Beast" as my favorite piece here - it works questions of a philosophical nature between freely associated images & curious digressions to sound finally like both an interior monologue *and* address - seeking to tell you something show you something thru detail: "Curtains play their roles, too, up and down,/ no doubt proud to shield and then reveal how/ death turns so quickly back to life and gathers/ in its leis." so, is the 1st issue a success? sure. Murphy, Martin, Schultz, Borkhuis, Fox and Joron make it so for me. does it present a diverse new set of visions - maybe, a little, in places - in other places I wonder exactly what's so new - consider David Hoefers' poems "The Queen of Sex" and "My Playmate Friend" the former being concerned with a visit to a whorehouse, the latter with a nude mode's effect on the neighborhood men which concludes: "This affliction of women---utterly unbearable! Their active rest; our passive eruptions!" - which in spite of the diction reads like bad TV to me

**editor's note:** Due to lack of space, no listing of recent books in this issue. That feature will return in issue #6.