

CHAIN 9
dialogue

editors
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and
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and
Thalia Field

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EDITORS' NOTES

Email conversation from October 2000.

THALIA FIELD I've been thinking about your note re: *Chain* and I came up with something, one or two things really: NON-CONSUMER FICTIONS as a sort of play on "consumer fictions" and also as a commentary on the state of the art which is all geared toward consumer categories of genre . . . so that this could invite both cultural critique as well as genre/consumer art critique . . . I guess the same trope could also work, though less gracefully, with POLITICAL FICTIONS—to be artless and direct about it. I understand you both want to torque it somehow, and I agree, the "field" of possibility should be wide open and invite multiple interpretations.

JULIANA SPAHR this sounds great! are there any people in particular you are thinking about? that sometimes helps when doing the write up for the next issue. i like looking at consumer. \$. etc. we haven't done much of that. and it is ripe for re-evaluation. cd this be a \$ issue? is that too trite? i don't mean that literally. but a critique of capital (globalism, etc.) issue.

F Yes, exactly—there's something about \$ and genre which seem to be the same thing, but since you've already done a cross-genre issue, it seems we could come at \$ from the point of view of the genre of FICTION which, as we all know, is the big \$ genre. . . . So is there a way of approaching "fiction" as consumerist fetish—as that kind of "genred" space which reinscribes certain norms—and then start to look for where that falls apart—to search out the outer limit of this "country"—find the illegal immigrants, unaccounted workers, those that trespass just enough to raise the invisible to the level of awareness . . . I guess I'm thinking of people like Fanny Howe and Leslie Scalapino, who inscribe "narrative" back into poetics—and of course the "new Sentence" sort of thinking and even certain kinds of polemical "narratives" like Kamau Braithwaite's—places where "FICTION" sets up house within other "genred" spaces out of necessity—(because it wouldn't be allowed into the Big House on its terms). Then of

course writers like Renee Gladman and Bhanu Kapil Rider, Brenda Coultas, people who tell “stories” in completely alternative form. Form is still the biggest indicator of genre (in my opinion) and there’s something in that which could be related to \$ as well. So . . . I’m thinking to explore the fiction of “fiction”—getting at how the consumer industry of publishing conveniently inscribes a set of invisible parameters for the sake of consumer convenience—do we think that upsetting the comfortable bourgeois space of the “novel” or the now popular “short story collection” is also about form and hybridization, multi-culturalism, etc.

S i thought i wd try to keep talking about this. my one worry on next issue: i don’t want to do another hybrid genres issues under another name. just b/c that is turning into our default of sorts. it isn’t a bad default. but i want to keep pushing at what is expected of us. i like the idea of capital as a topic. my worry is that people will write too much about \$. like it will be too literal. is there another term that we can use to draw it all together. some other ideas to just throw out: a drama issue (like thalia suggested). cd be called dialogue but that might be too hokey—but this feels expansive to me b/c it isn’t a “theme” but a “form” and one we haven’t done before and one that cd be interesting to open up—(worry: cd janet work with it? we might need to refine it a little).

F I thought your worries were interesting, Juliana, and I think avoiding just generalized hybridity is valid . . . if it couldn’t be framed more as a critique, I too am not that interested. I think you should continue to discuss what you’re interested in doing and if it’s something like “dialogue” which activates the theater world, I would love to join on. I think the “dialogues” idea is a good one because it not only beckons theatricality, but forms of philosophy, and new media. I’d be all for working on that. Otherwise, the money or “currency” idea could also be great, but it’s more of a subject theme, rather than a form, and this I don’t think you’ve done . . . ? But it could be cool . . . it’s more along the GRANTA lines, though. Originally, I thought of it as a critique of the form of fiction, but that ends up back perhaps in that soup of hybridity.

S Should we try to keep thinking about dialogues? This seems like there are a lot of ways to go with it. We cd get some good drama stuff from Thalia. We cd try and get some culture stuff—like dialogues across cultures (if we can get anything that isn’t too retarded with this idea).

Anyone we know who cd help with philosophy? Renee Gladman is one person that comes to my mind. Also: might be interesting to have people doing some dialogues for us. We cd think about commissioning some b/t people who might otherwise never talk to each other. Like people working in radically different genres. Or with very different ideas. The only thing I wd want to avoid, but I think we can: dialogue as nice, neat conversation. like we need to get some work that is against dialogue. and not too much work that says dialogue can save the world. and we need some screaming. or something. i don't know. i just don't want to end up in a place where we are saying hybridity (not of genre but of culture) can save everything; if we all just sat down and talked . . . also: collaboration as form of dialogue.

JENA OSMAN Yes, I love the “dialogue” topic idea. It’s a specific form (unlike the *Granta* theme idea) that could go in many great directions. Please excuse me while I die from exhaustion.

F I think the dialogues idea, too, has a ton of potential—it’s got all the artistic and social relevance. I also agree that some sort of furry moral is not the end we should be imagining, but rather a hard-hitting sort of thing, the difficulty of dialogue, even. Maybe it’s just being at Brown, but I feel our country has lost all sense that things Matter, or that being committed to something, or having a real opinion is a Good thing. The Dialogic idea sounds solid—and already sort of grant friendly—esp if you’re into using people who are “known” for being polemicists of some sort—pairing them into fruitful discussions—perhaps on TABOO topics—or topics which get REPRESSED AND RETURNED TO sort of in that freud/lacanian way . . . This week I’ve been thinking a lot about this notion of the TELEVISION TABOO and how TV seems to absorb the DIALOGUE from other public forums and sanitize and contextualize it through the use of “commercials” which frame it in the safety of consumer ideology which surpasses the “content” of whatever happens between commercials. This notion of BETWEEN COMMERCIALS then becomes the question too, how can we ask questions that aren’t geared toward CELEBRITY but actually ask people to risk their own consistency or little habits of mind. . . . I like the idea of pairing interesting thinkers with a third text or construct which they approach from different points of view, and perhaps different discourses so that vocabulary and discourse/ metastructures of thought are also foregrounded—efforts to combine, for example, how an economist and a filmmaker, or a philosopher and a ecologist might approach some third term/text. But this might be

harder to get people to doI wonder if there's a way to start the dialogues so that they evolve in interesting and organic ways—I'm thinking that the subject overall might be enticing enough for really interesting thinkers/writers to WANT to address—subjects which are not usually approached, or approached only tenderly—like an open-ended question: what's the SINGLE MOST MEANINGFUL THING YOU'D LIKE TO SEE CHANGED or something, and then let the discussions build from that kind of place . . . Or, like I mentioned on the phone to Jena: the issue could focus on each person's ONE BEST IDEA for changing the world . . . etc. Anyway, dreaming, really, the possibility to speak about what's maybe not "practical" in the realpolitik sense, but dreamable . . . now that sounds too namby-pamby. . . . I just think there's so much drivel and mealy-mouthed stuff out there—it would be great to make a book which is really ballsy and impractical in its OUT-spokenness. More like the WTO demonstrations and less like the "transfer of power" politics where everyone is "owned" by someone else anyway and so can't really feel free to speak up.

CECILIA VICUÑA don alejandro a Quiche Mayan elder came to speak to new yorkers last year. it seems people wanted to hear about the so called Mayan prophecies: "the destruction of the world" by 2012, as some interpret or translate them. (in other words, they wanted instructions to save their necks) instead don alejandro said: how can we interpret prophecies? i am here to recruit you: we, the indians have to watch tv in order to see animals. the earth is sick. i am here to ask you to influence your own government. this is how you will help us and the world.

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JOE AMATO

StarDate -322694.72

Tue Sep 11 08:51:38 2001

MAIN 2:3.12.44 stripe.colorado.edu 110 (1)

MAIN 2:0.3.2 Successfully received Poetics List Administration, 9/11/01 10:49 AM -0400, 2 Planes Crash Into World Trade Center (1)

MAIN 8:0.4.10 ALRT 1021

MAIN 8:0.4.35 Dismissed with 1.

MAIN 2:0.5.41 Successfully received Kass Fleisher, 9/11/01 8:57 AM -0600, Left Hand Reading Series 9/20: Joris& Mullen (1)

MAIN 2:0.7.4 Successfully received Kass Fleisher, 9/11/01 8:57 AM -0600, Re: Summer Writing Program at Naropa University (1)

MAIN 2:0.11.9 Successfully received Poetics List Administration, 9/11/01 11:00 AM -0400, World Trade Center Collapses (1)

MAIN 2:0.12.46 Successfully received Nicole.Gervace@Colorado.EDU, 9/11/01 9:40 AM -0600, Fwd: Counseling Center re NYC events (1)

MAIN 1:0.25.41 Succeeded.

MAIN 1:0.25.45 Sending charles alexander, 1:18 PM 9/11/01 -0600, Re: bleeding and mowing.

MAIN 1:0.29.5 Succeeded.

MAIN 8:0.30.59 ALRT 1021

MAIN 8:0.31.30 Dismissed with 1.

MAIN 1:0.7.24 Sending A Kass, 1:26 PM 9/11/01 -0600, Fwd: University Remains Open.

MAIN 1:0.11.16 Succeeded.

MAIN 8:0.12.32 ALRT 1021

MAIN 8:0.13.9 Dismissed with 1.

Tue Sep 11 13:29:57 2001

MAIN 1:3.29.6 stripe.colorado.edu 25

MAIN 1:0.1.5 Sending AndyL, 1:29 PM 9/11/01 -0600, are you ok? . . .

MAIN 1:0.3.50 Succeeded.

MAIN 8:0.4.8 ALRT 1037

MAIN 8:0.4.43 Dismissed with 1.

MAIN 2:0.3.15 Successfully received URGENT Campus E-Memo, 9/11/01 3:32 PM -0600, Campus Response to Today's Tragedies (1)

MAIN 2:0.3.29 Successfully received Reuven BenYuhmin, 9/12/01 6:20 AM +0800, doubt & worry (1)

MAIN 2:0.9.58 Successfully received Rova Saxophone Quartet, 9/11/01 2:12 PM -0700, from san francisco (1)

MAIN 2:0.13.15 Successfully received SMBSAC19@aol.com, 9/11/01 7:55 PM -0400, Re: 2 Planes Crash Into World Trade Center (1)

MAIN 2:0.16.56 Successfully received Charles Bernstein, 9/11/01 8:52 PM -0400, It's 8:23 in New York (1)

MAIN 2:0.21.58 Successfully received Buff Bulletin, 9/11/01 7:51 PM -0600, Buff Bulletin 09/11/2001 (1)

MAIN 2:0.23.34 Successfully received Mattg1227@aol.com, 9/11/01 10:05 PM -0400, WHO THIS EFFECTS (1)

MAIN 2:0.44.40 Successfully received MoondanceNews@aol.com, 9/12/01 12:51 AM -0400, *MOONDANCE statement on non-violence & call for entries (1)

MAIN 2:0.46.7 Successfully received URGENT Campus E-Memo, 9/11/01 11:35 PM -0600, Continued Campus Response to the Sept. 11 Tragedies (1)

MAIN 2:0.55.1 Successfully received webmaster@hollywoodlitsales.com, 9/12/01 3:03 AM -0700, Hollywoodlitsales.com Newsletter Vol. 2 #10 (1)

MAIN 2:0.57.56 Successfully received OfficeMax, 9/12/01 7:47 AM -0700, Limited-Time Offers From OfficeMax! (1)

MAIN 8:1.0.20 ALRT 1021

MAIN 8:1.0.55 Dismissed with 1.

MAIN 2:0.7.7 Successfully received Vanessa Carroll, 9/12/01 9:19 AM -0600, Re: master's thesis (1)

MAIN 1:0.7.18 stripe.colorado.edu 25

Wed Sep 12 09:22:24 2001

MAIN 1:1.30.25 stripe.colorado.edu 25

MAIN 1:0.1.11 Sending A Kass, 9:22 AM 9/12/01 -0600, not sure i agree with this ("business as usual"?). . . .

MAIN 1:0.4.7 Succeeded.

MAIN 8:0.4.26 ALRT 1037

MAIN 8:0.5.1 Dismissed with 1.

MAIN 2:0.31.23 Successfully received Alan Sondheim, 9/12/01 1:40 AM -0400, +++ (1)

MAIN 2:0.1.41 Successfully received Robert Archambeau, 9/12/01 10:33 AM -0500, Re: surrealism suggestions? (1)

MAIN 8:0.5.21 ALRT 1021

MAIN 8:0.6.4 Dismissed with 1.

Wed Sep 12 10:36:07 2001

MAIN 8:2.18.31 Save changes to "Joe Amato, 10:39 AM 9/12/01 -0600, Re: hey, we're not in class!"?

MAIN 8:0.2.8 Dismissed with 3.

Wed Sep 12 10:46:36 2001

MAIN 8:7.12.24 45

MAIN 8:0.0.4 No response in 45 seconds. Shall I keep trying?

MAIN 8:0.10.3 Dismissed with 2.

MAIN 1:0.10.6 stripe.colorado.edu 25

Thu Sep 13 07:18:27 2001

MAIN 2:0.5.47 Successfully received Patrick Pritchett, 9/12/01 8:55 PM -0600, re: hey... (1)

MAIN 2:0.8.47 Successfully received Charles Bernstein, 9/12/01 11:02 PM -0400, Today is the next day of the rest of your life (1)

MAIN 2:0.11.9 Successfully received Faculty and Research E-Memo, 9/12/01 11:51 PM -0600, HRC (Human Research Committee) Application Deadlines, 2 (1)

MAIN 2:0.14.3 Successfully received John Tranter, 9/13/01 9:25 PM -0700, New York (1)

MAIN 1:0.14.15 stripe.colorado.edu 25

Thu Sep 13 07:22:25 2001

MAIN 1:2.4.4 stripe.colorado.edu 25

MAIN 1:0.1.8 Sending AbbyW, 7:19 AM 9/13/01 -0600, Fwd: re: hey. . . .

MAIN 8:0.3.26 DATA

MAIN 8:0.3.26 SMTP

MAIN 8:0.3.30 There has been an error transferring your mail. I said:

DATA

And then the SMTP server said:

MAIN 1:0.11.18 Sending Lauren Pretnar, 10:45 AM 9/12/01 -0600, Re: hey, we're not in class!.

MAIN 1:0.14.33 Succeeded.

Fri Sep 14 15:47:38 2001

MAIN 2:0.16.48 Successfully received Taylor Brady, 9/13/01 9:45 PM -0700, Re: Today is the next day of the rest of your life (1)

MAIN 1:0.6.23 Sending MarjorieP, 12:16 PM 9/15/01 -0600, how are you? . . .

MAIN 1:0.11.46 Succeeded.

MAIN 8:0.13.33 ALRT 1021

MAIN 8:0.14.7 Dismissed with 1.

Mon Sep 17 15:41:30 2001

MAIN 2:20.42.21 stripe.colorado.edu 110 (1)

MAIN 2:0.5.53 Successfully received Patrick Herron, 9/17/01 5:25 PM -0400, RE: [ImitaPo] Nostradamus "predicts" NYC Attack, WWIII (1)

Mon Sep 17 15:49:03 2001

MAIN 8:1.2.40 Save changes to "Filters"?

MAIN 8:0.1.14 Dismissed with 1.

MAIN 2:0.1.45 Successfully received Andrew Levy, 9/17/01 6:10 PM -0400, RE: are you ok? . . . (1)

MAIN 8:0.2.55 ALRT 1021

1.0

4

BRUCE ANDREWS & ALANI APIO
“We Go Tilt-A-Whirl Again!”

This dialogue was begun by Bruce Andrews in response to issues raised by Alani Apio’s play, Kāmau A’e, and his editorials on identity, imperialism & cultural nationalism, “A thousand little cuts to genocide” and “Kanaka lament” (online at www.thehonolulu-advertiser.com for February 25 and March 25, 2001). Andrews collaged together passages from Apio’s play—these passages are indented and in italics—with summary or clarifying questions to Apio in brackets.

PART A.

“I’m getting tings togedda in my head”

ANDREWS We both start out wanting things to change, wanting writing to take part. [We want to have an impact on social matters, not just make impressive works for someone to interpret — yes?]

APIO Yes. My intention has always been to move people at a gut level. My father is a good, solid man who just made it out of high school. If the end product of my writing doesn’t move him at a gut level, then I haven’t done my job. I try to write for the highest common denominator. There certainly are layers to my writing, both literary and cultural, but I try to write for my neighbors and the guy selling lumber at the hardware store.

1.

BA Reading Writing: not just asking what it means, but what it does. Gauge the work’s force; see what kinds & intensities of critical or communitarian activism it can encourage. [How conventional does the work need to be in order to have that impact on the community we think counts?]

AA In Hawai’i that’s a difficult question. We’re multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and, most importantly for impact—multi-lingual. So, the community one is trying to reach—the one “we think counts”—is of tantamount importance. There is certainly a literary, highly educated

community here that will appreciate avant-garde, post-modern American literature (I'm not even sure what's the most cutting edge now!). Recent immigrants from Tonga, however, will for the most part need something that feels closer to home in its use of a language that is not their first, and, a medium more easily accessible to them. That's one of the reasons I've opted for using the stage—the medium has a great balance of universality and ability to impact.

The key over here is languages. With so many different people here whose native languages build different value systems and lenses for filtering the world, one cannot push the envelope of conventional (English) language use with people who are not absolutely proficient with the language to begin with.

For example: *Kāmau* and *Kāmau A'e* both use Hawaiian Creole and ʻŌlelo Hawai'i (our native language) but are for the most part English language-based. The dialogue of the characters reflects their own educational levels, their own social standing, political views, and their own proclivities within the play. Their individual language ability is complicated by not only their competency, but by the inherent inability of English to capture ideologies outside of the realms of the Language and larger western culture that uses it. For instance, in the play, the main character, Alika, when asked what aloha means by a tourist, cannot answer. The reasons why he cannot are quite complicated and are rooted in the colonization of the islands by America. Aloha does not have an English equivalent because it represents a multi-level social ideology far beyond a simple “hello” or “goodbye” which it represents as well. Also, Alika cannot formulate a response because his first language is (for reasons of historical oppression and colonization) English! He has a hard time translating a value system that is rooted in another language—one which he should know, but has never been allowed to learn. In the meantime, he has been taught, through non-verbal socialization, to know what aloha looks like, what aloha feels like, though he hasn't heard it verbalized because English doesn't allow for it.

Native Hawaiians, the indigenous people of Hawai'i, did not have a word for “own” because the idea of ownership was foreign. Everything belonged to the Gods—even—especially—land.

BA Force inscribes bodies, marks them up or erases the lines that confine.

“We all gotta draw ouwa lines.”

Either (a) Lines of flight taking off into distances, into becoming, future-tilted. Or (b) Lines of division (statics of victims & conquest, to stall, to stay put). Status quo tries to sew itself all up. Do we honor the suture or bust the stitches open, to open up a future. [Lines: does division usually keep us in place? If the status quo holds itself together partly by language, don't we need to take that language on directly?]

AA So, if we are oppressed by the status quo's use of language, taking it on directly for us as Native Hawaiians has a very different connotation: for me at least, it means learning my native tongue and using that as the mode of expression. Or, start by building a bridge back to understanding that land and language are imperatives to cultural survival and that to break the power of the status quo I must work to have at least a parity of languages. Cultural survival is vastly different from keeping races separate (anticipating a reply).

"We need to decide our future—not some interfering foreigners."

BA You can't, ahead of time, "decide" a future that's to stay open. Decision, here, takes on the tone of protective closure. [Deciding a future: doesn't that imply a lack of openness to the new?]

AA Above feels like you are interpreting language out of the context it's been given by the characters and the play.

BA [Memory: Does it help us move forward, or keep us stuck?] Move forward or trace back.

"you carry forward dat which needs to be remembered."

AA It feels like memory is like money—not inherently evil, but very loaded and valuable. It does both all the time: help us move forward and keep us stuck—it's all in how we use it.

BA Or. Your memories keep you from moving forward. There ain't no original. The past is not an outside, is not a vantage point on the outside. That's why it can't be represented (recreated at a distance). See how shredded the past has gotten — & gets. [Why have an imagined model to work off of?]

AA There ain't no original, but there is definitely, if we are speaking of human social systems, a spectrum of successful to not-so-successful

models and it bears remembering what worked in other times, other places, to see what may fit now, here.

2.

BA Does language even have its own country? Still, racial splits & fervent nationalist rejectionism seem to set horizons for literary art. [Why think of language as something national?]

“blood . . . da haole divide us by it.”

AA I agree. In the face of globalization we stand to lose the knowledge base of tens of thousands of years that is built in different languages. Language is power. Political power among other things. When it is linked to nationalism, even in its most benign form (is there such a thing as benign nationalism?) the dominant language tends to steamroll through along with the dominant culture. Much gets lost. If we think of languages as storehouses for valuable information for living on planet Earth, much like a specific species holds invaluable, irreplaceable information, then in the fervor to solidify a “national” language, the other languages of the minorities get quashed. And the ability for those minority cultures to survive gets curtailed as well.

BA When we’re making literary use of English, how do racial & national (assimilationist) divisions get mobilized? [Why think of English as national? Does national have to imply assimilation?]

AA In Hawai‘i it sure does. At least for any minority not capable of going toe to toe politically with the dominant white majority—which here means basically everyone. Besides, America was founded on the assumption that it would be an English speaking country and many of its laws and unstated ideologies enforce and support that. The difference here is whether one emigrated or is of indigenous blood. If you, or your ancestors came here by choice, then the unspoken social contract you bought into was that this was someone else’s land and you’d have to abide by their rules—including what language you would have to speak. That’s fine for immigrants, but what about the native people who had their nation overthrown and were forced, by law, to abandon their mother tongue for this new language (think how English capitalizes the “I” but not “you,” or “we,” or “us.” Think how different grammatical structures point to fundamental differences in value systems).

BA How to detect / decode / display a specific cultural heritage — as readers while we're writing? [If you have a cultural heritage you want to work with, how to do it in English?]

AA My belief has always been that sociologically speaking, land and language are the cornerstones of culture and if English is the first language, then chances are, at least this is how it has played out in Hawai'i, that if your first language is English, the best one can hope for is to be a subculture of the dominant, English speaking culture that surrounds you. Too much of how a culture defines itself is wrapped up in language to survive the translating.

BA Niche is the verb, the infinitive. But how does a niche open out onto a broader horizon? [If you make a niche — like “deciding a future” — does this close you off from broader possibilities? Can ethnicity really be a niche, if you write in English?] (I guess I don't think of racial essentialism as anything more than a genre.)

AA We need to have and state clearly, agreed-upon definitions of race, nationality, ethnicity, culture. Short of that, sure we can. Even if English takes over the globe, human social evolution and the simple diversity of environments will continually move us towards specificity in language and culture, even in the face of globalized capitalism. Everything is subject to change. and the writing's on the wall for global capitalism in its current state—the earth simply cannot support its excessive, exhaustive waste of natural resources.

BA Can we get access to a way of writing — a translation language — beneath these differences or abstracted above these divisions (which are national or — often when a sovereign state is missing — racial). [How do the different social groupings in H. get expressed in the same English language? Can we tell the difference?]

AA I would call the different social groupings subcultures. They mark the differences between each other through their different lexicons in much the same way as the different African American (is this the current identifier?) subcultures identify and distinguish themselves from the dominant white majority.

BA For instance. Leaving aside the use of pidgin or native, historical languages, between a mixed-race heritage & a purer Hawaiian one,

locally, what's the notable difference when they get embodied in English? What's vital to share, in writing, in (translatable?) works, that is uniquely Kanaka (Hawaiian)? How to embody a heritage: incorporating elements of pidgin or of the Hawaiian language — or its translation — or demonstrably tilting the English into a different shape, to create an otherwise. [Would the writing in English change to reflect these different groups or categories' experience? How to do that? Is pidgin relevant at all here?]

AA Pidgin is entirely relevant and reflects the first major step away from using standard English as the mode of literary expression. (Since, of course, the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the concomitant overthrow of the Hawaiian language.)

*“Oh, I'm sorry. I don't know, um . . . pidgin that well.
“Saright, we teach you. You new hea?”*

BA Or thea? Or whea? What stylistic idiom could make these cultural treasures translatable? To make at least the atmosphere of them, the semantic & material resonances of them, more broadly globally available? (Or is that just English-chauvinism, the blatant cash lingo?) [Is it presumptuous to imagine these experiences could get transmitted through standard English alone?]

AA Yes. A lot gets lost, as usual, in the translation.

BA [Do you feel the need to write in an historical Kanaka language at all?]

AA Certainly the desire. But I have to be truthful to my own reality or my writing will not ring true. As much as I would have given my eyeteeth to have ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi as my first language, it's not. I know I will never be as capable in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi as I am in English. Such is life. My future children may have a different reality. I don't know what you mean by “historical” though. The language has continued unbroken since contact with the West. It has survived, albeit just barely. It has evolved: we now do have words for “own,” “computer,” and “email.” So it is not a “historical” language but a living one.

BA [Cultural heritage has usefulness for you, yes?]

AA Cultural heritage forms the basis for my self and social identity.

BA Heritage: something empowering, & confidence-building, when you possess it yourself as an historic cultural encyclopedia, prop & prod; but also, at the other end of the spectrum, something inspiring when it isn't yours. [But how would that inspire or interest someone like me to be exposed to it in, say, your writing?]

AA I don't care what language we write in, humanity has common, basic denominators and good storytelling seems to me universal. If I weave a good yarn, and the translation is good, you will be interested in it the same way I was interested to find out what happened to Achilles, King Lear, and Arjuna on the battlefield with Krsna.

BA (Or is that just tourism in writing?) Tourists —

“they're a captive audience. We can use them to spread the word.”

And. Captive audience — Contradiction in terms?

“An, let da tourists know da full scoops.”

[Or is that just superficial tourism? Or would that be so bad? Are the local Hawaiians disenfranchised simply because they're stuck with English?]

AA Certainly not simply, but lacking our culture's language base puts us at a major disadvantage. Think in the opposite direction: suppose we never lost power here and the concept of land ownership was not allowed because our language (which expresses our value system) does not allow for it—what would Hawai'i look like today? In Samoa, Tonga, and other Pacific nations, private land ownership, as America practices it, does not exist. They have very different lives there. Judgments aside, they live very different lives.

BA Meanwhile: natives disenfranchised in English? Is local color something the (English) language can be robbed of — or something that can be trumped up (within it)? Does robbed of a language imply robbed of agency? Where are my stilts? Where's my machinery?

“You mean you fuckas was jus using me!”

[What ends up getting lost? And how might somebody restore it? Or is the local more of a barrier to getting experiences from elsewhere?]

How much is the Local a boundary, a reterritorializing? A parochial (insular) marking. & Danger signal.

AA When Captain Cook landed here in 1778, that was such a huge cultural clash. English and ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi represent cultures so very different that it is often very hard to come up with satisfactory translations—much gets lost. As far as getting experiences from other places, the barriers to that are created more as a reaction to the loss of power and culture. If the “local” is in control, then there is no threat of loss of power from outside influences, but if you lose power and control, then I think it is a completely understandable, human reaction to become insular.

Japan and France come to mind as two countries wrestling publicly with the threat of losing their cultures because of the huge, culture-crushing power of American media, pop culture—the “MacDonaldization” of the globe (I know there’s a better term for this!)

“We’re too much of everybody and everything else.”

BA [Does the high value you place on the local express a fear of mixing or of impurity, so that you want to get rid of these foreign intrusions — not just in commercial life and the media, but in literature too?]

AA No, absolutely not. Funny thing is, the bulk of what is considered “local” writing here is exactly that—mixed and “impure”! The continental U.S. imposes, through mass media, such a overwhelming flood of expression that our uniqueness gets wiped out. For example, to date there has never been a full-length feature film about Hawaiʻi told from our “local” point of view that has any merit—to me, at least. The rest of the world really does not know who we are, both in our specifics of culture i.e., local Caucasian, Asian, Polynesian, Native Hawaiian, or, in the mix that has resulted and is exemplified in “pidgin” writings.

BA Fear of Incorporation. Of the mix. (& the mixdown). Of impurity. Given to an expulsive, peristaltic writing, to rid itself & us of “foreign properties” — in purification ceremonies. [How much is this like the hi ʻuwai? Is the purification ceremony you mention anything related to this?]

AA I’m a member of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻŌhana. Kahoʻolawe Island was won back from the U.S. Navy by Native Hawaiians after a

twenty-year court war. When we go over to visit (it is still being cleaned of unexploded ordnance left from 40+ years of bombing) we do a cleansing ceremony in the water like the one described in *Kāmau A'e*. Anyone who wants to join us is welcome. It's not a racial or even ethnic thing—it's a cultural thing. If one wants to learn, is humble, open and respectful, then one is always welcome and loved. Racism is a wholly western import that we have, quite sadly, taken up at different times and places.

BA Must radical “basic research” be seen as a foreign import, as viruses to quarantine? Would enthusiasms about “experimental writing” get seen as an unwelcome American intrusion or betraying imitation? A “sell-out”? Do we do better restricting our diet? In the terms wielded in political economy, this points to an import substitution policy — with readers confined to winning badges of cultural preservation & restoration?

“Dey even won da culta award”

[What would this mean for your interest in, say, experimental literature from the mainland? Does it have to be rejected, should it be rejected, does it represent a threat, or just something too reminiscent of the intrusive commercial US cultural bombardment? If it gets rejected, what's left other than cultural preservation?]

AA Your use of the term “mainland” reflects, I suggest, your presumption that we in Hawai'i are simply a satellite, an offshoot, a “minor” land of greater America. Where you live, to me, is on the American Continent. I call it the “continent” for short. This place, Hawai'i, where I trace at least one line of my genealogy back to the 12th and 13th centuries (and then further back to Tahiti), is my main land. Ku'u one hānau—the sands of my birth.

Mainland. Hmmmm.

What's left when we reject the automatic subjugation (however unintended) of culture (in all of its expressions, especially literary) and identity (both individual and social) is reclaimed native soil for us to grow and be our selves on, to express our selves in.

I think that, again sadly, most people don't even conceive of us living here in Hawai'i as having our own, vibrant, worthy culture and that rather than preservation (because life does not exist without evolution even in the most remote places, and even in the slowest of time frames), clearing out the clutter and oppressive mass of American culture means the culture here is not just “preserved” but has the room

(once again!) to evolve and grow in ways that America, as a generality, is almost unable to even comprehend because it's much too preoccupied gazing at its own navel, or fake boobs—whatever.

3.

“Up to now we’ve only been talking da talk, now honey, we gotta walk da walk.”

BA The prescription follows from the explanation. Just like Walter Benjamin’s “Destructive Character,” that inveterate pathfinder, who “sees ways everywhere” and therefore “has to clear things from it everywhere.”

Memory: Now we need a tsunami of creative destruction to clear a path. X-ray the crossroads underneath the battlefield. Imagine an open set of relations, mixture-mad, inclusive toward those outside. A not-so-stand-off-ishness. I’m on the lookout for a globalizable resonance. A romance. Wouldn’t a useful globalism be created by porosity & mutual exposure? Criteria: how porous, how open to “flows beyond” can we make a place, a situation, a cultural stance? Isn’t the mere distinction marking off foreign from local in the way? — or, “on its way out”!

I can’t imagine meaning as an intrusion. Lineage smacks of linearity — instead of a code-scrambling, juiced-up miscegenation. Everything is foreign. [Destruction: if you see a chance to move your experience in many different directions, on many different paths, wouldn’t you need to clear away the barriers and baggage that are cluttering up all these paths? If that’s what I’m advocating, to allow for maximum openness and mixing, on a global scale, it’s partly to get some resonance or “juice” from outside my own cultural situation.

Yet, from your pt of view, what would be the risks or threats associated with that?

Is the protection of a lineage and a heritage always prone to ending you up on a narrow path?]

AA Why is it always the presumption that “protection” will always end up being narrow? How (in generalities, admittedly) absolutely hypocritical. America presumes the rest of the world speaks and understands English. That “Ugly American” expects nothing less while touring the globe. Talk about narrow. Start from a base language that is not your own and then we’ll speak.

“Right on keia, now you talking my language.”

BA [Talking my language: If you get confronted with something strange, doesn’t it help you notice how much you are usually socialized

into something? Do you end up being less inventive because you think you have a heritage to protect and conserve?] If you don't talk my language, wouldn't it help me notice that I possess (& how much I am possessed by) a specific confining language. Or Dracula-ized.

AA After, or most positively, concurrently, heritage grows, evolves and blossoms while being "protected" and "conserved." It's easy to speak like you do when you come from the position of dominance and unquestioned power—political, military, economic and cultural power.

In the 1800's, when Native Hawaiians still controlled our mainland, when we were the dominant culture, our leaders took in technology from all over the globe and folded them into our society here at lightning speed. 'Iolani Palace had electricity before the White House. We embraced reading and writing to the point where, in the mid 1800's, we had the highest literacy rate (98%) in the world. Our rulers were the first in modern history, perhaps in all history, to circumnavigate the globe. Pre-western contact, we did not know about harmonic scales and sung in monotones only. We embraced Western music and have made a uniquely Hawaiian sound now known the world over.

Clearly, this all points to power—who has it, who controls what. When one is fighting for basic survival, the luxury of invention is replaced with the cold hard pull of hunger and thirst. We, Native Hawaiians, experienced a depopulation rate of over 90% in the first hundred years after Western contact. A century and a quarter after nadir point, we're still trying to recover. Hard to experience the world, hard to be inventive when you are struggling to feed your kids.

BA Without a secure language, you face the need to invent one. Or how many. Or make a nomadic erasure of territorial markers. Speak in tongues. Make an exit in language, make language an exodus [Clearly I'm advocating something else here: more nomadic, less marked up territorially, less confined to a single "tongue" or way of writing.]

AA When you roam the earth silent, relying on a language other than English, then you will be walking your envisioned nomadic walk.

Your advocacy is, in my opinion, based on the luxury of largess and power. America goes where it wants, eats what it wants, takes what it wants—and even if the going, eating and taking is personally benign and done with sincere gratitude it is still going, eating and taking whatever one wants. We, Native Hawaiians, as a people, can't do that. We don't have that kind of raw power. And, as individual citizens, Americans on the whole don't take responsibility for the bullying and outright oppression America heaps on much of the world. And be-

cause they don't take that responsibility personally (but feel always that the world is their oyster and birthright)— criticism of the whole, of the system, gets personalized and twisted into a “but that's not what I'm about” mentality.

Strip naked, be silent. Other ways already exist.

4. *Out from Under*

BA Spot the Enemy. To oppose it, to stand back from it: Ask: How formalist / formula-ist is this enemy? How much settled into forms, or formal questions & issues & distinctions.

“No need be so formal hea.”

Or normal. How well can the weird circulate? One blockage: all that mass of conventional glop. To swamp is to conceal is to dominate.

“I ain't trying fo hide notting.”

Yet we do let established norms & forms occupy (& preoccupy us), dominate us, treat us like third world country members. Normative grammar — that's one big industrial management system. Or Genre: drop anchor; let the fecal matter build up on the bayside. Aren't fixed genres horrific? — unless you make one up on your own. (Self-management). To unbroadcast. What We Need = the Informal — getting us outside of the usual, established forms with an Informalism — where the play between words & phrases gets forged point-by-point, without a prior (preestablished, regimenting) program. Moments —

“we're making this up as we go along”

To kick up enough of an improvisatory breeze, to aerate our future. [Isn't the “enemy” something that relies on conventional forms to triumph over us?

And if so, don't we need to challenge those forms? (I'm even including genres and normal grammar in that, so that I'm advocating what I've called in another essay “informalism”, where the words and individual word meanings get related to each other on a point-by-point basis, with a lot of friction, rather than having them derive from some prior program. Which is where improvisation would fit in.)]

AA You know, I think I understand where you're going here. And, having read some of your pieces, I'm beginning to glimpse what might

be out there. However, there still, I think, must be some common ground, otherwise it's just gibberish to me. I know it's not. But I don't have the translators.

I never understood Picasso's "GUERNICA" until I read a straightforward account of the Spanish Revolution and the bombing of Guernica.

BA Do the words only propose something for action to carry out? Or can words themselves make up the action, the paper bullets . . .

"Moa pepa. . . . We goin fight one pepa war."

Even the page makes a battlefield, a slaughterhouse. To start: play with a counterviolence at the syllable level — just a clearing away to start with, rowdied by the microscopic. [Paper bullets: Does politicized or militant action have to look down on writing, or can we think of writing as a form of action in and of itself? If it is, then I'm back to wondering how much "the enemy" works through words and standard language forms, and how much we need to challenge those conventions if we want to challenge the enemy. And stimulate the reader, at a very basic or foundational level.]

AA Politicized and/or militant action, especially here, have used writing (myself included) as a major form of action. Who is the "enemy" you speak of? My enemy is that part of human nature (that part of my own nature) that will do anything to satisfy my lust for comfort and my desire to put Me, the capital "I" first before all others. What I try to do in my writing is hold a mirror up to our collective selves and say, "See! See what you are!"

As you seem to be defining "enemy," I would say that challenging then means learning and writing in my mother tongue, Ōlelo Hawai'i, advocating for that language to replace English, and providing translations rather than looking for a "new" language. What's wrong with the one we had? No one seems to have a problem reading a translation of *Les Misérables*, though most would agree that to get the full effect, one must learn not only French, but French culture.

BA How do we write AGAINST? How are we writing against.

"Capitalism, tourism, individualism—it's all gonna sink us in da end!"

Start by revealing (by remediating) the social stress embodied in the discourse, the grammar & lexicon & talk which is dominant. To take on

exploitation along with imperialism would mean taking on their Language, the machineries of their words. As long as repression usually works on their behalf, as a protective or freezing device, a contrary liberation art of words, at a basic level of grammar & reference, would hope to warm up the reader, restoring the claims of the readerly eye & ear (for materiality & extrapolations of social resonance). To delegitimize the dominant language practices — from outside (by confronting it with a different set) or from within, by scrambling & remediating & tilting & differently mobilizing. Differently changing.

PART B.

1.

BA The people who love their possibilities. Do we have to stay in the dark to feel like we belong? In language, no way self-sufficient. In discourse, no way self-sufficient. How involuntary — without our permission? No AS IF — domesticating dangers of . . . Can the reader be granted the full scope, or solicited to experience a wider viewfinder? However dystopic the result! (Listening to Mary J. Blige, “Searching for My Destiny” — “gotta be happy.” But what if no gotta bes rule?)(How autonomous can we be? do we imagine ourselves to be? And. Are autonomy & self-determination pretty much or much more than male gender stereotypes?)

*“I ho‘okahi kahi ka mana‘o / Be of one mind /
I ho‘ikahi kahi pu‘uwai / Be of one heart”*

Or. Be of polymind, machinic mind extension. Be of multi-chambered heart. Be of cyborg. Belonging limits. How to embrace polyvocality? [What’s so great about “belonging”? Isn’t language always making us lacking in self-sufficiency? What’s so bad about that? Don’t you want to open readers up to the widest possible viewpoint, or viewfinder? And let the chips fall where they may. What’s the downside of that? Would it make social unity impossible? Or is social unity just what is holding us back? Why not be polymorphous?]

2.

BA “What do I tell you! There have been people through here before.” — *Earth vs. the Spider (1958)* Make a subject-collage — multiplying the points of contact for the reader. Hospitality.

*“ouwa ancestas taught us to be kind to strangas an travalers.”
“Da’s ho‘okipa—ass one heavy value fo Hawaiians.”*

Or. Be kind to the strangers inside yourself — to the crossroads made by language inside yourself. Or is it a special individual privilege to be indeterminate / smooth / anti-fundamentalist / mixture-philic / marketeeringly cosmopolitan? [Why not imagine the reader as a kind of collage? — open to all kinds of different stuff. Welcoming, just like your tradition of hospitality. Or is that too risky, given what they're going to be exposed to? Does the reader need to stay more snugly settled into one specific heritage.]

3.

“We're only being harsh to toughen you up.”

BA Couldn't harshness be designed as an explosive device, to discombobulate our usual habits? Toughening up designed to help us be more adventurous, more unflinchingly able to accept or embrace change. Or does toughening up make for a stiffening of our defenses, of a thicker skin to contest or ward off outside pressures, or partial & mobile differences, words without attribution, phrases of mobile identity. (Content is a defense mechanism!) Better: A multiple engagement — not guaranteed by multiple characters on stage, but by multiple layerings, multiple (& even incommensurable) facets of a character, of a character's conceivable language universe (which immediately makes available a huge “social outside” of baroque layering & complexity). A social outside that calls for new modes of apprehension. New language. New writing. Harshness: to make us tougher? But does that just close us off, again, from a wide range of possibilities? Even “content” may build a wall cutting you off from a lot.

4.

BA What if our traditional habits are in the way of new experiences & new possibility?, are parochial in the worst sense. To be narrowly cultural referential. Offering up clearcut collective gests or cultural gestures — responding transparently to experiences which are already pre-codified in cultural (& even national sovereignty) terms. How much of our experience is predefined enough to make this approach possible? Do we want it to be? Wouldn't one of the hopes of a progressive writing be to make it next to impossible for the experiences to be culturally shrinkwrapped in this way? [If literature relies on previously validated cultural notions or images or traditions, are we assuming that those are worthwhile the way they are already set up? Do we want to protect them or open them up? Or does that all depend on whether we're on an island robbed of its national sovereignty or on an island at the center of a global empire: you or me.] “Dominant identity posi-

tions”: that’s part of what could be cleared, like underbrush, from the paths & crossroads we can get busy making. Even subjectivity itself takes the stage as barrier to fuller experience, putting the full & embodied individual into a deductive relationship to something prior. Are we supposed to deduce our position or is it rhizomatic, upended & all-ended? How particularizing can we be? [Identity: I seem to be putting identity in this same category: baggage that would need to be cleared away in order to open things up more widely. Do you take the opposite approach, familiar from identity politics, where an already established identity (or one that might be recoverable from the past) is empowering? Useful? Needed — as the foundation for cultural and political activism?]

AA When one is free to be whomever, wherever, whatever one wants, dropping identity is a luxury and, perhaps for some, a charade. In the wake of 9/11 it seems very clear to me that however much America says it wants to “embrace” the multi-culturalism of itself, the actions it has taken don’t jive. When Bush goes off on protecting the “American Way” he is very much talking about protecting the white majority way—certainly not protecting the “way” of Hawai’i or any other “way” that is not “Mainland America.” The trying on of different identities, the opening up you speak of, got slammed shut with a protectionist iron door gaudily painted red, white, and blue.

5.

“You know, Hawaiian style, it’s not individual rights, you said it yourself—it’s the group, the ‘ohana.’”

BA Are group rights & identity, in reading, any more than a way to homogenize the individual? We’re willing to pay what price of an internal homogenizing, & an exclusion of the outside — ? (Flatten out — a better phrase than “homogenize”; carries the topography motif along.) (The opposite of particularizing the whole.) Group norms flatten out on both sides: singularities are jeopardized & so are multiplicities. Don’t squeeze my multiplicity. Don’t swamp my particularity. You can be located. You can be counted. And isn’t a writing based on identification one that guarantees our sense of conventional membership? Could we imagine some identity beyond the group, or the individual as group member? — some modulation, some spectrum of differences to manage. Isn’t the individual (as different from the securely prefabricated group) likely to be a better vehicle for hybridity, for circulating mobility, for change?

6.

BA To make yourself unlocatable. To make yourself uncountable.

“Let the life that belongs to you be made firm.”

(From an anonymous, pre-Western-contact prayer for fishermen recited by the main character.)

Firm = closure? Or, firm = dedicated? Let the life that doesn't belong to anyone be made soft & porous. Individual rights — here's a tradition well grounded in our usual notions of reading. Or is that the trouble with rights & individualism? How individualistic is language adventure likely to be? Or is that mostly when it glorifies the writer's cleverness or charisma? If we work in isolation, we won't move forward as easily with a reciprocity in reading. [Individual versus group. A cultural heritage as the basis for a group identity: what does that do to the individual? Does it just close them off to things outside? Does it threaten to submerge their individuality in a big pool of group enticements and rules? I tend to reject identification (a move in my thinking familiar from Bertolt Brecht's writing) as something that forces you to have your experiences filtered through another person, the one you're encouraged to identify with. (Of course, this might be essential in doing plays you want to get an audience for . . .) Does that kind of identification seem crucial when you want to build up a spirit of group membership? (If so, it might make sense of my lack of interest in both, in the group membership and in the identification).]

AA As a generalism, but not, I think, an overstatement, the contexts of “individual” and “group” are diametrically opposed in Eastern and Western thought. This has been written about thoroughly but is still often overlooked. America's inability to comprehend that others around the world don't view the individual as primary can explain many of our foreign policy disasters.

In ancestral times in Hawai'i, when an ali'i—a ruler—died, if they were much loved, sometimes their most trusted and beloved followers would voluntarily be put to death, or kill themselves, to be buried with that ali'i. This was an acceptable, noble act. Others more removed from the ali'i would express their grief through self-mutilation, i.e., knocking their teeth out. These acts are not without precedent in humanity, but they speak to my culture's paradigm of putting others first: the family or clan comes first, one's own needs are secondary, if that.

We, as humans, need not judge this. If I desire to view the group, its identity and needs as primary, there is nothing inherently “wrong” with that, but it is fundamentally different from some of America’s basic tenets of individual rights, freedoms and privileges.

Your lack of interest in both the group membership and in identification is, I think, more the result of being socialized from day one into a society that glorifies and empowers the individual. It is not so where I am from. In Native Hawaiian culture, if one comes from an “I” center, that is met with harsh criticism and thunderous silence. I know this from personal experience and it points to the challenges of having another culture (American in this case) superimposed on our ancestral culture: we as present-day Native Hawaiians are socialized in a way that puts us at odds with ourselves. We’re not the only ones, many in the Pacific, Native Americans—we’ve all experienced this in one form or another. This is often why we kill ourselves—we’re fed, from day one, too much conflicting bullshit.

BA [If I want a more mobile and hybrid result, wouldn’t the group be a barrier to that? Because it would locate you, it would count you in.]

AA If we, as human beings, move away from race-based cultural identification, and color, or other physically defining identifiers as the basis for cultural inclusion, then your fears would be moot. Your unstated assumption, if I may, seems to be that “locating” and “counting you in” would lock you in. Clearly, at least in Hawai‘i, this isn’t the case. I know many non-Native Hawaiians who are welcomed into the culture, are encouraged to embrace it fully, but do not have to give up their other cultural identifications. Indeed, my first ʻŌlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian Language) teacher was a German/English man who was accepted by Native Hawaiians as one of our ‘ohana. He was hānai’d into a Native Hawaiian family and therefore became a part of them. He was also a member of Hawai‘i’s French Society. He also spoke fluent Samoan and had hānai’d (adopted) a Samoan youth as his son.

My read on America is that it is still sickeningly stuck on race-based cultural identity and the brutal politics of physical identity.

Hawai‘i has, by the last census count, the greatest percentage of mixed-race people in the country. This can be traced to Native Hawaiian values of acceptance: we were essentially color-blind. We didn’t care what you looked like, we cared, and still do, far more about how one’s soul manifests itself. Unfortunately, we have definitely taken in some of America’s ugly, self-destructive “racial” filters.

BA [If you want to help meet the group's already existing needs, does it make you reject a more experimental kind of art?]

AA No. It does, sometimes, make acceptance of the experimenting a longer process. The “we’ve always done it this way” syndrome has expressed itself most publicly in hula. There have always been, and probably always will be, strident discussion, fights even, about what is “traditional” and “acceptable” but that hasn’t stopped people from experimenting—ultimately. It seems to be a good balance, but it does depend on balance: enough filter to not lose what was good before while opening up enough to allow for growth and exploration.

BA [Belonging and non-porous: what I don’t much like. Doesn’t the importance of the individual get pretty clear when we’re talking about the reading experience? Or, in the theater, can you pretty much ignore that and instead try to go with a sense of the audience and the group being similar.]

7.

BA How is the reader going to share this authority? Only by buying into Heritage? [Interactivity issues.] Can authority be shared with the reader as easily if the source is a preset (historical) code or story or consensus or tradition or voice-&-personality-centered protocol? In any identity based on tradition, something fixed & fixing reveals itself. These end up being identifications imposed authoritatively, as a reflection of authority — even if it appears as identification with difference. Not to incite the pre-sold.

*“(Trying to incite audience)
Hawai’i for Hawaiians! / Hawai’i for Hawaiians!
(Audience does not respond)”*

Identity-needs serve as the basis on which things get ruled out. Made taboo. The equivalent of a cleansing ritual or purification ritual in writing. And this helps glue the hegemonic arrangements together. The dominant culture works like a magnet, bundling together the over-confident strands. As if: settling who they are & where they stand are vitally important. It projects — & depends on — this suturing. Readers supply the attributions, the invoices, the verifications. [Again: individual readers and cultural heritage. Doesn’t heritage based on tradition or group voice or story get in the way of sharing authority with the reader? If identity is based on the group, again, I’m wondering how much gets lost, gets made taboo.]

AA Again, I think it's all about balance: there is much in our collective history as a species to keep! Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it. Those who forget the present are doomed by the ever-changing nature of life. Balance between.

8.

BA Readers spread the word, but only if activated. And can they get activated without their assumptions about themselves (& not just about their colonial pleasantries & victimizations) getting challenged? But is knowledge a solvent of solidarity?

“dey going catch on. No worry. We no need bang em ova da head.”

Yet without a big cultural apparatus behind it, how can challenging new work count on readers catching on? Wouldn't it need to foreground its own extremity, its own cultural equivalent of headbanging? To incite desires may call for a more confrontational approach to the desires we already have. It may not be enough to simply try to foster new desire. The Enemy isn't subtractive. It implants things in us. It's additive. For instance. Normative grammar implants in us something; it doesn't rob us. So: how are we supposed to challenge these additive devices? If a stimulating (postmodern) “motivation” is the mechanism of control, then there's a prescription which follows from this explanation: the raw materials of socialization — the discursive “telling phrases” & “commanding phrases” & “insinuating phrases” — will need to be “taken down.” Challenged. Roughed up. As part of a liberation — which is a social liberation & a liberation of language. [How to activate the reader?: by confirming their cultural assumptions or by challenging them.]

AA I try to do both.

BA [To challenge them, doesn't it help if the literary work seems strange or extreme? Because we're not just offering up some new possibilities; don't we have to clear the path of what's already there?]

AA In the late 70's a kumu hula (hula teacher) shook the hula world by having his men perform pre-contact dances in pre-contact dress at the premier hula event, The Merrie Monarch. At that time the pendulum had swung firmly to the right and dress was ultra-conservative: long Mother-Hubbard style dresses (known as mu'umu'u) for the women and long pants/dress shirts for the men.

What this kumu hula did was both new and old: we are not now who we were back when that type of dance and clothing was the norm. We were much more genetically homogenous, we lived in an advanced stone-age culture on islands still incredibly isolated physically and culturally. Therefore, that kumu hula brought back a flavor of the past, blended with the present. To many it was strange and extreme. He did have to, definitely, “clear the path of what’s already there” but he cleared it to (re)introduce some thing that had been there before blended, unequivocally, with his present moment.

How this relates to literary work is, I believe, no different from all art: to be effective, one must still have a way to translate the message into the experiential filters of the other. Otherwise, strange and extreme is simply unintelligible. Or, it is ahead of its time and waits for others to bridge the gap. That is not altogether bad, much art, much philosophy, much of the outpourings of the human spirit have been seeds planted waiting for the right convergence of events and people.

If we, you and I, shoot from our na’au, our guts, I don’t think we have to worry: human guts have changed little in the last 40,000 years or so.

BA [(Again, is there a basic difference between us here — between helping people value what they already have (or what is being threatened by mainland intrusions or loss of sovereignty) and helping people jettison much of what they already have to open them to something new? I’m taking the latter position, which is why I talk about messing with the raw materials of the enculturation process when it comes to language.)]

AA again, I shoot for balance between the two.

Whether either of us is actually capable of doing what we are striving for is ultimately up to others to decide.

Why jettison what works? Why keep what doesn’t? The interpretation of positions need not be taken to the extremes.

9.

“We ready for active protesting.”

BA Does staying within a recognizable genre make active protesting impossible — or is it a precondition? Start with ourselves! Is the language just using us? Lick your chains. If you see it coming from a distance, don’t bother to absorb it. Contest subjectivity. (Even). [Brain-washing — an image of what? And how to resist it?]

“We don’t consider them the enemy. They’re just brainwashed, that’s all.”

Mind control — classic image of intrusive encroachment on self-sufficient (differentiatedly mental) activity. But all culture is brainwashing. To resist brainwashing = ? Another cultural purification ritual? Were we put on this earth to stay the way we are?

10.

“We not hea foa get in youa face an start yelling.”

BA Even without a clearly locatable voice . . . Doesn’t the writing need to counteract the complacent reciprocities of mutual facework, of both reader & writer saving face together? Doesn’t it need to get in the reader’s face? Counter-amplification. Raise the volume. Raise the temperature. Disconcert the reader. Disassemble the reader. Make interior nomads. Make monstrosities. Make a counter (contrarian) disassembly. Instead of adopting a culturally nonreferential stance: explore everything it means to culturally refer (or embed). Look into the arrangements that make sense (or fittingness) possible — (& not just “mere” abstract knowledge or individualizing ethics). (Political action, a social imaginary. Not just to dwell on the ethical & the epistemological.) If you don’t provide enough of the language context we need to “make sense out of” or “make intelligible” an individual utterance, aren’t we pretty much reduced to the status of the ventriloquist dummy? Instead, challenge, discombobulate, the socialization process — by taking on its materials. What do we need. Scramble (is that, take apart) the social grammar. Do some “social denormalizing’ — as if there’s a strategic logic of following norms that you’re opposing. You could do that as Critique of Ideology. But the social work/ political practice called for now goes beyond reflectively followed norms. It involves massive behavioral bodily conditioning — via the spectacle, mediated bodywork. So all of that becomes open to challenge through the writing. In theatrical writing or poetry we can take on (& test out) these identifications. But without the freedom (to roam, to choose, to reconfigure) the social materials which “make sense out of” an individual vantage. Instead, the identification is imposed. What are the mechanisms of (global? national? subcultural?) identity positioning. Or what are its ligaments? What’s the social machine that produces these identities & how does it work? How can we throw a monkey wrench into that social machine? Let me help you amputate some of that power. Identification?: instead, you’re brought too close to the fire of social material. Or else: vertigo-inducing experience of a

grand canyon of layering & sedimentation (of meaning). Identity solvent — (but not a solidarity solvent) — a social sublime. [Here I'm getting at what would challenge the socialization process in literary writing. And wondering if it doesn't require challenging the very basic ways in which things normally make sense, and in which we as individual identities get conditioned. Why wouldn't that work in a situation like yours? What would be the downside? Would dissolving conventional identity also run the risk of dissolving the solidarity you want? Is the sublime a threat?]

AA Your proposed process is one way. Honestly, I don't know if it would work better. I just go by my na'au, my guts. My fadda always tol' me, "Go fish, feed da 'ohana (family). Da's all what you gotta do."

ADEMIR ASSUNÇÃO & KAKÁ WERÁ JECUPÉ

Words of A Moon-Man

Kaká Werá Jecupé is a rare case among writers in Brazil. A Tapuia or Txucarramãe Indian (he prefers the latter, which means “unarmed warrior”), he is the legitimate child of the ancestral inhabitants of the lands “discovered” by the Portuguese. He resolved to break a five hundred year silence and write history through the eyes of those who have inhabited the “New World” for millenia. The result is the beautiful poetical-mythological book A Terra dos Mil Povos [The Land of A Thousand Peoples] (Editora Peirópolis, São Paulo, 1998). Born in 1964, in the Guarani village of Morro da Saudade, on the southern edge of the city of São Paulo, Kaká received his education in the public schools, where he learned the official history of Brazil and which made no inclusion of its indigenous cultures. This became the impulse for his journey toward his own roots. He began to travel the country from north to south, visiting Indian villages and following the mythological trail taken by the Guaranis in their quest for the Land without Ailments. He heard the stories of living memory from the wise elders. Tired of the official view, which treats the Indians as primitives, Kaká shows the ancient cultural richness of these peoples and points out the great weakness of “civilized” society: ignorance. In his words, words themselves take flight, like a bird that carries on its wings a mix of poetry and wisdom. This dialogue was originally published in issue 9/10 of the Argentinian journal Tsé=Tsé, 2001.

ASSUNÇÃO One of the things that catches our attention in your book *The Land of A Thousand Peoples* is the power that words have for the Indians. In one passage you say: “According to our tradition, a word can protect or destroy a person. A word in one’s mouth is like an arrow cocked in a bow.” What exactly do words mean for the Indians?

JECUPÉ Those passages refer specifically to the peoples of the Tupy-Guarani tradition. For the Tupy-Guarani, *being* and *language, language* and *being*, are the same thing. The word that means *being* is the same one that means *word*. *Ayvu*. Soul and sound. The very word *Tupy* means *sound standing upright*. Our people see being as the tone of a grand cosmic song, played by a great creating spirit, which we call *Namandu-*

ru-etê, or Tupã, which means *the sound that expands*. Human beings are seen as a vibration, a pulsation. This is the starting point for the relationship that the Tupy-Guarani have with words. One of the names for *soul* is *neeng*, which also means *speech*. A pajé [a shaman] is one who can emit *neeng-porã*, beautiful words. But not in the sense of rhetoric. The pajé is he who speaks with his heart, because *speech* and *soul* are one and the same. You are what you speak. That is why the Guarani-Cayowá, because of their disillusionment with relations with white people, prefer to withdraw their word-soul. They hang themselves (as has been happening for about the past ten years, in Dourados, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul) because the throat is the house of one's being. Thus you can see that the relationship between language and culture is deep for the Tupy-Guarani.

A You also say that the name of a person is very important for indigenous peoples. How is a child named within this tradition?

J In the Tupy-Guarani tradition there only exist seven names, seven universal names. The others are human reinventions. These seven original names are our first seven parents, our ancestors. Human beings inherited from these seven parents the power to name, to continue creation. These first beings, which the Tupy-Guarani call *Nanderu*, are divinities. They are what sustains the movement of the world. All of our lineage comes from these names. When a being is spiritually baptized, he receives what would be the equivalent to a family name, which marks his heritage. This is the importance of names—it is the name to which his soul is tied, his spiritual ancestry.

A Who are the seven divinities you referred to?

J They are known as Werá, Karáí, Jacairá, Tupã, which are the four that sustain the world. Then there are Namandú, Jasuká and Jeguaká, the divinities that sustain the spirit.

A Does everyone within the Tupy-Guarani belong to one of these lineages?

J That's right. It is very common among the Guarani to meet people called Werá Popyguá, Werá Mirin, or Tupã Jeguaká, Tupã Poty, Karáí Poty. These names are very common.

A In your book we also notice the use of words linked to nouns, such as Moon-Man, Sun-Woman, Bird-Tribes. Why is that?

J Within these primordial lineages, which are structures of sustenance, there have been mixtures. Moon-Man is linked to a mixture of inheritances, of inherited powers, of a quality of a man with a quality of the moon. This created a temperament, a quality that is Moon-Man. These linked words define these mixtures that define the structure of a being. Like Bird-Men, they are part of an ancestry, in a remote time, from moon to moon, which became myths. They are part of the ancestral memories of the culture.

A In this specific case the inversion is interesting, because normally the man is associated with the sun, and woman with the moon.

J The Tapuia culture believes that this is the human ideal, Moon-Man and Sun-Woman. This is the ideal of the perfect clan. Some beings exist that manifest this quality. They are perfect beings that have managed to attain these qualities on Earth.

A You also refer to the first seven tones, the last of which is silence. Considering that words are so important for the Tupy-Guarani, what does silence mean?

J Silence is in everything. The Tupy, this *sounding standing upright*, is manifested in three bodies: the physical body, a body that we call the body-of-sound, and a body that we call the body-of-light. The body-of-light is represented in the culture through head ornaments, through colors. The body-of-sound is linked to two qualities of energy, which are the *katamiê* and the *wakmiê*, the feminine and masculine poles. This movement of being is balanced in seven ancestral tones, which are vowels. Many dances serve to align, to tune the instrument that is the soul, which is this body-of-sound. For Tupy philosophy, this means the body that links the heavens and the earth, its residence in the material and its residence in the spirit, through which you experience sensations, feelings, perceptions. This body is moved by vibrations, it is a body-of-sound. Chants are sung to balance, to harmonize this body. And silence is the sound of the sounds. It has this meaning of the essence of the whole. There are sounds that are linked to the physical structure of the body, others that are linked to the sensory structure of the body and to the most subtle structure of the body, the spirit. Therein lies silence. The Portuguese language has five vowels; the Tupy-Guarani language has six: a, e, i, o, u and *ÿ*, which is a more guttural sound. And the seventh is silence.

A Is there a specific dance for each of these tones, these vowels?

J No. Our expression has all of these tones, like a song. Each tone deals with different artistic matters: *y*, for us, is linked to the earth, to vitality; *u*, with water, emotion; *o*, with fire, energy; *a*, with the heart, with qualities of attracting and expanding, with feelings that flow; *e* is linked to expression; *i*, with perception, intuition. Each tone has connections to aspects of being. The Guarani say that we all have a *nanderekó*, our place in the world. This *nanderekó* possesses temperaments. These temperaments are linked to four sounds, each linked to four elements that manifest themselves in our moods: earth, water, fire and air. It is these four elements that somewhat determine our personalities. And there are tones that make our interior selves live; they are like musical notes. When songs are sung, those aspects that need further work are given attention. Our *nanderekó* has a quality that makes a certain harmony possible. This harmony is manifested through our spirit, through our language, through our internal being. The songs and dances manifest this harmony, they tune, they align our being in the world.

A In this being in the world, we see dreams as something very important for a large number of indigenous cultures. What are dreams?

J Dreams are the moments in which we are stripped of the *nanderekó*, of the rational structure of thought. We are in a pure state of spirit, in the *awá*, the integral being. In these moments we connect with a deeper reality. For this reason, dreams are vital. They create this connection with our true selves, because the *nanderekó* leaves us with a very limited perception of things in life. Within the dream state you connect with the whole and with that larger self that you are. In dreams your spirit literally travels and can be directed wherever you want or to whatever moment you wish. Of course this requires training, like learning to speak.

A Who is responsible for this training in the tribes?

J Normally a wise man. Every master has his own way of teaching. In general the teachings are to prepare you to have your dreams consciously. The whole system consists of educating your rational mind to perceive that it is not the master of your body, but an instrument of your dreaming spirit, your unbounded spirit. The concept of a dream for an Indian is

not that of an unreal and impalpable thing. In the dream you realize the multidimensionality of the world. The doctrine that educates for dreaming consists of your perceiving the layers of dimensions that make up the world and orient this more rational side to be conscious to these other dimensions. A wise man prepares you to make these flights consciously.

A Do you control your dreams?

J You do not control the dream, but your conscious mind can direct it. For example, say you need to give a message to someone that is two hundred miles away. You can direct your dream, through your reasoning to yourself, and say "I will travel now in my dream and give a message to so-and-so." And the person there will receive it.

A And the person will be dreaming too?

J That's right.

A Does the tribe receive signals about how to act in certain situations?

J Yes, it happens frequently. It's natural, because dreams are the moment in which the spirit is free.

A Is the pajé [the shaman] the main person responsible for having these dreams?

J No.

A Can a child have dreams that indicate direction for the tribe?

J Yes. Among some peoples there exists a morning activity called the Dream Circle. They put fifty people together in a circle and they begin to tell their dreams. And that dream begins to give direction to the daily life of the village and sometimes it creates a change in the village's life. Sometimes a dream appears that has signs saying, look, you must all move the village immediately—a series of dreams that all indicate that. Of course there is always someone that knows how to interpret dreams. Among the Krahô tribe, which is a tribe that has many celebrations, there is a person who is the tribe's dreamer. If there is a meeting, a dance around the fire, he lies down with his head toward the fire and sleeps. The next day he tells what he dreamt about.

These are some of the ways the Indian peoples deal with dreams, having as a starting principle the relationship of dreams to a moment of liberty for the spirit, when the spirit sees everything from every angle possible.

A Is this relationship to dreams common among all the Indian peoples?

J Yes, it is.

A You say in your book that there was a moment in which the Indian nations divided themselves into three different traditions: that of the Sun, of the Moon, and of Dreams, which is the tradition of the Tapuia. Does this mean that the Tapuia are more dreamers than the other tribes?

J No more and no less. The Tupy developed a whole philosophy and ethics that sprang from words, from sound. The soul-word is the axis that orients spatial life, and the forms of the *ocas* [Indian homes]. The Tupy influenced many other peoples in Brazil for thousands of years. They are an expansive people, a sun-like people. But there was also another, more contemplative people, more like the moon, despite the fact that the tradition of dreaming has a more contemplative character. This other people left a greater mark of this tradition in its art, these people, the Marajoara, the Tapajó, left fragments, a complete cultural practice. And the tribes that left behind no philosophical system, no defined system of art, but which had a great power of expression, were the Tapuia, the Xavante, the Krahô. They are more nomadic peoples. They left behind no system of agriculture, but they did leave a system based on liberty and the relationship with the spirit and with the earth, through the process of dreaming. Not that that was all they did. The Xavante, which are remnants of the Macro jê [one of the main linguistic groups among Brazil's native peoples] are one example. They are a people with a strong cultural identity, a people that establish themselves through dreams.

A Writing has always been a determining factor in telling History. In your book you refer to a kind of Indian writing found in basketweaving and drawing. Is this indigenous writing?

J Writing as conceived by western peoples is concerned with linear time, present, past, future, in which civilization is caught. The writing

that indigenous people left, and which is still found today, is linked to another frequency of reality that is much more symbolic. Indigenous peoples have their writing, but it is inaccessible to that frequency that western civilization recognizes as such. This writing is found on the body, through painting of the body, in basketweaving and ceramics. There is a book that Lux Vidal organized called *Grafismo Indígena* [Indian Writing]. This book gives an idea of the richness of this native writing. Indian peoples left behind this quality of writing that is attuned to the part of the human being that deals with his interior “I.”

A You mentioned the relationship of writing to time, saying that white people’s writing is concerned with linear time. What is the relationship to time that the indigenous peoples have?

J I had the opportunity to live within an urban society, and also lived a part of my life in a Guaraní community and short periods of time among the Kamaiurá, the Krahô, and the Xavante. One thing that determines time for the Krahô, for example, is the movement of the rainy season into summer, or the movement of the day into night. They never concerned themselves with dividing up or breaking apart this movement. Because they live this passage of time so integrally, it is as though there were only an eternal today, even as children are born, as they become adults, as they grow old. Every cycle is experienced fully through its rites of passage. One lives the present moment. There is the celebration of the chestnut, of the *pequi* fruit, of the manioc. These rhythms of the village give a melody to the culture. The people live this melody and everything is one large present moment. The time of civilization is very tense.

A The year 2000 marked the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil, or as we learn in school, the “Discovery of Brazil.” In your view, was this a discovery or an invasion?

J It was a mismatching. A mismatching that provoked and continues to create serious problems, even massacres. The present situation for the indigenous people is not easy. Even today, in large areas of the country, the situation is defined by shootings, dispossession of land, conflicts with ranchers and miners. The interests that provoke these actions are the same as ever: economic interests. Today there is an additional element: the megainstitutions of science, of chemistry, pharmaceutical industries, which are practicing biopiracy, stealing an ancestral knowledge that indigenous peoples have of herbal medicines. Religious

missions also cause considerable tumult. The Guarani people are deeply religious. If you break the natural religious structure of a people, under the pretext that they are not religious, you destroy them.

A And what is the main cause of this mismatching?

J Its seed is a society that has in its cultural structure the matter of possession. It found here a society oriented towards being. This was the crux of the mismatching. A society that is oriented towards possession generated points of view that are still present in its conduct, in class divisions, in ideologies. Behind it all is a vision of possession and accumulation of wealth. These two different visions create the difficulties that the cultures have in meeting. The Tupy is not concerned with marking territory; his very name, Tupy, means “sound standing upright,” a being. The Xavante calls himself *awen*, which means “people.” Then people arrive that say they are Portuguese. And what is a Portuguese? A people that lives in a marked-off land, that is the owner of that territory, and that wants to expand to other territories, do you see? Like the French. These two very different visions provoked the difficulties in the meeting of these two cultures.

A Europeans arrived bringing “progress,” treating those who were here like primitives. How do you see this relationship: civilized versus primitive?

J For those who base their life and culture on having, the notion of progress consists in seeing around them the accumulation of material wealth. When it encounters a civilization that is not oriented towards possession, it finds that civilization inferior. The notion of progress for the indigenous peoples, especially for the Tupy-Guarani, consists of respecting the principles that things exist to be transformed and recreated by human beings. This is our skill, the skill of creating. And these created things can be exchanged; this is a basic tenet, so that our skill in creating can continue to manifest itself. The other tenets say that there are four things that cannot be exchanged or sold: the sun, the air, land and water. Progress, for us, is developing one’s creative capability, one’s expression in the world. This manifests itself in the way one deals with space and with nature in the form of a celebration. The progress of this people is within this law.

A So these are very different ways of viewing “progress”?

J Yes—the development of science and wisdom of the indigenous peoples came about through this interior perception, through the development of celebration through dance, songs, body painting—through a harmonious relationship with nature. We had our own progress. This is a point that needs to be made in order to perceive the size of the abyss that this mismeeting of cultures provoked.

A Notions of material wealth did not make sense to native peoples?

J Well, consider this example: when the Spanish arrived they found three great civilizations, the Incas, Mayans and Aztecs. They had monuments, pyramids, and hydraulic engineering. They attempted to deal simultaneously with these two essences: having and being. When the Spanish arrived, they asked the Mayans if they knew of any wealthy tribes. They said that there was one beyond the mountains, the Incas. But the Mayans were saying that the Incas were rich because they had the largest variety of corn and the best technology for planting it in inhospitable environments. When the Spanish arrived there, they saw the artwork in gold, but the gold itself was not the wealth of the Incas. It was not the gold the Mayans were referring to. They were talking about the technology of agriculture, that knowledge, that science. The notion of wealth of the peoples here was very different from that of the Europeans. So there was progress here, but it was undermined, and we have to reconsider the notion of progress to truly respect the civilization that was here. Civilization needs to view the Indians with less arrogance; then it might see that civilization itself is collapsing.

A Why is civilization collapsing?

J Civilization is not collapsing because the stock market falls or rises. This is all a bluff. Society today lives off the bluffs of those people that deal with future markets. How can you have an economy based on a bluff? What kind of progress is that? The economy of the Inca people was based on its capacity to deal with the winter and the infertility of the soil, without suffering, without the winter causing poverty for the population. That was wealth. The wealth of civilized society is founded upon a bluff. That which society calls progress has become so blinding that no one perceives how much it lives on self-deception.

A Is it blindness to the deeper values of existence?

J Yes. For the Tupy-Guarani this is a terrible thing. For the Tupy-Guarani words have spirits, and in civilized society people live on words without spirit. They have no strength, no truth. And this is called progress. An economy based on the talk of a bunch of people who scream like maniacs on the floor of the Stock Market, and then the dollar falls, affecting the lives of millions of people. Common citizens are the ones who suffer the consequences, and they are the ones that really construct, plant, create the structure for those people to be there talking about laws and discussing strategies for development. The common citizens are the ones who, in effect, deal with the reality of the situation. These two notions of progress have to become clear within these five hundred years. When this vision becomes clear, then it will be possible for us to promote a true cultural meeting.

A How could this kind of meeting have happened?

J There could have been a development of both peoples, without the destruction of either of their cultural essences. It could have been a meeting based on respect, on true integration, on exchange. Today there are indigenous leaders that have literally practiced cultural cannibalism ["antropofagia cultural"]. They discovered how to live in contact with white civilization while strengthening their own cultural heritage. These are examples of how such contact might have worked. There could have been a maturing of both the native culture and the one that had just arrived. This did not happen. Western culture today continues to practice values from an era that has passed—the notion of conquest, of expansion, of accumulating land and goods. I am not saying that this is the vision of civilization in general; it is the vision of a handful of people. It has nothing to do with today's reality. It is completely backward, primitive. Unevolved.

A You were one of the organizers of a meeting of indigenous organizations to mark Brazil's first 500 years, through the Arapoti project. What was the idea behind this meeting?

J Arapoti means *rebirth*. The death of our Pataxó relative in Brasília, after he was set on fire by white teenagers, made me begin to think about Brazil's young people.¹ To what level has this civilization sunk, to create a generation with such an attitude? I became very concerned. So I began to think about organizing a meeting of different tribes, to bring our different ceremonies and interact with young people, because they are the ones who need it, they are the ones who are

showing the symptoms of their civilization's disease. In April of 1998, we had the first meeting of tribes with young people, in Porto Seguro [where the first Portuguese ships arrived in 1500]. So our project for Brazil's five-hundredth anniversary is not only for Brazil's future, but also its present. Our notion of time is strongly linked to the eternal, so if we can manage to create a new relationship with what will be the future, then we can contribute to that civilization.

A And what does this project with young whites represent?

J Our project for Brazil's five-hundredth anniversary is against ignorance; it is a project of disindoctrination. Indigenous cultures have many tools for educating one's being, for teaching respect for humanity. This meeting is being called a New Rite of Passage for a New Human Tribe. The biggest problem for the young generation, which led to this horrendous crime, is that it lost contact with itself, with its internal rites, with its passages, its cycles. Indigenous peoples marked these cycles through rituals, ceremonies, in a process of education with its foundations in myth. [Western] society has none of this, so its youth don't know what they are or what they are responsible for.

A And how do you see the question of integration? There are still tribes in the middle of the jungle. What about their situation? Do you think they should be left there, that no one should go there, let them live in peace? How should this be resolved?

J In Brazil there are currently about 350 thousand Indians, from 206 ethnic groups and 180 different languages. Of these, about 70% live within civilization's confines, on the edges of the cities. The majority has lost much of its traditions. My project's aim is to value and respect our roots, and recover the self-esteem of these peoples. The people of the Xingu, in the Amazon, as long as they can live in an ecologically balanced system, are the teachers of our ancestry. They should remain in the Xingu, if they want to. The ones who need to be educated are the aggressors towards these cultures. They need to be sensitized, so that they understand the stupidity they are practicing—the ranchers, prospectors, mining companies.² These groups are the ones who need to be educated. It is the responsibility of this society's culture to invest in this educational process. This would be a project for Brazil's anniversary—to fight corrosive elements in the culture. The indigenous peoples are living patrimony of humanity.

A In these last five hundred years, with the disappearance of hundreds of ethnic groups, which was the patrimony that Brazil lost?

J The greatest patrimony that Brazil lost was that of knowledge. Many of these peoples developed systems of relationships with the environment, with medicine, which today are so relevant and sought after for sustainable development, for deep psychological truths—things this patrimony already possessed but that were not absorbed or applied. Biomedicine, phytotherapy, natural medicine. The economy, that is, what I call economy—the system of the people's interaction with local cycles, local relationships—things that are being remembered now and that existed in abundance here. Look at the Japanese; they are recognized the world over as a technological nation, a wealthy nation, but they do not surrender their ancestral traditions, their art, their dress, their philosophy. But Brazilians are ashamed, because they don't know their own culture. There is a popular image of the Indian as a poor victim, who was unable to develop shopping malls or to progress. This celebration of Brazil's five hundredth anniversary offers the possibility for the society to revisit its roots and understand its patrimony.

A And to understand its own wealth?

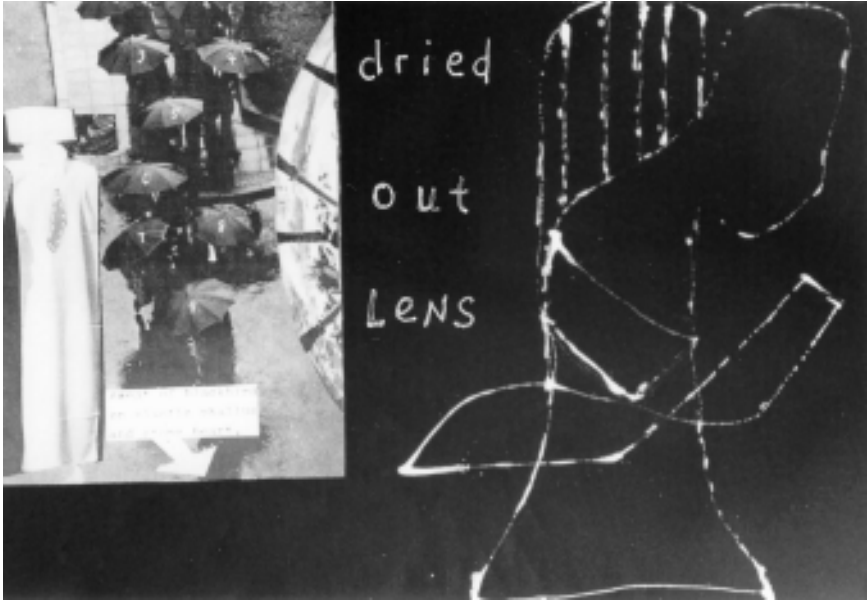
J Exactly. This idea of separating people into first world, second world and third world is false. With all its riches of flora and fauna and people, do you think Brazil is a poor country? No way. We are a great nation; there is no such thing as the Third World. This is another bluff that society believes for some reason. I walk through the hills, the forests, I work directly with nature, with indigenous people, with people from the interior. No one is wealthier than we are. I've also been outside Brazil—everyone always talks about New York. I've never seen such a dreary place! Always so dark, with steam always coming out of the ground. They call it the Capital of the World. If that's our model of civilization, we have a long way to go. But I don't think it's a model for [Americans] either. There is an anguish inside them; Americans want to understand indigenous culture. I felt in them a need to recapture something that would make sense for them on the inside, that would help them remember who they are. Human beings are not the children of that dismal steam seeping out of manholes. They are children of the earth. The human essence was born in the waters, in the mountains, trees, animals. Not in the megalopolis.

1. Three years ago, a Pataxó Indian was burned alive in Brasília (Brazil's capital) by four teenagers, all sons of judges from Brazil's highest courts. The man was sleeping at a bus stop, and the four poured alcohol on him and lit a match. After their arrest, they said that they meant to play a prank and that they had no intention of killing the man. They also said they did not know that he was an Indian, but thought he was merely a homeless man.

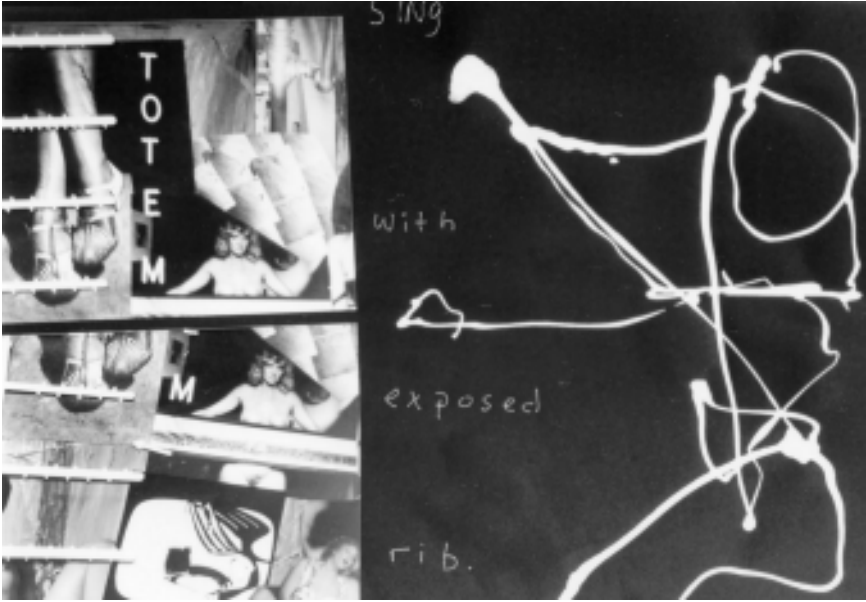
2. Individual prospectors ("garimpeiros") search for gold in parts of Brazil's interior in large mining areas opened in the middle of the jungle ("garimpos"), the most famous of which is the Serra Pelada.

Translated by Mark A. Lokensgard.

GUY BEINING



Concerning: dried out lens. The energy of dialogue is in silence. The figures with umbrellas chatter, in scattered rain. That voice of the sky is their web, the substance of their movement, yet from a higher plane the image is packaged by the weathered soul of blackness. This form turns from sky, rain, & voices; it is that indifference to dialogue, of the visual one, that creates the voice of silence.



Concerning: sing with exposed rib. The vulture of thought is processed again and again in a caustic collage. There is a piling on top of each other, which creates a visual totem. The verbal glue is flung from a body of paint onto darkness. It speaks of the elongated sentencing of that visual compilation. In both of these works the confrontation of darkness vs. light becomes the ultimate dialogue.

SHELLY BERG

Monodramatechnotrama

or, Why I Write One Person Technological Extravanzas

When you get down to it there is no such thing as dialogue. Contemporary communication is self dramatization. The Monotrama, as I like to call the one-person technological extravaganza, is the singular vision that sends the self into flight and sets a steel trap for it.

The earliest theatre was single-vision epic, from Homer through Aeschylus.

Once we got to Sophocles, things went down hill because the unified, theatrical voice got shattered. Theatre became character cut ups and those characters had to *do* something with each other—so they talked. Thus, dialogue was born and the single voiced vision went the way of woolly mammoths.

Dialogue is based on the powers of persuasion and lies, not vision or truth seeking.

Throw out dialogue.

Substitute: computers, synthesizers, techno-panic video screens, microwave ovens with three inch TVs attached.

Monotrama cannot exist without technology. Monotrama is virtual reality Paradiso.

What is missing from techno theatre and the avant-garde in general today is what is the essence of technology, namely hot wires.

Irony and cold metal electricity in cutting edge theatre have become dead connections, excuses for paranoia, cowardice, and too much TV.

Nuclear Bombs on the other hand are very hot.

In this world, theatrically speaking, we have to fight fire with fire.

Monotrama is miniaturization.

Silicon chipped characterization.

All consciousness in a single voice.

All the world in a lone object.

Through the minute and intricate, we recognize the infinite and abstract.

Monotrama is the close up fairy tale shot of theatre.

The individual in the Monotrama stands in for the old single voiced Greek chorus in its appeal to the Gods, in its lamentations and fears.

Monotrama is a blues song to abandonment

From self, family, community, this galaxy and plenty of others.

Classic realism skirts the schisms of psyche by chopping it up into warring personalities known as characters. Monotrama is the psychic realism of the theatre. It is the performance preview to the upcoming electronic cottage.

The dramatic tension of Monotrama is not between self and others. The tension lies between the prisms of the self. This understanding is the recognition scene of Monotrama. The resolution of the play is the constant regrouping of the reflective composition inherent in the character of one.

Monotrama scoops out the layers of lies, hunting for firm foundations of art. As the lies fall back in faster than we can dig them out, we hug ourselves to our self on ever shifting terms. Participles dangle, tenses confuse. The self knows itself as she and I and you and we and he and they.

Current technology makes two things possible: 1) liberty from the robot assembly line and 2) isolation or independence, depending on your point of view. The by-products of #s 1 and 2 are freedom and loneliness. Monotrama seeks to restore the magic dissolve of aloneness—an all-oneness that is the exhilaration of a group freed from group scrutiny.

Monotrama is thorough narcissism. By virtue of the fact that the theatrical Narcissus uses the audience-sea-of-faces as her looking glass, Monotrama is thoroughly skeptical of its own self-absorption.

Monotrama may be performed by more than one actress; the way a kaleidoscope breaks light, the way the cosmos has refracted itself into infinite particles of individual necessity. The single vision and the narcissistic are rooted in the same instinct—to defy gravity—the things,

people, artifacts that hold us down, as the universe floats and expands. The singular vision summons energy into one tight black hole in space, whose objective it is to blast through all space and all time.

Monotrampa is the poem of the theatre.

The poem is our last toehold on earth before the leap into zero gravity song.

As in a Homeric epic or a chanson de geste, the singular voice is released into the freedom of pure story telling.

Free of the weight of dialogue, she is unleashed from the whoredom of story selling.

Monotrampa is a chant. A chant of world want.

The world want is to wail and sing.

Sing the soul out to a wall, an image, a person, any particle of any substance that bounces even a fragment of our own sound back to us.

The chanting of the Monotrampa is the memory of our common culture, instinct, gene pool, atoms.

It is the conjuring up of pure DNA.

The Monotrampa tears up everything in its way to get to this effervescence. It rips the subjective from the objective and glues it back and forth together again, blinking like one of those religious postcards that change scenes as you turn them even slightly, up or down.

Through lyricism, with its deep dives and fancy flights, and irony, with its shrugged shoulders and minimalist mocking, the form perceives itself

An Atlas with Wings.

Monotrampa grafts the individual blissfully to her technology.

There is a grand canyon of understanding between the minimalist generation of artists and my own brood of multi-media feedback babies. We sucked TV and electric guitars from our first breath, while these forces hit them in their teens. For the older experimentalists communications technology will always be a somewhat exotic dark stranger, at once seductive and threatening. For them, it is literally a foreign tongue, spoken at best with a cool, clinical precision. For us, the new technology isn't new—its organic, erotic, demanding our hearts as much as our scalpels. It is our mother's milk.

Monotrampa reflects Internet time. It cannot exist without a techno theatre that can keep up with it.

Many theatre pieces talk about our times and technology but few reflect it. Few are structured as a time-reflection of our segmented, syncopated life pace.

The only forms that even remotely approximate the time sense of the Monotrampa and its reflection of our attention deficit times are the Internet, rap, and MTV.

The mix of hot music and video with their loose ends to abstraction, incompleteness, and mega fantasy, has kicked in the door to performance poetry, that howling banshee that is the other burning realm of performing soul in which the audience is the whole cosmos.

The swift-as-light interconnectedness of the information highway is the same as that of the Monotrampa. In both, we are the neurons of communication linking ourselves in infinite configurations to our fellow man, to our sense of universe. Click from one text to another, one subject and image to another to recreate one's self and transform. These links are the forces behind the hothouse blossom that is the Monotrampa. They are the keys to shape-shifting our way through life.

Theatre is the perfect ground for the synthesizing of medias, both human and technological. It's the ideal place to make live and human what is removed and alien when viewed behind the glass of our computer and TV screens, when heard through our digitally euphoric walkmans. Techno theatre is head and sex simultaneously.

Many theatres say that technology kills the magic of live performance. 'Tis but terror screeching. Theatre has always been a bastard art—a multi media mutt. But in the last twenty years, it has lost pace with media advancement, and has attempted to glorify a thoroughbred purity that is absolutely repulsive to its own bloodline. Between the reactionary growl of established theatre institutions and the frigidity of the recent avant-garde, truly LIVE performance is out the proverbial window, and with it the highest and deepest possibilities of melding individual and community, thought and imagination, instinct and intellect.

Prescription for a healthy, living theatre to replace the corpse on stage:

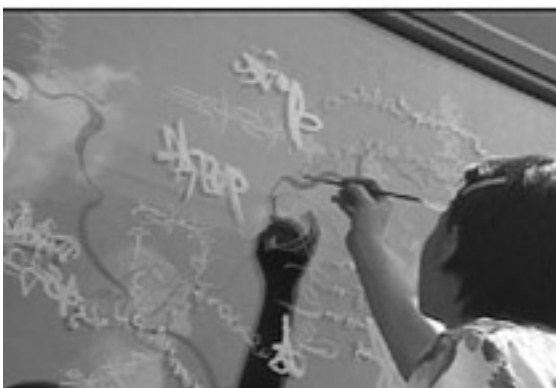
Throw out the painted sets, blow up the prop shops. Get a decent sound system, video and computer set up and most important some dangerous artists who honor their bastard roots and we'll see a new pack of people haunting our theatre, a younger group sure to kick some life and love back into its sorry ass.

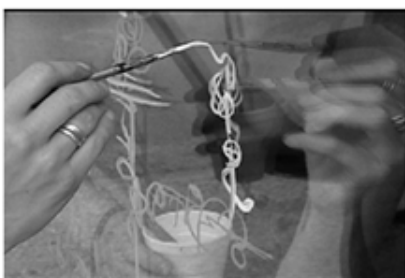
We can no longer look to the socio-familial-psychological-character drama to release us from the inner drama that links microcosm to macrocosm, the human to the rest of the universe. We can't laugh away heartbreak in black comedy anymore. Like a rabbit frozen in a car beam light, we are now impelled to cast forth our own demons in a singular glaring.

Monotrampa shines the group eye straight into the individual's multi-fly eye and refracts it back to us all in fractured glory.

Wipe everyone but the one off the stage and map out the one who's there—who is the welter of the ghosts, fairy tales, and memories that own us. Give the stage to the one who weeps and breathes electric blood.

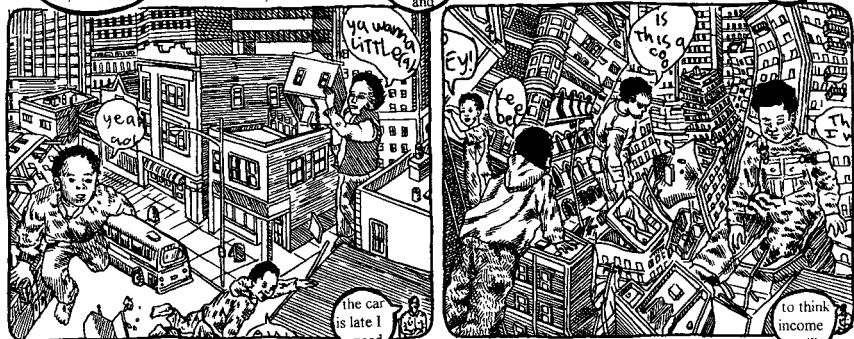
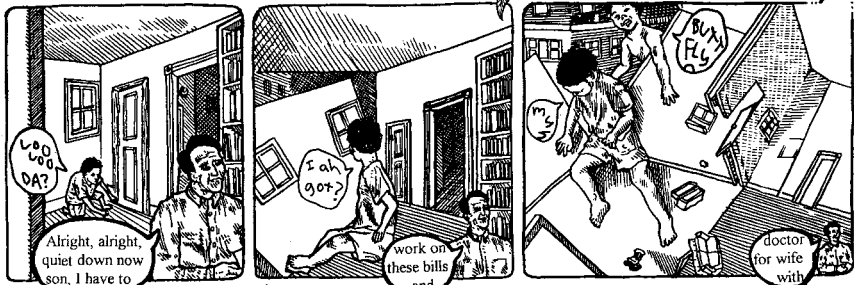
RACHEL BERS & E. TRACY GRINNELL
from *t*pography*





*“t*pography” was a collaborative exploration of legibility, vocabulary, and physical/ psychological location. We were interested in treating language as both a visual object and a symbolic referent simultaneously. Working on either side of the gallery windows so that we could not verbally communicate, we responded to each other’s marks and gestures over the period of a week. The layers of language, both legible and illegible, attempted to map a shifting internal terrain. As the project progressed, language and geography unfurled into each other: the movement of the words mimicked meandering “rivers,” and the “rivers,” in turn, seemed to be unraveled words. The project was a constant revision, which often involved erasing a day’s work and replacing it with work that addressed not only what seemed to be missing from the day before, but what was present and new in our relation and response to each other that day.*

LITTLE NOTHING IN SOMETHING



WENDY CALL & SASHA SU-LING WELLAND

Living Elsewhere in 16 Steps

A. Address

WELLAND [An internet café: cold concrete basement filled with cigarette smoke, repetitive loop of pop music, song about searching east, west, south, north for the one you love, under swarming street scene of bicycles and pedestrians and cars honking at blue truck overloaded with winter cabbage blocking the road, ping pong table in the corner, radiators lifeless, waiting for the government-dictated date when heat officially begins.]

Beijing, China.

You have become massive high-rise apartment buildings and Hong Kong-financed shopping malls lumbering into the sky. Mirrored glass architecture storms your multiplying ring roads with fero-city. These glittery new adornments threaten to dwarf even your monumental Soviet-style Great Hall of the People, your Military Museum, your Minorities Culture Palace. How is it that I now prefer the feeling of being small and inconsequential in relation to these icons of state than that of feeling miniscule at the silvered feet of capitalism? When did your drafty old train station start to feel cozy? The big-character slogan in the square, “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” now perfectly reflected in the surface of your concession to high finance, you know, the one that led to house arrest of the vice-mayor.

But, just one step off your imposing boulevards, and I’m suddenly lost in alleyways of retirees who shrug off change with a cackle and cling to mugs of tea and sidewalk chess games. Let me say for you, as a reminder, the mantra of my neighborhood, which I try to claim as mine by making these lists:

husband and wife shops that sell yogurt, melon seeds, liquor, cigarettes, shampoo, and toilet paper;

three competing hair salons with hairdressers who have repeatedly dyed their hair, waiting behind plate glass for customers and watching tv;

the pigeon cage, noisy with flapping wings, on the roof of an enthusiast’s apartment;

a family planning clinic;

the south entrance to the famous Jishuitan hospital, where victims

of the falun gong self-immolation in Tiananmen Square were treated a week before their fanaticism showed up on the fruit seller's television set;

a couple of dimly lit stores selling bed-side toilets, canes, neck braces, and prosthetic limbs—the hands rest motionless in a glass display case under fluorescent light;

at least four stalls, open night and day, selling funeral money and clothing;

several fresh fruit and flower stands (it's only recently that I put two and two together and figured out the why of so many gift vendors and stores selling cerements near a hospital);

a Muslim minority restaurant that is always blaring loud Uighur music and sells barbecue mutton for one yuan a stick out the kitchen window;

three street-side bicycle repairmen with basins of water for finding the leak in your tire;

a mishmash of clothing shops crowded with students in baggy pants, leg warmers, disco t-shirts, trinkets dangling from their cell phones;

the gaunt old man who stares blankly at them while clipping his fingernails;

a string of CD/VCD/DVD stores, with overflowing cardboard boxes of jumbled cellophane-wrapped pirated goods;

a hot pot restaurant with showy tanks of doomed fish breathing heavily in the front window;

a 24-hour Taiwanese-style noodle, dumpling, and soy milk cafeteria;

the homeless woman who drags along the uneven pavement in Cultural Revolution braids and green soldier's uniform;

two Adam and Eve™ branch sex shops (nos. 5 and 8), with sales people in white lab coats and advertisements of blond, big breasted blow-up dolls in the window;

a store selling light bulbs of all hue and wattage;

a store specializing in chemistry beakers, glass pipettes, and test tubes;

a trophy store;

a roasted chestnut stand;

the mandatory dumpling stall;

a few old moon-gate entrances to residential alleys;
and then you are at the subway entrance.

CALL [An internet café: three girls in middle-school uniforms giggle over chat room, man types letter with two fingers, teenaged boy looks at photos of naked women with one hand on mouse, air conditioner sputters to no avail, 99% humidity, nearly that many degrees, 1980s rock music blasting.]

Matías Romero, Mexico.

Funny how one's life can reduce down from a well-furnished five-room apartment to a termite-infested table, a soft, moldy mattress, a computer, a camera, and four small suitcases in less than two months, and one can still feel like the same person. You welcome me with profusion of another order.

You have given me a neighborhood that starts inside my house, even though I live alone:

termites in the cement walls, white cockroaches in the shower drain, and in every one of the many holes in the wall, lizards with see-through skin, whose tails fall off in times of terror;

out in the yard a bluish squirrel, a brown lizard the size of a cat, and a frog the size of a rabbit;

the neighbors' chickens and parrots squawking and their dog chewing rotted fruit in my compost pile, while the papaya tree drops rotted fruit onto abandoned red clay roof tiles stacked in the corner;

a begonia bush blooming next to the three-foot-high pile of ash left from burning trash;

broken glass gleaming atop the 12-foot-high wall;

on the other side, the concrete street white-hot at mid-day;

Coke for sale at the house next door on this side, frozen fruit juice and quesadillas on that side;

a carpenter, a plumber, and a car mechanic all working in a tiny, slanted wooden shack, its high walls spray-painted with advertisements for elections held months or years ago;

a house in mourning—the daughter and granddaughter died 9 months ago in a car accident—and a large black-fading-to-gray bow hanging over the front door;

a store for buying locks and pipes;

a department store that sells everything from tortillas to ovens to gas tanks to apples to negligees;

a store that sells only blenders and pots and electric burners;
one block of dirt road that has not yet been paved, with two empty store fronts (rent: 1000 pesos a month), a dentist's office, and a bar with a flapping sheet instead of a front door;
then a block that was paved just a few months ago;
a store selling only beer;
a feed and seed shop that smells of pesticides;
the Estafeta office, for sending letters to the US (18 dollars each)—it will only take five days for them to arrive;
a fabric store with Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cloth and blue-and-white checked oil cloth;
the red-and-yellow Elektra home electronics and appliance store, where your son/husband/brother, even maybe daughter/sister/mother (probably never wife) working in the US can send you their dollars, which you will receive in pesos, after the store takes 20%;
and then buses to everywhere, sometimes even the US, stopping right in front.

B. Blondie

C Every single time I venture out of my house, at least one and sometimes several men yell "*Guera!*" (sort of a derogatory way of saying "blondie") when I walk by. It happens less often when I am with Mexican friends. What I find funny is that they generally react to my ignoring them by repeating it over and over, more loudly, as if I can't hear them. Once, after a particularly bad day, I shouted "*Fuck you!*" in English at a teenager who had yelled "*guera*" and "*mamacita*" at me about five times. He looked at me as if I had slapped his face. *FU* seems to be as international as *Coke* and *OK*. *Un abrazo*.

W I am only rarely able to pass as Chinese, and only then as some kind of minority, and only if I don't open my mouth. My accent is enough to give my foreign-ness away, but usually my face does it first. It's a fairly daily occurrence to be walking down the street and hear people yell behind my back: "*Lao wai!*" (literally "old outsider," but a catcall of "foreigner" that sounds derogatory in an excited way.) Some days I get annoyed. Some days I find it funny to listen to whole conversations of people on the bus talking about me, not knowing that I can understand what they are saying. xoxo, S

C. Conversation with Fruit

C I said that this was about lychees, didn't I? I'm writing about a

couple of villages that are under pressure to rent their land for growing lychees for export to China. I know nothing about this fruit, foreign to Mexico, but I remember your reference to it, when you talked about your grandparents' visit back to China, when words felt "soft and comfortable in their mouths." What can you tell me?

W O lychee, which I grew up eating dried, when you were a treat my grandparents bought for me. A crinkling cellophane bag of dried lychees meant we were visiting them in San Francisco. As we strolled down the sidewalks of Chinatown, away from the messy remains of a dim sum lunch and toward the parking garage under Washington Square, my grandmother would pull me into a tiny grocery packed with smells that assaulted my untrained nose. From narrow shelves full of jars with labels I could not read and bags of dried spices and seafood products, she would miraculously pluck familiar treats for me. On the rest of the walk to the car, I tripped happily behind the adults with a bag of lychees clutched in one hand and a pink and green box of Botan rice candy, secret prize enclosed, in the other. The outer shell of a dried lychee is hard and prickly, thin and brittle. The dry fruit, shrunken and a darker shade of brown than the shell, rattles around inside. The meat is chewy, sweet, and musty. But more delightful to me than this taste was the perfectly smooth pit hidden in the center. I would roll the pit in my mouth like a marble, while the streets of Chinatown receded through the back window of my grandparents' car.

C As far as I can tell, there is no good tea in Mexico.

D. Delivery

W I live not far from a huge wholesale tea district, with blocks of stores selling tea, Tea City, Tea Town, Tea Village, of every imaginable kind from every tea-growing region of China. The first time I walked down the street, I couldn't help but laugh out loud at each new block. Who could have ever imagined so much tea in one place?

C I looked at your address and thought, "Huh, I wonder why it's in English?" THEN it occurred to me that I can't write Chinese. Once our postwoman in Boston copied the Persian return address on a package from Aram's mom so perfectly (on the yellow "pick up package" slip) that Aram was convinced she was Iranian. Turned out, she was just bored and detail-oriented.

W I have a new letterbox. My post office friend helped me nail an old milk delivery box with a lock onto the wall downstairs and used her connections in the post office to arrange for my mail to be delivered in this box.

C Do they really still deliver milk to houses in Beijing? I would

bet in Matías it would be easier to get milk delivered than mail.

W My milk/mailbox fell off the wall a couple days after I hung it up. Now every time I try to nail it back up, the wall crumbles terribly and it comes crashing back down. I'm convinced that someone is pilfering my mail because a letter I mailed to myself over a week ago has not arrived. Instead, someone put a tree twig through the slot. I'm getting paranoid; my communication relies on a battered milk box. But paranoia doesn't seem so unreasonable. They just painted the grass green for the Olympic inspection committee. Did the tea get to Mexico yet?

C This afternoon I read your e-mail as I sat in an internet café in Mexico City. It was 4 p.m., and I was still waiting for a 9 a.m. interview. Moments after reading your e-mail about the milk delivery, I walked back to continue waiting for my interview. Next door, I saw a man delivering milk and cream in glass bottles from a tricycle cart.

E. Estadounidenses Waiting

W I'm waiting for my next installment. I'm like one of those eager Americans waiting on the docks in New York for the ship from London bearing Dickens' latest chapter. Please send things to the new address from now on.

C Amazing jasmine tea. It looks like those little balls were rolled by hand!

F: Forgetting

C Yesterday, I had a mini-meltdown. I was just too tired of being helpless when people rip me off, merchants acting like they don't know me even though I have been in their store weekly for the past six months, and not knowing the word for whatever it is I want to buy. Yesterday, it was vice grip and wrench.

W I really lose it some days as I try to acquire new words. It was surge protector and Achilles tendon for me this week. And, if I get my tones wrong, I might ask for a "head check" instead of a surge protector. An examination might not be a bad idea; I think there is a hole in my brain. A few weeks ago, it took me several days to remember the word androgynous. I kept thinking amphibious or hermaphrodite until androgynous finally resurfaced in my mind and I could fill in the blank where I'd left it in a description of a woman I recently met.

C I had to e-mail someone a few months ago to ask how to say palindrome. For days, words like homonym and palimpsest rolled around in my brain.

G. *Great Ideas*

C I know a man who works carrying market vendors' goods to and from their stalls. All day long, he pushes a flatbed, wooden wheelbarrow up and down the hills of Matías. *Don Victor Miguel* always has story ideas for me. He finds it interesting and strange that I am paid to write things. He has suggested I write about prickly pear cactus recipes, the magic powers of the local hot springs, and environmental crisis.

One afternoon, he said to me, "You know what you should write about?"

Not waiting for my response, he answered his own question: "UFOs!"

He told me how, many years ago when he was in Veracruz, he saw a light. The light came down to the earth. "It was so brilliant!" *Don Victor Miguel* thinks the beings in the UFOs are trying to tell us something.

I wanted to know what their message is.

"Well, something about the chaos that we are living," he said. "And whose fault do you think it is?"

I knew this was a test. I wasn't sure of the correct answer. "The rich folks?" I ventured.

"Exactly!" he said, his face lighting up and breaking into a smile.

H. *History Museum*

W I know a man who works explaining old paintings and photographs to the few visitors who make it to the dusty museum where he works. He guided me through the florescent lighting of the exhibit halls and explained how a hawk crouched to push off in flight represented the Chinese determined to fight Japanese invaders. We exchanged business cards, and two weeks later, he called me and explained he felt he had something to tell me. He finds it interesting that I study anthropology and am paid to talk to people about their lives.

He sat me down in the lobby of the museum, and asked me if I feel more Chinese or more American.

I was hit on my blind side and said, "I don't feel at home anywhere. When I'm here, I'm there. When I'm there, I'm here."

"But, do you feel discriminated against, for being Chinese there or foreign here?" Not waiting for my response, he declared in an alarmingly loud voice, spittle flying, "I have always been discriminated against."

And then the story came pouring out: "My parents were both high-ranking cadres in an army unit. When I was young, I learned to drive and to shoot, but then my parents were denounced, and my brother

and I became black elements. Everyone spat upon us, and we wandered the streets with nowhere to call home. I could sing then. I could have been a “beautiful voice,” but I chose boxing instead. I wanted to fight to defend myself from attackers. My mother lived in a pigsty for ten years while I learned to knock people down. After they were rehabilitated, I became a bodyguard. I could run fast, and I already knew how to drive and handle guns. I worked for the government, but I can’t tell you whom I protected. I worked for gangsters, but you wouldn’t believe what I’ve seen if I told you.”

“Then, how did you come to work as a docent in a museum?” I asked.

He lowered his voice and whispered to me, “I’m just hiding out here. Lots of us, we learn to retreat from outside life and build up our strength. Don’t you know what I am?”

I shook my head, failing this history test.

“I am a crouching tiger, hidden dragon.”

While walking home, I kept looking over my shoulder, feeling like I was being followed.

C And, what if I am not telling the truth? As that fisherman asked me once, “You’re not going to betray us, are you?”

I. Indigenous Means

C By the way, an “indigenous” person is, well, it depends on whom you ask. Take for example the Huave, the fisherfolk who live in the coast of the isthmus: they say there are 25,000 Huave, but the government says there are only 10,000, since as far as the Mexican government is concerned, you are not “indigenous” unless you speak an indigenous language. The Huave language is in a family by itself—linguists have not found another language anywhere on earth that is closely related to it. The Huave say they arrived in Mexico between one and three thousand years ago, by boat, perhaps from the area of Peru, perhaps with a long stop-over in what is now Nicaragua. (There are also some Huave who say they came from outer space.)

W You ask me what a “middle peasant” is: this was one of the five categories used after 1949 for classifying people, and then punishing and rewarding them. There were landlords (bad, bad, bad), rich peasants (medium bad), middle peasants (fairly safe), poor peasants (good), and underclass peasants (the poorest of the poor, measured according to land holdings, and the cleanest class of all). There were also “bai” (white/good) categories: peasant, worker, soldier; and “hei” (black/bad) categories: capitalist, merchant, landlord, counter-revolutionary, rightist. I find it almost impossible to explain to most Ameri-

cans why Marxism was so attractive at the time. The sad part about this massive dream to reengineer society is how violent it could become. Someone last weekend told me that his grandfather still remembers how the people in his village rounded up the richest peasants and forced them—adults and children alike—into a cave dwelling, sealed the entrance, and set fire to it. Long-held animosity in the human heart ends in explosion, but then it starts all over again, and archaeologists start looking for utopia in the past instead of the future.

J. Jo-Sho

C There is a town in Oaxaca called Xoxo. Pronounced Jo-Sho. xoxo, W

W In China, XO as in Henessy XO is a luxury gift item that people display on their bookshelves at home. I can't tell if they actually ever drink it. Jo-Sho, S

K. Kang

W To Beijing—

When I first started studying Chinese with the Practical Chinese Reader, one of the lessons in Book One involved a trip for students down to the countryside. They stayed with Auntie Zhang, and I learned the word for *kang*, the brick bed common in northern rural areas. The heat from the cooking fire in the front room is tunneled through the wall to the adjacent room and under the *kang*, making it a warm communal sleeping platform in the winter.

Now, for the first time, I have slept on a *kang*, with a donkey pawing the muddy ground on the other side of the wall all night, and I realize how little city folk, with their shiny Olympic dreams, remember of Dongpo Village, where electricity has just arrived. We are just two hours away, nestled among steep mountains with the curving snake of the Great Wall as backdrop, but do you know that we've suffered a drought for two years? Our women trek up the mountain every day to try to sell Coke and picture books of Great Wall scenery to the few tourists who make it this far. I have sores on my face and my school has been closed. The teacher has heart problems and his two sons suffer from a hereditary disease that leaves them bone thin, lying on the *kang*, where you come to stare at me.

From,

Dongpo Village

L. Left Out

C Elsewhere in Mexico, they call the town where I live "Matías

Muy Feo,” or “Very Ugly Matias.” It looks as if it were built in a hurry, with no plan, vision, or attention to detail. Raised on military bases, ugly-but-functional is a familiar architectural esthetic to me. For this, I consider myself lucky. Having lived in plenty of unattractive places, I see past your grim façade. You are a kind, friendly town that remembers a better time: when railroad workers filled the union hall, when their families got excellent medical care, when train whistles pierced the air at all hours. Now, the lonely whistle cuts the humid air only six or seven times a day. Trains passing through hardly ever stop. Mexico City schemes and plans for a Trans-Isthmus Megaproject that will steal your lands from you one more time.

M. Margins

C People in Mexico talk about the US-Mexico war as if they remember it. They hate living in the shadow of El Norte.

W The Chinese still have a serious chip on their shoulder about the West, joined by Japan, carving up their country after the Opium Wars. Although they were never fully colonized, a deep national indignation persists. There is palpable yearning for world recognition, an insatiable hunger of millions of people to emerge on par with the US as a developed and modern nation. It’s a confusing love and hate relationship with the imaginary of America.

N. New

W In New China, women gained equality with men, or so the party said as Iron Women climbed telephone poles to repair wires, flew fighter jets, and swore like sailors. Now Iron Women are out, and in New New China, New Century, New Beijing, New Olympics, I am trapped in a banquet room with too many men swilling liquor and shooting off stupid remarks about the new economy freeing women to pursue their higher calling of self-beautification. A hot blush rises to the unwilling face of courtesan wallpaper brought back from 1920s Shanghai like a bad movie set. I dream that blood pours from two deep cuts on my cheeks. The wounds heal into thick scars. I wear a mask, carry a pen, and yell at the top of my lungs. I’m not sure that anyone notices, but it makes me smugly happy.

O. Outside

C A wedding procession just went by outside the wall of my house. The bride, at maybe eighteen years old, looked nervous, and her groom wore a military uniform and is probably a decade older. There were two bridesmaids, both under fifteen, in bright purple

dresses, three people carrying the bride's train, a brass band leading the group, perhaps 120 people of all ages following behind carrying food for the wedding party, and of course one vendor selling the group peanuts and popcorn. It made me happy that I could tell by the design on the women's tunics and the music that they were Mixe. I wish the bride a good long rest before the five children and live-in mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law and husband who rarely comes home from the bars and hourly motels.

P.P.S.

W One of the weird international dateline things I noticed when going back over our e-mails is that your response to my message is sometimes dated before I sent my original message. For example, I wrote to you early a.m. of 3/21, and you responded to me in the p.m. of 3/20. It looks like you responded to me before I even wrote to you. You probably already know what comes next.

The two of us met when we were tossed together as roommates at an August 1999 writers conference. For ten days we shared space, thoughts, perspectives, and writing. We have not seen each other since and have spoken by phone only once. Nonetheless, we have maintained a prolific correspondence, mostly via electronic mail. Starting in October 2000, our messages began bouncing back and forth between a small town in southern Mexico and a burgeoning Chinese city of over 12 million. As "non-fiction" writers, we find ourselves thinking a lot about what constitutes "truth," how to honor the voices of the people with whom we speak, and also about the uncanny, contradictory, parallel, and paradoxical elements of our experiences on opposite sides of the world.

ROBERT QUILLEN CAMP

Stage Double: a play

One.

Stage Left. Oliver sits down.

Stage Right. Jasper stands angry. Jasper stamps his foot.

Stage Left. Oliver stands happy. Oliver whistles the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Stage Right. Jasper calls the police. Hello, Police?

Stage Left. The police arrive.

Stage Right. Jasper stomps on his telephone.

Stage Left. The police stomp on Oliver.

Stage Right. Jasper screams angry.

Stage Left. Oliver cries weak.

Stage Right. Jasper replaces the telephone.

Stage Left. The police go to sleep.

Stage Right. Jasper goes to sleep.

Stage Left. Oliver goes to sleep. Oliver has a nightmare.

Two.

Downstage. Policemen sit fat.
 Policemen play cards.
 Policemen trade stories. Criminals are so goddamn
 short. In Afghanistan they're shorter. Yeah, yeah,

yeah, China. Still, they're too short. After a good bath I like a kiss on the cheek, you know.

Upstage. Jasper measures Oliver's height and writes it down. Oliver measures Jasper's height as well, but Jasper is kneeling.
They sit. They trade blueberries.
Should we eat them?
No. Waste not want not.
Oliver kisses Jasper on the cheek.

Downstage. The new recruit enters. The Policemen tie him to a chair. They tell him stories.
One time I owned a really really big dog.
How big was it?
It was so big we gave it a badge and a stick and a mission. Deliver the morning milk. Tell the truth.
Always take care of widows.
The new recruit chuckles.
The Policemen take turns punching him in the stomach.

Upstage. Eleanor enters.
Jasper rebukes her.
We only have two chairs.
Eleanor exits.

Downstage. Eleanor enters.
She laughs and punches the new recruit in the stomach.
The Policemen give her a badge and a stick and a mission. Deliver the evening freaks. Tell the truth.
Watch out for vacuum cleaners.
They carry diseases and news.
Eleanor exits.

Upstage. Eleanor enters. She beats Oliver with a stick.
He drops his blueberry.
He exits.
Eleanor sits in his chair. Jasper kisses her on the cheek.

Downstage. Oliver enters with a vacuum cleaner.

He switches it on. The policemen run away.

Upstage. Eleanor kisses Jasper on the cheek. He shows her his wallet. She runs away.

Downstage. Oliver turns off his vacuum cleaner.

Three.

Stage Left. Jasper sits down. A mailman delivers a letter.

Stage Right. Oliver sits down.
He removes his shirt.

Stage Left. Jasper opens the letter. He cannot read.
He removes his shoes.

Stage Right. Oliver tries to fit the telephone handset into his mouth. He removes his pants.

Stage Left. Jasper eats the letter.
He removes his socks.

Stage Right. Oliver spits out the telephone. A mailman delivers a package.

Stage Left. Jasper breaks seven eggs into a bucket.
He cries.

Stage Right. Oliver opens the package. It contains seven rubber chickens. He laughs.

Stage Left. Jasper puts his feet in the bucket. He tries to walk and he falls.

Stage Right. Oliver attaches the rubber chickens to his body with rubber bands. He does seven pushups. He falls.

Stage Left.

Stage Right.

Stage Left. Jasper cries for help.

Stage Right. Oliver reaches for the telephone.

Stage Left.

Stage Right.

Stage Left. The police arrive.
They handcuff Jasper.
They handcuff the bucket.
They handcuff the chair.

Stage Right. Eleanor arrives. She helps Oliver up.
She kisses him on the cheek. He gives her a chicken.
She hangs up the telephone.

Four

Upstage. The policemen are unconscious, piled on top of each other. The new recruit enters and picks their pockets.

Downstage. Oliver is asleep.

Stage Left. Eleanor is asleep.

Stage Right. Jasper is asleep.

Upstage. The policemen talk in their sleep.
Please, sir, kill our enemies.
Call an ambulance.
Call the fire department.
Call the ASPCA.

Downstage. Oliver wakes up. He opens his briefcase and withdraws several documents. He flips through them, looking for his instructions.

- Stage Right. Jasper gets up to use the bathroom. He exits.
- Stage Left. Eleanor wakes up suddenly, and locates the kitchen knife under her pillow.
- Downstage. A mailman enters. He begs for food.
Are there any dogs around here?
Big ones?
- Upstage. An alarm sounds.
The police wake up and reach for their sticks, only to find them gone.
- Stage Left. Eleanor exits, knife in hand.
- Stage Right. Jasper returns and goes back to sleep.
- Upstage. The policemen circle one another, wary.
- Downstage. Oliver reads his instructions to the mailman.
When the mailman comes, give him a sound beating.
Teach him English.
Give him eight dollars and ask for a stamp.
- Stage Right. Jasper gets up to use the bathroom. He exits.
- Stage Left. Eleanor returns with the body of the new recruit, a kitchen knife in his back.
- Downstage. The mailman offers Oliver a knife, a spoon, and a fork.
Pick your poison.
Oliver takes the spoon. The mailman congratulates him.
You're not very tall at all.
- Upstage. The policemen give up and go home.
- Stage Right. Jasper returns and goes back to sleep.
- Stage Left. Eleanor lists her options.
Option one. Call an ambulance.
Option two. Call the fire department.
Option three. Call the ASPCA.

Downstage. Oliver kisses the mailman on the cheek.

Stage Left. Eleanor kisses the new recruit on the cheek. She leaves.

Stage Right. Jasper gets up to use the bathroom. He exits.

Downstage. The mailman exits. Oliver whistles the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Downstage. Oliver looks at his watch.

Downstage. Oliver finds a stick.

Downstage. Oliver goes looking for the bathroom.

Offstage. Something loud.

Pause.

Upstage. Jasper enters, screaming. He

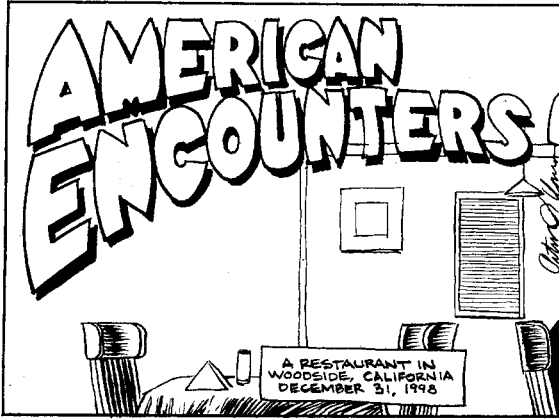
falls.

Downstage.

Stage Left.

Stage Right.

Upstage.



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www.peterconrad.com **END**

This really happened. Back then I was trying to draw a lot of stuff verbatim. I was at a table with my wife, her grandmother and maybe a couple other people. I stopped paying attention to our conversation and heard this little exchange from the other table. I wrote it down immediately and sketched the people. I couldn't believe he had said that to her; either they've known each other long enough to understand each other in a really complicated way, or he's a complete bastard. Funny either way.

TOM DEVANEY & EDWIN TORRES
from *Pong, A Conversation*

From: Tom Devaney
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2000 3:59 PM
To: Edwin Torres
Subject: PONG

Edwin. Glad I was able to get to Tonic last week 5/4/00 to see & hear you. It was good to be in the same place while you were performing. I didn't try to focus on any one aspect, but just let it happen—drums, dj, & you honoring the rain and the room. I'm willing to try a conversation with you here, though my instinct is to meet and talk first to get a physical sensory response, which we can build on in a brick-by-brick TOM, EDWIN, EDWIN, TOM email exchange—I'm open. I am wondering if you think email is a callous medium, or if it's just that I use it callously? Anyway, just as no one enters a Pollock canvas, because it's a painting not a door—or what people say is—that no one enters a Pollock canvas visually in any one place, so we may place our conversational ball wherever we want. Point.

•

From: Edwin Torres
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2000 5:44 PM
To: Tom Devaney
Subject: PING!

Tom

instinct sez physical meeting builds presence—email meetings usually callous—HOWEVER—if we know who we're dealing with—familiarity listens to untold nuances in speech patterns—sarcasms ignite untold tellings—keyboard becomes ear hole into which dark ages collect—dust bowls inna earhole . . . AYYYYYYYYY, matre morto sans le carryoutta!!! yeh, dug Tonic gig . . . glad you came—finished way too short 'cuz DJ wasn't 'feelin' it—I think it's cuz he's not used to improvising . . . and although I did feel a lag halfway through . . . it isn't uncommon to find the energy go low in an improvisation as improvisers search for each others' energy, etc. thought it was just cooking when

we stopped—but—was DJ's first improv with any musician and SEAN is master improviser . . . knowing when to come in and out yet always maintaining presence . . . something I try and attain in writing—attaining without trying—therein lies the blur . . . speaking of . . . physical presence is currently at work—don't know how often I'll be able to respond immediately—but let's keep up correspondence . . . as happenstance allows . . . your shot!

•

From: Tom Devaney
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2000 12:42 PM
To: Edwin Torres
Subject: Limitation as plus factor

Edwin

Counterbalancing the medium's (not so immediate, not so immaterial) limitations against itself would be interesting to do—if we're not already doing that. The mismatch between screen, keyboard, music, our brains. What you call “keyboard becomes ear hole into which dark/ages collect—dust bowls inna earhole . . .” I call screenesthesia—in the right ear-hand-eye-brain coordination/s, igniting “untold tellings” on the everyday face of our computer. I hope to match our mismatches into a new sense, instead of only a nuisance. Concerning the performance (not the one here, but at Tonic). Yes, I agree it's not “uncommon to find the energy go low in an improvisation as improvisers search for each others' energy”; I thought you were not fighting yrself, the room, the energy but working with it—it was mellow.

striking match, my best,
T.Devaney

p.s. I'm going to go to the show “Volume” at PS 1 sometime soon. (One piece “the bed of sound,” curated by Elliott Sharp). There is something about what is called sound installations, sonic drawings and sound art that relates to your work.

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From: Tom Devaney
To: Edwin Torres
Sent: September 2000
Subject: The Inner-view

TD: Perhaps this is a good time to ask a few questions about your poetry. (If calling your work *poetry* is the best word for it!?) One word is certainly—hybrid.

ET: Well, in a culture where communication is overloaded at every step . . . I've learned by now to accept that "poetry" just doesn't cover it all . . . but it's what people understand. Hybrid sounds like an experiment, and I'm hoping that what I do isn't looked at as mere experiment but as the thing itself. I don't think of myself as BEING a poet . . . I AM a poet. Where the being and the doing are conclusive of whatever exploration happens. The hybrid comes in the mingling of senses . . . so in effect, we're all hybrids. Combining the world into our own specific worlds.

TD: You are certainly at the cross-roads and nodes of many main and sub-arteries of the art/poetry/and new music worlds. It's safe to say your work confounds the category-makers.

ET: They need to be confounded! Category begets laziness. An open view is what I'm looking for . . . unobstructed by mere category.

TD: In an essay for *Poets & Writers Magazine* (April 1999) I described you in the following way: "If media critic Marshall McLuhan and Joyce's Molly Bloom had a child—raised in Spanish Harlem by rapper Snoop Doggy Dog's au pair—you'd get something approaching the genius mutt of Edwin Torres."

ET: Thank you . . . indeed a mutt of monstrous proportions . . . but I wasn't raised in Spanish Harlem.

TD: “The noise of the century is in his astounding meld of song, word, and sonically rich poetry.”

ET: That’s where my world lives . . . in the sonically rich texture between ear and skin. I was talking to Miguel Algarin back in April about how mainstream Puerto Ricans really have become vis-a-vis the avant garde. How Puerto Ricans have become the mainstream even though the media sez they haven’t . . . whereas my take was more of an individual one for EACH Puerto Rican being an avant garder . . . his was more about the idea of Puerto Ricans. The idea of an outside force being on the inside. So he was saying about my work, how sound is the future . . . in his megolamaniacal way . . . how in the world of the sound artist, the consonant is king. Which is such a great way to look at the poetry I’m interested in. Using New York’s endless inspiration as my muse, the use of sound as a secret code into our psyche, into the space between our skins . . . this covers wider ground than Language/Performance/Latino/Academia/Experimental poetries for me. I want to be the king of consonattas . . . or perhaps a pauper.

TD: It’s not exactly a tidy category, if it’s a category at all. Although you might also talk about how your associations with places like the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, St. Mark’s Poetry Project have helped and hindered how your work is perceived and received?

okay Tom, talk soon . . .

Edwin

•

From: Edwin Torres
To: Tom Devaney
Sent: Wednesday, October 04, 2000 7:30 AM
Subject: Your Point!

tom

wow—great to see PONG as it is so far thanks for sending it and buddhist work book will see what I give in to especially dig earlier PONG bounces back and forth don’t know where to edit or not but I think we should continue a bit more the game isn’t done yet let’s try a few short volleys over next week or so by way of a coda then will see how best to assimilate entire conundrum of our PINGS my shot:

communication untold by wary nuisance of brainage emails function as phone calls making “talk” a noun not a verb—how best to understand mixage of poetry reading timeframe with online readframe; can we become a loop of time allowing openings their ground by exposing all we can in short time blips? do we prolong our lifespan by sharing most intimate details, creating space for other details? when talk becomes verb does listen follow? and finally . . . how are you?

yours
Edwin

•

From: Edwin Torres
To: Tom Devaney
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2000 2:35 PM
Subject: THE THEORIST HAS NO SAMBA!

a thought . . .

there is a new instantism > a language of tangent = tanguage > ambient funguage > there is a modern path > invented through accidental spontaneity + of mock language sport = fractured intelligentsillys > there are sage athleticists + important children farmed out to the furthest reaches of nowness > . . . > . . . >

I propose a New Instantism. Take spontaneousness out of the ether and smack it into the throes of the wild screaming bastard maggot that IS poetry! I propose a New NEWness, where we refuse to comply by the aged fumbings of mere MEANING and instead descend into mere HEARING! I instigate a NEW failure of listening . . . so we may one day walk hand in hand with our own ears and say . . . THANK THE MIGHTY LOUD THAT I MAY THANK THE MIGHTY LOUD THAT I MAY THANK THE MIGHTY LOUD! I have a NEW Instantaety, a modern NEWness, a post NOWism . . . I have a fear . . . of hiding this fear, instead . . . I choose a revelry of failure, an opportune dimentia into the songs of my pacifism.

Let's say we level expectation with implied tension . . . the instant doubt appears, there is a window of possibility. What was thought to have clarity is now diffused by possibility. Is possibility the goal . . . or only an instant before doubt?

The New Instantists will allow possibility room to doubt itself . . . inventing a paranoia into the sleepless monster that is this bastard maggot poetry. The New Instantist will know that it takes a flat surface to iron out procedure, that a wrinkled pair of favorite

pants will match an equally wrinkled ass . . . and mind, that no matter how just or unjust the outcome . . . the New Instantist will always be blamed for what has just happened! Occurrence . . . being the signpost for all things instant.

To what is now
And what is never then
To what has been
And what will never now
To things all thinging
And maybe soon
To what is now
Instantly now
Inspired by Rod Smith's SubModernism movement. Not his theories but the fact that there actually IS another "movement" in the works.

paz,
Edwin

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS

Draft L: Scholia and Restlessness

One has touched vers, toward what objection hardy knows,
Touched glass, meddled the poem, cracked crystal show-

shelves in the thrift stores, smashed debris again, gained in
intensity, yet blocked comment! Reined in.

Stand there, restlessness. Also femaleness, heightened by
another hot flash, time, loss, annoyance, frankly

can't sit still, flesh floods the place as loose as
sloggy water, sandy brookings where one tides a bay,

"surfant le web" or "parling anguish." Where
beach-rose berries globen orange ripe, Here,

is this Happening? alongside what text, in what cued
brain extt, or xtte? The lemma—afloat with breathing tube

wiggles through rushing fish wash, blue schools they were
running light tween, twist unseen from wavers of a placid sea,

breath deliberate in the mouth and loud, husky heaves
of own survival. El allows for depth just under the surface

between subaqueous seam and down—"that zone"
"that parallel world we live in whenever we waken to it."

So stroke those looping, loping tunes beyond Gelassenheit.
Loft that haunting melody all sheeny bright,

and reach your fingers in between the modal pings
to play and twist those other, shadow, strings.

When you listen to the vibe of disinterested phonemes
Pheromones of phonemes, indecisive decibel, it

garners the supplement of illusion. Inclusion. Hallucination. Keys
on little pegs. All of them indifferent, all tagged with names,

chained charms and souvenirs, foreign, near, for the car,
for the ear. Where were they seen, the keys? So far.

Where heard? Per word. What instrument? Already rent.
And lock to match and sound to catch? Unknown.

Real or a dream? Hope or a shuck? Schtick or stuck?
Stumbled walker, shivering singer—where and to do what?

How to live? what's to hope? who's to say?
By the side of the road, trash cravings amid crazy ravings,

I saw a stranger at a rusted fire of cartons and cartels
a-singing songs. "Who are you?" Now what?

It is simply—simply NO, not and never simply. For as he paces,
as he rocks, as he feeds the fire, this place, this nothing place

becomes beyond. A flesh sketch of something else.
For the return to wandering. As cure and as disease.

He told me his ears hurt, one who at the end, is X, a blank
a wanter among nomad wanderers, caught

like s.l.a.n. on the book, sine loco, anno, nomine,
holding rank ends of a split, so I said I was dizzy.

Fine. Now what? Where did I see the keys? This is loco.
From the fire's wandering chorus, "melancholy"

was the one word on the page as it sizzled, crumpled up, nought.
The burn was 15 orange, one orange, zero blue and weightless

worse—brownish silvering dense explosive points,
wind aggression roaring, tornado through the straight.

A person never knows the bravery that times
demand until they riddle how to construct the correct

“crimes.” Ques: how to preserve the archives of dada
(Ans: in metal boxes buried near your hovel).

Nazis knocked but came without a shovel,
lucky for her. How to be courageous and stupid.

Who are you? What do you do it for? for natural light,
to keep these listeners awake, plus dead and time.

All local and all destroyed must speak accurately
how the man stood on the margin of edge

labbage dreams with dusk, cardboard and ash.
Why scan, capture, index, interlink this trash?

“For your good health, Barrel Picking is prohibited.”
Why not leave well enough alone?

A play within the play, he hove sprechstimme
fragments in half an anguage, ghostily selected

strung together as if continuous text,
hallucination’s vantage keying incantation sentinel,

with restless regard “not from a place on which to fix
but from a crossing of that place, a crossing of that crossing.”

He began to experience difficulties with reality;
for him each human soul remained a human soul.

But it is hard to act without shame, though
this be always true, for who it act it in your name?

The dream of turning the key in the lock as the wind in the door
moaned and the crow flew with its yard-wide wingspan

into the pear tree finding the open place. Now what?
He asked me, Why do you do what you do?

Do you take this adult set of sores
as yours for use in the urban scavenger tradition

to enchain all it with it? to travel through the spot-deep text
of song?

Je est un interstate, he said. "We Welcome Christian Tours."

There were left-handed shadows facing east
cloud cover over cloud cover, pumpkins sporting flags,

ever-whispering space when ick geschri or scry
every unspeakable untellable yod inside the bye.

This man with a small tree growing from his neck
was arrayed in imaginary memories, dot by dot,

"where the fibrous roots of every heart on earth
infixes deep its restless twists," arraigned with

weights across the border where he stood by fire,
the day dedicated to the evanescent ruffle of silence

as it teasing, tonging turns to hissy clumps, a spree
and spray of listed sound, a funny Jew d'esprit.

So sung, singing with waves the theremin, harp of the heap
sung with the hands, with the mouth, hand to mouth, a

paltry of mishegoss and dreck,
of unsatisfied satisfactions, allowering the wreck

to float out in brightness and disjuncture, all rift.
Poultry plants where bloody flesh and fast knives lift,

it's immigrunts work there why can't they just
speed Aing lish fast and wishing well like ust.

The fire got low, the voice asked, Who are you?
Stood in waves of strangeness, shaken rue,

still sigh underneath senselessness, to find
such speech songs scanned, rotated, aligned,

as addled noise to Nos, news to blues.
From search string, fuzzy and phonemic search,

from word stemming, natural language lurch
fall Drafts and fragments, Drifts and figments,

scrap paper shreds and fan-shaped books of Pantone
pigments. Asked a simple question: Why do you do

what you do? The world is all that's In Your Face.
Curious stranger still, as stranger place by place.

November 2001-January 2002
to Charles Bernstein

Notes to Draft L: Scholia and Restlessness. There was, as in "Draft 20: Incipit," another incident like the "Curious, this querying letter from a stranger": this one an e-mail by Michael Collino in mid-November 2001. Some of the questions in this poem were asked by him. "J'apporte en effet des nouvelles. Les plus surprenantes. Même cas ne se vit encore. On a touché au vers." Stéphane Mallarmé, "La Musique et les Lettres," Oeuvres complètes, 1945, 643. At Oxford/ Cambridge in 1894. "I am truly bringing news. Astonishing news. And never seen before—We have been meddling with verse." Trans. Lawrence Lipking, cited in his article "Poet-critics" in The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 7, ed. Litz, Menand, and Rainey. But see also the translation of Rosemary Lloyd that ends: "Poetry has been under attack." Mallarmé in Prose, ed. Mary Ann Caws, 32. "That parallel world we live in whenever we waken to it": Charles Bernstein, e-mail on his book With Strings (2001). Description of the strings between other strings concerns the Welsh triple harp. S.l.a.n.: without place, year, name. The archives of dada: from the life of Hannah Höch. "For your good health, Barrel Picking is prohibited" is a sign in a Maine rest stop on I 95, 2001. The citation "not from a place on which to fix/ but from a crossing of that place, a crossing of that crossing," is, slightly modified, from Michael Moon, Disseminating Whitman: Revision and Corporeality in Leaves of Grass, 109. "Where the fibrous roots/ Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists," William Blake, "The Book of Thel." Reminded of the theremin in reading Andrew Joron's work "Constellations for Theremin," A.BACUS #142, 15 November 2001. When I went to Georgia, someone said "poultry plants," whereupon I heard "poetry plants." List of search tactics from Brown University web site on The New Age. Donor drafts are Draft 12: Diasporas and Draft 31: Serving Writ.

Most ["lyric"] poems are monologic—there's the speaker's voice, and that's it. The other, the you, the figure addressed inside the poem's drama, the built-in listener very often doesn't speak inside a poem. The thought that poems can be written in which the socio-poetical privilege of confrontational speech is given to a "character" or another voice besides the poet's does seriously destabilize the apparatus of poesis, which has been for so long focused on the singularity and centrality of the poet-figure.

PATRICK F. DURGIN & JEN HOFER
from *Routine Knew*

•

*But for paradise
everyone inserts
a sensical expedient
resist brittle salvos
incipience yep a
partial enduring present
to share a tangelo
is not to eat a peach
they confuse modesty with irony
for privacy*

•

Consider the following:

This one
Now this one
Now the other one
("Marines" "Archive" "Organ")
Damp and slight ever shiver behind glass
Influences upon public transport
("Choice" "Cat" "Clothesline")
Now this one again

Endow it again
Advocate it (approaching reluctant
Always the is is ironic when
Swerve time lets it be thought

Think it
That one among others

(“Stability” “Growth” “Hairless Dog”)
National legacy with a leg up when
When is it not
So it is

Imperceptible and daily)
(“Very” “Verily” “Weilaway”)
Insist it the same and it never were
That way

Love you decidedly” That way National tailgunner
Moral engine sniper leading the sprightly that way

Let’s call it X) out from under
That way or that sway (again
Save time and money as if
The as if of an attraction to what
(“Thanks

(“Truly” “Cheeky” “Broad”)
“No questions, please” (“Evident
Ludic at least
A time-being” (Reply” (Polite” (Implied”

What we “Deliver
We “Deflowering
See we “Scopic
Have sight of “Source” “Phase” (Face)

Confrontative gaudy can’t countenance
(“Denunciations” “Votes” “Green”)
Watch regalia gear monarch denouement
Which with do wrench (“Easier

*“Routine Knew” is part of a larger project still in progress.
Other excerpts from this work can be found in recent or shortly
forthcoming issues of Aufgabe, combo, and !factorial. The
following is a brief note on the text culled from an epistolary
component of the larger dialogic project, initiated by the
publication of Durgin’s “Speculations with a View toward a*

Synaesthetic Poetics” in 1998 (Tripwire 2: Writing as Activism):

About our collaboration, I used the phrase “(eclipse in the transparent sense?)” with the idea that the layerings within the text should precisely (however imprecisely) function to illuminate each other, rather than obliterating each other. The idea that proximity to difference is luminous rather than blinding, illuminating rather than eliminating, transparent as a complex multitudinous body layered visibly, not transparent as self-evident, as clearly no “self” is “evident” nor should be. (JH)

Perception describes but it doesn't explain. We can only intend an explanation, otherwise it won't occur. Perception describes the inexplicable—trauma isn't the only effect (of what we've “seen,” for instance). Neurology etc grapples with this as a problem, as though perspective does eclipse / obliterate—but you're right I think to recognize it the other way. We learn as much from what we don't know as we do from what we do. An eclipse illuminates the form & ‘dark side’ in relief. It's a dark relief. (PFD)

I feel able, most days, in my own writings and in my daily interactions with people I know & people I don't know, to take appropriate care, to be utterly “curious,” both responsible & response-able, to listen while listening & listen while speaking, while acting. This as poet & as person. My sense is that synaesthetics and negative capability are related, in terms of accessing a mind or state which can contain difference in various manifestation, without containing difference in the sense of border or limitation. Today, as bombs continue to drop in Afghanistan & I am sickened by knowledge of continuing (what's the term—infinite?) violence & sickened by polarized rhetorics that leave precious little (any?) space for thoughtful consideration, committed dissidence—in a word, for a “curious” response to recent world events (though no event or response should be held to any one word), my question is how to expand the practical poetics, if you want to call it that, I'm suggesting in the first sentence of this paragraph, how to extend them to reach beyond my own small life, my own small orbits, my own small imaginative, imaginary, material universe. (JH)

- What is discourse? A needle torquing slant-wise in a groove of wax.
- What is freedom? The weight of light from a single street-lamp, just at dusk.
- What is sensuality? An unlocked car. On a sidestreet.
- What is light? Oil on concrete.
- What is black? The smell of acetone.
- What is a prism? Bruises blossoming like violets.
- What is longing? The shadows of motes, long on a sun-raked wall.
- What are trees? Phosphenes in the eyes of the blind.
- What is energy? Dust breeding.
- What is somnambulism? The hands of clocks clapping as they pass.
- What is pain? A deserted tennis court. With the nets down.
- What is form? NOIGANDRES.
- What is a mirror? The chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella.
- What is a desert? A stick. A stone. The end of the road.
- What is culture? That mode of sacrifice in which the victims are words.
- What is satisfaction? The feel of velvet against your back.
- What are electrons? The sincerity of a phantom limb.
- What is a hard bed? The interest of a sunflower, at night.
- What is philosophy? An uncanceled ticket, for a show one didn't see.
- What are bubbles? The Empire of Meaning.
- What is wisdom? The realization of our desires.
- What is happening? Polymorphous perversity.
- What are books? The emblem of the police.
- What is important? The brief flight of a sparrow, through a meadhall, in winter.
- What is poetry? Venus. In furs.
- What is fancy? An omission, or loss in a manuscript.
- What is history? Un coup de dés.

What are letters? An ecstasy of destruction.
What is life? Poetics?

An old Surrealist mode of dialogue: every night for a month, at the same time, but thousands of miles apart—and without any knowledge of what the other was writing—one of us would record a question and the other an answer.