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JEFFREY SIDE

MONDAY, 2 MARCH 2020

Lawrence Upton RIP

A few days ago, I was saddened to hear that the poet and director of Writers Forum, Lawrence Upton, had died on the 16th February 2020. For about a year early in the last decade, I corresponded with him via email, discussing many things relating to the UK avantgarde poetry scene, and also about his association with the poet and founder of Writers Forum, Bob Cobbing, with whom he collaborated on a number of projects.

Around the time of our email correspondence, I published his *Commentaries on Bob Cobbing* as an ebook with Argotist Ebooks, which can be found here:

<https://www.argotistonline.co.uk/COMMENTARIES%20ON%20BOB%20COBBING.pdf>

I also published a poetic work of his, *Memory Fictions*, which can be found here:

<https://www.argotistonline.co.uk/MEMORY%20FICTIONS.pdf>

He said he wanted to also write an article for The Argotist Online about a (then) fracas concerning Writers Forum, in which he felt that certain people involved with Writers Forum were attempting to

ABOUT ME

 JEFFREY SIDE

Editor of The Argotist Online, a poetry website that was founded in 2005. The website also publishes poetry, fiction and literary criticism ebooks via its publishing arm Argotist Ebooks, founded in 2010. Educated at Liverpool University (BA in English, 1997) and Leeds University (PhD in English, 2007). Has had poetry published in Poetry Salzburg Review, Underground Window, A Little Poetry, Poethia, Nthposition, Eratio, Pirene's Fountain, Fieralingue, Moria, Ancient Heart, Blazevox, Lily, Big Bridge, Jacket, Textimagepoem, Apochryphaltext, 9th St. Laboratories, P. F. S. Post, Great Works, Hutt, The Dande Review, Poetry Bay and Dusie. His book publications include, Carrier of the Seed, Slimvol, Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes (with Jake Berry)

remove him as its director. He'd written about this on Writers Forum's blog but felt that a formal and detailed article by him concerning the situation would better advertise the unfairness of his treatment. And that as The Argotist Online reached a wider readership than Writers Forum's blog did, it would be the best place for his case to be heard.

I said that I'd be interested to read anything he wrote, and would likely publish it once the aforementioned ebooks had been published. Unfortunately, after they had been published he changed his mind about writing the article. I think by then he might have had a rapprochement with the various parties involved.

Here is his Writers Forum blog post about the situation:

<http://www.wfuk.org.uk/blog/?cat=8>

And just in case that link becomes redundant at some stage in the future, here is a link to a PDF of the blog post:

[https://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Theft%20of%20Writers%20Forum%E2%80%99s%20Reputation%20\(a%20blog%20post%20by%20Lawrence%20Upton\).pdf](https://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Theft%20of%20Writers%20Forum%E2%80%99s%20Reputation%20(a%20blog%20post%20by%20Lawrence%20Upton).pdf)

I belatedly found out about Lawrence's death from a post on the British and Irish Poets Listserv, which I only occasionally log into these days. One other subscriber to that list, the poet Cris Cheek, posted the following regarding Lawrence:

'Please help bring pressure to bear so that Lawrence Upton's papers and collections do not become landfill fodder. The situation is precarious. Lawrence has no next-of-kin (as far as we know) and might have died intestate. We need to gain access to the building to

and Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence (with Jake Berry).

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

BLOG ARCHIVE

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PUBLICATIONS

- Wordsworth's Empiricist Poetic and its Influence in the Twentieth Century
- Signs That Do Not Signal
- Carrier of the Seed
- Coleridge's Early Empiricism
- Collected Poetry Reviews 2004-2013

ascertain if there is a will and to begin to assess the condition of the mountain of materials inside his house. It is currently boarded up by the police for security and possibly in danger of being declared a public health and safety hazard by the coroner's office. Time is in short supply. This petition seeks to demonstrate the importance of his materials for future research by scholars and practitioners:

[https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/the-archive-of-lawrence-upton?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=&loc=thank-you-page'](https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/the-archive-of-lawrence-upton?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=&loc=thank-you-page)

I echo his sentiments and urge people to sign this petition.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 23:33 LINKS TO THIS POST 

WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2020

An Old Poem I Wrote

Here's an old poem by me that I just came across again after many years. I wrote it around 1991. It's never been published.

The Threshold of Jove's Court

I told them to enter
and see the lamenter
who was a repenter
and became an assenter
to fall to the centre
and become a consenter
and be a frequenter

Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes

Distorted Reflections

Empirical and Non-Empirical
Identifiers

Outside Voices: An Email
Correspondence

The Influence of Coleridge on
Wordsworth

Slimvol

LINKS

9th St. Laboratories

Argotist Ebooks

Argotist Online

Deb's Diary

Kundavega

noble dissenter
and upset tormenter
and bookish augments
to make the restrictions
and get the convictions
to cause the new frictions
to burn the sad fictions
like Los's predictions
and all his old dictions
and Ida's depictions
and Milton's inflictions
and Beulah's confictions
she turned to transfixions
as she came to the confidante
who showed her the miscreant
who made her feel elegant
with the power of lubricant
and the eyes of the vigilant
and the thoughts of the postulant
and the cowardice of the reverent
and the diplomacy of the celebrant
and the hatefulness of the ignorant
and the safety of the inhabitant
and the words that are blighted
and mediocrity knighted
or the men who are not righted
or the women who are frightened
and soft voices that are spited
with the opinions that are slighted
and the warnings that are lighted
to the ones who feel plighted
as the stalkers who are sighted
turn out to be heightened

for the simple publicity
that crowns our great city
with its glass walled cubicity
and its sky bound toxicity

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [06:42](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2019

Review of Christopher Plummer's Memoirs

Christopher Plummer's *In Spite of Myself* is one of the best showbiz memoirs I've read. It's very long (over 600 pages) but never boring, largely due to Plummer's narrative skill, wit and charm.

A large part of the book reads like a *Who's Who* of the American and British theatre of the 1950s and 1960s, with Plummer having worked with most major theatrical figures of those decades, from Elia Kazan to Peter Hall. And his friendships have also ranged widely, including figures such as Noël Coward, Rex Harrison, Laurence Olivier, Katharine Hepburn, Raymond Massey and Jason Robards. He is always generous towards everyone he mentions, even to those who have treated him unfairly, either professionally or personally; and he is always self-deprecating.

He is, perhaps, better known for his film work (particularly in *The Sound of Music*) but a major part of his career has been in the theatre, on both sides of the Atlantic. In the 1960s, he was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, living in Britain for a large part of that decade. And amongst the major theatrical classical roles he's played throughout his career are Hamlet, Macbeth, Henry V, Richard III and King Lear.

The book is also full of interesting detail about Plummer's more personal life: his visits to different countries (he's extremely well travelled), his favourite hotels and restaurants, his house moving adventures, and movingly about the deaths of his pet dogs, which he kept in the 1980s and 1990s.

As you can imagine for a 600-plus-page book, there is far more in it than I have been able to touch on here, so I highly recommend it—especially to anyone interested in theatre and film of the past 60 years.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:46 LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY 2019

Interview with me at The Wombwell Rainbow

Here is an interview with me at The Wombwell Rainbow:

<https://thewombwellrainbow.com/2019/01/24/wombwell-rainbow-interviews-jeffrey-side/>

The interview is part of a series of interviews with poets and writers about their approaches to and methods of writing.

Initiated by Paul Brookes, to date it is an ongoing series, and Paul is looking for more poets and writers to take part. So if anyone is interested you can contact him at:

paulbrookes07@gmail.com

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:19 LINKS TO THIS POST 

TUESDAY, 29 MARCH 2016

The Monopolisation of Avant-garde Poetry

Here is an article by Tim Allen called ‘The Kiss of Life? The Kiss of Death? Some Thoughts on Linguistically Innovative Poetry and the Academy’:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Allen%20essay.htm>

Tim wrote it in connection to a feature at The Argotist Online concerning the relationship between academia and avant-garde poetry. The feature is several years old, and was an attempt to get a discussion going about what appears to be an increasing tendency within the English departments of some academic institutions in the US and the UK to monopolise the practice, discourse, dissemination and publication of avant-garde poetry, thus creating a sort of “gold standard” by which avant-garde poetry is to be measured, validated and approved as being “worthy” of academic interest.

I thought the best way to start this discussion was to do a feature about it for The Argotist Online, consisting of articles by US and UK academics responding to an article by Jake Berry that was critical of academic encroachment into the sphere of avant-garde poetry. The feature can be found here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/The%20Academisation%20of%20Avant-Garde%20Poetry.htm>

My original hope for the feature was to get responses to Berry’s article from academics closely involved in this monopolisation process. To that end, I approached many academics, both in the US and the UK, who were involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in this

process. Few replied to me, and the majority of those that did, refused to take part in the feature. One or two did initially agree to take part but later changed their minds, for such reasons as having lack of time or having more pressing deadlines for other projects to meet. Consequently, without the involvement of these academics in the feature, the feature was ignored, and failed to garner any online interest, despite being viewed thousands of times within the first few hours of it being online.

Recently, Tim and I were discussing these issues via email, and I suggested to him that he formulate his opinions on the subject as an article, so that they could be accumulated in one place and read by others. He readily agreed, and consequently wrote the article mentioned above.

My thanks to him for taking the time to write it.

POSTED BY [JEFFREY SIDE](#) AT [06:57](#) [LINKS TO THIS POST](#) 

WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2015

A Survey of How Poetry Can Be Read and Written

I've just come across a feature I'm included in by Peter Philpott for his site *Modern Poetry*. It's a survey of various ideas held or rehearsed by poets and academics about the reception and production of poetry. I'm included regarding various articles I've written that advocate reception theory as a useful tool for appreciating poetry. Others included are:

Matthew Caley, Will Rowe, Ian Davidson, Johan de Wit, J. H. Prynne, Joe Kennedy, Harriet Tarlo, Philip Terry, Lawrence Upton, Brian Kim

Stefans, Sheila E. Murphy, Tim Love, Andrew Duncan, Willian Watkin, Peter Riley, Reginald Shepherd, Marianne Morris, Ira Lightman, Robin Purves, Sam Ladkin, Christopher Funkhouser and N. Katherine Hayles.

It can be found here:

<http://www.modernpoetry.org.uk/uw3.html>

My thanks to Peter Philpot for his generosity in including me in this line-up.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 11:48 LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2015

Pirene's Fountain Interviews

Here are two interviews with me, conducted by Ami Kaye for Pirene's Fountain in 2009 and 2010, about online poetry editing and online poetry publishing. My thanks to Ami for allowing me to re-publish them at The Argotist Online:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Side%20interview.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 11:45 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SATURDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2015

The Influence of Coleridge on Wordsworth

Here's a free ebook drawn from material in my PhD thesis:

The Influence of Coleridge on Wordsworth is an examination of the ways in which aspects of Coleridge's early writings and philosophical concerns permeate the poetry and poetic aesthetic of Wordsworth, especially in the composition of Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, of which Coleridge said, 'It is most certain, that that Preface arose from the heads of our mutual Conversations [...] the first passages were indeed partly taken from notes of mine [...] for it was at first intended, that the Preface should be written by me'.

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/THE%20INFLUENCE%20OF%20COLERIDGE%20ON%20WORDSWORTH.pdf>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 08:56 LINKS TO THIS POST 

WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2015

Michelle Greenblatt RIP

Just heard that Michelle Greenblatt, a poet and editor friend, died last Monday. She was only in her early thirties. I hadn't had contact with her for some months, and assumed that this was due to her fibromyalgia, which she suffered from terribly. I'm very shocked and saddened. My thoughts are with her husband and family. Rest in peace, Heavenly.

She was poetry editor and music editor for the website Unlikely Stories:

<http://www.unlikelystories.org/biogreenblatt.shtml>

Here are some of her poems at that site:

<http://www.unlikelystories.org/12/greenblatt0812.shtml>

Here is an ebook of her collaborative poems with Vernon Frazer I published in 2011:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/DARK%20HOPE.pdf>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 13:11 LINKS TO THIS POST



FRIDAY, 24 JULY 2015

'Carrier of the Seed' now an Argotist Ebook

My long poem, originally published by BlazeVOX, is now an Argotist Ebook.

Description:

'All the way through to the poem's conclusion, with its implied continuation, the reader will have embarked down an extraordinary route of languages, registers and vocabularies, which function to arrest, surprise, disrupt, flow together, collide and cut across each other's current like a plaited waterway. In turn, this flow has been enriched by the assimilation of artefacts from different generations of writers; these deepen the work, interlacing it with echoes and experiences from different times and cultures. The integration of so many disparate elements into one cogent construct is the poem's triumph.' (John Couth)

Available as a free ebook here:

www.argotistonline.co.uk/CARRIER%20OF%20THE%20SEED.pdf

Full Argotist Ebooks catalogue here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Ebooks%20index.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 09:54 LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 3 JULY 2015

Limited Poetic Meaning and the Wordsworthian Legacy

Here's an article I wrote a few years ago, which attempts to show how the Modernist innovations in poetry in the early years of the twentieth century became marginalized as serious poetic techniques, in favour of a more realist sort of poetic style that was largely influenced by the poetic aesthetic of William Wordsworth.

'Limited Poetic Meaning and the Wordsworthian Legacy':

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Side%20essay%208.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:47 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SUNDAY, 15 JUNE 2014

A Critique of Conceptual Poetry

A critique of conceptual poetry: interviews with David Hadbawnik, Joseph Hutchison, Don Share, Andrew Peart and Bill Friend at The

Argotist Online:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/A%20Critique%20of%20Conceptual%20Poetry.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 09:27 LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 3 JANUARY 2014

Wordsworth's Empiricist Poetic and Its Influence in the Twentieth Century

For anyone who might be interested, my PhD thesis, 'Wordsworth's Empiricist Poetic and Its Influence in the Twentieth Century', is available online here:

<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1041/>

It's a sort of literary "unified field theory" as to why we have the sort of poetry we have today.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 11:49 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SATURDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2013

Coleridge's Early Empiricism

The new ebook from Argotist Ebooks is *Coleridge's Early Empiricism* by Jeffrey Side

Description:

This study examines the influence of empiricism on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetry up until 1800, at which time he deserted it for transcendentalism. This is not to suggest that he was completely an empiricist before 1800, but that his empiricism was somewhat tempered by transcendentalist influences. Therefore, the relationship between "empiricism" and "transcendentalism" in his thinking with regard to poetic composition is problematical. Coleridge became a transcendentalist poet and thinker, whose *Biographia Literaria* was partly intended to demonstrate the malign effect of the Locke tradition on poetry. Even so, that book is partly a work of self-correction. There is ample evidence of Coleridge's immersion in empiricist philosophy in the 1790s, as well as in the kind of scientific enquiry that was thought to be congenial to that philosophy.

Available as a free ebook here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/COLERIDGES%20EARLY%20EMPIRICISM.pdf>

Full Argotist Ebooks catalogue here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Ebooks%20index.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 08:40 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SATURDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2013

Shadows of the Future

Shadows of the Future, an anthology of Otherstream poetry, edited by Marc Vincenz with an Introduction by Bon Grumman, has been

published by Argotist Ebooks, and can be downloaded here:

Shadows of the Future PDF



Argotist Ebooks' catalogue can be found here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Ebooks%20index.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 10:06 LINKS TO THIS POST 

TUESDAY, 6 AUGUST 2013

**What's in a Name?: The Art & Language Group
and Conceptual Poetry**

In his essay, 'Charmless and Interesting: What Conceptual Poetry Lacks and What It's Got' Robert Archambeau asks: 'In what sense is pure conceptualism poetry, beyond the institutional sense of being distributed and considered through the channels by which poetry is distributed and considered?' The answer to this question would clarify the relationship between conceptual poetry, conceptual art and the generally accepted definition of poetry as being specifically a literary art whereby language is utilised aesthetically and evocatively.

That some of the concerns and practices of conceptual poetry are not new in the world of conceptual art needs no extensive repetition here. However, it is interesting to note that in relation to conceptual poetry's use of texts and lexical elements to comprise its works, a fairly recent historical precedent already exists. This can be seen in the theories, practices and works of 1960s conceptual artists such as Lawrence Weiner, Edward Ruscha and Robert Barry; and also in the theories, practices and works of the conceptual art group known as Art & Language, which was formed by Terry Atkinson, Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell and David Bainbridge in 1968. Others affiliated with this group, included Ian Burn, Michael Corris, Preston Heller, Graham Howard, Joseph Kosuth, Andrew Menard, Terry Smith, Philip Pilkington and David Rushton. These artists were among the first to produce art from textual and lexical sources.

The notable similarity between the theories of this group and those of conceptual poetry's is that the group developed, extended and championed the conceptual theories that were initiated by artists such as Marcel Duchamp. The group also held the view that the practice of art should be systematically theoretical and entirely separated from concerns relating to craft or aesthetics. These and other ideas appeared in the group's journal, *Art-Language*, the first issue of which appeared in 1969.

A direct parallel with the works of these artists and those produced by conceptual poets is not my intention here. There will be differences in scale (both physical and theoretical) and presentation between them; suffice to say, that the common element they share is that of a conceptual approach to their works, and as such, this leads us back to Archambeau's question ('In what sense is pure conceptualism poetry, beyond the institutional sense of being distributed and considered through the channels by which poetry is distributed and considered?'), and also one that I would like to ask. If it is at all possible to agree that both the Art & Language group and conceptual poetry share similar theoretical stances and working practices, then in what sense is the work produced by conceptual poetry more suited to be called poetry than that of the Art & Language group?

In one of the two Facebook discussions I took part in recently about Archambeau's question, it was mentioned by someone that the term "poetry" was merely an honorific one, conferred by the academy on what it deemed was poetry: the logical extension of this being that if the academy should deem, for instance, a text-book to be poetry then it would have to be accepted that a text-book was, indeed, poetry. In response to this, someone else mentioned that the approach of the literary theorist Roman Jakobson was more reasonable, in that Jakobson saw poetry as marked by specific functions in language rather than by an arbitrary redesignation by the academy of general texts. I agreed with the latter.

In light of this, it seems to me that given that there is no significant difference between the work of the Art & Language group and that of conceptual poetry, for the work of the latter to be designated as poetry whilst that of the former is not, seems a peculiarly inconsistent and whimsical act on the part of the academy. It seems

to me, that neither the Art & Language group nor conceptual poetry can accurately be described as producing works of poetry, given that they are both operating from within a conceptual art aesthetic and theoretical stance.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 13:47 LINKS TO THIS POST



THURSDAY, 11 JULY 2013

Ann Bogle Apologises to Me—Sort of

Ann Bogle emailed me recently to apologise for her part in a public dispute we had with each other last year. For those interested, here are links to my blog posts where the dispute is explained:

Response to Ann Bogle:

<http://jeffrey-side.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/response-to-ann-bogle.html>

Second Response to Ann Bogle:

http://jeffrey-side.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/second-response-to-ann-bogle_3143.html

Third Response to Ann Bogle:

<http://jeffrey-side.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/third-response-to-ann-bogle.html>

In her email of apology Ann said:

“I apologize to you for an event that led to other events in August last year. I hope you will accept my apology, in particular for bringing up Bobbi Lurie’s email correspondence with you in the OtherStream thread. It was not appropriate to bring it up there or to air it. It was in a flaming thread that you initiated because I had persisted in adding comments about Prosetics (my coinage) in poetry contexts, most particularly, in The Argotist Group.

Country Without a Name will become a book this year to be published by Veery Imprints. Acknowledgement of Argotist Ebooks as its first publisher will be included in its pages. I appreciate your steadiness in working as an e-publisher and your own poetry, when I can find it, and I wish I could find more of it. We were indeed allies and I hope you will view it that way once again.”

In response to this, I replied:

“Thanks for your apology. I can only accept it, though, if you are willing to make it a public apology. I will then accept it publically.”

Ann replied:

“I will post my apology, first, along with this note, mine, second, in response to yours of today, July 5, 2013, at Ana Verse as a Page (rather than as a blog entry) called “My Apology to Jeffrey Side” -- unless you have had thought of de-posting the several blog posts that critique me and Bobbi Lurie. Then our posts will not be permanently available on the Internet, as per Bobbi’s request. Perhaps you plan and prefer to leave your critiques of us posted as an explanation of part of history.

In keeping with the artistic design of Ana Verse, the related entry I wish could remain at Ana Verse is “American Candid” -- that I view as

a spontaneously-written collaborative play and that I de-posted at the request of Bobbi Lurie, who has asked both you and me not to use her name publicly in any connection with the word “psychotic,” for reasons she had stated in a comment she at first allowed to be posted at Ana Verse following my single-entry response to you and that she later asked me to de-post because her name appears there in connection with the word “psychotic” -- as do these THREE or FOUR emails.

Please let me know your wishes.”

She then posted her apology at her blog, notifying me thus:

“Jeff, there I posted my email to you verbatim:

<http://annbogle.blogspot.com/p/my-apology-to-jeffrey-side.html>”

I replied:

“I am satisfied with your posting your apology email at Ana Verse but please amend the sentence:

‘I hope you will accept my apology, in particular for bringing up Bobbi Lurie's email correspondence with you in the OtherStream thread.’

to:

‘I hope you will accept my apology, in particular for bringing up Bobbi Lurie's email correspondence with you in the OtherStream thread, and misrepresenting what you said about her in relation to the word “psychotic.’

And also amend the sentence:

'It was in a flaming thread that you initiated because I had persisted in adding comments about Prosetics (my coinage) in poetry contexts, most particularly, in The Argotist Group.'

to:

'It was in a thread that you initiated because I had persisted in adding comments about Prosetics (my coinage) in poetry contexts, most particularly, in The Argotist Group.'

Also please remove my email address from the header of your apology email.

Once you have made these amendments (and not reposted "American Candid") I will post your apology at my blog, with a note saying I accept it. I will also remove the several blog posts that critique you and Bobbi Lurie."

She replied:

"I'll amend the Apology I posted without the word "flaming" in it as a compromise; otherwise, STET, no mention of the word "psychotic."

STET, for those who don't know, means: "let it stand", and is used as an instruction on a printed proof to indicate that a correction or alteration should be ignored. So here, Ann has agreed to remove the word "flaming" from one sentence, but not to amend the crucial sentence:

"I hope you will accept my apology, in particular for bringing up Bobbi Lurie's email correspondence with you in the OtherStream thread."

to:

“I hope you will accept my apology, in particular for bringing up Bobbi Lurie's email correspondence with you in the OtherStream thread, and misrepresenting what you said about her in relation to the word “psychotic.”

I replied to Ann:

“I can't accept your apology without your mentioning in it the reason why I was in dispute with you in the first place, namely that you said that I had called Bobbi “psychotic”, when in fact I only said her later emails to me were. It is perfectly possible for someone's writing style to be “psychotic” when they themselves are not. I made this clear to you at the time.

Without your apology being amended in this way, I can't accept it, nor can I remove my blog posts regarding the issue. For me to accept the apology as it stands, would mean I would have to leave my blog posts in situ in order to contextualise your apology, which you probably wouldn't like.”

Ann, however, was adamant that no further compromise on her part should be made, replying:

“Jeff, it's okay to me if you do not accept correct apology, but it's a shame in terms of peace and friendship.”

Her apology (albeit without the inclusion of the word “flaming”) can be found at her blog here:

<http://annbogle.blogspot.co.uk/p/my-apology-to-jeffrey-side.html>

In this apology, she also links to another part of her blog where she has reproduced fully the thread from the Otherstream Facebook group that initiated my dispute with her. That she should do this after both Bobbi and myself requested she not do so, demonstrates a lack of consideration, especially towards Bobbi whom, as far as I can tell, Ann has no grievance with. Incidentally, as far as I know, no one who has taken part in the thread has given her permission to publish their private comments in it. This probably constitutes an infringement by Ann of Facebook's privacy policy, which she might or might not be aware of.

Given this, and her apology being incomplete, and possibly insincere, I am in no reasonable position to accept it as an apology.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 11:25 LINKS TO THIS POST 

WEDNESDAY, 19 JUNE 2013

Nothing New under the Sun

Here is an article written by Kenny Goldsmith praising Richard Prince who has made a facsimile copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*, inserting his own name in place of J. D. Salinger's.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2012/04/richard-princes-latest-act-of-appropriation-the-catcher-in-the-rye/>

Goldsmith writes:

"A few months ago, a friend pulled off her bookshelf a new appropriation work by Richard Prince, one so radical and so daring, that I almost couldn't believe it was by the same artist. The premise

of the book was achingly simple: a reproduction of the first edition of *The Catcher In The Rye*, identical in every way except the author's name was swapped from J. D. Salinger to Richard Prince. The production value of the book was astonishingly high, a perfect facsimile of the original, right down to the thick, creamy paper stock and classic typeface.”

It is peculiar how Goldsmith forgets to mention his own book *Day* (another work of “unoriginality”) being similarly appropriated (though in a far more ironic and conceptual manner) by Kent Johnson, a few years ago, who, I think, might have been the first person to do this sort of thing with a published book.

It appears nothing is original in conceptual art anymore, even when it's trying to be unoriginal.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:01 LINKS TO THIS POST



SUNDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2013

The Chicago School of Poetics Scholarship Program Appeal Campaign

Poet and founder and director of The Chicago School of Poetics Francesco Levato, has asked me to spread the word about the School's scholarship program appeal campaign, which I am very happy to do. He also mentioned to me that he and Larry Sawyer, the School's co-director, have been teaching from Argotist Ebooks' catalogue. This is great news, and shows great faith in the ebook format as a serious medium for the presentation and of poetry. This is what he says in his email:

"It's been a while since I last emailed, and I believe it was about teaching from Argotist Ebooks at the Chicago School of Poetics. Both I and my co-director Larry Sawyer have taught from your catalogue, and, of course, really appreciate the work you put out. I'm writing now to ask if you might consider helping us get the word out about a scholarship campaign we are nearing the end of for the School. We're trying to raise funds to offer full scholarships to poetry students in financial need. Do you have an email list you regularly send to where you might mention the campaign? If this is something you wouldn't be comfortable doing I completely understand".

Here are the full details of the campaign:

With your generous support, the Chicago School of Poetics will be offering full scholarships for Master Classes (with poets like Eileen Myles and Charles Bernstein) and regular 8-week courses for the 2013 school year. Just \$10 can help students in need attend classes. Please donate at:

<http://www.indiegogo.com/CSoPScholar>

The campaign ends February 22nd.

"This is what a school truly should be—think of Black Mountain College —beyond all the boundaries & borders". (Ron Silliman)

The Chicago School of Poetics (CSoP) is an online and on-location school that offers compelling poetry classes without the MFA time commitment, pressure or price tag. With an emphasis on craft, instructors at the School focus on the merits of student writing on its own terms. It's not the typical creative writing workshop! Courses offered at the School allow students to refine their work in a collaborative—not competitive—environment. We don't teach

creativity. Courses allow students to understand the writing process from the inside by observing firsthand how the instructors work in order to gain the critical distance necessary to write more resonant poetry. The School also offers genuine community. On-location courses offer valuable face-to-face contact and online courses offer valuable access to the vibrant community of Chicago poetry for anyone worldwide.

www.chicagoschoolofpoetics.com

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [15:10](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 17 AUGUST 2012

Third Response to Ann Bogle

Ann Bogle has made a further false accusation about me in the comments thread of one of her recent blog posts regarding me. Here is a link to the blog post:

<http://annbogle.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/american-candid.html>

The comments stream is at the very end of this long blog post. The same comments stream can also be found in another part of her blog, here:

[http://www.blogger.com/comment.g?
blogID=21023072&postID=8315023444307361429](http://www.blogger.com/comment.g?blogID=21023072&postID=8315023444307361429)

She says (referring to the emails between her and myself that I posted in my first blog response to her initial accusation about me):

“Jeffrey Side posted emails he didn’t write”.

If I didn't write them, who did? Maybe she mistyped "he" for "I", and the sentence should read:

"Jeffrey Side posted emails I didn't write".

It so, then why did Ann, in the Otherstream Facebook group thread where I also posted the same emails in response to her accusing me there of having called her friend Bobbi Lurie "psychotic", say:

"Bobbi knows about this correspondence that Jeff quotes here accurately".

This comment can be found here:

<http://annbogle.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/american-candid.html>

It can also be found in the original Otherstream Facebook group thread, which will remain in that group as evidence, should Ann try to manipulate the reproduction of that thread she has posted on her blog. It is sad that Ann has had to recourse to a blatant lie about me.

She also goes on to say, somewhat incoherently, in the comments stream of her blog:

"Marc Vincenz and Jeffrey Side have censored using their positions as administrators of web groups. I don't have Bobbi's permission [I have her permission as of 4:29 p.m. today] to post the comment she wrote to me above that explains much that Jeffrey Side forgot to explain in his purple campaign.

Anny Ballardini instantly assumes that I did what Jeffrey Side alleges in the flame threads he started at Otherstream and at Argotist. He

deleted half the proof of it, and I deleted my own comments from one thread that he said intruded, yet he claimed that he deleted my comments.”

Why she has decided to involve my friends Marc Vincenz and Anny Ballardini in this situation is unclear. Marc is not an administrator of any Facebook group that I am aware of, and if she is alluding to the Otherstream Facebook group, then she is mistaken, as he is not the administrator of that group, which is administered very fairly by my good friend Jake Berry. I administer The Argotist Online Facebook group, and make no apology for it.

I don't know what Ann is referring to, in the second paragraph of the above quote from her, when she says that:

“[Jeffrey Side] deleted half the proof of it, and I deleted my own comments from one thread that he said intruded, yet he claimed that he deleted my comments.”

Perhaps she is referring to the thread in The Argotist Online Facebook group that she "highjacked" by using it to post links to her Fictionaut posts in, despite the thread being started by someone who was merely alerting the group to an essay he had just had published, and which had no bearing on Ann's Fictionaut posts at all. I warned Ann not to do this, but she ignored me, and so I deleted that thread, and one other that she did the same thing in.

Ann then, in the comments stream of her blog, quotes from an email Bobbi Lurie recently sent her, which says:

“We should write story titled JEFF SIDE's BRAIN--the title of this email sounds appropriate--but why should we give jeff side any credence? who the hell is he? he is a nutso brit--i've met so many when i lived in

england--they believe in false "remedies" more so even than americans..."

I won't point out the irony of Bobbi calling me a "nutso brit", even though I didn't call her "psychotic".

Ann then says in the comments stream:

"Bobbi, I fully understand what you're saying; it is a big issue with all of us, and women especially because men define women as nuts who have their own viewpoints."

I, for one, would never define women as nuts, and most of the men I know who write poetry would not, either, so I don't know why Ann is saying this.

Ann then quotes, again, from a recent email to her from Bobbi, who says:

"yes. ok. true enough. no shame in needing to be on morphine for pain from cancer (perhaps Jeff Side disagrees?). the fact that he won't answer me as to why he thinks i am psychotic. you can mention that i have been fighting so many things."

Why Bobbi thinks I should disagree about her being on morphine for cancer is not clear. I have never suggested to anyone that they should stop taking morphine for pain relief. I wonder if Bobbi has read my blog posts, so far, regarding this whole situation. Had she done so, she would know that I never said she was "psychotic". I urge her to read them.

Ann goes on to quote Bobbi as saying:

“if he freaked out over me having cancer...that sickens me. yes. “the morphine poems” you can post this as well--it's the cover for the book and if he wants to call it psychotic it was actually my rebellion against persona poems due to “poetess” woman who lied about having cancer, not only in her “persona” poems but in her bio, in her promotion of her book, in her recommending her book to cancer patients when she did not even research the disease she claimed to have. i begged her to write a statement about her “true” life. her answer “but if i told the truth: no one would believe me.” she also placed her fake cancer poems in an anthology which specifically requested poems ONLY from cancer patients and their families. she also posted her fake cancer poems on a site meant ONLY for cancer patients and that place was specifically meant for cancer patients to express their ANGER about having cancer.”

I am not in the least “freaked out” about Bobbi having cancer. If my sending her a few links, in 2008, about alternative treatments has caused her so much anger towards me, I sincerely apologise for it.

Ann goes on to quote Bobbi as saying:

“so “the morphine poems” was based on these rules which i set down for myself (while on morphine, while in severe pain--and i dare Jeff Side to call such an endeavor while dealing with unbelievable pain and fear “psychotic”--i wonder if HE could have survived such an ordeal and i DARE him to answer me about this--he having the nerve to call me a name which condemns someone so utterly--he hasn't the courage even to answer my email to him requesting (in the most polite language) “why” he calls me such a diagnosis when he is not a medical professional or any other such thing”

Again, Bobbi can't have read my blog posts, and Ann can't have alerted her to them, otherwise this paragraph, by Bobbi, would not

have been written. I should, also, mention that I didn't receive an email from Bobbi regarding this. I don't doubt she sent it; I just didn't receive it. I have changed email addresses several times since I was last in correspondence with her.

Ann then comments:

“Side says he's defending his character as someone who wrote that her emails were increasingly psychotic not that she was and he dragged her name through the press to make his minor point.”

Ann can't seem to understand that it is she and not me who has dragged Bobbi into this. Ann first brought up Bobbi's name in the Otherstream Facebook group thread, accusing me of calling Bobbi “psychotic”, and then she contacted Bobbi and invited Bobbi to join in this “debate” online.

I really can't understand Ann's anger towards me, which seems out of all proportion to my having merely removed her from The Argotist Online Facebook group.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 08:38 LINKS TO THIS POST 

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JEFFREY SIDE

TUESDAY, 14 AUGUST 2012

Second Response to Ann Bogle

Here is Ann Bogle's response to my blog post of Saturday 11 August 2012:

<http://annbogle.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/jeffrey-side-and-american-candid.html>

In that blog post I explain that I didn't call Bobbi Lurie "psychotic", as Ann had previously said I had done in an email to Ann, but had, rather, referred to Bobbi's emails to me as becoming "more and more psychotic and confusing", principally at the point at which Bobbi accused me in one email of trying to make her cancer worse. I think anyone accused of this would take such an accusation as not being consistent with reality, hence my use of the word "psychotic" in relation to this. The word "psychotic" means, by the way, in case Ann doesn't know the definition of it, "being out of touch with reality", and as Bobbi's accusation that I was trying to make her cancer worse falls very much into this area, I felt justified in using that word. I did not say, I stress, that Bobbi, herself, was psychotic, but that what she was saying was.

Ann says in her response to my blog post that Bobbi has told her that Bobbi might seek legal advice regarding my use of the word "psychotic". Ann says of Bobbi: "She says the word "psychotic" is

ABOUT ME

 JEFFREY SIDE

Editor of The Argotist Online, a poetry website that was founded in 2005. The website also publishes poetry, fiction and literary criticism ebooks via its publishing arm Argotist Ebooks, founded in 2010. Educated at Liverpool University (BA in English, 1997) and Leeds University (PhD in English, 2007). Has had poetry published in Poetry Salzburg Review, Underground Window, A Little Poetry, Poethia, Nthposition, Eratio, Pirene's Fountain, Fieralingue, Moria, Ancient Heart, Blazevox, Lily, Big Bridge, Jacket, Textimagepoem, Apochryphaltext, 9th St. Laboratories, P. F. S. Post, Great Works, Hutt, The Dande Review, Poetry Bay and Dusie. His book publications include, Carrier of the Seed, Slimvol, Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes (with Jake Berry)

incriminating even in defense against it. She emailed she could find a lawyer". If one can't refer to the word "psychotic" to defend oneself from the accusation that they had called someone it, then that would be very strange. I'm only going, though, by what Ann says Bobbi has said regarding this. I don't know if Bobbi said it or not.

Ann also says in her response to my blog post that my blog post accuses Ann of incompetence and malicious gossip. I don't think I do accuse her of the former but certainly of the latter, as the latter was, as is plain from my blog post, motivated by her anger at my removing her from The Argotist Online Facebook group. The malicious gossip in question, being her accusation that I called Bobbi "psychotic", which she first mentioned in the Otherstream Facebook group and then in a post she made at Fictionaut, which has now been removed by a Fictionaut administrator as it was defamatory.

Ann then says in her response to my blog post:

"Side sent Bobbi quack remedies for cancer, she told me, and that when she lived in London, she met many Brits who believed in false hope remedies such as those Side proposed to her."

This is referring to the period when Bobbi and I were in communication with each other. I sent Bobbi various links to alternative cancer therapies. I wouldn't characterise them as "quack" therapies, though, as most were being delivered by reputable hospitals and clinics.

Ann then says in her response to my blog post:

"In a message dated 8/12/2012 11:49:19 P.M. Central Daylight Time, bobbilurie@.com writes:

and Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence (with Jake Berry).

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

BLOG ARCHIVE

- ▼ 2020 (2)
 - ▼ March (1)
 - [Lawrence Upton RIP](#)
 - ▶ January (1)
 - ▶ 2019 (2)
 - ▶ 2016 (1)
 - ▶ 2015 (6)
 - ▶ 2014 (2)
 - ▶ 2013 (6)
 - ▶ 2012 (6)
 - ▶ 2011 (1)
 - ▶ 2010 (8)
 - ▶ 2009 (17)
-

PUBLICATIONS

- [Wordsworth's Empiricist Poetic and its Influence in the Twentieth Century](#)
- [Signs That Do Not Signal Carrier of the Seed](#)
- [Coleridge's Early Empiricism](#)
- [Collected Poetry Reviews 2004-2013](#)

YES, JEFF SIDE'S BRAIN: DRINKING WATER WHILE STANDING ON YOUR HEAD AND SPEAKING IN HUNGARIAN IS NOT A CURE FOR CANCER, JEFF SIDE'S BRAIN...YOU'LL JUST MAKE MY CANCER WORSE..." [Block capitals not mine]

I have no idea if Bobbi did actually write this or not. If she did, then I would like to take the opportunity to say that I have not advised her to drink water while standing on her head and speaking Hungarian, which, of course, she knows full well is not true.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 10:47 LINKS TO THIS POST



SATURDAY, 11 AUGUST 2012

Response to Ann Bogle

Ann Bogle, someone who I thought was a friend (or at the very least, a friendly acquaintance), has been spreading malicious gossip about me online, saying that I called her friend Bobbi Lurie "psychotic". Here's the link to it on her blog:

<http://annbogle.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/american-candid.html>

You will need to scroll down the page to find her reference to Bobbi Lurie, so I'll quote it:

"You had represented (though I might have wanted an editor in you besides) my e-chapbooks, so, for that career-related investment I had made with you, I failed to defend Bobbi Lurie more fully (by disassociating from you? retracting my e-books?) when you described her as psychotic in an email."

Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes
Distorted Reflections
Empirical and Non-Empirical Identifiers
Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence
The Influence of Coleridge on Wordsworth
Slimvol

LINKS

9th St. Laboratories
Argotist Ebooks
Argotist Online
Deb's Diary
Kundavega

As can be seen, this is mostly incoherent, but her comment relating to Bobbi is quite clear. What Ann hasn't done is to explain the context whereby I came to use that word in relation to Bobbi. Here is that context.

In late 2011, Ann, asked me to publish an ebook of Bobbi's poetry. I told her that I would rather not do so, as Bobbi and I had, a few years previously, been in an email communication with each other that had started off amicably but for some reason on Bobbi's part became what I can only describe as increasingly eccentric, incoherent and somewhat belligerent towards me, for no reason I was aware of. The culmination of this was an accusation she made towards me, saying that I was trying to make her cancer worse. Because of this, and because, by that time, I was so exasperated by the frequency and confusing nature of her emails, I called a halt to our communications.

When Ann asked me to publish Bobbi, I mentioned this state of affairs to her, saying that I would rather not have anything to do with Bobbi because of it. However, after Ann had explained to me that Bobbi had been going through a difficult period, I was moved to reconsider my refusal and agreed to publish her after all, but on condition that Ann, or her then literary associate, Marc Vincenz, be an email intermediary between Bobbi and myself, as I couldn't cope with the thought of having to communicate with her again, to which Ann agreed. As things turned out, though, I heard no more from Ann about this, and assumed that Ann or Bobbi had changed their minds regarding publication. I later found out from Ann that the reason Bobbi had decided not to publish with me, after all, was because Ann had told her that I had said she was "psychotic" in one of my emails to Ann.

The following is the full email correspondence that Ann and I had regarding the publication of Bobbi's ebook. As can be seen, Ann has

taken the word “psychotic” very much out of its original context:

21 November 2011

Jeff,

I just got a note from my friend and one of my favorite writers, Bobbi Lurie. She's learned her first poetry collection has gone out of print, and she asked if I know anything about ebooks. What I know is that you publish them - amazing ones. Could I suggest that she contact you?

Best,

Ann

1 December 2011

Ann,

I've had dealings with Bobbi Lurie in the past, and to be frank it wasn't all that pleasant. Her email exchanges with me became more and more psychotic and confusing, and her tone and language were so belligerent towards me (at one point accusing me of trying to make her cancer worse - whatever that meant) that it would be a pain to have to deal with her again. Sorry for my negativity, and I appreciate your trying to help her out.

Best,

Jeff

1 December 2011

Jeff,

Thanks for letting me know of the experience you've had with Bobbi, as sad as it makes me to hear it. Marc Vincenz suggested he might be able to reissue her first book via Mad Hatters', but I haven't mentioned it to her yet, not wanting to get her hopes up and disappoint her in case Carol Novack withdraws funding from the press. Carol has cancer, too. I have had to make my way carefully with Bobbi myself, as I know her life circumstances have not been easy, and she becomes suddenly distrustful. The internet, especially, though she is a good writer there, sometimes even better than good, at times deluges her with confusion.

I'm sure there will be a place for her first book as an ebook.

Thanks for writing.

Best,

Ann

3 December 2011

Ann,

The only way I could consider doing an ebook for her is if you or Marc act as intermediaries for me. I'm very sorry Carol has cancer also.

I've attached an email I send to people who have cancer, advising them how to treat it using apricot kernels. Perhaps you could forward it to Carol and Bobbi.

Best,

Jeff

9 December 2011

Jeff,

Thanks. I'll pass on your file to Bobbi and Carol. Carol cannot read due to her brain cancer, but her assistant and friend, Douglas, can read it for her.

Bobbi is on the road for cancer treatment, but I heard from her, and she'd like to bring out the first book as an ebook with Argotist. I talked to Marc Vincenz, and he said that he and I can handle the details with her. Sound good? Let me know if there's anything we need to do first and when. Thanks so much, Jeff.

Best,

Ann

Ann initially accused me of calling Bobbi "psychotic" in the Otherstream Facebook group, after I had removed her from The

Argotist Online Facebook group for ignoring my requests not to post things there that were not related to poetry. Here is how I announced to the other group members that I had removed her from it:

“I’ve had to remove Ann Bogle from the Argotist FB group, as she was relentless in her determination to carry on starting threads that were not poetry related, and also “hijacking” other threads by posting comments not related to the threads’ topic matter. I explained to her that the Argotist group was solely for discussion of poetry but she ignored me, and continued unrelentingly. I, therefore, had no choice but to remove her from the group.”

I assume Ann was so outraged at this, that she felt the need to vent her anger in the Otherstream Facebook group, and in doing so try to damage my character by representing falsely the Bobbi Lurie situation, as explained above.

For Ann to have done this is quite disturbing. She must have known the potential damage it could have caused to my character. It is especially disquieting considering the reason for it was fairly trivial: merely my removing her from a Facebook group.

Here is the Otherstream Facebook group exchange I had with Ann where she says I called Bobbi “psychotic”. As can be seen her posts are extremely incoherent and rambling, whether this is intentional on her part, I don’t know:

Ann Bogle:

You had represented (though I might have wanted an editor in you besides) my e-chapbooks, so, for that

career-related investment I had made with you, I failed to defend Bobbi Lurie more fully (by disassociating from you? retracting my e-books?) when you described her as psychotic in an email. The links to my e-books are probably still working. Rachel Lisi designed the cover of one of them, and Daniel Harris gave ten illustrations. All I wanted to say, and you are avoiding the subject rather stupidly, is, and I said it in more than one place and way, your poetics collection of essay, responses, etc. and fight with Seth Abramson about it, did not name names in a way that might have been useful in considering or applying your arguments. Your cry that it went by not celebrated caused me to plunge in as a reader preparing to review your email correspondence, Other Voices, with Jake Berry. Jake, in turn, took a dip, a little swim, in my prosetics, and responded kindly. I am in your coral as a writer, and you are revoking my digressive strategies. It seems strange you represented my collections as e-books unless you were aligning yourself in another silent debate in poetry.

Jeffrey Side:

Ann, I was unaware that the links to your ebooks were not working. I will correct that. If I had intended to remove the actual ebooks I would not have left them as listed on the site. If that is what all your silliness is about, then you should have told me the links were inactive instead of causing trouble here. I assumed you were more mature than this.

Regarding my saying Bobbi Lurie was psychotic. I said her emails to me had become psychotic and confusing to

me, much like your posts here have been.

Ann Bogle:

Define "psychotic" then. You are wildly evasive. Who knew you were wild? I wrote "distrustful" and you are not? I wrote "confusion" and you are not confused. Bobbi knows about this correspondence that Jeff quotes here accurately (it is plain that Jeff and I do not have day jobs), painstakingly, and ... okay, Princess Di ...

Shortly after this exchange, Marc Vincenz told me that Ann had now left the Otherstream Facebook group. I wish her no ill will, and hope she can resolve some of the issues she has with me.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 05:46 LINKS TO THIS POST 

TUESDAY, 17 JULY 2012

Response to Seth Abramson

Here is a link to my response to Seth Abramson's critique of my Introduction to The Argotist Online feature, The Academisation of Avant-Garde Poetry:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Response%20to%20Seth%20Abramson.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 13:33 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SUNDAY, 24 JUNE 2012

The Academisation of Avant-Garde Poetry

Jake Berry's essay, 'Poetry Wide Open: The Otherstream (Fragments In Motion)' deals with the issue of certain types of avant-garde poetry as not yet having found favour within the Academy, or with poetry publishers of academically "sanctioned" avant-garde poetry. The damaging aspects of this exclusion, and the concept of an "approved" versus an "unapproved" avant-garde poetry, are also examined in the essay. And these things could well be described as "the academisation of avant-garde poetry".

Academic poetic output is operating to a healthy extent in the US, where university creative writing departments are flourishing. The University of Pennsylvania has its Kelly Writers House programme, its PennSound website and its Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing, all sympathetic to academic avant-garde poetry. The University of Pennsylvania also edits Jacket2, an influential online poetics website, which was formerly called Jacket, and which was edited by the independent John Tranter before he passed it over to the university. And similar things are happening in the UK, with various institutions such as the Contemporary Poetics Research Centre at Birkbeck University, and the Poetry and Poetics Research Group at the University of Edge Hill, both promoting academic avant-garde poetry.

Consequently, one could say that the term "avant-garde" has now, essentially, been appropriated by the Academy, and, as such, has become associated with the sort of poetic writing practices that could be fairly said to represent "establishment" poetry, to the extent that the historical resonances of the term "avant-garde" have become meaningless. In contrast, Bob Grumman's term, "otherstream", which Berry uses in his essay to describe poetry that is marginalised by the Academy, can be seen as a more apt replacement for the term "avant-garde", which has now become

obsolete as an appropriate description for poetry that isn't anecdotal, descriptive or prose-like.

This Argotist Online feature presents Berry's essay, the responses to it from poets and academics it was first shown to, and an interview with Berry where he addresses some of the criticisms voiced in these responses. Many poets and academics (including those most famously associated with Language Poetry) were approached for their responses but declined. Other poets and academics that had initially agreed to respond ultimately declined. I mention this not as criticism but merely to explain the absence of people who one would normally expect to have responded and taken part in such a discussion.

The feature can be found here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/The%20Academisation%20of%20Avant-Garde%20Poetry.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:23 LINKS TO THIS POST 

WEDNESDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 2012

The New Ebook from Argotist Ebooks is 'Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence' by Jake Berry and Jeffrey Side

Description:

This 18-month transatlantic email correspondence between Jake Berry and Jeffrey Side ranges across and intertwines a variety of topics that include: poetry and music; film and TV; the changes in culture over the past few decades; the differences in regional U.S.

and U.K. accents; the difficulty of reaching the famous in order to interview them; the songwriter as poet and vice versa.

Available as a free ebook here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/OUTSIDE%20VOICES.pdf>

Full Argotist Ebooks catalogue here:

<http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Ebooks%20index.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:46 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SATURDAY, 25 JUNE 2011

Taking the Concept of Meaning-Making by Storm: A Review of Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes

There is a negative review of *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* (a long poem by Jake Berry and myself) in Jacket2 by Jacquilyn Weeks. I don't mind the review, as I am fairly detached from the poetry I write. Besides, it's good to have feedback whatever it is. Here is the review:

'Taking the Concept of Meaning-Making by Storm: A Review of *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes*'

<http://jacket2.org/reviews/taking-concept-meaning-making-storm>

Bill Lavender who published the poem has written a response to the review, which can be found here:

<https://jacket2.org/commentary/bill-lavender-responds-review-cyclones-high-northern-latitudes>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 10:41 LINKS TO THIS POST 

FRIDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2010

Rachel Lisi 1970-2010

A dear friend of mine, Rachel Lisi, has passed away. I am deeply shocked and saddened. She was a great visual artist, with her photography and graphics, and also wrote poetry. She was also one of the cover illustrators for Argotist Ebooks. She was working on her third cover for Argotist Ebooks but was unable to continue due to her illness.

I'd known her since 2003, and over the years, she had been a true and loyal friend to me. She was always friendly and upbeat, never complaining about anything.

Her website of artwork, photography and poems can be found here:

<http://www.kundavega.com/>

From her introduction to her site:

'My name is Rachel Lisi. This small corner of cyber space allows me to share different things with you. For some time I have been following the crafts of photography and poetry finding many hills and valleys along the way. I am still trying to find the right path, but surrendering to the guidance of the day and night and every turn of my imagination. As always, I continue to evolve and learn within this circle of creating.'

I have asked her family if it is ok if I do an ebook of her poems and

artwork as a tribute.

Here is a photomontage of her on YouTube:

Tribute To Rachel Anne Lisi

[http://www.facebook.com/l.php?
u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D8xbL4R0C
S34&h=2d4d7](http://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D8xbL4R0CS34&h=2d4d7)

Thank you Rachel for your friendship and generosity of spirit. I will miss you greatly.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [08:12](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

SUNDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2010

Pirene's Fountain Feature

Pirene's Fountain has a feature on Jake Berry and myself:

http://www.pirenesfountain.com/folios/berry_side.html

My thanks to editor Ami Kaye for all the work she's put into this during the past year.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [20:11](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

MONDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2010

Interview with me at Fieralingue

I was pleased to be asked by Anny Ballardini to take part in a series of interviews with poetry publishers at Fieralingue:

<http://www.fieralingue.it/corner.php?pa=printpage&pid=3461>

Excerpt:

Q: Are there any parameters by which you understand the political correctness of a literary work? Could you please describe them? Could you give some examples based on the books you published?

A: I can't really answer the question, as I don't believe that poetry that thinks of itself as political is of any urgent relevance to the aesthetics of poetry, which has always been my main concern. I assume that some of those poets who write what they call political poetry hope it will have some interest philosophically, if nothing else. Few would expect it to bring about political change.

The failure of the high profile and well-supported political protest song "movement" in the USA in the 1960s should be an indication that if such a popular and internationally well-publicised mass movement as that failed, then certainly "political" poetry (avant-garde or otherwise) has little hope of success.

Q: With the general economic crisis that has hit not only the U.S.A., what is your forecast on the future of the book?

A: I think the future of printed books will be that they will still be available but for mainly archival purposes, and for collectors of beautiful objects. There may also be a market for them as gifts for special occasions such as weddings, christenings and other rights of passage celebrations. But as a utility, printed books will be used

rarely when devices such as Kindle become as ubiquitous and as affordable as digital wristwatches.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [17:02](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2010

Seven Poems in Fieralingue

My thanks to Anny Ballardini for publishing seven of my new poems in Fieralingue:

http://www.fieralingue.it/modules.php?name=Content&pa=list_pages_categories&cid=230

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [10:38](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2010

Published Email Correspondence

Otoliths have published *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence*, which is a series of emails between poet Jake Berry and myself. Here is the publisher's description:

'This 18-month transatlantic email correspondence between Jake Berry and Jeffrey Side ranges across and intertwines a variety of topics that include: poetry and music; film and TV; the changes in culture over the past few decades; the differences in regional U.S. and U.K. accents; the difficulty of reaching the famous in order to interview them; the songwriter as poet and vice versa.'

It's available to purchase here:

<http://www.lulu.com/product/paperback/outside-voices-an-email-correspondence/12675463>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 09:19 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SUNDAY, 6 JUNE 2010

Two Poems in Jacket Magazine

I have two recent poems in Jacket Magazine:

<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/40/side-2-poems.shtml>

My thanks to Pam Brown.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 05:27 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SUNDAY, 11 APRIL 2010

Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes

Thanks to Bill Lavender of Lavender Ink books, a collaborative poem by Jake Berry and myself called *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* (with drawings and cover art by Rich Curtis) is now available as a book at Amazon.

More information about it can be found here:

<http://lavenderink.org/cyclone/>

Excerpt:

Her dignity
could not be effaced
by the quality
of her clothes.
I knew this
back near the border
when I was not satisfied.
I recommend highly
a new approach
to the situation.
Such was the time
spent together.
What could I offer her
that would not
betray her?
Money was cold comfort,
bleak as the weather.
There would be
half a smile
and polite rejection
and words
beneath her breath
in a language
not spoken since
a time
before words
were written.
All this
I tell you now.
A time
there was
when such
could not be broached.

Not even
by those
whose position
it was to assist.
Why do I
go on this way?

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 08:46 LINKS TO THIS POST 

MONDAY, 8 MARCH 2010

Two Poems at Todd Swift's Eyewear

Todd Swift has kindly included two of my poems in a recent profile of me at his Eyewear blog:

<http://toddsswift.blogspot.com/2010/03/featured-poet-jeffrey-side.html>

Thanks, Todd.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 11:38 LINKS TO THIS POST 

SATURDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2009

Another Day for Kent Johnson

A new book by Kent Johnson is now available. It's called *Day* and is published by Blazevox. It has had some good reviews, including the following by Juliana Spahr:

'If the 836-pp. *Day* established Kenny Goldsmith as without a doubt the leading conceptual poet of his time, the 836-pp. *Day* by Kent Johnson may well be remembered for nudging the politics of

Conceptual Poetry out of blithely affirmative, institutional framings, and into truly negational critical spaces’.

Commendation indeed, if Spahr had actually said it, but it is a fabrication by Johnson, in keeping with the parodic tone he sets for the book, for indeed, Johnson’s *Day* is an exact reproduction of Kenny Goldsmith’s “work” of the same name. I’ve put “work” in quotes because Goldsmith would readily agree that the work in question was not “created” by him in any authorial sense. He describes his working procedure for the book as follows:

‘I am spending my 39th year practicing uncreativity. On Friday, September 1, 2000, I began retyping the day’s NEW YORK TIMES word for word, letter for letter, from the upper left hand corner to the lower right hand corner, page by page’.

<http://www.geoffreyyoung.com/thefigures/day.html>

His term for this procedure is “uncreative writing”, which is,

‘a constraint-based process; uncreativity as a creative practice. By typing page upon page, making no distinction between article, editorial and advertisement, disregarding all typographic and graphical treatments, Goldsmith levels the daily newspaper. DAY is a monument to the ephemeral, comprised of yesterday’s news, a fleeting moment concretized, captured, then reframed into the discourse of literature’.

<http://www.geoffreyyoung.com/thefigures/day.html>

However, this arduous undertaking of retyping the whole newspaper is not all it appears to be, for he later contradicts himself by saying:

'But in capitalism, labor equals value. So certainly my project must have value, for if my time is worth an hourly wage, then I might be paid handsomely for this work. But the truth is that I've subverted this equation by OCR'ing [scanning] as much of the newspaper as I can'.

<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/uncreativity.html>

Johnson's appropriation of the "work", therefore, can be seen as a logical extension of Goldsmith's procedural stratagems, and perfectly within the ethical scope that Goldsmith has allowed for himself (and presumably others) in the publishing arena. Indeed, if Johnson, or anyone else, for that matter, had not done this, it could be argued, convincingly, that Goldsmith had proclaimed his aesthetic in vain.

However, such a compliment that Johnson has paid to Goldsmith's aesthetic could be seen as something of a poisoned chalice, in that it has painted Goldsmith into a corner. For if he were to sue Johnson, he would be seen as something of a hypocrite, and thereby lose some artistic credibility. But if he doesn't sue Johnson, he will leave his other "works" open to the same fate as has been visited on *Day* in this instance.

Of course, Goldsmith could have avoided such a dilemma by simply publishing the book anonymously, but that is, perhaps, too much a council of perfection that not even his aesthetic could countenance.

Incidentally, it could be said that Johnson's appropriation of Goldsmith's "work" is, perhaps, the more innovative and audacious act in comparison to Goldsmith's "original" gesture, which, I think most will recognise, was based on an already established artistic precedent.

Day by Kent Johnson is priced at \$30, plus shipping and handling. (\$300 for each of ten numbered copies signed by the “Author”, no charge for shipping and handling.) All copies come with specially designed, affixed stickers (on cover, back cover, title page, spine, etc.) to impart authorship, copyright, blurbs, and co-production. It can be purchased at Blazevox:

<http://www.blazevox.org/bk-kj4.htm>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 20:19 LINKS TO THIS POST 

TUESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2009

Is Stephen Burt’s “New Thing” all that New?

I have just seen an article by Stephen Burt called ‘The New Thing: The object lessons of recent American poetry’ in the *Boston Review* in which he says:

‘For much of the past decade, the most imitated new American poets were slippery, digressive, polyvocalic, creators of overlapping, colorful fragments. Their poems were avowedly personal, although they never retold the poets’ life stories (they did not tell stories at all); the poets used, or at least mentioned, difficult ideas, especially from continental philosophy, although they never laid out philosophical arguments (they did not lay out arguments at all). Nor did they describe concrete objects at length. Full of illogic, of associative leaps, their poems resembled dreams, performances, speeches, or pieces of music, and they were, in M.H. Abrams’s famous formulation, less mirror than lamp: the poets sought to project their own experiences, in sparkling bursts of voluble utterance. Their models, among older authors, were Emily Dickinson, John Berryman, John Ashbery, perhaps Frank O’Hara; some had studied (or studied with) Jorie Graham, and many had picked up

devices from the Language writers of the West Coast. These poets were what I, eleven years ago, called “elliptical,” what other (sometimes hostile) observers called “New Lyric,” or “post-avant,” or “Third Way.” Their emblematic first book was Mark Levine’s *Debt* (1993), their emblematic magazine probably *Fence* (founded 1998); their bad poems were bad surrealism, random-seeming improvisations, or comic turns hoping only to hold an audience’

He then sees a move away from this sort of poetry to that typified by (among others) Devin Johnston, Jon Woodward and Alice James. He describes this as follows:

‘The poets of the New Thing observe scenes and people (not only, but also, themselves) with a self-subordinating concision, so much so that the term “minimalism” comes up in discussions of their work, though the false analogies to earlier movements can make the term misleading. The poets of the New Thing eschew sarcasm and tread lightly with ironies, and when they seem hard to pin down, it is because they leave space for interpretations to fit. Woodward’s *Rain*, with its five-word lines and five-line elegiac stanzas, makes a good example:

the slick
of rainwater converts each thing’s
outside to an image of
inside the only object without
a soul is the sun

So says one stanza; six pages on, another reads:

the tar they use to
fill the cracks shines orange
from the orange streetlights but

is blacker than the asphalt
which doesn't shine

We may have to reread to see, amid these scenes, the grief (for Woodward's dead friend Patrick) that guides the whole book.'

My apologies for being obtuse but how does this sort of poetry exemplify anything new? Granted, in contrast to the poetry that Burt sees as non-descriptive and elliptical it is different. Nevertheless, it is not historically new in the development of poetic writing since High Modernism. On the contrary, it seems merely to represent a style of poetic writing that has always been active in mainstream poetry, namely that which has always relied on an empiricist aesthetic in describing phenomena. Indeed, Burt seems to acknowledge this:

'This turn among poets to reference, to concrete, real things, has parallels, if not contributory causes, in literary academia. By 2001 there were books, articles, and anthologies devoted to "thing theory," showing how literary works depend on the structures and histories of the "solid objects" (Douglas Mao's term) that they might depict.'

Therefore, it is curious that Burt sees this as novel. He adds:

'Reference, brevity, self-restraint, attention outside the self, material objects as models, Williams and his heirs as predecessors, classical lyric and epigram as precedents: all these, together, constitute the New Thing.'

This statement could have been made at any point in history about mainstream empiricist poetry.

By the way, some of what I say in my article 'Empirical and Non-Empirical Identifiers' in Jacket magazine, may inform any discussion this blog entry fosters.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 07:49 LINKS TO THIS POST



TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2009

Has British Poetry Had Any Significance Since Wordsworth?

This may seem an outlandish question, but I think it has some force behind it. Of course, the influence of Wordsworth on contemporary British mainstream poetry need hardly be stressed, and I have written extensively about this elsewhere. It is because of this influence that most of the celebrated British poetry of the Twentieth Century tended towards mediocrity when compared to American poetry of the same period. Certainly, there will be individual lines or stanzas from British poetry that belie this statement, but generally, I believe, the statement to be accurate.

In my last blog entry, 'Can There Ever Be Another High Modernism', I suggested that since High Modernism poetic innovation has been slight. Nevertheless, what little of it there has been seems to have been the product of an American sensibility, the most acute example being, perhaps, Language Poetry. Indeed, the more I look at the poetry of the last century, the more I see it as having been predominantly the manifestation of this American sensibility, incarnated in American-born poets such as Eliot, Pound, Stein, Stevens, Kerouac, Ginsberg, Ashbery, Bernstein and others. The only exception to this American ascendancy was Joyce, who was Irish.

Even before the Twentieth Century, America was, for the most part,

producing the better poets, such as Whitman, Dickinson and Poe. It is certainly true, one could argue, that from Poe to Eliot the influence of French poets such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine was very much present, but it was American poets rather than British poets who seem to have had the perceptiveness to see something of value in these French poets and appropriate it.

British poetry, conversely, has continued in the tradition of Wordsworthian empiricism and parochialism, largely antagonistic to any use of a poetic language that basis its effects on aspects other than descriptiveness and anecdotal confession. How long this will remain the case is uncertain.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 04:56 LINKS TO THIS POST



FRIDAY, 7 AUGUST 2009

Can There Ever Be Another High Modernism?

This post is developed from a comment I left on Adam Fieled's blog *Stoning the Devil*, in relation to his 'Flarf Time' post which was his response to Nana Gordon's 'Flarf: Memorable? Novel?' post on her blog. The exchange between Adam and Nada revolved around poetic value and cultural significance: Adam arguing that poetry should ideally be able to encompass these concepts, and Nada arguing (if I understand her position correctly) that such concerns were not necessarily applicable in evaluating poetry's "worth".

My own view is a position held between these two opposites. Whilst I accept that ultimately a poem's emotional value cannot be objectively estimated outside of its personal significance to individual readers, I believe that each poem has within it a potential for historical significance by either moving poetic language forward or, as in the case of Ginsberg's *Howl*, having a cultural impact largely

independent of linguistic concerns. As is probably the case, very few poems written since the appearance of *Howl* have achieved anything near a national or international cultural significance.

But having said this, Flarf's "frivolity" of approach is (if albeit depressing) perhaps apt for our times, as is its estimation of poetic "value". Perhaps poetry should not be taken very seriously, at least not that which has been written during the past 50 years, or so. However, many poetic schools seem to take themselves very seriously. Perhaps, this is why such schools form in the first place. It is certainly a fact that, historically, many poets have written a particular style of poetry as a way of being accepted by one of these schools, if only to potentiate their publishing opportunities—poetic schools are more marketable than desperado poets are

Of course, alongside this state of affairs there arise the inevitable rivalries and poetic factions. Perhaps, I am mistaken, but the only exception to this seemed to be the relationship between the Beats, the New York School and the Black Mountain School. They seem to have got on very well together—at least from what I have gathered from reading biographies of Ginsberg and Kerouac.

As we know, poetry is not read much now. Consequently, poetry has become culturally insignificant. I read somewhere that if all the poets now writing vanished from the earth, their absence would not affect the culture one jot. I am afraid this may be true. This cannot be accurately said for practitioners of the other arts such as music, painting and film. They seem to now do for us what poetry used to do.

Of course, a similar state to that which is present regarding poetry now was present before High Modernism, as can be seen in the poetry anthologies of the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

Nevertheless, I do not see an equivalent to High Modernism on the current poetic horizon—or at least not that which doesn't involve a multi-media approach, which I think would not really count as a multi-media's affects would rely more than on words alone. Although, I accept that a poetic sensibility can be expressed in most art forms to some extent, I think that what we have come to know as poetry—i.e. that which is read on the page or heard being spoken—would be lost in a multi-media approach.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 12:13 LINKS TO THIS POST 

WEDNESDAY, 5 AUGUST 2009

Linda Thompson Appeal

I have just heard that Linda Thompson, singer-songwriter and former singing partner to Richard Thompson, is having some difficulty funding her next album due to various changes in the music industry, which some of us regret. She has set up an appeal for funding at a site called The Hector Fund (a site which is something of an innovation in these matters). Her page on the site can be found here:

<http://www.thehectorfund.com/about/linda-thompson/>

Linda says:

“I'd like your help. I'm trying to raise money so I can record the music, and be able to pay the excellent musicians, engineers and studios a fair wage and release the album to the public. So I am asking for financing - not charity (please save that for a more worthy cause) - but a business transaction. You, the audience, put up some money and I return the favor by sending you the music and much, much more!

I'm trying to raise \$50,000 to cover ALL of the costs associated with independently producing, manufacturing and marketing an album in today's marketplace.

When I started playing music in the sixties and seventies, we shared everything- perhaps some things we shouldn't have. I'd like to return to a little bit of that spirit now. You the audience can share in the experience of making my record with me and be the first to hear it when its done - and I get to stick it to "the man" (whoever passes for the 'man' these days) by working outside of the system."

Having been a fan of Linda and Richard for many years, I think it is a disgrace that someone who has contributed so much musically over the years has to be put in a position whereby she has to resort to financial help from fans and public alike. It just goes to show the appalling state of the music business, which even in the folk/country genre is only thinking of the bottom dollar.

So I hope some of you will help Linda, and, as she says, don't think of it as charity but more as sponsorship.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 12:51 LINKS TO THIS POST



The Dissembling Poet: Seamus Heaney and the Avant-garde

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Saturday, 21 March 2009

I came across an interesting interview with Seamus Heaney (a recent recipient of the David Cohen prize for literature, being awarded £40,000) by Dennis O'Driscoll ('Beyond All This Fiddle') where Heaney says about the avant-garde:

‘It’s an old-fashioned term by now. In literature, nobody can cause bother any more. John Ashbery was a kind of avant-garde poet certainly and now he’s become a mainstream voice. The work of the “Language Poets” and of the alternative poetries in Britain—associated with people in Cambridge University like J. H. Prynne—is not the charlatan work some perceive it to be; however, these poets form a kind of cult that shuns general engagement, regarding it as a vulgarity and a decadence. There’s a phrase I heard as a criticism of W. H. Auden and I like the sound of it: somebody said that he didn’t have the rooted normality of the major talent. I’m not sure the criticism applies to Auden, but the gist of it is generally worth considering. Even in T. S. Eliot, the big, normal world comes flowing around you. Robert Lowell went head-on at the times—there was no more literary poet around, but at the same time he was like a great cement mixer: he just shovelled the world in and it delivered. Now that’s what I yearn for—the cement mixer rather than the chopstick.’

Several things about this statement need to be addressed, so I will go through it step-by-step to do so. When Heaney says that the term “avant-garde” is old-fashioned, what does this really say regarding the term’s significance in relation to his own poetic ideals? Indeed, many critics have accused Heaney’s poetic, itself, as being distinctly old-fashioned, a sort of neo-Georgian retrogressive “poetic” utterance. It is as if Heaney recognises the accuracy of this criticism, and in an effort to deflect its force feels the need to reflect it back at his detractors. That he is sensitive on this point is suggested by his saying (as if an afterthought) that ‘in literature, nobody can cause bother any more’. This is a curious thing for a man of letters to say in the absence of a defensive posture. What does he mean by “bother”, anyway? Is he referring to poetic innovation as being troublesome, or simply referring to personal “bother” caused by negative views of his poetry by observant critics? Whatever the case, to say that the term

“avant-garde” is old-fashioned is beside the point, as Heaney, practised in casuistry and dissembling, knows all too well.

His citing of Ashbery as a belated mainstream voice also makes little sense outside of Ashbery being published in the UK by Carcanet. Certainly, he can't be referring to Ashbery's poetic which has yet to receive unreserved approbation by mainstream criticism, at least in Britain. Regardless of the truth of the matter, even if Ashbery was now part of the mainstream this does not demonstrate the emasculation of avant-garde concerns, which is the stated thrust of Heaney's argument. Interestingly, if Ashbery is a mainstream voice this would imply that he and Heaney are both writing poetry. To reposition Ashbery within the boundaries of mainstream verse, all Heaney seems to be doing is to flatter his own poetic practice by association.

When he says of the alternative poetries in Britain that it 'is not the charlatan work some perceive it to be', who are the "some" he is referring to? No doubt, the main body of the mainstream, but I think, also, Heaney himself. His acknowledgment of Prynne, here, seems to be little more than an attempt to distance himself momentarily from the "some" he alludes to. If it were not this, then his saying that, 'these poets form a kind of cult that shuns general engagement, regarding it as a vulgarity and a decadence' recoups the generosity he grants Prynne. It seems not to have occurred to Heaney that any "cult" status these poets have acquired was, perhaps, the consequence of being marginalised by the mainstream. It is certainly not true that they shun "general engagement", if he suggests by that term an aspiration for their work to be read and for it to communicate with a significant readership. In this respect, there is very little dissimilarity between mainstream and avant-garde poets.

Heaney's appropriation of the criticism he sees as inappropriate

regarding Auden ('that he didn't have the rooted normality of the major talent') and conferring it upon the avant-garde, implies that major talent can only be an outpouring of an unadventurous character. If the history of art tells us anything, it is that this is categorically not the case. That Heaney uses Eliot, of all poets, to argue his point is another instance of his use of misdirection and redefinition, similar instances of which can be seen littered throughout his *The Redress of Poetry*. Whilst it is certainly true that Eliot was a conservative figure in both temperament and ideology, and that his later work was not as effervescent as that of his major period, Heaney's suggestion that Eliot's poetry evinces the 'normal world' is only accurate regarding content, the treatment of phenomena in Eliot, however, is seldom "normal" and usually problematical.

An expanded version of this blog has been commissioned by Jacket magazine and can be found here:

<http://jacketmagazine.com/37/heaney-side.shtml>

Responses to it, both positive and negative, can be found on the right of the page.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 07:09 [LINKS TO THIS POST](#) 

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JEFFREY SIDE

WEDNESDAY, 5 AUGUST 2009

William Wyler's 'Wuthering Heights'

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Tuesday, 3 February 2009

Looking at the barrage of overrated and over-produced contemporary films it is easy to forget that film once aspired to be an art form. One such film is William Wyler's 1939 underrated version of Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* which is, for me, the best film adaptation of that novel. Whilst the film deals with only the first 16 chapters of the novel's 34, it compensates by capturing perfectly the emotional essence of the book, which for me resides in the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff. When read in light of having seen this film, the rest of the novel's 18 chapters seem almost like an afterthought or padding.

Wyler's use of camera, lighting and mise-en-scene take much from the German Expressionist cinema of the 1920s, which is to be expected since many of this school's filmmakers and technicians had, by the early 1930s, relocated to Hollywood and become part of mainstream film production there. This expressionist style is well suited to the film, as it provides a visual equivalent to the novel's gothic atmosphere.

The film quite deservedly won an Academy Award for Best Original Score, by Alfred Newman. Indeed, it is difficult to separate film and

ABOUT ME

 JEFFREY SIDE

Editor of The Argotist Online, a poetry website that was founded in 2005. The website also publishes poetry, fiction and literary criticism ebooks via its publishing arm Argotist Ebooks, founded in 2010. Educated at Liverpool University (BA in English, 1997) and Leeds University (PhD in English, 2007). Has had poetry published in Poetry Salzburg Review, Underground Window, A Little Poetry, Poethia, Nthposition, Eratio, Pirene's Fountain, Fieralingue, Moria, Ancient Heart, Blazevox, Lily, Big Bridge, Jacket, Textimagepoem, Apochryphaltext, 9th St. Laboratories, P. F. S. Post, Great Works, Hutt, The Dande Review, Poetry Bay and Dusie. His book publications include, Carrier of the Seed, Slimvol, Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes (with Jake Berry)

score, so entwined and essential are they that they become almost dyadic. To listen to Newman's score alone is a deeply emotional experience.

However, *Wuthering Heights* did not win the Academy Award for Best Picture, which went to the unfortunately titled *Gone With the Wind*. In my view, this was an oversight because *Wuthering Heights* is the far superior film. One cannot help but suspect that *Gone with the Wind* won because it was an adaptation of a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, which dealt with a "big" subject. However, for me, the really timeless and universal themes are dealt with in *Wuthering Heights*.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 07:07 LINKS TO THIS POST 

Empirical and Non-Empirical Identifiers

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Friday, 28 November 2008

I have an essay in Jacket Magazine called 'Empirical and Non-Empirical Identifiers':

<http://jacketmagazine.com/36/side-j-essay.shtml>

This essay looks at certain effects of language that I call Empirical Identifiers because of the ways in which they encourage exegetical closure through their functioning as referents to phenomena. It also looks at their opposites, which I call Non-Empirical Identifiers because of the ways in which they invite readers to participate in the creation of individual meaning and significance from language that is autonomous and non-referential. These identifiers, by enabling a ready recognition of empirical and non-empirical writing procedures in poetry, may prove useful as diagnostic devices for literary and stylistic criticism. The essay examines a range of poetic works from

and Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence (with Jake Berry).

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PUBLICATIONS

Wordsworth's Empiricist Poetic and its Influence in the Twentieth Century

Signs That Do Not Signal

Carrier of the Seed

Coleridge's Early Empiricism

Collected Poetry Reviews 2004-2013

the last century and assesses the extent to which they exhibit a reliance on either Empirical Identifiers or Non-Empirical Identifiers.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 07:06 LINKS TO THIS POST 

Poetry Collection

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Sunday, 13 April 2008

I have a short collection of poems out with cPress called *Slimvol*:

<http://www.lulu.com/cPress>

The ebook version is free.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 07:00 LINKS TO THIS POST 

'Carrier of the Seed' Available as a Free Ebook

My poem *Carrier of the Seed* is now out as a free ebook with Blazevox. You can download it at:

<http://www.blazevox.org/ebook.htm>

What the critics have said about it:

Jake Berry:

'Excellent, mythopoeic, my kind of stuff.'

Marjorie Perloff:

Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes

Distorted Reflections

Empirical and Non-Empirical
Identifiers

Outside Voices: An Email
Correspondence

The Influence of Coleridge on
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Kundavega

'It's very striking. The reader is propelled forward, thematically and mythologically. The result is extremely interesting.'

Hank Lazer:

'An engaging avalanche of a poem, and I like the collision of various registers of language throughout the poem. Overall, a feel of contemporary myth-dream propelled narrative to it. A truly contemporary quest.'

Andrew Duncan:

'It negates a whole repertoire of well-loved effects and also demands the reader to switch off their routine response and find a new way of reacting to the text. *Carrier*, presented as one long continuous strip, has a straightforward phonetic organisation: every line is three words long. This disconnects the line break from the flow of sense of the text. The telltales, which show someone's emotional state, which make it possible to slip into the rhythm of a text and a situation, are effaced. The text thus breaks free from the limits of a soul and could for example be the voices of several different people, standing at different points of a situation. It ceases to be owned by a personality, which we could try to reconstruct in order to identify with it and share what it owns.'

Pam Brown:

'The poem is breathlessly written, imbued with distinctive imagining and, perhaps surprisingly, it also maintains a satisfying, dynamic-yet-steady rhythm, reading like a long, measured monologue or song. Side intersperses antiquated traces that sometimes suggest classic fairy-tales - robes, kingdoms, forests, parlours, maidens, minstrels, pilgrims, with a contemporary everyday lexicon of cybernetics and

with plain speech. The made-up language overtakes the poet intrinsically and emphasises the suffusion of feeling that pulses throughout the poem.'

Adam Fieled:

'Reading the poem is like riding on a high-velocity train; it doesn't get sluggish, and there are no breaks in the continuity of the sustained, rapid rhythm. This is a poem that takes what someone like Barrett Watten did and extends its range. It has the kind of heart and soul that Watten does not, yet it maintains the sleek feeling and pungent sharpness of Watten.'

John Couth:

'All the way through to the poem's conclusion, with its implied continuation, the reader will have embarked down an extraordinary route of languages, registers and vocabularies, which function to arrest, surprise and disrupt, languages that flow together, collide and cut across each other's current like a plaited waterway. In turn, this flow has been enriched by the assimilation of artefacts from different generations of writers; these deepen the work interlacing it with echoes and experiences from different times and cultures. The integration of so many disparate elements into one cogent construct is the poem's triumph.'

John M. Bennett:

'Say, this is an excellent piece.'

Michael Rothenberg:

'I like it a lot.'

Reviews of it can be found at the following sites:

Stoning the Devil:

<http://adamfieled.blogspot.com/2007/12/jeffrey-side-carrier-of-seed.html>

Jacket:

<http://jacketmagazine.com/35/r-side-rb-brown.shtml>

Apochryphaltext:

http://www.apocryphaltextpoetry.com/Vol._2,_No.2_3/carrier_of_the_seed_jeffrey_side.htm

Big Bridge:

<http://www.bigbridge.org/REV-CAR.HTM>

Exultations & Difficulties:

<http://timtim.typepad.com/exultationsdifficulties/2008/04/melting-into-na.html>

Shearsman:

http://www.shearsman.com/pages/editorial/reviews2008/jc_side.html

The haunting cover photo was done by my friend Rachel Lisi whose other photography, artworks and writings can be found at:

<http://www.kundavega.com/>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:57 LINKS TO THIS POST 

Ezra Pound's Romantic Roots

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Sunday, 28 October 2007

I have an essay called 'Ezra Pound and the Romantic Ideal' at:

www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/JSideEPoundRomanticIdeal.htm

The essay examines the poetic ideas of Ezra Pound and shows that they have similarities to the poetic ideas of William Wordsworth, especially with regard to Wordsworth's advocating a naturalistic and descriptive mode of poetic writing that became the principal style of poetry for the rest of the nineteenth century and the greater part of the twentieth.

The essay also argues that the received opinion that Pound's poetical radicalism was largely motivated by his antipathy to Romantic poetry is exaggerated. Rather his radicalism was the result of his reaction to the stylistic excesses of late Victorian poetry, and as such can be paralleled with Wordsworth's reaction to the stylistic excesses of late seventeenth-century poetry.

To this extent, Pound's poetic ideas can be seen as a continuation of certain Romantic ideals in poetry; ideals primarily articulated by Wordsworth, having been developed from seventeenth-century empiricist philosophy.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:56 LINKS TO THIS POST 

Veronica Forrest-Thompson Article

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Monday, 24 September 2007

I have an article on the poet Veronica Forrest-Thompson at Shadow Train called:

'Multiple Registers, Intertextuality and Boundaries of Interpretation in Veronica Forrest-Thompson'

<http://shadowtrain.com/id201.html>

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:55 LINKS TO THIS POST



To Connote or Not to Connote

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Saturday, 14 April 2007

It is not often that I'm quoted, so when I came across George Szirtes 2007 StAnza Lecture and saw that he'd quoted the following statement (which I'd made on an online poetry forum last year) I was quite flattered until I continued reading and saw his response to it. The quote from me is:

'I don't think there is such a thing as difficult poetry, only poetry that connotes or denotes. The former is always considered difficult by opponents of it. *The Waste Land* is more connotative than a Simon Armitage poem, for instance, that is why *The Waste Land* is seen as difficult.'

His response to it is:

‘I am not sure how this writer can draw a sharp distinction between connotation and denotation in any speech, let alone poetry. Connoting and denoting are simultaneous processes.’

Semantically and cognitively, connoting and denoting may be simultaneous processes but their creative usage in poetry necessarily modifies to some extent the balance Szirtes observes. If this were not the case then literary criticism would not be as problematic as it is.

Besides, most readers would, I’m sure, agree that *The Waste Land* is more connotative than an Armitage poem. This is not to say that Armitage’s poems do not connote; the difference is in the extent that they do when compared with *The Waste Land*.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:52 LINKS TO THIS POST



Neil Astley's Apologia for Populist Poetry

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Saturday, 4 November 2006

Rupert Loydell of Stride Books alerted me to an article in *New Statesman* by Bloodaxe Books editor Neil Astley called (rather clumsily) ‘Give Poetry Back to People’. In it, Astley laments what he mistakenly sees as the lack of interest poetry publishers display in the sort of poetry he champions: namely that which is populist, descriptive and prose-like. He says, ‘When poetry publishers and reviewers ignore their readership, this is called “maintaining critical standards”’. He argues that this indifference is inappropriate given that ‘more people write poetry than go to football matches, and poetry is popular in schools, at festivals and at the hundreds of readings staged every week in pubs, theatres, arts centres and even

people's homes'.

Moreover, 'Poetry has reached a wider audience through films, radio, television and the internet, as well as through initiatives such as London's Poems on the Underground, which has been imitated around the world'. That is not all:

'Big names in world poetry read to full houses at Scotland's poetry festival, Stanza in St Andrews, every March, and at Ledbury in July. This month, hundreds of poetry enthusiasts will flock to the biennial Poetry International at the South Bank Centre in London (24-29 October), where the international line-up includes Elizabeth Alexander, Martin Espada and Jane Hirshfield (US), Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon (Ireland), Tua Forsström (Finland), Tomas Tranströmer (Sweden), Arundhati Subramaniam (India) and Gabeba Baderoon (South Africa). The following weekend (3-5 November), Aldeburgh Poetry Festival will fill the town's Jubilee Hall with readings by writers from Kurdistan and Catalonia to the US'.

He adds that despite the extensive promotion by major bookshop chains of poetry that is 'aimed at a broader readership'; nevertheless, 'all the talk in poetry publishing is of crisis'. He says that,

'The producers of poetry aren't in tune with the lovers of poetry. Many poets and publishers are actually hostile to the promotion of poetry [...]. They see marketing as a dirty word instead of simply the means by which their books are made available to more readers'.

Because of this state of affairs, 'Bookshops stock less and less poetry, concentrating on safe bets such as anthologies and selected poems by big-name authors'. The solution to this problem is, he says, to publish 'a range of books and authors that people actually want to read'.

Furthermore, 'Continuing to package their books to appeal only to an intellectual elite has severely disadvantaged' poetry publishers. He says, rather patronisingly, that if 'readers find a book visually unappealing, they won't pick it up. And if the back-cover blurb is a piece of turgid literary criticism, new readers will be scared off'.

For Astley, 'Too often, poetry editors think of themselves and their poet friends as the arbiters of taste, selecting only writers they think people ought to read. [...] Ignoring the readership would be commercial suicide in any other field, but this malpractice in poetry publishing and reviewing has survived into the 21st century thanks to "academic protectionism".'

He continues: 'Editors' "personal taste" is too often an excuse or disguise for elitism and arrogance. In my view, my responsibility as an editor is to be responsive to writers and readers, and to give readers access to a wide range of world poetry'. As long as it is populist, descriptive and prose-like, one presumes.

He says that 'Contemporary poetry has never been more varied, but what the public gets to hear about are the new post-Larkin "mainstream" and the "postmodern avant-gardists" (with their academic strongholds in Oxford and Cambridge respectively)'. I would have thought Astley's own poetic preferences have now replaced the post-Larkin "mainstream". Moreover, as for the postmodern avant-gardists; surely they are somewhat marginalized.

He concludes with echoes of a liberal humanist aesthetic: 'The establishment must be responsive not to literary and academic cliques, but to readers, especially at a time when public interest in poetry is growing so rapidly. Poetry's dinosaurs have to realise that our country, culture and economic climate have changed, and so have their responsibilities'.

In his article, Astley seems to be in something of an unnecessary dilemma. On the one hand, he laments the failure of establishment poetry publishing houses to churn out even more populist, descriptive and prose-like poetry, while on the other hand he boasts about such poetry already being the dominant strain in contemporary British and international culture. Hasn't he the slightest notion that poetry should be an art form and not a sort of social realism to be blindly marketed like reality TV?

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT 06:48 LINKS TO THIS POST



Sean O'Brien and Seamus Heaney Redefining the Mainstream

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Sunday, 15 January 2006

In Sean O' Brien's piece ('Rilke and the Contemporary Reader') in *Poetry Review* (issue 95-3) he rightly acknowledges that much contemporary poetry in Britain is 'indulgently anecdotal'. He sees this anecdotalism as traceable to Philip Larkin (for older exponents) and Frank O'Hara (for younger ones). He says that these influences,

'trade on an attachment to authenticity which is felt to outbid both technical reach and thematic scale. Both serve a misconceived 'democratic' notion of poetry as entertainment, in which equality (a notion misplaced in this context) emerges not in diversity but as sameness'.

This seems strange coming from a poet whose career could be said to have embraced and championed realist tendencies in poetry. Indeed, he seems to have won every mainstream poetry prize going (including

the Cholmondeley Award, the Somerset Maugham award, the E.M. Forster Award, and the Forward Prize). And Poetry Review (with typical hyperbole) describes him as 'the poet-editor-critic of his generation'. Peter Forbes in issue 91-1 of that publication reasserts O'Brien's mainstream credentials:

'The members of this group of mainstream-poets-who-are-currently-making-the-running (they need a handy name but we'll come to that later) have been winning the prizes in the last few years: Carol Ann Duffy (virtually everything); Sean O'Brien (Forward), Don Paterson (Eliot and Forward First), Michael Donaghy (Forward), John Burnside (Whitbread), Jamie McKendrick (Forward), Jo Shapcott (Forward), Ruth Padel (National Poetry Competition), Ian Duhig (National Poetry Competition), Paul Farley (Forward First Collection). Prizes may not sell many extra copies of books but they play an important role in the consolidation of poetic reputations'.

Peter Porter in his review for *Poetry Review* (issue 91-1) of O'Brien's *Downriver* includes O'Brien with, among others, Don Paterson, Glyn Maxwell and Simon Armitage as poets who 'bring back intellectualism and populism to British Poetry'. Porter sees these poets as 'delivering us' from 'the hermetically sealed Old Experimenters in J. H. Prynne's Cambridge'. Of these "saviours" of British poetry, Porter says that they 'cared enormously about versification' and that their material was 'sharply observed' and (echoes of the anecdotal?) 'wittily presented'.

Porter notes that O'Brien 'writes with the ease and assurance of a poet so at home with the real world'. This need/desire for realism is further expressed in O'Brien's entry under the academic staff biographies list of Sheffield Hallam University:

'His poetry often combines demotic and more literary language and is strongly aware of its northern location - a poem such as 'Cousin Coat'

creates an angry presence of historical injustice, closed mines and cenotaphs, by enhancing the rhythms and rhymes of ordinary speech. This means that when a more extravagant word is used, it feels necessary'.

Thus, we see realism (as geographical location and linguistic functionality) emphasised and esteemed. For Porter, such realism is preferable to what he sees as O'Brien's former less-functional language, which 'sometimes tended to be strangled Laocoon-wise by their ramifications, their lineation and syntax tangling like roots in a pot'.

David Wheatley, in his *Guardian* (October 5, 2002) review of the mainstream poet John Fuller's *Now and for a Time*, notes that O'Brien, in *The Deregulated Muse*, sees Fuller as a postmodernist poet. This is a designation which, says Wheatley, 'must have left readers of Jeremy Prynne and the *Conductors of Chaos* poets scratching their heads in disbelief'.

Given all this, I fail to understand why, in recent years, mainstream poets such as O'Brien have been willing to bite the hand that feeds them. Could it be that they sense the Hand's "imminent" demise, and are preparing for the time when they will have to jump ship and adequately explain themselves to their new crew in terms of a redefinition of their poetic lineage?

Something of this can be glimpsed with Seamus Heaney in his *The Redress of Poetry* where he appears to want his cake and eat it. He says:

'Poetry cannot afford to lose its [...], joy in being a process of language as well as a representation of things in the world'.

His empiricism is unavoidably evident in this statement. However his about-face on the nature of poetic language is puzzling. Could this turnaround perhaps indicate that Heaney realizes that his poetic modus operandi is beginning to lose currency in the more progressive circles of academic poetic discourse, and that to fully safeguard his posthumous poetic reputation he has to enable future critics of his work to capably defend his reputation against charges that he is a merely descriptive poet?

Yet, his continual wariness of the linguistic and formal properties of a poem is still very much evident. This can be seen in his cautious praise (also in *The Redress of Poetry*) of the descriptive poet Edward Thomas:

'Thomas came through with a poem in a single, unfumbled movement, one with all the confidence of a necessary thing, one in which again at last the fantasy and extravagance of the imagery and diction did not dissipate themselves or his or his theme'.

Here, Heaney can be seen elevating poetic content over poetic language. This would seem to bring in to question his sincerity in saying that poetry cannot afford to lose its 'joy in being a process of language'.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [06:25](#) LINKS TO THIS POST



The Anti-Modernism of Seamus Heaney and Philip Hobsbaum

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Sunday, 2 October 2005

I've been reading a *Boston Globe* article called 'Heaney Ponders the

Powers of Poetry' by Robert Taylor, which praises Seamus Heaney's 1995 apologia for descriptive poetry, *The Redress of Poetry*. In the article Taylor writes:

'Seamus Heaney's recent Nobel Prize coincides with the publication of *The Redress of Poetry*, the lectures he gave over five years as professor of poetry at Oxford, ranging from the Elizabethan audacities of Christopher Marlowe to the bleak void of Philip Larkin, and illuminates a point of view of poetry as a force capable of transforming culture and the self'.

Yet from reading *The Redress of Poetry*, what I find is that far from advocating 'poetry as a force capable of transforming culture and the self', Heaney argues for a neo-Georgian descriptive poetic aesthetic that, if anything, can only inhibit supposed cultural transformations.

In *The Redress of Poetry*, Heaney's aversion to experiment and formal innovation, and his bias for a poetry consisting of obvious subject matter is evident in his criticism of Dylan Thomas. For Heaney Thomas has a 'too unenlightened trust in the plasticity of language'.

Heaney also has reservations about poetic artifice. Of Thomas's use of it, he says that 'the demand for more matter, less art, does inevitably arise'. Elizabeth Bishop, however, has his approval because 'she never allows the formal delights of her art to mollify the hard realities of her subjects'.

In *Seamus Heaney: From Major to Minor*, R. Caldwell rightly criticises Heaney by saying:

'There is too often the feel with his poetry that the paraphrase is the end of the matter: there is little of the multifaceted richness of suggestion that invites one to probe further'.

Heaney, of course, was a protege of Philip Hobsbaum who made it possible for Heaney to get a publishing contract with Faber & Faber. Hobsbaum was also a founder of the 1960s British poetry clique, The Group. Originally based in London, The Group founded a wing in Belfast when Hobsbaum had to relocate there to take up a teaching post at Queen's University. Heaney met Hobsbaum while studying at Queens, and was invited to take part in Group meetings.

Hobsbaum was an anti-modernist - especially of the American variety. In his *Tradition and Experiment in English Poetry* he writes:

'Whitman's abstractions and random collocations have a raw life of their own, a form even through their formlessness; and this has remained highly characteristic of American poetry ever since. *The Waste Land* is, indeed, a heap of broken images: this is its meaning, and, to some extent, its distinction. But that kind of writing has never worked well in England'.

His criticism of Eliot extends to what Hobsbaum sees as the negative influence on English poetry of Eliot's use of the American idiom:

'Some damage was done to English verse by too close an imitation in the 1930s of the American idiom as evidenced in such poets as Eliot and Pound'.

Hobsbaum also sees a disparity between Eliot's American writing style and traditional English poetic writing practice. Although Hobsbaum does not see this in itself as necessarily negative, the implication is that American modernism is largely a geographical and cultural entity, unable to successfully function within an English milieu:

'Again, Eliot's work exhibits the characteristic American qualities of

free association or phanopoeia and autobiographical content. English verse, however, has been at its best as fiction: an arrangement of what is external to the poet to convey the tension or release within'.

The approbation of Heaney is truly a retrograde step in the historical development of international poetry.

POSTED BY JEFFREY SIDE AT [06:15](#) LINKS TO THIS POST 

Dan Schneider's Article on Gregory Corso

Originally posted on my old Tripod blog on Thursday, 30 June 2005

I just read a very interesting analysis of Gregory Corso's work by Dan Schneider. What was most interesting was Schneider's rating of Corso above Kerouac and Burroughs in the Beat pantheon. Only Ginsberg came out ahead of Corso. Schneider says:

'the Beat Generation, i.e. - the Beatniks - really just consisted of 2 real poetic talents & a lot of hangers-on. The 2 being Allen Ginsberg & Gregory Corso. Kerouac & Burroughs were really prosists - & mediocre, at best, LeRoi Jones a token, & Anne Waldman & Diane Di Prima bedwarmers'.

While I understand Burroughs's placement, I think Kerouac should be awarded more credit. Yes, much of his prose is prosaic but his poetry by far makes up for this. His use of novel word juxtapositions in '211th Chorus': 'quivering meat / conception', and in 'The Thrashing Doves': 'all the balloon of the shroud on the floor' are, like Ginsberg's use of them in Howl ('hydrogen dukebox, starry / dynamo in the machinery of night'), truly inspired. It is difficult to imagine what early Bob Dylan would have been like had these lines not been written.

I think that Corso's placement in the pantheon (given that Kerouac was primarily a novelist) is about right. His poetry, despite a tendency towards the prosaic, does generalize sufficiently for connotation to operate. And Schneider is right in citing Corso's 'Last Night I Drove a Car' and 'The Mad Yak' as being particularly inane.

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