

Dead Poets on the Ouija Board

(Reprising a few from two or so years back, and
with more that have since come in on the plastic poetic planchette)

HI, JUST TO POP IN HERE FROM THE DEAD FOR A MOMENT, COULD SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON, AND WOULD YOU STOP EMBEZZLING MY POETRY FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES, JOIN A SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION IF YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING, POETRY WON'T DO IT, EVEN IF WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT. THANK YOU, GEORGE OPPEN

NOT TO BUTT IN, AND EVEN THOUGH GEORGE AND I HAD OUR DIFFERENCES, I HAVE TO SAY, YES, PLEASE STOP SAYING THAT YOUR MEANINGLESS GALLERIST LOGORRHEA HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH US, DEAR LANGUAGE POETS AND GRANDCHILDREN. THANK YOU, LOUIS ZUKOFSKY

YES, OF COURSE, NOT TO BUTT IN, LOUIS, YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT CONSIDERATION, DON'T YOU, DEAR, BUT IN THIS CASE I HAVE TO AGREE, FROM WHERE WE ARE: GET A LIFE, YOU KIDS WITH THOSE GLOW-RECTANGLES IN YOUR HANDS, WHAT ARE THEY, ANYWAY, DEATH IS PERFECTLY REAL. THANK YOU, LORINE NIEDECKER

LORINE RADIOED ME AND I COULD BARELY MAKE HER OUT, BUT I GUESS THERE'S A PROBLEM OF SOME KIND ON THE DIAL WITH POETRY? A THING I, TOO, DISLIKED, O, ANIMALS ARE MORE INTERESTING, EVEN THOUGH I DID OK WITH IT, WHEN I WAS ONE OF YOU, BUT WHAT IS IT NOW, CAN I HELP IN ANY WAY, WHAT ARE LANGUAGE POETS, IS THE EDSEL STILL AROUND. THANK YOU, MARIANNE MOORE

I'M NEW TO THESE PARTS, RELATIVELY SPEAKING, JUST WANTED TO SAY, OK, THE ZIONISTS DIDN'T KNOCK DOWN THE TOWERS, MY BAD, AND I TAKE BACK WHAT I SAID ABOUT BELOVED FRANK AND FAGS AND ALL THAT, BUT I'LL BE DAMNED IF POETRY IS GOING ANYWHERE WITHOUT WHAT WE SAID IT NEEDED, YOU LOST ACADEMICS. THANK YOU, AMIRI BARAKA

I SUPPOSE IT'S OVERKILL FOR ME TO CHIME IN AT THIS POINT, BUT I JUST HAVE TO SAY: IT'S A TOTALLY DIFFERENT POETIC WORLD YOU HAVE THERE AND NOT EXACTLY A BETTER ONE, YOUNGSTERS, READ THE OLD CHINESE, THE GREEKS, AND THE ROMANS, AND GET SOME AUTONOMOUS MOJO GOING, LIKE THE OLD SURREALISTS, MAYBE. THANK YOU, CARL RAKOSI

I LOVED LITERATURE AND I STILL DO, AND SO YOU MIGHT SEE THAT THE DEAD, IN A SENSE, ARE ALIVE, TOO, AND I WILL SAY, FROM HERE, WHERE YOU SOON WILL BE: THERE IS NO "POLITICAL POETRY" AS YOU PRESENTLY CONCEIVE, THERE IS ONLY POETRY, BUT YOU HAVEN'T FOUND IT, PEEPS, YOU MUST KEEP TRYING, THOUGH NOT AS HIRELINGS, YOU SEE. THANK YOU, CLR JAMES

WHERE'S MY CITY, WHERE'S MY GLOUCESTER, ALL THIS BOATWRECK I HAVE GLIMPSED FROM HERE, WHAT'S COME OF WHAT WE TRIED, IS THIS THE PROMISED END, OR IMAGE OF THAT HORROR? WHERE'S ROBERT, WHERE'S DIANE, IS SHE STILL THERE, IS EDWARD STILL THERE, O, O, O, O, WHAT IS AWP, WOULD BERKELEY SAY IT'S REAL? WHAT? THANK YOU, CHARLES OLSON

ROBIN, ROBERT, COME, LOOK, A HOLE, HELLO, HELLO, CALLING CABLE CARS, HELL [...] HELLO? LOOK, DO YOU SEE? DO YOU [...] WHAT I SEE? OH GOD, NO, NO, NO, GET ME OUT OF HERE, NOW, NOT DEATH, BUT THE PEEP HOLE, DID WE HELP DO THIS, DO THIS TO THEM, THAT'S THE QUESTION, HI GEORGE, CAN YOU HEAR ME, IS THAT STILL VANCOUVER? LOVE, JACK SPICER

WHAT HAS HAPPENED BELOVEDS? WHAT YEAR IS IT FOR YOU OR FOR ME? I AM FEELING ILL AT YOUR CALL, PLEASE DON'T WAKE ME AGAIN, FOR MY WARS ARE LAID AWAY IN BOOKS, THOUGH THAT SAID, I HOPE YOU REALLY GIVE IT HARD TO THIS SHAMEFUL NEO-AVANT-GARDE, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN OVER WHERE YOU ARE. THANK YOU, EMILY DICKINSON

HI THERE, IT FELT LIKE SOMEONE TAPPED MY KNEE WITH A TINY HAMMER, SO I WOKE UP, AND MY REFLEX NOW IS TO QUOTE MYSELF ABOUT ALL THIS POETRY FOUNDATION BIZ, WHICH I TOUCHED ON BACK IN 1917, IN MY ARTICLE FOR POETRY JOURNAL, "AMERICA, WHITMAN, AND THE ART OF POETRY," WHEREIN I WROTE, "POETRY MAGAZINE IS SO AMIABLE THAT IT HAS MADE AMIABILITY ALMOST A VIRTUE." THANK YOU, WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

WHAT PILE OF PECKERHEAD POT PIE IS THIS? ARE YOU ALL QUEER LIKE ROBERT DUNCAN OR SOMETHING? BECAUSE SO FAR AS POETRY GOES, IT SEEMS YOU COULDDN'T POUR PISS OUT OF A BOOT WITH INSTRUCTIONS WRITTEN ON THE HEEL. THANK YOU, JOHN CROWE RANSOM

EVERYTHING I SAID IS REAL AND MORE, POETRY UP THERE IS BUT A SHADOW OF A SHADOW, AND THAT'S MORE OF AN UNDERSTATEMENT THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE WHERE YOU ARE, PLUS THE SEX DOWN HERE IS TOTALLY OUT OF YOUR WORLD, AS WELL, IF YOU ARE GOING TO PUBLISH THIS, YOU'D BETTER MAIL CAREFUL PROOFS FIRST. THANK YOU, ROBERT DUNCAN.

AYND A HEY AND A SKDALKFASOIRGN03743AIG HEY AYND A HIDEY HO, SCRREECKCH93735PLK IN HARPY LAND, IN HARPY LAND, MY PROMISED BRIDE IN SCRREECKCHSKEYHA3990ERJPOIK WORLDS UNSEEN, BECKONS ME TO HER DARK SCRREECHKE8349JFSOH WITH BONE WHITE HAND GOGWITCKE325URUGU, AYND A HEY AYND A HIDEY HO, THAT'S ALL. THANK YOU, HELEN ADAM

I AM SICK AND TIRED OF JUST LAYING HERE WITH NOTHING TO DRINK, DAMMIT, IT'S LIKE I'M IN A VERY BAD DREAM, MR. BONES. THANK YOU, JOHN BERRYMAN

YOU "AVANT-GARDE" NORTH AMERICAN POETS REALLY ARE A BUNCH OF COWARDLY, INSTITUTION-LICKING COCKSUCKERS, AREN'T YOU? THE LAST OF YOUR APPROXIMATE BUNCH WHO WOULD'VE HAD A CHANCE BACK IN MY DAY WERE O'HARA, OLSON, AND BILLIE HOLIDAY, GET A LIFE. THANK YOU, CATULLUS

IS IT IMPROPER FOR ME TO SAY A FEW WORDS? I COULD TRY, OH, ARE THOSE YOUR FINGERS, MARJORIE AND HELEN? THERE IS THIS VALLEY WHERE I AM, IT'S LIKE A HUDSON SCHOOL PAINTING BY FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH, AND YOU CAN JUMP OFF THESE SHEER CLIFFS WITH NO CHUTES, AND WHEN YOU LAND IN ALL THESE FLOWERS AFTER FALLING TEN THOUSAND FEET REALLY FAST NOTHING HAPPENS TO YOU, YOU JUST GET UP AND LIFE IN DEATH GOES ON, YOU JUST KEEP WRITING POETRY, FRANK IS A GREAT JUMPER, BUT ARTHUR IS SOMETIMES BETTER. THANK YOU, JOHN ASHBERY

YES, I STILL THINK VALLEJO'S TRILCE WAS A PIECE OF SHIT, NOTHING LIKE MY OWN HUMAN AND COMPASSIONATE POETRY, FOR BOTH HUMANS AND FOR THE MOST MODEST LIFELESS THINGS THAT NEVER GET ANY ATTENTION, TORTURED AS THEY ARE BY OUR CALLOUS DISREGARD, I CONFESS THAT I HAVE LIVED, YES, READ IT AND WEEP. AND SO DAMN WHAT, YOU KNOW, IF I HELPED CONSPIRE TO KILL TROTSKY AND THOUGHT THE MOSCOW SHOW TRIALS WERE JUST KOSHER? IDIOT AMERICAN POETS WILL LOVE ME UNCONDITIONALLY UNTIL THE 23RD CENTURY, ANYWAY. THANK YOU, PABLO NERUDA

HERE IN BRAZIL, OR WHEREVER I NOW AM, THOUGH IT MUST BE BRAZIL, BECAUSE IT IS CRAZY CARNIVAL ALL THE TIME, I HAVE HEARD THAT SOME THINK I AM A GREAT POET AND SOME THINK I AM MINOR POET, THAT IS PERFECTLY FINE WITH ME, BECAUSE POETRY IS ALL ABOUT BEING CONFUSED, AND YOU EITHER GET THAT OR YOU DON'T, YOU SEE, AND HERE'S THE BIG SECRET: IN THE END IT DOESN'T MATTER ONE IOTA, YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE A FISH, JUST ASK ROBERT LOWELL. THANK YOU, ELIZABETH BISHOP

I HEAR YOU, JOHN, AND I SURE WISH HELEN AND MARJORIE WOULD PUT THEIR FINGERS ON ME TOO, BUT THESE DAYS IT'S ALL ABOUT NOT TOUCHING AND ALL ABOUT JOHN TOO, ISN'T IT, HUH? MUST BE NICE, BUD, NOT THAT I'M JEALOUS, OR ANYTHING, BUT REALLY, DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT YOU MIGHT BE HOGGING ALL THE GLORY HERE, DOES THAT NOT DAWN ON YOU, OR NOT BUG YOU? I MEAN, I EVEN WROTE A POEM THAT YOU ARE IN, WHERE I MENTION YOU LIKE NINE TIMES, IT'S CALLED THE CIRCUS II, BUT OF COURSE YOU PROBABLY NEVER EVEN READ IT, I STILL LOVE YOU, THOUGH, AND HERE WE FINALLY ARE, YOU, FRANK, AND JIMMY, AND ME, OUR FACES SMASHED IN LIKE GARBAGE CAN LIDS, SO WE ALL LOOK LIKE KING GEORGE THE THIRD, JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE WILL, JUST SAYING. THANK YOU, KENNETH KOCH

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON? DID I MISS SOMETHING, ETC. THANK YOU, EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

MY COMRADES MURDERED ME, IN 1975, THE GUY WHO SHOT ME WAS THE MAIN COMANDANTE OF THE BIGGEST GUERRILLA FORCE OF THE SALVADORAN LEFT, THEN AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, HE BECAME A LEADING SPOKESPERSON FOR NEO-CONSERVATISM,

BEWARE, AMERICAN AVANT POETS, OF THOSE AMONG YOU CLAIMING TO BE
REVOLUTIONARY, THEY WILL SHOOT YOU IN THE HEAD THE FIRST CHANCE THEY GET.
THANK YOU, ROQUE DALTON

ANYBODY WANT TO SMELL MY ARMPITS? DRINK MY MANHOOD? WHEN YOU ARE DONE,
SAVOR THE ODOR AND TASTE OF ME, CAMERADOS, AND FORGIVE ME FOR MY STUPID
PREJUDICES, I BEG YOU, FOR I ONCE, TOO, WALKED AMONG YOU, SINGULAR,
CONTRADICTORY, AND MULTITUDINOUS, ONE OF THE ROUGHS. THANK YOU, WALT
WHITMAN

THE END OF THE WORLD IS THE END OF THE WORLD, IT SHALL ARRIVE, AND YOU DON'T
EVEN HAVE A CLUE, YOU ARE DOOMED, AND YOU ARE EVIL, AND IT IS BEAUTIFUL. THANK
YOU, CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

I REALLY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO THIS OUIJA BOARD, WHO NEVER TALKED
TO ME WHEN I WAS AMONG YOU, EXCEPT MAYBE A LITTLE BIT TOWARDS THE END,
WHEN I WAS ABOUT 80 LBS, AND THAT WAS PRETTY SLIM, THE TALKING, I MEAN, BUT I
DO LOVE YOU BEAUTIFUL YOUNG POETS, IF YOU WILL JUST WAKE UP AND DO
SOMETHING WORTHWHILE BESIDES GOING CRAZY ON STUPID PC CAMPUS POLITICS.
THANK YOU, AUDRE LORDE

HOW COME EVERYONE IN THE AVANT POETRY WORLD WAS TALKING ABOUT ME RIGHT
AND LEFT LIKE THREE YEARS AGO AND NOW EVERYONE SEEMS TO BE HOLDING THEIR
TONGUE? IS THIS WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU JUST BECAUSE YOU NOMINATE ADOLF HITLER
FOR A NOBEL PEACE PRIZE? OR WRITE SOME PROPAGANDA SPEECHES FOR THE HEAD OF
THE VICHY? SERIOUSLY? GEE WHIZ, OUIJA (VERB) SOME OF OUR RECIPES, BITCHES. THANK
YOU, GERTRUDE STEIN

CAN I GET A WORD IN HERE? WHO GIVES A FUCK ABOUT POETRY? [PROLONGED
OSCILLATING STATIC ON THE PLANCHETTE, COMMUNICATION BROKEN, AUTHOR
UNKNOWN]

HOW COME NO POET OR CRITIC, SAY LIKE MARJORIE OR HELEN, WHO SOME PEOPLE
MENTIONED ABOVE, EVER ONCE NOTICED THAT ROBERT FROST TOTALLY PLAGIARIZED
THE IDEA OF HIS FAMOUS POEM ABOUT TWO ROADS DIVERGING IN A WOOD, ETC, FROM
ME? WHAT I SAID IS "DO NOT GO WHERE THE PATH MAY LEAD, GO INSTEAD WHERE
THERE IS NO PATH AND LEAVE A TRAIL," SO YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN? NOT THAT I OBJECT
ON ONE LEVEL, BUT THAT FROST WAS A TRICKY BASTARD, YOU KNOW? FUCK. THANK
YOU, RALPH WALDO EMERSON