

115 Farewell Dispatches to *Dispatches*, May, 2020

[Presented in the order received, except for the last one, which was the first]

A month ago, we wrote to the members of our Editorial Board and to ninety-some of our many hundreds of contributors (nearly 800!), inviting them to send a few words of feedback about Dispatches. We asked them to offer their views on the project's meaning or worthiness over the past four years. Or even, if they preferred, to remark on any lack thereof, in the event they felt compelled to take us to task. We've always been open to reproof, and we don't deny deserving a dollop of it.

Amazingly, the great majority of those we wrote graciously sent a response. Some of them sent blurb-like notes, some sent a thoughtful paragraph or two, some sent poems, some even sent meditations akin to brief essays.

This is the record, unfiltered, of what we received.

We are deeply honored and moved.

Solidarity, permanent poetic resistance, and lots of love, compañeros.

Always,

–Fric and Frac

May 31, 2020

[This document is 85 pages in length.]

*

For the Admirable *Dispatches*!

(provocateurs & compañeros)

Despite the final

I, “betrayed by my choice of words?”

Sabra and Shatila, you might invoke, I weep

Palestine “not grammatical”, we keep local

Adorno: “consciousness is will to survive,” I weep
The memories, draperies, the wars a clavical
Critical mass, 4 years we’re under catastrophe
History will decide the streets of the world!
Exile? Are we? I weep broken, seamless, you were edge
Sign of diminishing time, beloveds, act now, bite, you were

Poetry as compulsion, as *amouray*, you made us laugh
Outlook of the ancestors, Simonides,
Esprit for memory and demand end of Wall
There must be no sorrow in the narratives we sing
Remember the shadow now passing over the world
Your ghost in the machine, remember poetry wins

We need you now count & hail the bodies O chroniclers
And change the toll we’re on, dear house of mind
Redemption is the current age, Kali Yuga
So sweet, the next, not a new Nation but a so

--*Anne Waldman*

**

As *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* comes to a close, in a time of pandemic and global economic upheaval, one solace is the appearance of a new poetry collection, Kent Johnson’s splendid *Because of Poetry I Have a Really Big House*. The book is dedicated to Mike Boughn, Kent’s partner-in-crime at *Dispatches*, and serves as a good recapitulation of why the website they edited together these past four quasi-apocalyptic years has meant so much to me. In a word, the *hospitality* they offered in their self-described “temporary autonomous zone” was exceptional. It reached out to the tribes of pataphysical outliers in the American poetry landscape, whose voices had been effectively exiled and were too remote to be heard. This is not to say that the gatekeepers across the spectrum of American poetry, during a “neo-liberal” push extending from Reagan to Trump and Covid-19, have not displayed hospitality to a wide range

of poets. But rather—as recent, pandemic-determined revisionist narratives would indicate (in tandem with the insistence of a more mainstream claim that “openness to the Other” remains a hallmark of everything that’s good in American poetry)—what has been denied across the board, and smacks of a lack of self-awareness consistent with the political climate in this country, is that the publication of poetry—its promotion as *res publica*—is inherently exclusionary, a discourse in the service of a hegemonic order, premised on a hierarchal model that judges and controls who is heard and who is ignored. The genius of “Fric” and “Frac,” as editors, is their implicit understanding that hospitality in poetry is indissociable from hostility, that the governing insight that includes some poets is indissociable from a willed blindness that excludes others. They refer to this repressed dynamic of *hostipitality* (Derrida) as “poetry war.” They never pretended to have built in their benevolent wisdom some sort of politically correct auditorium that would give theoretical sanctuary to all poets. But, by fighting fire with fire, like with like, they invite us to dwell in that (im)possibility.

--André Spears

**

The loss of *Dispatches* will be comparable to losing *House Organ* or *Rolling Stock*. The group of writers and thinkers actively working in ways that are beneficial to my practice has always been small and tended to coalesce around publications like the examples named above. I was sick at their loss and feel no less deprived of a home as *Dispatches* shuts down.

--Brian Richards

**

My path to joining in on *Dispatches* runs straight back to my earliest exposure to poetryworld some 25 years ago in Henniker, New Hampshire. Don Melander’s classes at New England College first turned me on to the poems of Joel Oppenheimer which in turn led to me pulling Olson’s *Maximus Poems* off the library shelf, just a shelf or so away from Oppenheimer’s books. Upon reading Olson I was soon seeking out Everything Olson and found my way to receiving *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* in the mail from Ralph Maud. This led me to discovering John Clarke, his sonnet sequence *In the Analogy* published by Mike on Shuffaloff Press and first hearing of *Intent*. Several crisscrossed pathways later I began to receive Kenneth Warren’s *House Organ* and rather amazingly Mike was sending along new Shuffaloff publications every now and then. So when *Dispatches* came along I was well aware of much of Mike’s back history and engagement with all things poetry.

This all came roaring back to mind the other week when a link to a recording of Oppenheimer reading his “Marriage Poem” popped up on *Dispatches*. Oppenheimer taught at New England College during his final years and is buried in the cemetery on the east edge of town, down Old Concord Road out by route 202. I ended up writing my MA thesis at the Poetics program at New College of California on Oppenheimer. I mentioned all this to fellow executive editors at *Dispatches* and Ammiel responded that he knew Opp, having built bookshelves for him in New

York City c.1976. This shortly led to a lengthy exchange on the merits of Gil Sorrentino's work (a central figure in NYC poetry circles of which Opp was a part) in which André, Mike, Ammiel, Sharon and Kent extolled his work towards which I had negligently expressed some slight dismissal. Which is just one instance among many of the terrific email threads that are regular occurrences between executive editors.

For me, the original appeal of *Dispatches* was simply that Mike was behind it. With Kent picking up the co-editorial cap I was only all the more thrilled. While having never been in direct touch with Kent I had long been following his work ever since he sent in to New College's *Prosodia* some pages from *Also with My Throat, I Shall Swallow Ten Thousand Swords: The English Letters of Araki Yasusada* (which Combo Books would later publish), when I was an editor c. 1999. Our theme was "collaboration" a la Rimbaud's "Je est un autre" and Whitman's "I contain Multitudes". Reading the *Yasusada* work two things were clear: 1) Spicer's influence was HEAVY. 2) Kent was heavily invested in nothing BUT poetry, ideas of "ownership" be damned. "The Poet" was within.

My earliest contributions to *Dispatches* came spurred on by occasional visits from Ben Hollander while I was at work. Ben lived nearby USF and had long held special borrowing privileges at Gleeson granted by a librarian who was a neighbor. I introduced myself to Ben a few years after I started work at the Periodicals desk. I recognized him from past readings/local scenes over the years and after confirming his name when he checked out some things I told him how wonderfully great I thought *ACTS*. Back then our full run was shelved just steps from my desk and I was regularly able to peruse them. Now, along with the entire bound periodicals collection, they have been removed to off-site storage. Sometime after *Dispatches* was up-and-running the librarian "sponsoring" Ben had retired and when his annual privileges came up for renewal the front desk called me to vouch for him which I heartily did. While I never became too close with Ben—I was always a bit unnerved during our chats as I was technically "at work" and Ben liked to keep me for a while with his long, frequent pauses as he chose his words with cherished deliberate precision, between light-hearted chuckling with a twinkle in his eye—I nevertheless thoroughly dug hearing his latest bits of news, which often involved *Dispatches* business. I'd head back to my desk with a furious amount of energy flowing through me. I miss Ben's visits and wish I had better-managed to be on more comfortably affable terms with him before his abrupt passing.

Just a few months before her own passing, along with coeditors Marina Lazzara and Nick Whittington, I made a visit to Joanne Kyger and Donald Guravich in Bolinas to speak with her about a New College Poetics anthology project. Joanne was ever gracious about the project as well as quite thrilled with things happening at *Dispatches*—she was decidedly quite excited with the general overall vibe.

I'm not sure what all went into the decision to ask me to join the Executive Editorial board; however, the last several months of being looped in on emails with an amazing crew of poetic instigators has been incredibly rewarding. It's also incredibly humbling as works such as Ammiel's *a little history* (along with so much else!), Sharon's editing of the Olson/Bolderoff correspondence, Miriam's Robin Blaser biography (but also *Radical Affections*) together with

Mike's editing of *The HD Book* (& likewise so much else!) form a literal nexus of central preoccupations of my reading over the last twenty-odd years.

All I can say is THANKS. *Into the company of love / it all returns.*

--Patrick James Dunagan

**

Dispatches from the Poetry Wars is a borderless site for poets & writers like me to feel at home in. I'm not talking about comfort (difficult in a war zone), but about companionship and conversation, the "old" mode of poetic interchange with its inefficiencies of passions, talents, experience, and legacies. The editorial board (pan-American, Canadian, Australian), headed up by Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson, encouraged international contributions whilst arguing and celebrating among ourselves. "Why poetry wars?" was the question being asked by many others who mistakenly believe there is no such thing. When have poets ever not complained about each other, and about the contradictions and compromises they all have faced? *Dispatches* offered fertile opposition to the institutionalization that threatens to overtake the field. *Dispatches* wondered why poets would want to commodify and professionalize themselves, or even worse, why they would have to. At *Dispatches*, one's poetry is understood to be a mode of experience hitherto unknown and therefore needed for the world, the beauty of the world—not a way to polish one's chosen agenda. Here at *Dispatches* we have welcomed the new and the old. We have often said or published what otherwise wouldn't be—and not without consequences, especially for those of us trying to swim in the very small pond of official Canadian poetry. These are dangerous, consequential times, but poetic imagination is worth the trouble. Look at Shelley's "Defence of Poetry": he meant defence, not polite demurral. So, sadly, I take my leave of *Dispatches* along with the rest of the editorial board and the contributing editors, with immense gratitude for the fortitude and honourableness and sense of humour of "Fric" and "Frac".

--Sharon Thesen

**

When I first went into the *Dispatches* site, my reaction was immediate and straightforward--"Oh, this is me." I have always been skeptical of the hackneyed phrase "literary community." But a community of skeptics! That seeming paradox, in the form of this magazine, was deeply attractive. I wanted to be part of that. I didn't expect it to be such a constant jones, more welcome than any daily newspaper, with its dyspeptic prescience, with Emily's spot-on, crustacean pincers and far-seeing elevated eyes, with Michael's trippy tricks and triptychs. I was treated to many poets whose work I didn't know about, because I don't get out much. Some enlivened me, some enlightened. One of the most shining facets of this rough-cut diamond has been its appetite for polemic. Others try to do it and come off as jejune. Not so here. *Dispatches* is a cut to the gut. If I'd spent personal time with Emily, I'd have taken her downtown, gotten her drunk, and turned her loose on the patrons of the bar, who would get

pissed off, threaten to hit her, and on the way home, sober up a bit and say, "Well, she has a point." I was not drawn in always by some of the personal feuds, but to the extent these opened up to the culture at large, I got more interested. Then again, I've always loved a good grudge match, so I read 'em anyway. I have appreciated the chance to publish work here, getting it before the kind of readers I want, especially my "secret" column, which grew out of my lively correspondence with one-of-a-kind Kent, who has the biggest heart and the sharpest tongue of anybody I know in the world of letters. Though I understand why Kent and Michael are closing down the diner, I will be mad at them for 5 to 10 years, as my emotional half-life deteriorates into acceptance. There's a lot left to read in the archive. I do feel this has been a renaissance moment in time. Impossible to repeat, difficult to emulate, as it approaches *sui generis* status. It jolted me out of a certain jaded boredom about the literary "scene." Many thanks to ya, fellas. I'm fresh out of valedictories, so I will simply close by saying Fuck you, motherfuckers. You broke my heart. Then again, you opened my mind.

--*Johnny Payne*

**

I was always ill at ease with the "poetry wars" idea. I know, "mental fight" and all that, most invigorating! But still the only thing I have in common with Skeeter Davis is singing "I'm a Lover (Not a Fighter)" and it's hard to let that go. Still, I always found *Dispatches* eye-opening. To someone like me who feels a bit distant from the poetry world, maybe more distant than I should be but also possibly less distant than I like to think I am, it seemed to offer a peek under the rock at all the creepy-crawlies I don't normally notice. Admittedly, when *Dispatches* jabbed at various salient entities such as the Poetry Foundation or the AWP and associated personnel, some of the below-the-belt assaults went over my head. But I always felt strengthened, somehow, by the recurrent reminder that "Our poesy is as a gum which oozes / From whence 'tis nourished." And what a pleasure to think that in afteryears, I will be able to say I was at least tangentially connected to what, once it's safely off the scene, will surely (like Bernie Sanders) be declared by one and all to be "an American original."

--*Barry Schwabsky*

**

Long live the *Dispatches TAZ* with its love for experimental poetry and prose - and even more rare - political art. Who will push boundaries for us, unify our resistance? We will miss your contrarian voice, unique, insistent, honest.

--*Larissa Shmailo*

**

It has been an amazing effort by Mike Boughn and Kent Johnson to keep *Dispatches* going for four years with such a wealth of material being published and assembled. An immense diversity of people--from big names, to those more on the margins and many in between, from the UK and Europe to Latin America and Australia (where I live). A smorgasbord based on poetic linkages and shared enthusiasms rather than any single political or social agenda. Letting good poetry flourish and keeping a wide sense of how many things deserve a place...

--*Peter Boyle*

**

the poetry wars.... sadly. so much has come and gone these decades, the proliferation of a million poetry universes, the inclusion of voices formerly unheard, professionalization (whatever that is), fetishization, trivialization, popularization. ah the avant-garde, wherefore art thou? to tell the truth I am always over here on the sidelines in my own little aerie (like you) and have no idea. am no warrior, I've given that up, and have no arguments to make (I make them in the morning, repudiate them at night). to tell the truth I am a little like Trump, think this one day that the next and talk a good game. but in all this I have appreciated the thumb in your eye satire of *dispatches*, and its fierce determination to uphold poetry at all costs. humor always tells the truth! i haven't necessarily always agreed (have most of the time missed the joke) but have been met in *dispatch's* editors with kindness and courtesy and have felt in these "pages" with all of you a kinship. despite the skirmishes, poetry remains poetry, and it will save us in the end, believe it or not.

--*Norman Fischer*

**

Dispatches was a great, provocative, thrilling, no nonsense locale for serious (and humorous) inquiries, essays, poetry, translations, and great, weird columns. I can't help thinking of Olson's "go contrary, go sing." *Dispatches* has been a beacon of light in a dark time. I hope that in the future it arises again in a different form like a phoenix from the ashes. The hard labor Michael and Kent have done will not be forgotten and I am honored to have been a part of it.

--*Peter Valente*

**

With a mix of brave, humorous, thought-provoking, and progressive articles and editorials; and some of the liveliest, relevant, and stylistically diverse poetry published in recent years on the web; *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* did an incredible job of energizing the poetry world, and especially the political-poetry world, at a time when the poetry world was in real need of that energy. For me, as a longtime political poet and activist, it was one of those few indispensable websites that I felt compelled to check out every day, like reading or listening to Democracy Now for the important daily political news. When *Dispatches* closes shop, I'm really going to miss it. A huge thanks to Kent and Michael for all the enormous time and intelligence that you

both put into Dispatches in recent years, beginning, of course, with the tremendous print anthology, *Resist Much, Obey Little*. And I also have to add a personal thanks for welcoming me in to be part of the Dispatches community. Perhaps if we can all survive the current pandemic, we could have some sort of grand in-person re-union in the years ahead? Much appreciation for a job very well done.

--*Eliot Katz*

**

Goodbye Dispatches Misters Fric & Frac

Chow Chow Tchou Tschau
Totziens, Hejda
Farvel, Zegnaj
Joigin, Annyeong, Namaste

Arrivederci, Dispatistas
Ciao & Bon Voyage
Vale & See you Later Alligators
Hasta la Vista Antiracistas

Oh you dadaistas, arribistas, cubistas,
antifascistas, poetry patologistas,
antiimperialistas, internacionalistas,
post-post-modernistas, anti-terroristas,
& poetry jazzistas

Namaste, Ma'a Salama
Donadagohvi, Alveda
shalom, totsiens
sayonara & aloha

Good Bye to the TAZ
and all that Jazz
adios, adeus, addio
go with god
damn Dispatches was good
for all a free fall
this little hymn
to Lazaruses in the coffin
levantarse de nuevo
again and again

--*Joe Naylor*

**

Reading the Dispatches

‘THERE IS NO HARM IN TRYING.’

‘THERE IS NO HARM IN BEING BETTER THAN WE ARE.’

The story of the river is not the same as the river’s story.

There is a road that travels itself and it is the road that runs away.

The heartprint on my heart is your heart in my land.

The heart’s serene contraband can be opened to the public.

In every distant window a face is a revolution in difference that shows us the same.

As the circle we form grows all gets closer together.

Everything escapes language or rather has no need to escape.

Breath passes away in the flesh.

The breath sells its flesh in order to reach you.

From turning on a little tap, the ocean exhales.

There is the circle that is bigger than itself and is bigger than it's bigger than itself.

Full reception without questions.

I can use the stairs as if blind; the corners unfolding to welcome and recompose the story of my back.

Humanity and the whole of time are trapped in my floorboards.

The carpet creeps to the door and soon is onto the footpath in front of the house.

My neighbours and friends are 'turning up'!

Mike, Kent, Sharon, André, Ammiel, Miriam, Patrick, Andrew, everyone – *you-say-with-each-other*.

Finally I understand the 'moment-of-hyphenation'.

There is no moment in which it doesn't matter.

You have shifted the contours of the heart so that the human resembles less and less the form of cowardice.

Because you *allow* and not because you are good.

Your raids on art were made with boots kicked off.

You proved that the poem pops out in a manner delightfully devoid of the professional.

Chuckling royal peasants.

Who cares if no dream survives itself!

And so the days go on filled with all this light that never falls.

The mind has no night.

Statistically we knew there wasn't a hope but who gives a fuck.

No little game will suffice.

Who insists on reading a newspaper in a high wind?

Who struggles to hold the pages down?

The dispatches came from those who don't name honour.

No honour can be named.

They came from those who refused to slip into something more comfortable.

From eternities' ceaseless volunteers.

Read(ing) what is not yet said.

'True speech is prophecy,' said a sage. [Edmund Jabès]

'WE HAVE TO STAY TRUE EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T BE TRUE.'

--Margie Cronin

**

Dispatches was often a thorn in my side, not personally, but in terms of its explicitly partisan, sometimes adolescent, rebelliousness. Nonetheless, I found it inspiring in its exposure of the sometimes unsavory financial resources laundered into poetry foundations, prize monies and grants. We poets all live compromised lives; Dispatches reminded us of that inconvenient fact every day.

--*Tyrone Williams*

**

A zone whose challenge and reach brings to mind Vallejo's dictum: "before literature: life"!

--*Michael Rattigan*

**

I guess I should spatter out a few words about *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*. All day long I hear people on TV and radio and other sources of despair advising me and my friends to "be safe." I see pictures of people wearing face masks and face shields and plastic tuxedos, doing their best to be safe. Sort of like Creative Writing TA's teaching their graduands how to keep their poetry safe. Then I remember seeing my first dispatches from the poetry wars. Horses in gas masks! That's one of the twistedest pictures of safety I ever saw, you alarming military gents! Do I want my poetry teachers to scare the bejesus out of me? No! I want Robert Frost! I want Mary Oliver! Damn it, the first time I read a poem by some gink from Boston named John Wieners I just about filled my BVDs, I was so scared! Safety, man! I have a challenge for you. Go back through all your feeazackin' dispatches and tell me how often you find any daffodils. Come on!

--*George Bowering*

**

Goodbye Dispatches (We Hardly Knew Ye!)

DANGER POETRY
NEOLIBERAL! The End
iS near for your
Petty positioning!!

This is whAt
DispaTches said

baCk in 1974, or
wHenever it
startEd
itS quixotic

eFfort to liberate you
fR
O
M

The mental prison of bourgeois poetry life.
Fric & Frac, tHey
tEstify: the life of the

Poets more than prizes &
pOetry booty!
ThereE's a life force
To
tRack, a cosmos to create
You dig?

“Winning” is for dog
rAces, football games &
wRestling
matcheS.

What an incredible run it has been! Your commitment to the underdog, I mean those at the *aesthetic margins* is unparalleled and that's so rare in our identity-addled materialistic days. I am grateful for the support of my own work via *Dispatches* and understand that while your retirement is well-earned, who will be the champion of Po justice here on out? Few have the institutional Po memory (& cultural memory) of you two AND the global span. I can't imagine anyone qualified to pick up this project and run it as you two did. This is what real beauty is. *Dispatches* has been beautiful and it's fitting that it goes under during a pandemic. May your posthumous existence be glorious!

--Paul Nelson

**

Today, it is almost impossible to find a so-called acknowledged or respected poet or critic who is not an academic or he/she is not in some way involved with the official academia. It seems that postmodernism –both the systemic and the anti-systemic ones– ended up putting questions and modifications only to receive an answer which provides the endorsing of its constitutional validity, its methods, and gradations, denying any importance which is located elsewhere. Systemic poets and critics, it is now clearer than ever, have adopted their positions not because

of analyzed reasons, but rather out of some authoritative caprice; in like manner the anti-systemic ones. That's exactly what it means to merely downgrade an unpleasant truth for the sake of comfort and confidence which offers a drained tradition.

Into this, now globally, standardized situation, *Dispatches* was a bold and a rather unique platform where poetry, as an art, became possible to express itself on the basis of renewed terms, which would be particularly difficult to publish anywhere else. *Dispatches*, therefore, have been a key point in the course of critique and presentation of contemporary poetry, and as a poet I feel deeply honored to have been featured in the pages of this distinct literary magazine.

--Yannis Livadas

**

Despite *Dispatches'* commitment to impolite dissent, its provocations often took the form of insisting on intellectual complexity and the desire to grant all poetry combatants and participants the full measure of their humanity. In the pages of *Dispatches*, poets could be flawed, but were talked and written to, given the chance to change their minds, explain themselves, and work toward a collective vision for how the world is and could be. I found this practice sometimes maddening and almost always intellectually stimulating, refreshing, and challenging, recalling me to the real work of poetry.

--Joel Bettridge

**

Distempered by the overbearing Poetry Mediocrity Monopoly, where “dead mother” poems assume the stature of national anthems, where poet’s introductions, streaming with awards & prizes, have come to resemble sarcophagus nails, *Dispatches* comes to the rescue: fiery with intolerance for the nugacious, for insipidity, for the hand-me-downs, & honoring those poems that reach for trouble, that dare, that burn with indigenous fervor, *Dispatches* has been irreplaceable in giving me hope, a shelter from the aridity of sterility, . . . I will miss you *Dispatches*, my wish: that your Blaze continues, that it be cultivated, fed, & Flame into Blizzards of ManNifiCence!

[excerpted from “Calliope caliginous]:

all the while through the turnstile paucity vociferous rent from splendiferous it comes in waves shies in skivvies from earthenware to crockpot tea rooms to tapestries kettle drum thrum thrum through the glass wily upend the roast rudely burn brilliance to air to be fair the mindless are a sorry lot best besotted put away stashed in nugatory asylum two plus two equals three heralds free fires fresh phylum three on a spree glees delight proud of the sleight the truth marches on...

--Heller Levinson

**

Dispatches from the Poetry Wars? I have always felt I am a refugee from these Wars and that *Dispatches* was my escape pod. Antonio Porchia wrote, “Situating in some nebulous distance I do what I do so that the universal balance of which I am a part may remain in balance.” (Merwin trans.) *Dispatches* was is and will remain that universal balancer. I am eternally grateful to Fric and Frac and *Dispatches* for publishing my virtual chapbook, but also for every word I’ve read and heard and seen in its refugee camp. Every thought thought and every thought un-thought as a result.

--Jeffery Beam

**

Pull—when I see you posting, I feel curious to find out what’s going on and usually am satisfied that it’s something I needed to know about which I might not have otherwise, or that because of your honesty, I’ll find out something different than I would have anywhere else. Always got a kick out of being published with you since it’s a lively, truly contemporary place, edited by very knowledgeable, accomplished writers. One of the few sites I look to/at regularly. Hope when you go on elsewhere you won’t stay in your hut but maybe create a bunch of tiny houses or move into an old grand hotel, because you need a bigger place for all you’d o and all the readers you have.

--Ruth Lepson

**

On a bus in Chelsea, MA, about two years ago, I may have been reading these lines by Gerrit Lansing, from *Heavenly Tree Northern Earth*, an edition borrowed from a friend:

To name is to portend. As we are given names.
The hen held upside down, with my right hand I push her head down
to lay it on the block. The hatchet is keen.
Sun warm on my bare shoulders,
children’s head in straw and dirt and chicken dirt.

To name gives you know what. I will not tell you how to eat the pomegranate.

I celebrate the end of *Dispatches* in many ways. I think first of seeing & then teaching the videos & poems posted there, which I did, many times. I think of powerful poems by poets I had never heard of. I think of all the brilliant essays. I think of all the insights & inspiration that could be found nowhere else. I think were I going to say anything larger I would think of the moment, around 2012 or 2013, when it was clear neither poets nor anyone else could offer anything via social media. Perhaps not anything, but less than nothing. A few years later, *Dispatches* appeared, & an autonomous zone that was as such. It is hard to forget. I don’t grieve over the final *Dispatch*, although I do.

Here is a poem by Lansing I have been thinking about recently:

AN INLET OF REALITY, OR SOUL

(in this Age, or any

“With respect to plants as animals, we are wrong in speaking as if the object of life were only the bequeathing of itself. The flower is the end and proper object of the seed, not the seed of the flower.”

—John Ruskin, *The Queen of the Air*

When in Rome do as the Greeks,
show it hard,
let intellect be rampant in the fragrant colors of the indomitably so,
no compromise no blame.
Take happiness in touch that bursts in light,
konx om pax,
as the sun yacht shoots through the Gate of the Tongue
(Tharmas happy in his element.)
Sweetness savors itself in balling rondures,
delectation of the Gods come true,
truly come in the core of time,
old nick of it, new aeon, lion form in the wood where virgin lay.

When then love takes you in hand you don't languish in the clover but make song:

o flowering stick
smoke wreath of peacefulness
discovery of happy self in other's grace
good limpid star golden bird
girl leaning from a window when the last light shakes out in the West.

This and *this* we say and do.
and so we fix each other up and *this* is how transcendence is.

--Boyd Nielson

**

There's power in the poetry world owing to the power of language, and at its unruly best, *Dispatches* railed against more transparent abuses of that power. The disturbance in the field was not always enlightening, the provocations occasionally sacrificing fair play to make too fine a point. But pugnacious or rambunctious, *Dispatches* could never be faulted for not grasping the stakes in a world gone mad with weaponized words. A vital resource for wordsmiths and others in these our inexorably troubled times.

-- Joe Amato

**

Dispatches has fostered the kind of no-book-burnings, everything-on-the-table discussions that I signed up for years ago when I chose the humanities at university. I thought then that the academy was all about getting on the magic bus that said “further,” but that might have had something to do with the fact that Robin Blaser was driving the bus that I got on way back then and he was some crazy ass driver. “Thinking without bannisters,” Hannah Arendt called that kind of going off the rails. Later, I found out that most other school buses had particular routes and lots of bannisters. You could either get on them or you could get off and if you got off you were free as a bird to teach freshman English as a sessional for the rest of your life or just leave the academy, why not? Thank you for making me remember why I signed up.

--Miriam Nichols

**

Poetry is circular or it doesn't work.

You're really onto something if the poet is as well.

We shouldn't fret that the great *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* is closing up shop. A beautiful job was done and there's only so much one and two editors can do before they start stepping on one another's toes. Even beavers move and build new dams and new dens. Kent and Mike are simply moving with the flow. We will hear from them again. The beauty of their network is that each time I submitted pieces for *Dispatches*, often to Kent, Kent always made sure he passed everything first by Mike and often I would then be in touch with Mike. It was easy and comforting to detect the friendship between the two. Years and years earlier when I first made contact with Kent, while editing the last four issues of Cid Corman's *ORIGIN*, it was the genuine brotherhood from Kent that brought forth a richness of contacts with poets around the world, fattening and juicing many parts of each one of those issues. A fellow editor forgets none of this, unless he is a fool.

Every time I logged onto the latest gift of a *Dispatches* oracle — yes, sages worked there — I was reminded of the tiny art piece made by Jess Collins titled “The Seven Deadly Virtues of Contemporary Art”. Crayon on board, 5 x 7 inches, a tiny being, and this is what it says: “originality, spontaneity, simplicity, intensity, immediacy, impenetrability, and shock.” The rich and the strange. *Dispatches*.

Now someone come and carry it on.

--Bob Arnold

**

[Part I]: Dear Emily --I am trying to send you a love note that is also a, well, not hate note exactly, but a thank you that is also an indicator of an *odi et amo* relationship I have quietly held with you but, OMG, I seem to be outing myself Right Here In Public. I guess poets cannot help themselves. Since right now I am not going on any other outings I might as well say thank you for a wild ride of giggles, snark, kissing the ground your truth-telling walks on, and feeling ashamed for enjoying myself so much at the expense (did I mean expanse?) of others. Maybe this is a great time for one of those "double words" we hear so much about from you when you are in a pensive and double mode. Your doubleness was never really duplicity, which I appreciate, being sensitive to My Name, but this isn't about me, now is it? So in your honor as an advisor to poets of many ilks (whether the poets were willing or not), I have coined a new word, based, given my pedantry which incidentally I embrace thoroughly, on LATIN. It is AMODI--yes, perfectly naming my relationship with your mercurial and gadfly self, and I give you little "paltonic" bici on both cheeks (just two) for our very nice (or perfectly disgraceful) AMODI relationship. xxoo

[Part II]: In this wide, broad, eclectic, exciting--but not (alas) overly long run thru poetry, poetics and provocative thought (plus visual texts), *Dispatches* has been a completely necessary experience--to read, to look at, to think about, to enjoy and to be grateful for. I am very happy to have been part of its lively and intelligent presence, and thank the editors for their bounce and insights connecting to the ways Our Poetry Worlds and communities might be construed--and glossed. A toast to the intrepid editors--the beverages of their choice. Long may they wave--and many of us are waving back, too.

--Rachel Blau DuPlessis

**

This moment to say goodbye occurs in a haunting syzygy. *Dispatches'* leave-taking, aligned as it is with our Covid-19 pandemic, does seem fated. It comes neither too late nor too soon. A journal such as this one will not come our way again. Camus' Dr. Rieux, in *La Peste*, puts it succinctly: "la seule façon de lutter contre la peste, c'est l'honnêteté"—"the only way to fight the plague is [with] honesty" (Google's rather literal translation).

We are not who we were just a short while ago, never will be again. Has a single journal ever fostered such a large and avid community, almost overnight? *Dispatches* took up residence in our conversations, in our lives, before we even realized what had happened. Now this star, just as quickly, will go dark.

This is precisely the time to bid *Dispatches* adieu. Something like it cannot go on and on.

The journal's outsized role was taken as a matter of course when, recently, a prominent poet and scholar was forbidden participation in an annual conference. Banned by a major American

university because of alleged unprofessional, really bad behavior, he had been accused in public by more than a few people. The controversy, far more than a skirmish, included editorials and other commentary in *Dispatches*, not all of it of one mind. Some of it would be cited within academe. (There has been no criminal charge, or even formal complaint lodged.)

The journal would spin off a press. It brought out a book by a poet who had fallen out of step with current taste. In my view (as I wrote in another journal), the collection is a great work, and the crowning achievement in a long, stellar career.

Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson published essays of mine that were anomalies in the forms they took and the ethical positions they adopted. I will always be indebted to these two people—in small for seeing the value in these essays and without hesitation standing behind them, in large for their imagination and courage in founding *Dispatches* and insisting upon its now undeniable cultural force.

Dispatches gathered itself to lead us away from complacency. Its immense verve will now ebb and disappear (but for an archive). I honor its passing out of existence.

--Burt Kimmelman

**

As, And I, A, Bravo, and And

As sung by The Byrds on their first album: ♪ We'll meet again.... And I always thought, still do, that the realm of poem is expansive and is more than capable of sheltering a multitude of considerations. I stand and clap for *Dispatches* from the Poetry Wars. A great run. Bravo. And I always thought that the mule with the gas mask might be Alf the Sacred Burro that wondered about Bixby Canyon in Kerouac's *Big Sur*.

--Michael Basinski

**

Dear Fric, Dear Frac,

You squatted in the marble halls
of the Sacred People's Temple of Po Biz
and begat a big ripe turd.

Now whenever I hear the word
"poet," whenever I try to read
a "poem," this large red boot

kicks me in the head over and over.

Then the Poetry Gods call out:

You monkey-brain eater!

You secret cockroach-sucker!

You grave-humping, skull-licking fetishist!

How dare you scorn us.

Thanks, fricking Frac!

Thanks, fracking Fric!

--*Justice Poeticus*

**

I have rarely been more sorry in a long literary life than I am in learning that *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* is ceasing publication and moving into the archival mode. Simply because DPW, in the everlastingly growing field of web magazines, has been unique. First and foremost perhaps it has waged war on the capitalist view that poets write and act “in a Happy Land of Nice Bards” where the only obsessive concern that matters and ever will matter is Sales. Under the directorship of two eminent poets, Kent Johnson and Michael Boughn, long active in their own art and in literary politics, DPW has sported eight Executive Editors and forty-three Contributing Editors - ten of the latter from other nations than the U.S. It has published over six hundred poets, fictioneers, essayists, craftspeople and artists from various parts of the world. It has had seventeen Departments, the largest perhaps being the Portfolio Selection in which whole careers of elected poets have been featured among many archival texts.

If I remember rightly, I was first drawn to DPW when finding out that I was being included in its major publishing endeavor: the vast anthology “Resist much / Obey Little.” Not long after that, I was invited to be a Contributing Editor. I do not believe that I have ever had a section of my own in any other magazine -- apart from the very welcome Special N.T. section in Mark Nowak's “Cross Cultural Poetics,” issue 5 in 1999. This was eventually followed by an N.T. Portfolio Department collection. And as if this were not enough for arousing gratitude, DPW published two brilliant essays on my “Avia” book by poets Elizabeth Gray and John Matthias.

It is to be hoped that another publishing masterpiece will emerge from Michael's and Kent's subsequent activities. Meanwhile here we are adding another cause for mourning, intimate but painful, in the heart of the gigantic Pandemic disaster, a disaster that will perhaps be capped by

an even greater one: the shaping Environmental crisis. Continued poetic resistance against a governmental system led by illiterates will continue to be in demand. We await from subsequent achievements the announcement of more “informaction.”

--*Nathaniel Tarn*

**

In the tradition of Robert Bly’s “Crunk,” Mike and Kent have created that all too rare entity—a space for literary criticism free of the rampant games of career and reputation advancement. *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* will be much missed, more than we know.

--*John Bradley*

**

In a place and time where the poetry world can still feel exclusionary, *Dispatches* has been a site where dissenting voices could gather to pry the doors off the hinges of the temples, to be a gadfly on the flanks of literary powers.

--*Philip Metres*

**

Internet publication with its formal democracy but enshadowed curatorialization, is historical onto-poiesis in progress/process. That gods and demons are attracted to its medium without appropriate magisterial discretion cannot be regulated from without. Only when the last zillionaires and their minions adjudicate will the thing come clear, if then. Meanwhile, mediated contexts for the registration of configurative acts of intelligence, where both the breadth of the on-line condition and the inalienable but impossible necessity for its adjudication find a way to convene in a strange symbiosis, is about the best that can be hoped for. That both "dispatches" and "wars" contextualize under a kind of sublation and erasure is appreciated. The further enlargement of its document space will be sorely missed.

--*Charles Stein*

**

To *Fric & Frac*

The end of *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*,
end at (Poetry*) Wars. Aber was heißt *War*?

O'erlooking a superior spectre (Berenguer:
avizorando un sobrepujado Espectro (2013)).

The End (con mayúscula) of *the Poets light but Lamps* — *¿encienden Lámparas? Dispatch*,
O Cadoiro: O que é espectral no cancionero
é o sopro (2007). That boggles 'em (*Ulysses*).

* WTF such *Poetry Wars* are? — *Cataracts*, perhaps.

--Andrés Ajens

**

Despite corona-time when so much is bleak & deadly & baffling, I'm going to be sentimental here as I think about *Dispatches* leaving the scene but at the same time staying with us.

I often remember the afternoon of Jan. 3, 1980. Rosalynn Carter had invited (by way of strong editor John Frederick Nims at *Poetry*) about 50 American poets to a White House reception. I've written about this a few times. Here's my poem "Wings" from *Ribbons: The Gulf War* (1991):

Dick Hugo once called me about nothing except
to say he'd gotten married, had had a lung cut out,
& would be okay. He was happy & in love & writing.
This was after the White House reception for poets,
where I'd seen him briefly, propped up against a baby grand,
blitzed with champagne & history like the rest of us.
Later he wrote me that he'd had to get the hell out,
early—"too many angels there." Jimmy Carter showed up
at the last minute for Rosalynn's receiving line.
My wife & I were next to Simic. When Charlie answered
"New Hampshire," the President's eyes lit up—
the "Live Free or Die" state's primary used to matter—
but then dimmed again with the hostages in Tehran
who would cost him the next election.
Dave Smith, Ashbery, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ammons & Levine,
Stryk, Jim Dickey & Jim Wright, Hall & Swenson &

Rod McKuen was there, who had sold more books
than the other dozens of us together, & William Cohen,
the poetry-writing Senator from Maine; & maybe Gene
McCarthy, whose gnomish *Aardvark* book I'd read—
half Senate jester & one-third politician. Readings, &
Karl Shapiro said something rough & true for the papers,
& we all departed limbo to decompress

& figure out again what to do except trust
to good verses, as royalist Herrick said.
I wish we'd posed on a marble staircase for a photograph:
the angels die off
who for one day visited the powerless residence of power.
I remember being with Han, alone except for the lone
honor-guard Marine standing in shadow in a corner.
One of the smaller rooms, blue or green. Candlelight.
A tall empire bookcase filled with leather wings.

I'm not sure what-all is going on here. But, yes, "too many angels there"—Dick Hugo, WWII vet, was overwhelmed with the camaraderie he felt, the gathering of poets who suffered in spirit from American foreign policy, who in the main didn't know what to do except bear conscientious & maybe cynical witness & then go home to write poems that were smarter than they were. Transcendentalist Emerson said that poetry must be wild, & it must integrate. I'm 79 now, & feel every day that I'm in the presence of deceased but still living poet angels I knew/know (Richard Wilbur, May Sarton, William Stafford, Archibald MacLeish, Aaron Kramer, Martin Booth, Adrienne Rich, William Meredith, John Berryman, Judith Minty, Allen Ginsberg, C.K. Williams, & so many others), & contemporary angels still-alive like so many of the contributor to *Dispatches* who have felt welcome to speak our often radical minds in the presence of kindred spirits who have been angry, edgy, unafraid to call out elitism & politics in the poetry corporations that reward gamesmanship, insider trading, & conservatism. As my own life in poetry took its natural (for my sensibility) course, I progressed (or regressed regarding recognition) from a Madison Ave. publisher & *The New Yorker* to various small magazines & presses run by angels who helped my books/chapbooks/broadsides/journals—one journal volume is titled *Too Many Angels—exist*, which is now pretty much all I ask for. I sent my problematic poem "A Reading of Whitman" to several places that were afraid of it. I'm still afraid of it. It grew inside me unconsciously for years. It is about my dread as I wrote it, my fear that something needed to be raised about Saint Walt as possibility. The angelic (I hear them laugh) editors of *Dispatches* intuited this, & without blinking allowed me my say even if my say was a probe unfair to the greatest poet who ever lived.

--William Heyen

**

Since its publication of the fierce anthology *Resist Much, Obey Little* in 2017, *Dispatches* from the Poetry Wars has hoo-hah'd the poohbahs of the self-imagined Poetry Establishment while curating a menagerie of bardic teeth and nails that mainstream editors and poetry contest judges would find dyspeptic, bless their hearts. Those of us blissfully outside that Gomorrah owe special thanks to Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson for their acumen and dedication in providing space for and archiving a panoply of oppositional work by poets who appreciate

Ed Dorn's wry observation that

One poetry cannot be
more true than another

it can only be more convenient

--Daniel Zimmerman

**

Upstate, where I live, when you say you're going *to the City*, everyone knows you mean New York. In Byzantine Greek, εἰς τὴν Πόλιν (eis tèn Pólin) means *to the City* and that's how Istanbul got its name. For the last four years, *Dispatches* has held a like place of civic importance in the mind, a mythic crossroads and its collisions, The City, with its Great Bazaar, a noisy, treacherous haven for nomads, outlaws, saints, thieves, liars, scholars, poets and provocateurs. Iconoclasts and their beloved icons. Fishmongers and warmongers. Contagion and salvation. And always poetry at the center, Hagia Sophia, our Holy Wisdom, not as a museum but as sacred geometry, original Omphalion, marvelous dome, hive of rising, clamorous voices saying what must be said, what can only be got right by one among many.

--Billie Chernicoff

**

It is regrettable but undeniable that today's cultural economy has no place for lyric poetry in the traditional sense, even to the extent that such a place still existed in the mid-twentieth century. There is no doubt much fine poetry being written, and *Dispatches* has published a good deal of it, but the conditions of the marketplace are such that broadly recognizable criteria of poetic quality no longer exist. It is too easy to write a poem, too easy as well to dismiss someone else's for reasons having little or nothing to do with the objective skills of the kind promoted by healthy cultural markets. This does not mean that everyone need share the same judgments, but that a consensus of respected opinion can agree on a more or less reliable set of distinguished artists, which may change with time, but which allows a canon to emerge and evolve. I venture to say that *Dispatches* would never have been created had this still been the case.

Consequently, while expressing my personal gratitude to Fric and Frac for having published a good number of my poems on their website, and even more for having sponsored my book *Commedia* and even submitted it for a prize (which needless to say it did not win), I find it depressing indeed that the Dispatchers found no one to take up the baton when they felt obliged to lay it down. *House Organ* was a similarly generous enterprise which, after a good many years, came to a sad end with Ken Warren's untimely death. That his widely admired little publication had no successor was no doubt inevitable in the face of a well-funded university-based establishment able to ignore work produced outside its purview. The creation of *Dispatches* provided a lifeline, but now that too is no more.

I can only express once more my thanks for the time and effort the creators of *Dispatches* have devoted to the relatively thankless task of publishing work like mine, whose poetic qualities, such as they are, are irrelevant to "market value." I am sure many of your contributors share my

lament that, in parting, *Dispatches* takes with it a good portion of the tiny chance that someone who might enjoy my poems will ever encounter them.

Gentlemen, I salute your noble effort! Ave atque vale!

--I Goldfarb

**

Adieu

Instead of sitting on our asses
We farted on a book of matches
And lit the joint that so abhors
Such Dispatches from the Poetry Wars.

Now archived, we sit and wait
For future flames to leap the gate
As kids pick up the signal sent
Out from the compound of Mike & Kent.

That the gift horse's mouth is somewhat rotten
And sells its illness as good health,
Says bon appetite as it feeds itself
And calls the starving foal a glutton.

But nothing in this life is free,
Especially patches for the poor,
Small plots that promise something more
Than the epic freedom of poetry.

But history

Has a way
Of keeping it
All in play,
As comrades rage
On screen and page
Charged dust
Unsettles
The industry.

--*Joshua Weiner*

**

I honor *Dispatches* for including outliers and valuing poetics above credentials. I first landed on the site through an act of collaboration: Jonathan Mulcahy linked his “Unstructions for lingerpith” to my poem “in the pith of hover,” under the umbrella of Heller Levinson’s Hinge Poetics. When Kent and Michael asked for suggestions how to continue the site, I suggested an ecopoetics issue. They welcomed the idea of enriching the lingual world with eco-relevant poetics. Without their providing the opportunity and supporting its development, Poetics-for-the-more-than-human-world would not have developed into a full-fledged online anthology - soon to generate a 580-page print anthology. Bravo to Michael and Kent for providing the platform that enabled such opportunities.

--*Mary Newell*

**

Fric & Frac Exit Stage Left

Dispatches from the Poetry Wars will be missed. I started reading it for its news about poetry beyond the USA and for its alert, sometimes contentious, sometimes amusing responses to the usual cruel courtesies that keep the status quo in place in American poetry. In an era when reviews of American poetry too often read like extended blurbs and scholarship about poetry is speeding up its exit from the university, *Dispatches* showed what can still be done if one is prepared to take a little heat. I’m grateful for its encouragement of alternative forms of critical engagement—the Letters to and from Emily Post-Avant, for example, or the Dornian Pobiz Stock Index Updates-- because if there is anything more deadly than a reviewing culture fearful of passionate advocacy and critique, it’s boring, formulaic reviews. Maybe *Dispatches* wasn’t always as funny as it hoped to be, but it’s hard to write satire while looking at a poetry world

where so little happens that one can't more or less predict. Fric & Frac did their best. They wrote a lot, much of it interesting. Their energy has been impressive. They died trying, one might say, or at any rate they have decided to stop and deserve a rest. I admire their efforts. Here's hoping there is somebody out there prepared to pick up where they are leaving off as we enter a new and probably newly brutal wasteland.

--Keith Tuma

**

Dispatches,
Alas—it's so.
Had to come to this,
eventually.

What it was fully operational
was nonpareil.

For readers,
a site of rereads;
up-down down-up scrolls,
arcana made sense of
via right click.

For poets,
 An oomph—
the sympathetic snare-buzz
encouragement enough
to rehouse
mad thoughts there.

—but too much of that's an ask
by the kit to be taken apart.

Kyboshed, but oh well,
in theory up forever,
pocketable and take-anywhere,
very wild in the blood.

A big intangible thanks
well-expressed impossible—
God's work,
all told,
—so to speak,
Fric & Frac.

--Omar Al-Nakib

**

Dispatches has spoken truth to power for four years in an unrelenting voice and without financial remuneration in this capitalistic ‘democracy’ of ours. In other words, it has been a labor of love with a capital L. We celebrate, here, its legacy and hope that it has served and will continue to serve as a model for discerning and activist voices in the future. May its spirit continue.

--Thomas Rain Crowe

**

I’m not much for wars, let alone poetry wars, as I find something quite other than war in poetry, but oh I have been heartened mightily by these dispatches and the generousities of their contents and range of endeavour, their fidelity to justice and earth and to our elders and histories. The works in *Dispatches* resist complacencies and insist on a different future, a clamour of languages and of listening, and I’m glad for Fric and Frac, and glad for the Archive that will live on!

--Erin Moure

**

I don’t know if they’ll eventually call these the “Dispatches-Years,” but certainly, during its time(s), *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* has been a lively, vibrant, cantankerous, brilliant, bitchy, *Ort* to read some of the best lit- & circus-lit stuff (that was meant to be “circum-lit” but my own fric-spellchecker messes with my frac-desire in inneresting ways, so I’ll let it stand). Come to think of it, fric-frac goes back to the 1545 expression *ne fric ne frac* meaning “nothing at all.” Which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t mean anything at all only that it means nothing at all. And as culture abhors a meaning-less or -full vacuum, it quickly added a 2nd meaning toward 1640 as “Ce qui vient de fric s’en va de frac,” i.e. “what has been wrongfully acquired dissipates easily.” (I am acquiring this right- or wrongfully but fully, from Big Red Bob’s Dic in 3 volumes). And our modern meaning of fric-frac derives from that latter intent to become a masculine noun translatabe as “breaking and entering” which is indeed what our two guys did to a range of lit-presumptions, -manners, -manors & -dungeons, and managed to do so actually without fric, i.e. money before or after.

A long time ago I wrote that I dislike irony but like sarcasm (& also satire, which, married, give sarsat) because irony it is an elitist mode, in that it speaks condescendingly from an assumed position of superiority. Irony is defensive, augustan, a shield, while sarcasm & satire are investigative, or, as, hmm, Bernstein, someone often well, yes, say it, attacked in them Dis-

patch-pages calls “a probe.” Sarcasm is a double -edged sword that cuts all ways in all directions. Tough to use for shaving, but still easier than irony since, as someone, I think it was Olson, complained, the iron in it has gone on the lam. And as a probe armed with sarsat but also — often, if not most of the time — with just sheer poetry-knowledges (happily reaching way beyond the tight-assed borders of these Younighted States) Dispatches has, I believe, successfully achieved what it had set out to do, & more.

So, merci merci Messieurs Fric & Frac, I was happy to come along (at least partway) for the ride, most of what you had to offer was insightful, informative, intense if at times irritating (well, not as often as you may have wanted the readers to be, ¿quien sabe?...). Actually I hope that when you’ve taken a well-earned rest, you’ll come back swinging just as wildly & accurately in another incarnation of Dispatches.

One final question to you two, Fric & Frac: in the movie version, which one will be played by Fernandel and which one by Michel Simon?

--Pierre Joris

**

So Long, Cheapskates

Congratulations to Fric and Frac for their four-year run. I was a fellow-traveler for most of the last three years.

During that time, I answered *more than one hundred letters* (some of them nuttier than a squirrel turd), from poets and critics who poured their hearts out to the poetry field six ways to Sunday. Letters that craved advice, compassion, and validation from charming old trans me! Sometimes, yes, a grad student would write just to put some hornets in my bonnet. But MFA kids will be MFA kids, and you can’t do anything about it.

Regardless, in all cases, I sallied forth best as I could muster; I did so, even when hurt by certain harsh attacks against my person, most of which I have since discovered were written by an obsessed *Paris Review Daily* columnist, and under four different pseudonyms. (Did it matter that I had once proposed, in print, when he was still a grad student at the U of Chicago, that he might one day turn out to be our next John Ashbery? Apparently not.)

Well, I always tried, at least, to be interesting. And sometimes even a little bit funny. Even on those days when I was ready to burn thunderwood and jump damn salty, I tried to make people feel that someone out there at least *cared enough to answer*.

The main thing I wanted to say is that back in May of 2017, Fric and Frac had, and in writing, promised to pay me \$15 per letter. This was welcomed news, as I was basically a homeless mendicant at the time, holding a hard-luck sign at a traffic light in Spokane, leaning on an aluminum crutch for effect, if not so effectively. Even such a modest amount “per letter” promised to keep me half alive on instant Nissin Top Ramen.

You can get five packs for a dollar at Safeway here. So I wrote and kept writing, even as the checks had long stopped coming and for no explained reason. For the more than one hundred letters I lovingly handled, I was paid for maybe twelve of them.

So thank you so very kindly, Fric and Frac, even though I know that with this letter you will likely violate your “principles” of never censoring anything. Which is fine, because I’ll just publish it somewhere else, you lying cheapskates.

May you each enjoy a peaceful senescence. Don’t let the lingering possibility of a lawsuit for breach of contract trouble your well-deserved plague retirement. Keep those gas masks on.

--Emily Post-Avant

**

On War as a Metaphor

The first time I became aware of “poetry wars” as a thing was Tom Clark’s *The Great Naropa Poetry Wars* (1980), the report about an infamous gathering outside of Aspen in 1975 involving Trungpa Rinpoche, some of his Buddhist students at Naropa and W.S. Merwin and his girlfriend. Most people reading these tributes to *Dispatches* will probably know the details, and there were lots of bitter feelings aroused: then as now, some people wondered why poets should ever attack each other, to which Edward Dorn, in his poem “The Party” (the name of Ed Sanders and his Investigative Poetry class’s expose of the incident) responded “It is appalling that anyone / Should seek to be the agent of Shock.”

But the bitterness ignores a much longer history, from Dryden and Pope’s attacks on the less talented writers of their time to what was seen as the renegade modernism of Pound and Williams to the mainstream reaction to *The New American Poetry* in 1960. The Naropa affair blew over relatively quickly, but was succeeded by the langpo poetry wars, primarily in the Bay Area, and any number of other poetic squalls over the past 30 years, most of which don’t deserve the name “wars” (Flarf, anyone?). Because I studied with Dorn, one of the great poets and satirists of the 20th century, my feelings are perhaps more sanguine than others. When asked by Clark in an interview whether 18th century “literary contention” didn’t breed “a higher degree of focus and perception,” he was all over it:

Completely. People were willing to insult each other in that century. All the time. It was a total century of insult. And it was a brilliant century. It invented the modern. And you can tell by looking at what people had to say to each other that it had such hope for the modern. . . . its betting on the future was heavy, and it was very positive. I mean, the fact that the future has totally disowned that, and failed it, is no comment on the hope that was lodged in that century. I mean, it’s now looked back on as unsanitary. It’s now looked back on as arch, in this kind of pernicious way.

So when *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* emerged four years ago, I had an idea of what might be afoot, but this magazine morphed in surprising directions, publishing some astonishingly good work and becoming essential reading: not wanting to miss anything, I made it my home page. The die was cast early, in Michael Boughn’s essay on Bob Creeley early in 2016, which I’ve just

revisited. After writing that Williams's variable foot "located the imagination in the constant act of attention to the unfolding world and its political conflicts," he reports that Creeley was despondent that he wasn't writing political poetry, but that Robin Blaser disagreed, saying

that the mere form of his poetry was deeply political. I understood that to mean that the specific attention it required reoriented the reader outside the War Machine and its daily habit. And that was/is deeply political. Poetry was understood as a mode of thinking, and prosody was its soul. . . . [Projective Verse] lifted the darkness and opened composition to the limitlessness of the imagination, . . . because it treated prosody and thinking/being as one. Poetry mattered.

"It still does," Boughn went on, "but not in the public sphere," because poetry as a mode of thought has been abandoned and turned into a commodity for art booty: "prizes, grants, academic positions, invitations to the White House." *Dispatches*, from its beginnings, scorned that attitude and always sought to reclaim poetry's importance. Here's a bit more from this provocative essay:

Poetry was his life, not his living. It was not a means to an end, whether that end was some meager appointment or some equally meager prize. . . . The idea that like the current manufacturers of Commercial Poetry Products he "jockey[ed] around for fame and position" is laughable. . . . And although [Robert] Archambeau (a literary critic) claims that the poetry wars ended and that Creeley's anger was a lingering "resentment" that outlived its occasion, in fact, Archambeau's review is proof that the poetry wars are very much alive and well, and the enemies of Creeley's poetry are still at the wheel, even if they are more "detached" now, less forthright.

These ideas and attitudes, of course, weren't uncommon. *Dispatches'* other editor, Kent Johnson, in another early commentary, offered this pithy formulation: "In the fruition of integrationist goals first candidly floated fifteen or so years ago, the institutional avant has come to be—across its late-LangPo, Hybrid, and ConPo spectrum—something akin to our Democratic Party of Poetry." The rightness of this idea and others isn't the point: the central idea is that resistance is necessary and always will be. The title of the first big anthology from *Dispatches*, which I was proud to be part of, was *Resist Much / Obey Little*, and the editors always have. In doing so, they've created a publication that has joined the list of essential magazines in our time: everyone will have their own, but mine include *Caterpillar*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Intent*, *Rolling Stock*, *House Organ* . . . I could come up with more if I looked at my shelves. I hope other magazines will take up the baton, and that the archives of this one will be preserved: the list of contributors is long and impressive. 723 people, people! In fact, I've just realized I somehow missed the tribute to Gerrit Lansing, so I know what I'll be doing today. Take a look: spend some time. It's not like we're at war or anything.

--Joe Safdie

**

What my teachers taught:

"Our disgraces are our graces" (Olson?)

"We know ourselves by our resistances" (Creeley?)

Slant memory of who said. But they cling, these teachings. Or they jibe with what we already know, that resistance exists, and generates meaning, and shows the other. I've practiced poetry most of my life as a way to locate my own frictions. It's the one site of action that is not just political or social or beautiful. I needed to locate that sense of choice and intention I find in making poetry and I think I first found it in the resistance of a brass mouthpiece. Embouchure. Pressure. But in the body, the breath, the lips, cheeks, tongue. In other words, resistance yields. What should the fingers do next? At least that's the plan. Olson again: "In this intricate structure are we based, now more certainly than ever (besieged, over-thrown), for its power is bone muscle nerve blood brain...resistance." ("The Resistance").

--Fred Wah

**

THE STATE OF GRASS ARCANE

--for *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*

1.

For the first time
in 35 years I smoked
a joint: the spasms
in my ribcage

I'd suffered for months
vanished. Three days.
Five days to today.
They've vanished.

The grass seems
to have cured me.
I've even given up
Ibuprofen, and I

haven't smoked
grass again. Don't
need it. Don't
particularly like not

being myself, that is,
philosophically and
poetically being
involved with

non-being without
definitively being
controlled by it.
The State of Grass

is: an anything may
happen in a condition
of a light drunken
float; a helpless

sort of macho,
two or three orgasms,
an orgy with a whore
who's myself,

because my lover
there, is not, is here
inside me, but not
inner, is sort of like

happy dough my cock
is pounding into bread
and, being alive and
loving is so close to

being dead, I'm sure
it's better if you stay
just Agneta, and the
puns we crack with

our pillow laughter
are memorable
oblivions, not what's
simply forgotten,

and the grass we
lie upon is grass
and cannot make
us rotten.

2.

But have we after
all got out of the
in-sect crawling
around in each

other's skin,
crossing a street
of breadcrumbs
to get to nowhere

fast? I say with
equal fervor that
the science of the
skin of the world

and the velocity
of the streams
and cellulose under
it is an incest that

keeps us riveted
to the bliss of the
bion at the expense
of theory, without

which Revolution
can't get off its ass.
We're suffering
from agitpropriety,

not agitprop, are
scared of losing
the thing we say
we want everyone

to have, as if we're
afraid to hear
that voice again
thundering:

Get a job!
as if what we
create is not,
and it is, that is,

indeed, not; though,
oh soul of souls in
an empty pocket's
omnipotence.

--Jack Hirschman

**

When Michael Taussig, Peter Lamborn Wilson, Dilar Dirik and I put together a volume of writings on the Rojava Revolution in Northern Syria called *To Dare Imagining* (Autonomedia, 2016), we hoped that it would have some effect on the conversation in the U.S. We thought that the Left here would embrace this feminist, ecological, anti-authoritarian revolution based on the anarchist principles of democratic confederalism and stateless democracy. That didn't happen. The book was translated and published in Italy and did have an effect there, and I'm told it had an effect in other parts of Europe, but not in the U.S. One of the only places here that would listen to what we were saying about this revolution and give us a platform to speak was *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*, and for that we are forever grateful.

In solidarity and with thanks,

--David Levi Strauss

**

Dispatches is, well, if not a life-saver (which I think it often is), by and large indispensable, and (save for a couple of "issues" I somehow managed to, um, throw out) is clearly a keeper. There's a lot of sometimes very feisty news here, the whole well worth revisiting (and I do revisit, at need) – now and again perhaps a bit tiresome in its insistentcies, but dammit why not, *Dispatches* get things moving, the perpetual Peck's Bad Boy, fun as well as serious. And THAT is very much necessary, yes. We all owe something to Mike and Kent, keeping it going the way/s they have..

--Peter Quartermain

**

Sad, and yet possibly timely for *Dispatches* to be dispatching itself. *Dispatches* seemed to begin in a period of dogma and solidifications, schools, cliques, prescriptive modalities, and it set about with wit and intelligence to undermine the edicts and edifices of the contemporary scene, often punctuating the balloons of rhetoric and bombast, and with an all-hands on deck approach that not only worked at the demolition sites, but also, as space was cleared, began to offer the open ground for new and old voices, for new constructions, many of which had been hidden or downplayed behind the official verse culture which had supposedly replaced "official verse culture."

But now, and this why I suggest some sense of timeliness, we are on new and very ancient ground simultaneously, and anyone sensitive to the situation realizes that we are in a new relation not only to the future but to the past—fluidity, nimbleness, humility and as much humanity as we can gather to ourselves is now the new demand. I think, however, as time unfolds, we will come to see *Dispatches* as having done some important preparation for the time ahead.

--Michael Heller

**

In Praise of Dispatches

Going to miss the good and lasting work of Dispatches, official name “Dispatches from the Poetry Wars.” Just when we get used to something so useful and helpful, poof!, it tends to depart, just like life. After a certain age, you hate to answer the phone after 10 p.m.

Dispatches was unafraid to take on, in a humane and fair manner, many literary disputes and issues. It was always somehow both relaxing and energizing at the same time.

Dispatches was always good to me. Michael Boughn reminded me of a poem I once read (sang actually backed by the Bardic Pulse Lyre) in Buffalo, “Protestant Mean Streak,” so I brought it back, decades later, into my repertoire, and Dispatches published it. Dispatches published 9 Glyphs, salutes and poems of mine, for which I am very grateful.

Dispatches also published a new edition of my manifesto, *Investigative Poetry*, and is bringing forth my multi-color “A Life of Olson in Text and Glyphs.”

I am so grateful to Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson for their love of writing and the creative sparks that bounce around theirs and our noggins!!!!!!

--Ed Sanders

**

speCt books is grateful to *Dispatches* for being the first poetry outlet to support us when we tried in our small way to speak truth to power. Poetry by its nature resists commodification, but this can leave poets vulnerable to patrons and systems that do not have the field’s best interests at heart. We admire *Dispatches* for always calling it as they see it, unsparingly, with wit and heart. With their farewell, the poetry community should be reminded of our collective duty to do the same.

--the speCt books collective

**

I find it difficult to offer in a short summation what *Dispatches* has offered us --how it has functioned and continues to function under what is perhaps the most dysfunctional presidential administration in US history. At a time when many poets -- and most radical intellectuals--across the US fell silent--stunned by the outcome of the 2016 election and subsequent rise of what is unmistakably a totalitarianism on par with the rule of Pinochet in Chile--*Dispatches* emerged to fill a significant void among radical poets and addressed head-on and without apology cultural

life under an administration that very quickly closed the borders to non-white immigration, waged a full scale assault on free and open media (ironically in the name of free speech), opened precious national monuments and natural resources to further corporate exploitation, and, perhaps most importantly, created the governmental infrastructure and social conditions to support what has been, in effect, an all-out WWII-style holocaust on Latino / Latina / Latinx citizens not just along the borders but throughout the nation proper. The governmental reconfiguration of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal agencies, in conjunction with the travel ban on Muslim-majority nations, among other astonishingly reprehensible moves including an utterly xenophobic trade war, have not only isolated the US, and North America at large, from the rest of the world -- these moves have reconfigured social and cultural relations globally. But for poets there were few outlets willing to confront this political phenomenon in a direct and savagely honest manner. *Dispatches*, however, did that, and for this I am grateful. Continuing onward from the vital social and cultural formations that emerged through the Arab Spring of 2010 and the Occupy Wall Street moment of 2011-12, *Dispatches* carried itself through the darkest years in American history with tremendous integrity, offering poetries and commentaries commensurable in force and tenacity to the cultural and political violence we still find ourselves daily resisting. Even now, under the present health crisis -- a global pandemic that has hurled those of us in North America back toward Depression-era social conditions -- *Dispatches* rises to the occasion, placing pressure on wealthy and well-funded cultural institutions to participate in the campaign against COVID 19 in order to help ameliorate the toll this disease has taken on all of us. And if *Dispatches* has done this, it has done this without losing sight of language as such and the work we, as poets and intellectuals, do in and with language. And for this I find myself grateful-- thankful that *Dispatches* has been around to kindle and rekindle the fires it must through what are unquestionably the darkest and coldest moments in decades.

--Richard Owens

**

It was my own good fortune to have casually sent in some work. I read the first issues of *Dispatches* & knew from the beginning that it was a lively & cutting-edge journal open to a wide-variety of poetry & critical work. My good friend Bruce Holsapple studied with Mike in the doctoral program in Buffalo with Robert Creeley and Jack Clarke. Bruce spoke very highly of Mike & gave me the book *City*, & I was immediately taken by the work; the way Mike uses the page places him squarely in the field of compositional innovation. The sweep of his work inspired me.

I also found the Dear Emily sections amusing. It made me wonder what Kenneth Rexroth would think.

I think Kent's work was to draw on internationalism through translations & make the big connections in literary innovation. Of course both editors are part of what Rexroth once called the international avant-garde.

I didn't say too much about it except to other poets, but I knew from the start that *Dispatches* provides poets, writers, translators, & artists a platform for their work & potentially a great audience. I recommended poets whose work I love & respect, particularly those in the under-served community of publication, to send their work to *Dispatches*.

Unfortunately, in large part due to the generosity of the editors/publishers the flood gates opened a tsunami of submissions. Most of us could hardly keep up with the torrents of work that appeared with the rapidity of a newspaper. People much younger than Mike & Kent would be run-ragged by all the labor *Dispatches* required.

Those of us whose work appeared in *Dispatches*, were fortunate to be drawn into a *capillary net* of creativity, conversation, discourse. *Dispatches* is a fundamental resource for a far-flung community of those in the world of poetic innovation, not unwilling to grind the occasional ax, but doing so with humor, in the end.

I am grateful for the acknowledgment, the support, the nurturing.

Now both of you can visit New Mexico sometime--you have friends here.

--John Tritica

**

Dispatches spared no sacred cows, let no sleeping dogs lie, always called out the elephant in the room, aped the uptight and eager to censor, monkeyed around, sang like a lark, tossed pearls to swine, and rose like a lion to class warfare. The zoo of contemporary poetry will be poorer and more boring without it.

I am assuredly sad to see it go.

Health and solidarity, comrades,

--Eric Powell

**

The VISUAL WORKS section of *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* has been a welcome landing strip for the visual poetry community. A platform by which work can be disseminated throughout the literary globe. Not an easy task for both an ancient and nascent form to thrive. THANKS for including us!

--Nico Vassilakis

**

Dispatches, OBU, and its Conduit

A few weeks after the election of November 2016, a strange voice came into my head that called for a new political movement that would be adequate to the disaster that had befallen my country. It was clear that all the existing movements, parties, institutions that currently did exist were not equipped to pull us out of this new abyss. And, so, consequently, we required the Movement That Did Not Exist. And I would have to collect and circulate its manifestos:

OBU is a national organization supporting social justice and democracy and opposing tyranny, oligarchy, and racism. It is extraordinary in its effectiveness, cohesiveness, commitment, and imagination.

OBU does not exist.

And thus, OBU: One Big Union/Oligarchy Busters United came into being, or rather, did not come into being. But I was cracking the manifestos out. But what does one do with such documents of exuberant utopian horror?

In early December, I sent the first half dozen to Rachel Blau DuPlessis. I thought they might be up her alley. She told me there was this new online journal run by Kent Johnson and Mike Boughn, and she didn't necessarily like everything in it, but this might be something they'd go for.

Dispatches from the Poetry Wars!

Well, as it happened, I had met Kent Johnson a few years earlier, or more like a dozen years earlier. He'd passed through New Haven. This was not too long after the Araki Yasusada excitement. Kent had been invited to the post-avant seminar at Yale run by Richard Deming, Nancy Kuhl, and Jean-Jacques Poucel. This was a great ongoing seminar. A poet came just about every month during the academic year. The deal was, at one meeting, we'd get together and read some recent work by the poet and talk about it and formulate some questions. Then, two weeks later, lo and behold, the poet him or herself would arrive, and we'd spend a couple of hours in a seminar room at the Whitney Humanities Center and just talk about whatever came up, more or less based on the discussion we'd had two weeks before. And another beautiful part was that a nice little expenditure of Yale's famous revenue kept the thing going: the poet's books were paid for; the poet got paid, reimbursed for transportation, taken out to dinner, put in a nice hotel for a night. It became pretty popular. A lot of the big contemporary poetic honchos took part. Bernstein, Silliman, Lauterbach, Wright, Gander. That's where I met Rachel. So, Kent made an appearance, and we kind of hit it off. I was very interested in forms of witnessing and testimony, and how it could be that one could bear witness and testify to an event where you were not present. What would be the epistemological and, more importantly, the moral status of that (false) testimony? What would be the moral status of the forgery of that witnessing? I had written, in *After the End*, about the impulse in recent fiction about the Holocaust to feign the status of the witness in giving a kind of testimonial form to fiction—an authenticity, or playing around with the gravity of authenticity where there really could be none. And yet, if the work had sufficient power—as, in the case of Yasusada, it did—then how could that gravity be denied? And how else could a moral relation with such an event be established? As I had written about

Cynthia Ozick's *The Messiah of Stockholm*, this sort of work can only be false messiahs; there is no Messiah, after all. But the false testimony is the best we can do.

Anyway, it was a good conversation. Kent and I kept in touch for a couple rounds of correspondence. He sent me another book of his. I sent him my first book of poems, which came out a couple of years later. But then we fell out of touch.

So, I was really pleased when I heard from Rachel that Kent was the guy I should go to with OBU. And she was right. Kent and also Mike were absolutely enthusiastic and supportive. *Dispatches* published the manifestos as I sent them, one or two or five at a time.

And it was Kent Johnson, of course—who else?!—who came up with the idea that the manifestos *had to be anonymous!* And of course he was right. And I don't know if, right now, he's going to send this account back to me with some caustic comment about why was I now breaking out of the anonymity.

And he's right, again. It would be misleading for me to claim authorship, after all. I have always acknowledged being the midwife and conduit of the manifestos, and that's all I can plausibly claim. I mean, look at those manifestos... and look at me. How could I have written them? These Orchestras Bringing Unraveling, these Oafish Buffoons Undulating... these icons and indices of Blakean True Democracy?!? No. Kent, be assured. Every night, I tore out my liver and placed it under my pillow; and every morning a new manifesto appeared.

And as they kept coming, we began to think about a book on *Dispatches'* imprint with Spuyten Duyvil Press. They kept coming, and Kent did a little editing and added a few nice bits, and I got to organizing the book. Mike did the design and cover. And it appeared on Dispatches Editions in June 2017.

And that was that. I was done. My organs couldn't take it anymore.

But a few months later, they started appearing again—this time more depressive. I mean, a whole year had gone by and Trump was still in office?! As the old Geico (was it?) ad went, “This can't be happening...” “Oh, it's happening, sweetheart.” And I also thought, this time, I want more OBU authors, or anonymous authors, and so I started recruiting. And Susan Schultz wrote a few things—and Susan really got into her OBU voice and was magnificent! And Eileen Tabios wrote a couple; Rachel Blau DuPlessis wrote an extraordinary poem/manifesto; Michael Davidson wrote a marvelous poem; my old friend Diane Stevenson became so inspired with OBU that I had to edit hers into a shape that was no longer quite what she'd intended, so we ascribed it to “Diane Stevenson and OBU”; and others contributed: Geri Lipschultz, Terese Svoboda, Alex Kolokotronis, and a couple of anonymouses. OBU included some funny letters received by OBU insisting that, in its non-existence, OBU ought to exist even less, I mean what was the point already. Even the redoubtable Emily Post-Avant contributed some correspondence. And when Emily gets involved, there's going to be fur flying across the poli-poetical buttresses.

And we will miss Emily.

It took a bit more time to get volume 2 together. But *Dispatches* online continued to put up the manifestos as they appeared. And in Summer of 2019, *The OBU Manifestos vol. 2* came out in print.

Without Kent and Mike and Dispatches, OBU could not have existed, I don't think. Without their encouragement and love of the project, it all would have become too discouraging.

I don't know what else to say except that part of the pleasure and privilege of being associated with Kent and Mike and Dispatches was getting to learn so much. These guys just know so damn much about poetry. I would just read the magazine and follow along, and think, oh, so here's somebody else I need to read or some other way of thinking that I need to think

about. It's truly remarkable that they started this rag from nothing and within a couple or three years, it was a journal that you kind of had to read, and wanted to read. It was the most challenging and the most erudite and the most ferocious. And it didn't bother being nice to anyone. It didn't feel it owed anyone any kind of back rub in exchange for the reciprocal rub of any sort. If any rubbing went on, it was rubbing the right poets the wrong way. Truth comes out of discord—that's the lesson of the poetry wars.

So, I do not want the journal to rest in peace. I want its demise to be unquiet. I want its Vallejo-esque poltergeist to continue slamming poetic vases into walls and through windows.

From OBU and its conduit: *Adelante y abrazos, hermanos!*

--James Berger

**

What a marvel Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson have wrought: a lively online magazine full of snark, intellect, warmth, humor, polemics, and a lot of good poetry! One need not always agree with the editors nor their alter-egos, "Fric and Frac," much less the mysterious "Emily Post-Avant," to appreciate and even enjoy the lively Web presence that *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* has come to be. For the poetry alone, it will be sorely missed, and its retirement leaves a gaping hole which, with any luck, some enterprising and equally discerning editor will come along to fill, with a brand-new Web concoction. For the snark and rhetoric, for the sharply argued positions colored by what once was called, in a particular bygone & less digital context, the "poetry wars," I suspect no one soon will come along to equal messieurs B & J. They have done a service to poetry that some will hate them for; for that, I think they ought to be regarded with at least a grudging admiration.

--Mark DuCharme

**

Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna (Never Say Goodbye)

Dispatches from the Poetry Wars – the 'poetry wars' was the very first phrase that struck a chord deep within me to resonate with the ideology of this magazine - poetry wars never ended. Yes, it is true in every poetic world of every country whether it is East or West, India or America. The war against the poetic authority, a poetic society where life is defined by its desire for power, position, prestige, name, success etc and etc and hence breeding antagonism, friction, conflict, and endless wars.

The DPW magazine started its war four years ago with the 'magazine' of a gun, in military sense, that shot against this authority and decided to be ended now as archive, which will again act as a magazine, again in military sense, the storehouse of ammunitions or explosive materials for the future world of poetry, for the future generation to know about the past war game of politics of poetry and will be an exemplary archive to "show young poets that you can take on the system with whatever resources you have at hand."ⁱ

Every poetic era of every state/country consists of a mainstream of poetry/literature, governed by the institutional authority of that state and at the same time a leftist way coexists in parallel with the conventional stream which gathers dissatisfaction, boredom, frustration about the known existing, the nameless thing of a thousand names. As a result they start questioning everything out of their disagreement, disapproval, objection over the present mode of poetics that the present society has accepted as valuable, as necessary instrument of making poems or any other forms of literature. Hence poetic leftist start a poetic movement with a new ideology because they possess the dream of going beyond the existing known to enter into an unknown, the unknown as defined in our Upanishad: “Whatever is unknown is a form of the vital force, for the vital force is what is unknown. The vital force protects him (who knows this) by becoming that (which is unknown).”ⁱⁱ –by knowing the limitation of the known we enter into the unknown, the vital force, to deny any authority. When the movement becomes successful, the resistance loses to the capitalist conspiracy of acceptance by the institutional authority, the rightist way of poetic politics, and hence the parallel stream becomes the mainstream of the literature world of the state/country. As the time passes, another movement starts and the cycle goes on and poetry war never ends.

Like that DPW’s war also started in the form of resistance against enormous conflict of life, human corruption, aesthetic brutalities, revolts, wars and the endless divisions of ideology, nationality etc and etc. The very resistance comes from the freedom from fear, as the Nobel laureate Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore’s poem said:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.ⁱⁱⁱ

With this freedom DPW becomes “one of the very few places dedicated to disturbance, to shaking up the complacency that rules the Institutional Wastelands”ⁱ, with its presentation of lots of poetry, criticism, commentaries on contemporary literature in a healthy way as Nietzsche said, “objection, evasion, happy distrust, pleasure in mockery are signs of health: everything unconditional belongs in pathology.”^{iv} DPW is always seeking something truth or reality of life beyond material welfare, always seeking poetry that “is and always will be an unruly opening of profound modes of oppositional thought, a constant reset of “knowledge” and its categories, a site of revelation for unprecedented form and exorbitant meaning.”^v That is the DPW’s adventurous path of freedom to deny the phantom demon of authority that always tries to shape our dream, to bend our head, to break our back, to blind our eyes to the beckoning call of the future. To follow their own dream, DPW created an Autonomous Zone; ‘autonomous’ in the sense of denial of authority and ruled only by freedom in the way of anarchism as prescribed by Hakim Bay because:

they lied to you, sold you ideas of good & evil, gave you distrust of your body & shame for your prophethood of chaos, invented words of disgust for your molecular

love, mesmerized you with inattention, bored you with civilization & all its
usurious emotions.^{vi}

The idea to become free from all political control to make an entire world of autonomous zones is “precisely science fiction or pure speculation” at present. But as per Hakim Bay “certain kind of “free enclave” is not only possible in our time but also existent which he coined as Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ). Though Hakim Bay took the idea of TAZ as poetic fancy, but DPW who believe in Emersonian whim, tried and verified Bay’s idea of TAZ seriously. There is always a dynamic interplay between whim and will, a movement from whim to will to make the spontaneous desire to a real goal. DPW follow TAZ to “pirate utopia”, in Bay’s sense, where pirates are “social bandits,” although their base communities were not traditional peasant societies but “utopias” created almost ex nihilo in terra incognita, enclaves of total liberty occupying empty spaces on the map.”^{vi}

DPW worked internationally as seen from their Contributing Editors board, with representation from a dozen countries outside Canada and the US and behaved “like a confidence-trickster whose aim is not money but change” with a “poetic terrorism” where they truly follow Hakim Bay: “Pick someone at random & convince them they’re the heir to an enormous, useless & amazing fortune.... later they will come to realize that for a few moments they believed in something extraordinary, & will perhaps be driven as a result to seek out some more intense mode of existence.”^{vi}

Though DPW appeared as temporary, DPW and its two editors, Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson, has become an exemplary by their sense of freedom, sense of poetry, as they “share the sense of poetry’s importance as a unique mode of knowing, a transformative gnosis, and they could say whatever they wanted, whatever they thought, because neither of them wanted anything the Machine had to offer: prizes, jobs, grants, fame and fortune (poetry version).”ⁱ DPW worked truly with Emersonian self-reliant way, “in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.”^{vii} They are always against any institutional schooling of poetry as they thought creative writing factories can merely build poetry career of the young generation, spoon-fed by their teachers, by their authorities, but they lose their ear to the music of poetry by the machinery of schooling. Sound, rhythm makes the heart of a poem, in the words of Michael Boughn, “A sounding is a measurement made with sound, and a poem is an instrument for making such a measurement.”ⁱ

DPW is not a revolution but an uprising because it wanted to act with “peak experience” rather than ordinary and hence it is a temporary event/occurrence, able to create a type of aesthetic shock in the service of realization & liberation. This temporariness doesn’t mean that it reaches to its end because there is no reaching for poetry; poetry is always put on a moving stage, as Michael Boughn said, “complacency is the enemy of poetry. Poetry is forever unsettled and unsettling”ⁱ. The intensity of this temporary uprising has been able to shape the thoughts of, not to be expected of everyone, but at least of DPW community, created internationally, to change, to shift, to integrate things to make a maximum possible difference within a particular liberated poetic zone, in the sense of spatial, temporal or imaginal space, and then disappear itself to reappear elsewhere and elsewhere. So I never say goodbye to DPW, *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna*.

¹ What Whim Has Wrought: An Interview about Dispatches from the Poetry Wars with Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson conducted by Steven Manuel - <https://www.chicagoreview.org/category/commentary/page/2/>

¹ *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* - chapter-1, section-5, mantra-10.

¹ The 35th poem from English version of Gitanjali (Song offering), written and translated by Nobel laureate Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, published by the Indian Society of London in 1912.

¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, by Friedrich Nietzsche.

¹ <https://www.dispatchespoetrywars.com/about/>

¹ TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, *Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, by Hakim Bay.

¹ *Self-Reliance* by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

-- Runa Bandyopadhyay

**

It's been hard to write this final dispatch, as it were, to *Dispatches*. Four years ago when *Dispatches* began, I was so busy with work of another kind that I barely had time to read, write or contribute work here, or anywhere. All that changed a couple of years ago when I moved into full retirement and began to pick up the threads of my past writing activities. That wasn't easy. I was woefully out of touch with the publishing scene and hardly knew what to do with the new material I was writing and early material I was re-writing. Who would care? One of the venues that I felt offered an opportunity for my kind of expression, turned out to be *Dispatches*. I liked its edginess, its willingness to read and respond quickly and openly to material contributed. Further, *Dispatches* included numerous authors whose work I'd long admired, as well as new writers whose work in some cases I did not know at all, and still others I was just getting to know and was keen to read more of. I enjoyed being able to open *Dispatches* and see interesting and often caustic articles on contemporary matters and poetics. And I liked that *Dispatches*, while serious in intent, did not take itself seriously, but rather championed our need for a comedic look at our many current foibles. If Poetry (Chicago) (PC for short) is the Dick Tracy of Poetry Magazines, and Prism International (PI for short) is its Sam Ketchum, *Dispatches* has been the Fearless Fosdick of critical little magazinehood (that's FF for short, as in I don't give a FF what you think, I'm gonna say this out loud). I guess that means I'm just a Mugg hanging for dear life atop a speeding cop car while the criminal poetry killers scurry like rats down the drains of the City while old Sam and Big Dick chase them down! Woof Woof! Go catch'em Sam. We're going to miss *Dispatches*. It's held a unique place in contemporary letters--one too radical I'm afraid to be readily replaced. Thanks for a great four-year run folks.

Sincerely, and 'foiled again by Postum,'

--Robert Hogg

**

For *Dispatches*

A literary historian who has studied little magazines could probably tell us about publications similar to *Dispatches* from other time periods—the sixties, perhaps, or the twenties, or maybe as far back as the eighteen-nineties. Such journals no doubt published new poetry, inventive poetry, poetry written by established authors but also newcomers who were doing something different, and needed to be introduced to a welcoming audience. Poetry that wasn't boring. Certainly these publications also ran reviews, informed, sensitive to contemporary trends, full of measured praise but unafraid to identify aesthetic or sociological problems in the books under consideration. Along the same lines, perhaps these little magazines had a sustained interest in recent literary history, examining ongoing cultural tendencies which had proven controversial over the year, even decades, while connecting past arguments, flare-ups and vexed encounters with current debates. Perhaps they uncovered documents which needed to be seen by a wider audience in order to shed light on contested claims, even to the point of exposing those who sought to control the discourse. Perhaps these journals simply tended to make mischief. Perhaps they saw themselves as gadflies, maybe even had regular columnists who got down and dirty, unafraid of occasionally sticking their feet in their mouths, all in the cause of blunt honesty, however opinionated, even prejudiced. Did these publications stand for, as the phrase goes, “poetic justice”? I'm sure many among their readerships believed so, though I'm equally sure that others shook their heads and rolled their eyes upon reading a poem, a review, a muckraking revelation, a particularly nasty (but wonderfully witty) column and said, “here we go again.” Surely our scholarly informant can provide us with a substantial list of such periodicals from nearly every era in the past hundred or more years which served these admirable but edgy purposes.

What's that? Our literary historian is stumped? No periodical quite fits this description? Oh my.

Well then, all the more reason to lament the passing of *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*. Certainly in my memory, there has never been anything quite like it. To be sure, it's been something of a hodge-podge, offering work that has literally ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. (I will not venture to guess where my contributions have fallen in that range.) Although its editors have frequently appeared to be making the effort to get on everybody's nerves, as far as I'm concerned, a great deal that has appeared on the website has been an absolute delight. Smart. Informed. Refreshing. Committed. Engaged. Imaginative. Wait, did I just hear someone say “reckless”? “Irresponsible”? “Quixotic”? No, I must demur. What I have cherished about *Dispatches* is that it has genuinely taken risks. Real risks, meaning the expenditure of social and cultural capital—not the fake ones we see proffered too often by the *soi-disant* avant-garde (see—I've learned my lessons, Mike and Kent!). Furthermore, my personal experience of writing for *Dispatches* has been that I have been treated with the utmost warmth and respect. It's rare that I've felt so welcomed when I had a poem or a review to offer. The care was palpable. Mind, heart, soul, in genuine reciprocity. I don't know when we will see the likes of that again. Thank you, Mike and Kent. Thank you, *Dispatches*. You will be missed.

--Norman Finkelstein

**

My heartfelt thanks to Mike and Kent and all other contributors for making *Dispatches* such a cultural nutrient, a veritable war machine in the complex and frequently dissembling institution of letters. A Rabelasian rollock at times, a tribune and an exposé at others you have filled not only a valuable but also an urgently necessary position in the lapsus of culture making. May Emily Post-Avant find her rightful niche in the fane of eminent ladies.
With sadness and gratitude,

--Steve McCaffery

**

A fond but sad farewell to *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*—an important voice working to return us to the generative wilds of poetry again. Thank you for all your hard work, Mike and Kent. We will miss your *Dispatches*!

--George Kalamaras

**

Who, today, is going to tell you the truth about poetry?

For us (relative) kids, rousing up the courage to drop by Gerrit Lansing's house, call up Diane di Prima, hang at a reading with David Henderson--to tap into the lineage and transmission of histories *known*, but often yet to be *transcribed*—you're not going to find the truth at an academic conference. The places to turn for the answer are the people.

I've come to the good work of *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* through my editing with *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*, a project led by Ammiel Alcalay (also an executive editor for *Dispatches*) that publishes chapbooks from the twentieth-century archives of poets. Necessarily so, when you're looking at the material evidence, working with *Lost & Found* entails a good deal of dismantling everyone's expectations of what happened under the so-called auspices of "New American" poetry and its precedents and antecedents—not only in unpublished works, but in unexpected relationships, beliefs, and encounters. *Dispatches* is a trusted friend who reminds you that telling these truths is not about being palatable—"poetry is and always will be an unruly opening of profound modes of oppositional thought."

And in the spirit of this, *Dispatches* will gladly clue you in on the specifics. When I first found *Dispatches*, I felt: *finally*. I scrolled endlessly to read the beef. It felt clear that in sharing the type of poetry, commentary, and work that *Dispatches* does, they invite you into a long-ongoing conversation whose purpose is to remind (after Diane di Prima): "I have just realized the stakes are myself" (Revolutionary Letter #1).

The culmination of *Dispatches* leaves a profound hole in our resources to understand the ongoing world of poetry. Projects by *Dispatches*, such as Portfolios—recently, the incredible Gerrit

Lansing Portfolio—remain unmatched offerings for understanding important poets of our current and passing times.

I owe much to the editorial work of Fric and Frac, who along with countless other astute contributors and editors, have hastened my own research towards far better and richer conclusions. The clarity of *Dispatches* mission, matched by its editorial thoroughness, unflinchingness, and deep spirit, will be sorely missed.

Poetry's truth remains to be seen, told, and shared. Thanks to *Dispatches*, another generation also knows that necessity. We're being left with work to be done here. We won't be able to do it with the same flair, but we promise to tell the truth.

--*Mary Catherine Kinniburgh*

**

Over twenty years ago, back in the late 1990's, I got deeply entangled in some local skirmishes of the American poetry wars, which were taking place online at the legendary Buffalo Poetics List. Poet Kent Johnson stood (digitally) beside me during those embattled episodes, and later interviewed me about my poetry, and about writing in general, for *Jacket* magazine.

This was not just a vanity project on Kent's part, or a cynical tactic. His curiosity and friendly interest in a certain minor *poete maudit* was and remains a steadfast matter of principle with him.

For me, *Dispatches* represents those same principles of solidarity, with a willingness to challenge the marketplace bureaucracies of institutionalized Literature. The ethos of *Dispatches* asserts that without forthright, critical, iconoclastic, unsponsored, and contrarian voices - without complete intellectual independence - poetry itself is unfree. And unfree poetry is the ultimate oxymoron. As my hero Osip Mandelstam once put it : "There are two kinds of poetry : official and unofficial. The first is trash; the second, stolen air."

Thank you Kent, Michael and colleagues, for your excellent work on this sterling enterprise over the years. I feel very honored to have been able to make a small contribution to your pages.

--*Henry Gould*

**

Dear Mike, Kent, and Dispatches editorial crew,

I dislike bullies. I despise bullies who promote class warfare, who encourage and model socio-economic and cultural discrimination, dislocation, and suppression of the unidentifiable. Whose stunted authoritarian blather masquerades as critical thought. In the spirit of speaking truth to power, Dispatches from the Poetry Wars spoke to me, then Mike, Kent, and their associates welcomed me into their digital domain, doors already unscrewed from the jambs. The genius of Dispatches, what it has put on the table, what was at stake in every post is a poetics and

pedagogy that workers could relate to, that was political, too. The work of *Dispatches*, in my view, has centered on questions: Is everything, meant to float among the centuries, reliant entirely on advertisements and promises? Could poetry (and poets?) disentangle its existence from the social game of competition and productivity? Has everything (everyone and everywhere) become a medium for securing one's personal advantageous interest? Or, is it possible, as *Dispatches* has shown over and over again, that everything *is* a medium for securing one's thoughts.

I came on board a couple years after the *Dispatches* project had launched, I've valued every minute. And I think the beginning of a shift away from our poetry wars must come in a reflection upon the intersection of community and communication that culture names. It is even possible to say the links and alternating contrast of *Dispatches*' literary heredity encompasses the ambiguity of our culture's relation to the question of the dignity of communication and community. Is my life *my* experiment to do with as I please apart from the consideration of others? Are there no limits to the actual things I may—in pursuit of the imaginative qualities of really existing things—appropriate to my individual purpose? *Dispatches* has reminded me that poetry opens oneself to the “other realm” of an attraction that will take one out of all conformities, out of the realm of the known.

The falsification of intelligence is an inside job that seems magical – of the caliber of a paranoid delusional system that persecutes those upon whom it projects what it itself desires – and contagious. In both the aesthetic and in the natural world we've overstretched our reach in terms of what we've taken. The hoi polloi in our industries of art and culture, in finance, in government and politics are not geniuses; they're creeps and slimy ball lickers with connections. Parasites who suck the life blood out of the best fruit, they wouldn't know really raw reality if it bit them on the ass. To me, the principle significance of *Dispatches* from the Poetry Wars is that it has celebrated the potentiality for indicating a new kind of response to all types of aesthetic experience perhaps spreading to the whole of life. That's something novel, indispensable, and irreplaceable.

As *Dispatches* has so often made clear, we are seeing the emergence, in all the cultural cheeses or universities, of imitation cultural productions. And, given their ambiguity, they may deceive critics and consumers with cheesy modernist and post-modernist pretensions.

Between being oneself and being history is the dilemma at the center of the canonical belief that change comes not by confronting those with influence, power, and not infrequently wealth but by partnering with them. To that tendency *Dispatches* has put forth a firm NO. Admittedly, its sharp teeth and claws have often proven to be too much to bear for the faint of heart. Guy Davenport in “The Geography of Imagination” writes that, “The imagination is like the drunk man who lost his watch, and must get drunk again to find it. It is as intimate as speech and custom, and to trace its ways we need to reeducate our eyes.” Imitation cultural productions ally themselves with the opening ceremonies of the contemporary dilemma, the political rhapsody of their own construction. The form these ceremonies are taking is a strange collaboration of the rhapsodizing self, an instrumental identity that pardons and kills ideas, with the nonexistent. *Dispatches*'

practice of dialogue with the song or poem or person rising out of the abyss, in its unstructured existence, arrived just in time, a triumph in the darkness.

Looking forward, I dedicate the following poem to my friends at *Dispatches*.

Comrades, it's been a true pleasure,

.....

And We Call This a Democracy

--to the crew of *Dispatches*

What was at stake was personal (in a poetics that I could relate to), composed
Of the dead bodies of many plants and animals, the gift of numerous living beings.
There's a mirror of mind of the times... Thoreau whistles in my ears of peeping frogs
And dreaming toads mingled into a sort of indistinct universal evening lullaby.
That whirlpool (the banks make all the profit) cannot discriminate among muscles,
Legs and arms, and cannot understand these words: Will you have enough ecstasy?
Physical, corporeal power? Rules of politeness and swift consumption? An almost
Imponderable unpredictability, what distillates of life is one capable of grasping?
The question of the question mark, of the narrative story, the floral motifs, the faces
Of one's mother and one's father. An inflammation of criteria, stuffed with cash, slips
The silencer out of my pocket. Is it spiritual? But what does "spiritual" mean?
Whose intermediary leaves their mark? What blurs it, makes it larger than life, gives it
A meaning, an emphasis it does not have? There are many businesses and trades,
Unskilled labor in large quantities. Truth providers. Designers. Estimates for where
The disease is. What's the impact on my world? I never voted anything but Democrat.
Don't have a dog in that fight. Across the world people take on an instrumental identity.
Secular Messianists? Is that economically viable? There is very little concern, very
Little attempt to reconcile with one's past. Home can be anywhere? Why attempt to
Reconcile one's past concerns. Go in search for the country of your heart.

--*Andrew Levy*

**

The imminent demise of *Dispatches* is a damn shame, though I understand the toll of time and energy it must demand of Mike and Kent. The problem I fear they haven't considered sufficiently is what is going to happen to those of us who avail ourselves of their hard labour? Where do we go for sustenance and knowledge? Simply put, in the last couple of days I've checked into *Dispatches* several times. I don't know where else I would find the following:

Deep down in a cunt
I saw a badger
weaving gold brocades
& a monk's cowl...

The entire feature on *A Flea the Size of Paris* is grand fun. After I find myself following up on a recent notice on Mike's FB page: the *Letter by Murat Nemet-Nejat to Dispatches, with Some Translations of Ilhan Berk and a Brief Essay*. Ilhan Berk long a favourite of mine. This is how *Dispatches* works for me: Reading his letter to *Dispatches*, I started looking for books by Murat, came across a couple – one his poetry, one a translation – that I'll have to find the cash for. The translated book I'm looking at is by Birhand Keskin, a name which tugs at me until I remember I have a book by her back home in St Ives. Before you know it, I'm reading reviews by and/or of both Nemet-Nejat and Keskin. Then I start digging deeper into *Dispatches*. I find poems from the book by Keskin, plus a letter I remember reading by Murat, along with another near dozen articles within its labyrinth. Half the day and half the night is happily stolen from me. I have material up on my browser that will last me days. But I am damn well enjoying myself.

One final gift *Dispatches* recently gave me, gratis. I've been buying books by Joseph Donahue for a few years now, but never quite managed to get into them. You know the score: you can gather quite a collection of a poet's books who you know you will read down the line, there's no doubt about that, but it can take several years before the books open themselves up wholeheartedly to you. As if the poems were hesitant, or they could feel you were. I mean, I'd pick a poem here and there, enjoy it, put the book down, move onto other things. Well, recently I read the six poems by Donahue at *Dispatches*, all from his book *The Disappearance of Fate*. The way these things happen: before coming across the poems at *Dispatches*, I'd recently ordered that book, though aside from marveling at its appearance, the fine painting on its cover etc., I hadn't begun to read it, had held it in my hand several times, turning it over, as one does. Enjoying it as a book without quite being ready to dive into its contents. After reading the poems in *Dispatches*, I simply had to throw myself into it. The book devoured me. I moved onto the next: *Terra Lucida*, *Red Flash on A Black Field*, *Dissolves* and onto *The Dark Church* which I am currently half-way through. I know that without the push from seeing his poems in *Dispatches*, it might've been sometime yet – maybe an age or more - before Donahue's poems started to read themselves to me. As it turned out, the timing was glorious. Ripeness is all, etc.

But *Dispatches* has to end. Fair enough. The party's over. No choice but to grab our coats, say our goodbyes and thank the exhausted hosts before piling into a stranger's car for the long drive home. From now on it will be a lonely road. We might not even get there or know where there is. No more road signs, no more place names. It will be difficult to guess which turning to take. But that's the way it has to be.

PASSENGER

as if one were a passenger

in back of a car

being driven by another

you can't see

to a destination

neither

will reach

Or such is how I feel. At a loss aren't the words for it. Even so, it was a fine party. I wouldn't have wanted to miss it. I met a lot of people I hope to meet again. Many I never heard of, some I knew by name only, and it was great to catch up with some old friends. A few who stuck their heads in, it's true, became a little riled over certain of the conversations, including some who weren't invited, and there were even a few punches thrown. Some neighbours complained, while some crashed into the fray laughing and smiling, happy something was finally happening that was worthwhile. Each to their own. Most thought it the best party in town these last years. An open house you could wander into anytime, day or night, as long as you brought a bottle – wine or water, it mattered little - and some thoughts of your own to throw into the pot. It will definitely live long in the memory. If Mike or Kent ever decide to hold another such gathering, I'd walk to it barefoot if needed. What can I say? It was a pleasure.

--John Phillips

**

I came upon *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* only a couple of years ago. Someone sent me the link. I added the editors to the broadcast list for my blog, Parole. *Dispatches* informed me on the bad behavior of poets I had never heard of before as well as some whose bad behavior was legendary. Not that any of it was all that shocking, more predictable, like a bad soap opera. The poems I read were by young poets or regional poets I felt akin to and in the great independent

tradition of Americano poetry. Mostly. I was pleased to be included in their raucous variety when they linked to a piece on Bill Berkson from my blog. Dispatches also kindly linked to a few more posts over the last few years and even published some of my fiction and poetry, all of which attests to their extremely sophisticated tastes. I have been very appreciative of their attention.

Dispatches always seemed an organized though spontaneous effort with a long list of contributing editors, a regular posting schedule, and an international reach. The editors, Fric and Frac, made Dispatches into a clearing house for anti-establishment gripes, disaffection, conspiracy theories, exposés, faux exposés, rumors, gossip as well as original poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, noncreative fiction and into something readable and often entertaining. I had heard details of the Robert Duncan and Barrett Watten dust up years ago but Michael Boughn's account provided a keen insight into the social and ideological tussles known as the "poetry wars." As Fric (or Frac), Kent Johnson could always be counted on to put the good ship Hyperbole through its paces on the choppy sea of outrage (faux and otherwise). There is no truth to the rumor that they were spawned from the comments section of Ron Silliman's blog aka the "snark tank".

Wisely, the editors, at the outset, chose a date four years into the future as when they would flip the switch and let the enterprise go dark. That date has arrived. Satire is a tough gambit to keep fresh. Hyperbole devolves into hysteria, hip turns sophomoric, outrageousness hovers at the edge of puerile. Over too long a time, some blogs can become little pillbox fortifications from which to snipe at others. Even purveyors of fine vitriol have to know when to turn off the tap.

--*Pat Nolan*

**

Dispatches was the best poetry site on the internet and now that they're gone I'll be lonelier in the woods. But I know I will come across Fric and Frac in those dark dripping woods of the strange days ahead, because their campfire will be the brightest and I'm not a poetry banker or one of their stage coach drivers... And even if I was, since I have been once or twice (a stage coach driver for the poetry bankers) Fric and Frac will welcome me home round that fire and pass me a spitted sausage made with the ugliest but tastiest parts of the worst plumpest poets in America, explaining to me that Dispatches was not so much a hot air balloon but a slaughterhouse where the mortal enemies of litho-anarchic poetry were dispatched. And I will roast and devour the dead poetry banker sausages with Fric and Frac before heading back off into the dark where it is every poet for him/herself, until we meet again.

--*Julien Poirier*

**

As a perpetual outlier,
I drifted along and found language
to be the only sphere where I could find company—
poetry as refuge in what has not yet been explained away,
the potential of spherical syntax

spiraling into cosmic consciousness—

Looking back,
I only wish I knew that language
falls into hierarchical --and not cosmic--
slots, no matter how disjointed

. If only I had known
that there was a game to be played,
and not playing it right could result in being set loose
into the void of language
a lonely place to be drifting about
bumping words into all that
space junk.

Not for lack of effort, or hard work, or talent even,
but simply because language
like money
is slotted into categories
that makes some, and loses most
and in this sense is Capital:
the true marriage of true minds
they who play for power
while feigning anarchy and madness.

Dispatches had an eye on this game,
a satellite view which attracted the outliers
(who often behave badly)
and through the continuous present of publishing
poetry written by poets
for no other reason than
poetry: it's what we cannot help but do
and there find
each other.

--*Kristin Prevallet*

**

I'll miss *Dispatches*: even if I didn't always agree with Mike and Kent's take on things (and wouldn't it be weird if they had readers who always did?). It's always been lively, informative, and troublesome—*Dornian*, to invoke one of my own touchstones.

--*Alan Golding*

**

It was in late April of 2017 that I got an email invitation from Kent Johnson to join the editorial board of *Dispatches* as a contributing editor. Given the lively and controversial reputation of the journal, I literally jumped at the chance. *Dispatches* not only became an important outlet for my own scholarship, but also a significant resource for many Africanists and African cultural producers who checked in on the journal for their scholarly and creative work. One of my most memorable contributions to the journal was a review article on Jonathan Haynes' book on Nollywood, the burgeoning video film industry in Nigeria. *Dispatches* became that radical platform in which Africanist scholars doing work on non-canonical cultural texts in Africa found useful resources to inform their thinking and research. One of the powerful legacies of *Dispatches*, then, will be the different ways in which it created a space for marginal and countercultural voices to bring their narratives and insights on global culture to the center of international creativity and scholarship. That opportunity is needed now more than ever before, and it is sad that the journal is being phased out at a crucial moment when we need to tell stories of a global trauma!

--Paul Ugor

**

“The only war that matters is the war against the imagination.”

I have kept this statement from Diane di Prima above my desk in my high school classroom for the last twenty years. And when you think about it, all wars are wars against the imagination, all struggles to quiet the minds in opposition, all attempts to shut up the inconvenient voices of dissent.

Poetry wars are no different. The conflict around what poetry is, and who gets to say it, make it, shape it, is a bitter war that goes back to Homer and Caedmon. The current battlefields of universities, foundations, and publishing houses, where factions fight over money and status as much (or more) than aesthetics, are full of the corpses of many imaginations that have been defeated by contempt, by fashion, by the anomie of continual frustration; Michael and Kent, for the last several years have engaged in debate, in controversy, in criticism and poetry, and have helped in a great way to keep the imagination alive. They have done so with humor, with wit, with deadly serious outrage, giving a platform for new voices to mingle with the old, keeping the conversation about the importance of poetry alive in a world where many (including many of its most “successful” practitioners) would rather see it sequestered in a comfortable niche on a college campus somewhere.

I, though not young, am one of those new voices. I had the opportunity to meet Michael through the poetry community in Buffalo, and unlike so many others, was interested in my work, and upon reading some of it, wanted to discuss it with me, and offered to publish it. I am not an MFA, not a Ph.D. in poetics. I brought nothing to table in terms of status or reputation, and can

say I was shocked that someone I respected was interested in my efforts. After my initial publication, I began a vigorous correspondence with Kent and Michael, some of which made its way into Dispatches, all of it lively and engaging. It has been one of the great pleasures of my creative life to have become friends with Fric and Frac; to share ideas with them, and to be honored that they felt my ideas were deserving of a larger audience.

Michael and Kent share with me the fundamental idea that poetry should do something. That it makes a difference, that it can save lives, can make lives better. Poetry is the voice of human dignity; the wars against it, from without and within will continue, and we will all be fighting them. Thanks, Michael and Kent, friends, teachers, poets, for showing us how important that fight has been.

Now, more than ever,

--*John Rigney*

**

Elegy for Emily

Poets, wail tunefully
an elegy for Emily
who gave advice graciously
regarding matters literary
for Dispatches' community.

She answered letters truthfully
with admirable integrity
revealing the hypocrisy
of those who spoke officially
for 21st century poetry.

To Emily victorious
over fools ubiquitous
we raise a glass of venomous

nectar distilled for us
by the wasps of Archilochus.

--James Chapson

**

Goddammit, what isn't there to say. It's late here, about the time I'd usually be poking around the nooks and crannies of the old house. It seems like only yesterday that Fric & Frac and Crew moved in. They took over. But it seems there was more to hear than time would allow. Concluded with a monster ecopoetics issue, how appropriate. Exeunt *Dispatches*. You're already missed.

--Jared Schickling

**

Dispatches from the Poetry Wars existed both as a call-back to a previous time, and as an incredibly timely assault on problematic issues in the poetry world. For one who came of age in poetry during the 1990s, especially in a place like the Bay Area, the thing that always struck me was how seemingly *nice* it all was. This seemed especially strange as one learned about the recent "poetry wars" of the 1980s, involving a cast of hundreds, from holdovers of the "New American Poetry" and "Beat" generations to the "Language" and "New Narrative" movements, and everyone in between. Nobody had emerged from those wars unscathed. Almost all of the main figures were still roaming the landscape. There was a tension, to be sure, a restive *détente* in which one paid close attention to where one sat, whom one spoke with, at readings, events, and openings. At the same time, everyone was so polite. Everyone was so polite you could almost scream. And some did. But always in private. We'd sit in our cars outside a venue and take an extra slug of something before going in, to calm the nerves, and then go inside and smile and nod and sit quietly waiting for the lights to dim and the reading to start.

Sometimes the drinking got to be a bit too much and the politeness wavered. If that happened – even if insults were traded, sloppy punches thrown – one could always copiously and politely apologize, later. These were the days before social media. There was the Buffalo Poetics Listserv, on which some nastiness began to emerge, barbs traded via (gulp) email. DIY print journals and zines like *Skanky Possum* and *Tripwire* were a vital source of information in which battles briefly flared between various camps. Then came the blogs – a short golden age, in retrospect – on which new voices emerged, even flourished, without having to "come up" through a school or kiss a ring. All too quickly this age was subsumed in the rising tide of various "platforms," coincidentally (?) alongside new movements such as Flarf and Conceptual Writing, taking advantage of the new social media to spread wings and tentacles and "go viral."

But the air of polite gentility remained. A teeth-gritting sense of not wanting to rock the boat, say the wrong thing, be the first to cast stones or aspersions. As if all of poetry were a vast cocktail party unwinding on a veranda somewhere in the antebellum south. Inconvenient truths and unpleasant realities transpiring in the periphery, to be sure, but best not to look too closely or discuss too loudly. As before, a few ragged print outfits kept discussion alive – *Damn the Caesars* and the vital but short-lived zine *Sous les pavés* – but aside from these signal fires, the landscape had long been devoid of any outward manifestation of the conflict roiling beneath the surface. This is where *Dispatches* came in. A throw-back to the muckraking poetry rags of the late 70s and early 80s such as *Rolling Stock* and *Bean News*, the online journal did its level best to be a constant burr in the side of, if not embarrassment to, the poetry “establishment.”

But what is the poetry establishment? A frequent target of *Dispatches*’ ire was the Poetry Foundation, with its several-hundred-million endowment and august Chicago offices. In the four years of its existence (though it seems to have been around so much longer!), however, *Dispatches* also skewered the contradictions of the conceptualists, lampooned the language writers, and called out call-out culture itself. This last, most recent crusade sometimes made for strange bedfellows, as the editors of the journal found themselves defending problematic figures who’d previously endured their vitriol. Taken altogether, the issues, insults, and sheer range of satire promoted by *Dispatches* over the years feels as varied and catholic as anything undertaken by Pope or Byron. And in some ways, every bit as necessary, even if at times excessive. Personally I did not always agree with the editors’ obsessions and causes. Perhaps if I or anyone *had* always agreed with them, that would’ve marked a failing on their part. Their job was confrontation, not comfort. But I always respected the editors’ commitment, and I always appreciated their bluntness and passion and wit.

Especially because it was anything but polite.

Now, alas, it is time for some new venture to take up the mantle and throw down the gauntlet. *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*, angry anachronism though it is and was, will no doubt rise again in some other shape or form. For its office in the normally, seethingly polite world of poetry is similar to that of the legendary king, of whom it was prophesied: *quondam et futurus*.

The king is dead; long live the king.

-- *David Hadbawnik*

**

Dispatches published two small selections of my poems in the past couple years, as well as the poems in the recent *More-Than-Human* anthology, and so I am definitely grateful. I’ve also enjoyed reading a lot of the essays they’ve compiled! Great stuff on theory, history, poetics.

--*Kelly Shepherd*

**

How we needed, still need, and will always need these *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars!*

A sturdy gasmask against the hordes of Poets who wield business cards that read: *Poet*.

The antidote—a reliable *Sal de uvas*—to the heartburn and gas caused by the feast at Helikon Banking where a Decrepit Muse in bikini smeared her lips against this year’s Grant Recipient.

A sudden strafing of the auditorium’s ceiling right when the sensitive poet is about to declaim his sensitive quatrains showing how likeable and sensitive he is.

A pot of manure left in front of the MFA Department Chair’s office in a building founded by the Steel Magnate; beautiful, busted flowers at the tombs of Apollinaire and Baudelaire, or chucked into the churning sea that ate lovely Hart Crane.

All very serious, serious work, like a soluble fish, or lunar pencil shavings.

Toppling the New Wave Ironic conceptualism, the Angular Haircuts, the Scarlet and silken flowing Scarves, the Hyphenated-SoBleedingHearts, the Silver and Turquoise Shamans no wiser than Disney and who don’t do anything as practical as learning how to mix concrete, marksmanship, milk a cow, sit in a field of crows until turning into a mushroom, but instead they open a website with a “merch” link, and ray-gun set to stun whenever a new Book Award or Fellowship open.

Bang! Boom! Let the Foundations burst like smashed pomegranates.

If a poem doesn’t stab or scald, then what’s the point?

And now the virus, the same monkey in the white-house, and the long, long, long line of the Academically Trained and Endorsed Young Poets (or your money back!) outside the building that looks like a bank or plastic surgery hospital. A blast! Another Dispatch! Explosions of Authentic Laughter and the Molten Verb! It’s getting hot, it’s getting hotter, and they’re taking off their sports-coats, loosening their ties, bandanas, sunglasses, removing their calfskin loafers, expensive army-boots, nose-rings, fashionable tackle-bait, post-exploitive T-shirts endorsing and attacking everything except what would incite true outrage, and they’re sweating, they’re melting, the terrain is hitting 120, 130 degrees, yep, they’re deliquescing, simmering and sizzling into puddles of gelatin and bad verse, all into the gutter, to be washed away into the unanimous and indifferent sea, into the anonymity they unwittingly pursued.

--Anthony Seidman

**

Dispatches has followed its own model of “excellence” in an era of academic retrenchment and status-obsessed branding, harnessing its own neuroses in the fight against those who turn to poetry not for weaponized critique but for its life-styling function, challenging institutional management through long-form vituperation rather than the passive engagement (clicking

"like"), scavenging the junkyard for explosive materials to be hurled at those cultural gatekeepers who flash their police badges, stirring the shit and unafraid of stepping in it too.

--Paul Vogel

**

For Dispatches

--that no event / is not penetrated, or in collision with, an eternal / event

(Charles Olson)

from Adyta: Pindar's 8th Paian -- of the Temples at Delphi

I.ii (Antistrophe: Myrddin goes down)

“When Merlin in Chrestien de Troyes loved Ninian he showed her a cavern adorned with gold mosaics and made by a prince for his beloved, and told her that those lovers died upon the same day and were laid “in the chamber where they found delight”. He thereupon lifted a slab of red marble that his art alone could lift and showed them wrapped in winding-sheets of white samite. The tomb remained open, for Ninian asked that she and Merlin might return to the cavern and spend their night near those dead lovers, but before night came Merlin grew sad and fell asleep, and she and her attendants took him “by head and foot” and laid him “in the tomb and replaced the stone”, for Merlin had taught her the magic words, and “from that hour none beheld Merlin dead or alive”.’

I.iii (Epode / First Adytum: Le cri du Merlin)

en la forest perilleuse

- Broceliande -

Nun nur Stimme:

Now but uox.

Eros, dross.

Element is oracle

- scoots upon wind,

where it goes.

Oaks' hollows,

holes

the doves nest in.

Eiche rauschet.

A mist rests.

Murmur

to the shady

roots

your old

man's

carmina.

III.i (Strophe: The Third Temple)

hands anymake

could make, they

--Athena, Hephaistos--

made

what rhythm

shone forth, showed

itself there, O
Muses?

The walls, bronze, stood up,
the pillars, too, bronze,
held them,

& above,
on gable, eagle-height,
gold

Keledones

--"Charmers," they say--
sing there

They broke
the Law...

Kronidai

came down--

thunder's bolt--
the earth
split

(a chasm)

the singers hid there,
the temple

(holiest of all works)

too

The gods,

in anger

sweet song

lured to waste

xenoi-- apart from their children,

apart from their wives--

thumoi

hung up

in honey-thoughts

(that sound was)

daidalma, daidalma

'weaving dances'

out of their wits

they come . . .

Pallas

put it there

in the voice . . .

Mnemosyne

tells them

what is, &

what was, &

what will be . . .

from I.i (Strophe: Entrance, *geineo, geineo, koure, kai epios exithi kolpou*)

Make of pattern a temple,

of your patter

green song.

(A moon as eye is our candle in patches--

III.ii (Antistrophe: Atlantis goes down)

κρύψε δὲ πῦρ

--*Steven Manuel*

**

en síntesis y/o grandes rasgos, veo en **dispatches** un menos de lo mismo, una diferencia, una posibilidad de leer y ver poesía en un formato virtual con algo de porvenir _no quiere decir esperanza, no quiere decir buena o mala poesía; quiere decir lugar donde sigue habiendo la posibilidad de pensar la poesía_.

--*guillermo daghero*

**

It's Hard to Say Goodbye...

When *Dispatches* moved out of the virtual back room banter of a group of friends and into more accessible cyberspace, I was both enthusiastic and skeptical. My skepticism mainly had to do with going digital at all, something I've generally resisted as much as possible. Of course, mainly

thanks to our fearless leaders Fric and Frac, as *Dispatches* moved from its humble beginnings to the well-oiled behemoth it has become, all that changed. Reading the tributes that have come in has been extraordinarily moving, because as I (and I think many of us find out), one never knows if there are actual readers out there until they show themselves, until they respond. With *Dispatches* in particular it's been hard to tell, since, as I put it in an interview: "My sense is that a lot of people actually follow it, using the equivalent of a brown paper screen-saver, so the neighbors don't find out, as we're probably considered very impolite, irascible, and politically incorrect." It is incredibly heartening and empowering to know that we've had an impact, that we've had a following, that people have cared about what we've done and have been able to find real resonance in our mixture of over-the-top satire, original work, debate, archival finds, chapbooks, and various dossiers of one kind or another. Virtually leafing through the archive, I'm astounded at how much we've been able to present in this relatively short time span.

Editing for style is one of the great mechanisms of censorship in the US and "house styles" or "formats" deeply impinge upon content as style also connotes format, scope, what is allowed in or not. At the same time, if editing for style can't tame expression, then severe controls over content come into play. In America, you say? Yes, Emily... And, as I've been railing on ad nauseam for decades, there is almost NO forum left for actual debate, because the "debate" has already been taken care of by suppression, misrepresentation, marginalization, feigned ignorance, real ignorance, and a whole host of other control mechanisms, including "format." By insisting on "Dispatches from the Poetry Wars," *Dispatches* raised the stakes, bringing us away from gossip, mutual-admiration, back-scratching, and careerism, to the news, where opinions and positions actually matter. In this day and age, that is actually astonishing, particularly in the so-called poetry world which has even outdone the MSM (main stream media) in curtailing actual debate and promoting a feckless "we're all in this together" bubble of fake news.

I can't overemphasize the importance of this for me, personally. As someone who has spent a lot of time in the rush and immediacy of newsprint and news, in which a dispatch from somewhere is an actual thing, the concept of having a textual and conceptual home has been incredibly helpful and made encounters possible that couldn't have taken place anywhere else on the current scene. And believe me, in many cases I tried, we tried! My own relatively more recent history has included a near ban, post 9/11, on being asked to write for venues I used to write for regularly. In the early 2000s I found myself with a column called "Politics and Imagination" in a Bosnian weekly, contributing semi-regularly, as well, to the English language *al-Ahram* in Cairo. Despite the frustration and anger at exclusion, in retrospect, I've come to consider myself lucky. While so many of my peers were busy getting censored or self-censoring, I had free reign, and it allowed me a certain boldness that was unavailable to many of my contemporaries. This "boldness" doesn't necessarily always mean "what you can actually say," though it can be that importantly, but where you're coming from, what your perspective is, what you bring to the table from experience and reference, who you're trying to reach and why. Beyond the 24/7 surround sound cognitive dissonance of propaganda we find ourselves enveloped in, under the guise of professionalization or any number of corporate infused modes, our spectrum has become so diminished, narrowed, and naturalized in the US that we forget how

destructive and suffocating it can be, how limiting and antithetical it is to the possibility of finding forms for true expression, and encompassing a vision. My profound thanks to the crew at *Dispatches*, including, of course, our dear departed compadre Ben Hollander, for reviving and keeping that spirit alive.

--Ammiel Alcalay

**

Since its inception I cherished *Dispatches* for overseeing the ever ready production of sterilized pins to prick the proliferating balloons of hot air hovering on the horizon of the transnational poetry scene. The reliable personnel on hand there also had in their collection hatchets and ice picks to go after the many mastodons of mendacity. For subtler cases, they kept stilettos and needles for delicate insertion of common sense into the various traffickers of poetic and extra-poetic pap. Steadfastly, this mighty journal was armed with an indignant dissent from some causes, movements, institutions, and persons—and steady solidarity with many others. It managed to be cerebral, polemical, and comical—not an easy act to pull off.

Speaking of pulling off...

Dispatches never got into the habit in its four year run of trying to topple icons and ideas off platforms it wished to replace with its own agendas and ideologies. No, it wanted to remove these platforms entirely, perhaps bombastically blowing them up or hurling their hierarchical properties into that gaping historical dustbin. Elitism was never a quality of either founder, Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson, or their many contributors. What did seem to be generated on that site, over and over, was a popular front against cant, guff, platitude, pretentiousness, posturing, hypocrisy, duplicity, preciousness, bad faith, bad poems, bad poets, and the superabundance of poetry institutions with bad histories, activities, or intentions. Agitprop with fervent ethical compass. Amen!

Beyond the critiques and chronicles, the site managed to publish some wonderful poems, engaging reviews, inspiring commentaries, hard-to-classify hybrids, and a friggin' advice column (Thanks, Emily, for all the psycho-poetic memories!). *Dispatches* was devoted to celebration, too, and I am honored to have contributed a few pieces to it, including a picture of me celebrating my friend and mentor Michael Heller's 80th birthday in 2017. Hooray!

This multifaceted gem of a journal gave me much joy and I am saddened by its discontinuation. However, its archive will always be a tremendous resource and its spirited legacy will be found in its bright future lineage: all those poets, poems, journals, critics, readers, and fellow spirits influenced by the force of its inspiration. Thank you, Michael and Kent, for a radiant run. Gratitude and Beatitude to You and to All for Whom Poetry is a Counter to the State of Dreaded Affairs.

--Jon Curley

**

Dispatched Reflections

such poets have no right to quote,
and yet God forces them to never be silent
and seems to need their complicity
Cocteau's Epitaph, Mary Butts

It was far too easy to take *Dispatches* for granted, that it would always be there, much in the same way many of us considered *House Organ*. As the saying goes, all good things must come to an end but in certain ways they do not, not at least anything committed to writing in any shape or form, in print or electronic. Knowing that the entire site will be archived on-line in perpetuity provides some solace, that *Dispatches'* content will thankfully be available to readers, students, and researchers enabling it to live on in its own way.

Mike Boughn and Kent Johnson reiterated that *Dispatches* would only be a TAZ (temporary autonomous zone) with a limited run. I believe many of us may have forgotten this point. But the ephemeral nature of the TAZ is such that it leaves traces, constituting lingering and perhaps lasting edifices. In Hakim Bey's aka Peter Lamborn Wilson's own words:

The TAZ is *utopian* in the sense that it envisions an intensification of everyday life, or as the Surrealists might have said, life's penetration by the Marvelous. But it cannot be utopian in the actual meaning of the word, nowhere, or No Place. The TAZ is somewhere. It lies at the intersection of many forces, like some pagan power-spot at the junction of mysterious ley-lines, visible to the adept in seemingly unrelated bits of terrain, landscape, flows of air, water, animals. But now the lines are not all etched in time and space. Some of them exist only *within* the Web, even though they also intersect with real times and places.

(P. 111 *TAZ*).

So many marvelous lines intersecting, creating beautiful arrays and permutations in the course of this e-zine's run. These inventions will populate the continuum. Wilson suggests that a *TAZ* is a web erected or tethered to the grid creating a realm, a safe haven for outre' behavior and creative abandon. In a certain sense *Dispatches* afforded that space essentially spliced onto the world-wide-web, it's own interstices concealed to a more select audience.

Dispatches was a type of tribal affair. From that fundamental angle I've been musing on the quandary of literacy for societies past and present. Recently Peter Lamborn Wilson granted

me access to the manuscript for his penetrating work on the Yezidi, *Cauda Pavonis: Esoteric Antinomianism in the Yezidi Tradition* (soon to be published) where he broaches insurgency in the face of dissemination and writing,

The *text* has always (since about 4000 BC) been a means of enslaving humans to a status quo of the State and its official ideology or religion. By refusing literacy the Yezidis signified their refusal of *Law* as oppression. “The pen is in the hand of the enemy,” as the old Persian proverb puts it. The magic of writing comprises both the blessing and the curse of Hermes-Thoth. According to a legend, when Thoth tells Zeus he’s invented *letters*, and that from now on humans will never forget anything, Zeus answers, “On the contrary, my son — now they’ll forget *everything*.” Writing is the death of memory, and hence — paradoxically — the origin of unknowing. The “spell” binds us to the power of the author(ity). In this sense, in an oral tradition—not “illiterate” or “pre-literate” — the Yezidis can be seen as deliberately (not accidentally) *free*. (p. 11)

So, possibly, the deliberate cessation of *Dispatches* will further its contents. Memories may be jogged and recollections incited through this disbandment. One may argue this progression only provides partial liberation. Of course, if anyone understands, Peter Wilson knows that using the tool of the enemy to transmit any message concerning literacy undoes its very moorings. Such is the vice of literacy in the way of the world, a pharmakon of sorts, its bitter pill-value downplayed while it provides enjoyment.

However, all the efforts to archive and suspend the mass of this creative juggernaut may be for naught and forgotten. Such a positioning for *Dispatches* may elicit its emancipation and contribution to the greater aporia, unknowing and the comfort afforded thereby.

A fragment of a poem in progress feels right at the moment:

Felt feeds of the future

In Seeds

(come out of dead flesh
and Virgil’s bees
take off)

Using words

We may never understand

Meaning entirely

Taken out of interiors, hearts
Set on the backs of verbs
Burros of the trade
Sounds and mounting semantic labors
Passed by actions.

“At the paleolithic level of techne’ time is measured by myth, not science.
Time is dreamtime, the narrative duration of the hunt, the original artform of
our species.” From *Old Calendrist* pamphlet #10 by Peter Lamborn Wilson

Time to sit back, listen, and “Let the wind speak” like Pound dictated at the end of the *Cantos*.
The wind that clears the battlefield and shakes the grasses. The aftermath and its transport, now.
In gratitude
On the piedmont

--*Robert Podgurski*

**

When I was first discovering what poetry mattered most to me, Sulfur, Temblor, Acts, Talisman, Hambone, Notus, and First Intensity were my Harvard and my Yale. Their mix of translation, scholarship, lively criticism, the range of arts and ideas, the overall openness to and curiosity about poetry ancient and contemporary, offered a lifetime of instruction in the art. The minute I saw Dispatches, I felt a deep continuity with those earlier magazines. Yes some of the same names, long unseen, and so many new names, and, for sure, the same excitement. But more importantly, the two of you were testifying, are testifying, in a dire time, to the imagination and its power to push back, to, every now and then, cast out Moloch. I'm deeply grateful for that.

--Joseph Donahue

**

Dispatches Editions (that is, the editors Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson) published my seventh book *Status of the Mourned* when virtually no one else would.

And finally, I thought, I have hit the private big time—big time.

Or, as Mike Boughn wrote: “You, no doubt, have a world of experience with publishers. We are on the extreme informal end of the spectrum. This is more or less family, like the web site.”

And with this also stands gratitude, a personal debt, owed to Mike Boughn, for his patience and openness to accommodate the many changes a manuscript saw over the many weeks that it took to produce the book.

--Hugh Seidman

**

Thanks to the salty crew at Dispatches for calling out the prudery, hypocrisy, and toxic self-congratulation so endemic to certain sections of the poetry world (and the world in general). I didn't always agree, but then again--is that really the point? Right!! It was good to get out on the open waves on this particular barnacle encrusted old pirate ship. I enjoyed the company and the view. It will be bittersweet to see y'all disappear into the sunset, but I will be hoisting a cold one in salutations and respect!

--Jason Morris

**

La dernière mode (poétique): dernier numéro

Spring has brought color to this part of the world; nature puts on its seasonal finery—the cherry, magnolia, and pear trees have bloomed spectacularly, and now the lilacs and azaleas are pouring out colors that would do credit to any Pixar production. But your humble correspondent, confined to his home these past two months (with of course occasional hurried and nervous trips to the grocery, the pharmacy, and the hardware store)—huddled behind his books, laptop, and notebooks in the same ensemble of jeans, t-shirt, and hoodie that he vaguely recalls donning and doffing for at least two weeks now—is inclined at the moment only to basic Baudelairean black.

Somehow over the past couple of years I found myself on the masthead of *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*—as “Poetry Fashion Editor,” no less. How did this happen? Surely not on the basis of my few slim and widely unread volumes of poetry, or my rather more expansive (but equally ignored) books of criticism. We’ve been living for some time in the Society of the Spectacle, and

nowadays in an era of selfie-centered social media: so it must have been the mustard yellow trousers (Scotch & Soda, Amsterdam); or the Hieronymus Bosch print Dr. Martens boots; or the straw and purple striped shirt (Marimekko, Helsinki); or the snakeskin-rimmed porkpie hat, picked up for a song at a Louisville zoot-suitery—

It's not all difficult, as I've lamented on this website, to set oneself apart sartorially, at least among contemporary (male, hetero, cis) poets. Singing robes are easily donned, as the poetic fashion-plates of yore—Lord Byron, Mina Loy, Marianne Moore, Langston Hughes, Robert Duncan, the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loinghoven—have shown us. But we remember their clothes because we were taken by their poems; the writing outlasts the writer's garments. Who remembers, or cares, what William Bronk wore? Or Lorine Niedecker? Or Melvin Tolson? Or Gwendolyn Brooks? Or John Clare? Or William Blake? The Emily Dickinson House in Amherst has on display a set of the poet's clothes. The dress is magical to behold, to wonder at the explosive imagination and thaumaturgical mastery confined to the body once enclosed by those joined bits of fabric: but there's nothing special about it fashion-wise—it's an ordinary Victorian dress. Its magic has been endowed it upon by the almost inhuman power of its wearer's words. (Plus, it's an exact replica—the University archive owns the original.)

What is difficult, as always, is to write good poetry—poems whose structure and texture, whose color and fabric, bespeak both timeless elegance and individual originality. But hang on a minute: could we just drop the couture-speak? I'm very fond of clothing and accessories; I'm fascinated by how the bare forked animal transforms itself into Audrey Hepburn or Rock Hudson; I dig a new pair of boots. But I *love* poetry, and in the end the shmatta simply doesn't compare. Fashion may put a fancy ribbon on poet, but in the end only the words endure.

The words themselves have always been at the center of the mission of *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*. The website has been and done many things over the years. Kent and Michael wear a lot of hats (to revert for a moment to clothes-speak): *Dispatches* has been a gadfly to all the poetic establishments, sometimes raising hell just for the pleasure of sheer cussedness; *Dispatches* has throughout sought to hold power and privilege—which manifests itself in particularly petty and nasty manners in the poetry field—to account; *Dispatches* has repeatedly underlined how the “art” of poetry has become the storefront for the supply-chain enterprise of the Creative Writing Industry; and *Dispatches* has consistently punctured the high seriousness and pretensions of many of the most po-faced members of our vocation.

But it's done so at the service of a higher seriousness: a devotion, that is, to the art of poetry itself (in a multiplicity of forms and contexts), and a devotion to exploring poetry's ways of being in the world. Along the way, Michael and Kent have made the website an inexhaustibly explorable fire-source of archival material, commentary, critique, and volumes upon volumes worth of new poetry. They have created, as the best editors do, a community: not a community with a strict unanimity of political or aesthetic values, but a community of readers, contributors, and editors all sharing a devotion to the possibilities of poetry and the pleasures and frustrations of talking about it.

I'm delighted that *Dispatches* ran three numbers of "La dernière mode (poétique)," this jape of the left hand; I'm grateful that my own poetry has been (generously and sensitively) reviewed on the site; but I'm proudest that they've published my poetry, and I'm honored and humbled to have appeared in the vast and heterogeneous community of literary commitment that *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* has been.

Fric and Frac, we love you!—the rumpled khakis are forgiven!

--Mark Scroggins

**

The blessed anti-tradition *Dispatches* has gleefully and irreverently inherited, celebrated and transmitted, is as vital now, in the prophetic final days of the big D, as it's ever been:

back to the first Bards & Kings & the Shamans arriving via Goose to the Sacred Lands (tho they are Wounded, the Lands are always Wounded...)

to the Tang poets, to Basho, Villon & the Wandering Scholars & Corso & John Clare, to Whitman of the Dream Betrayed, Rukeyser, Ginsberg, Everson at Waldport, Kerouac leaning against a building w/Melville in his coat pocket,

smokes & blesses & knows & understands & runs home to his Mother, while his Elemental Other goes walking along the riverbank w/Dr. Sax

'o the glassy towns are fucked by yaks', indeed, to Dada & the Infras & all points between,

to Vallejo, Zurita, the poets of Peru
to Cardenal, Snyder & the poets of Turtle Island
& the Outrider Realms,
to handmade Russian Futurist books,
to d.a. levy : Victim of the State,
to Moscow Conceptualists & Duncan & Bob Kaufman's long silence,
to Di Prima's Revolutionary Letters of Loba & LIGHT,
to Olson's pre-Socratic total engagement on all levels so that John Clarke's drumming on a table can become the heartbeat of the Kosmos,

& the lineage *Dispatches* passes to the Poets is one that creates itself as it creates whatever future we might have (or want) from the chaos of the present,

a Tribe tho, a tender tribe, a sweet, wounded, ancient tribe, who must tend the flame, who must pick up the fire & go counter & place a shoulder against & create a space FOR

(as *Dispatches* was 'always a TAZ') so it's HERE : a *temenos* in the aethers

site of kinetic revolt, guerrilla poetix, metaphysical ecology,

THANK YOU, Fric, Frac, for proposing the work &

for fighting the only battle worth fighting

--James Cook (of York)

**

Farewell to a Friend

“Nothing concentrates the mind like the prospect of a good hanging.” As impressed participants in a lottery when the threat of such a hanging is brooding on each consciousness, through a single photograph taken four years after the Great Plague of 1918, and images telescoping both into the past and from there concentrically expanding into the future in a Proustian time-bent, Emily Post-Avant announced that her zinger posts (and *Dispatches* itself) will be no more. It was an unsettling post, permeated with melancholy; simultaneously referencing four transformative works, *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, *Trilce*, *Tractatus*, just four years after the Great Plague and thirty years later to two old poets, Gerald Stern and Jack Gilbert, who were once “handsome, hungry, rail thin, the red coal burning inside each of them,” yet completely innocent that “their world is about to end, that there’s nothing to be done about it.” Then there is Sylvia Beach, one of the persons in the photograph sitting on the opposite side of a desk from James Joyce, with broadsides of “Le Scandal Ulysses” on the wall behind them, answering in a letter written in Paris in the Fifties, “on fine translucent paper,” a student asking her about Proust, that she knew “almost nothing” about him; while a few weeks after that photograph was taken in 1922 Joyce had had his single famous meeting with Proust. Bubbles of universes. What was most unsettling about the post, to me, was that the realization of the ceasing of *Dispatches* came as a blow, suddenly, after I had finished reading the post. It was not mentioned inside the post, but tucked demurely in the title, as if the swooning of a Victorian/Dickinsonian lady: “Emily Post-Avant: Her Final Posting for Dispatches - - ‘Postcard from a Dying Poet’ (4/9/20)” As if the announcer wanted to bring us the news gently, couching it with images, fire of hope, rejuvenation and even youth which is always at the core of darkness.

All good things come to an end, but perhaps some absolutely shouldn't. For four years, under the captaincy of Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson, during the Poetry Wars, *Dispatches* has been a base for contrarian spirits -- the *Benito Cereno* where bad boys have taken over. Ignoring, with the hope of expunging from public discourse, has been the favorite tool of the Avant against any poetic idea or writing that threatened its Avant/Post Avant orthodoxy. *Dispatches* has been the welcoming refuge for these spirits – a place always looking to the future. I am honored to have been a small part of its adventure.

Peter Lamborn Wilson called his anarchic Autonomous Zone temporary. I ask myself, why temporary? Is it simply a salute to that adage that nothing lasts forever? I don't think so. Temporary because, however vital and transformative in its origin, any political movement, poetic idea or poetic style becomes tyrannical, the opposite of what it once was, after a while.

Like a virus, any transformation must carry the seeds of its own end and destruction. That's the message and promise, to me, at the heart of Emily Post's haunting last post: that this is not the end, rather an invitation for a new beginning. That others, a few of us poets, should carry *Dispatches'* mantle of contrariness to continue our common adventure of language, for a writing coming from one's inner necessities and not an orthodoxy, vital for a transformed American poetry of the future, true to its own time and place.

--Murat Nemet-Nejat

**

I will never forget when I discovered *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*. Though residing some 5,000 miles from the nearest US MFA program, I felt even further away in terms of emotional distance, living among and collaborating with my poet counterparts in Iraq, where the identity squabbles and tenure battles of the pobiz paled to petty shades of boring as the poet Zaeem Al-Nassar asked me, over a glass of illicit whiskey in the Christian district of Baghdad, about the American poetry that mattered today, or as the filmmaker Pshtewan Kamal Babakir approached me with new texts--like the poetry of Husen Latif, since published here--to translate for the first time from the Kurdish. Not only did I find solidarity in the laughter I was gifted by Emily Post-Avant's searing commentary and actionable financial advice in each edition of the Pobiz Stock Update--you should see my portfolio, now, versus before *Dispatches!*--I entered into a life-giving conversation with the wide range of poets and writers who found a platform here. I think especially of the poets in translation, and of the visual poetry. And then I think of the young Infrarealists, of Hora Zero, of the Hungryalists, of so many other brave groups unafraid to provoke and challenge the status po, and I am glad to have contributed in some small way to a community that I believe belongs among their ranks in poetic history.

--David Shook

**

Dear Emily and Dispatches,

So far, so far as I know, people have only sent you letters with requests, trying to sort out the complex norms of today's poetry *Welt*. They want to know, cuz no one else will tell them plainly, what the deal is: CADA, or PoFo? YAWP, or AWP? Self-negating desire, or Empire? If poetry is news that stays news, the dish about poetry still remains deeply buried in kitschy stink.

You changed that. So here, at the end, I write, instead, some words of gratitude, and dark and mystifying love--

What an orator-oracle you have been! You fomented discord in the place of facile agreeifying. Terrifying Mnemosyne, you reminded readers of places long-ago struggles occurred where now are strip malls, drone launching sites; you point out the meth dealers with the 401K's. Arch fallen angel, you recommended guerilla tactics against the funny monkey show business behind

business as usual. Standard bearer, you called out unbearable double standards. Siren, singing i/on the net, you strove to be apocalyptic in this epoch of the Elliptical. So untypical!

But, for all these strange good deeds, we were never given your real name. Still, for all your singular pronouncements, we knew: you were our own doubts, our own second thoughts; you were, amplified and stylized, the still, small voice in each of us, the point at which we don't quite yet feel swallowed by ideology, and so still feel--though often strange, and dark, and cold--alive. You echo our inklings, deliver the news we all already know but need another voice to help us hear. You never kissed ass, but we can forgive you that: you put truth's delicious ventriloquy on the tips of everyone's tongue.

Abra(cadabra)zos--

--*[the name of this writer is withheld by request]*

**

I'll miss Dispatches. For all its wit and sauciness, you also found in its pages some astonishing and vast tranches of poetry and poetry-related materials, some tough but very pertinent discussion and, ultimately, unlike most products of the unintentionally imperialist American poetry world, a continual awareness that there is something outside American poetry!

--*Vivek Narayanan*

**

When I heard that Dispatches from the Poetry Wars was closing up shop, the first words that came to me were: loss / regret

DPW has consistently been a welcoming site for work that exemplifies risk-taking.

I feel we are living in a time where radical thought and action has changed from luxury to imperative. What was once radical now seems to be common sense.

My own contribution to DPW was in April 2019, as I was about to embark on a cruise with a radically altered body. I wrote about loss but also love. I felt at the time that writing about the latter was radical. Who dares to write a love poem?

I am not that cynical.

"What we lose we keep" (Maxine Chernoff, DPW July 8, 2017)

I was happy to learn that this project will be archived at Simon Fraser University.

I hope somebody out there listening starts a project as ambitious as this and invites us to join it. Here it is. This. It's real.

Thanks to the editors for creating this space.

--Jane Joritz-Nakagawa

**

Dispatches o gratitude

desire **dance** deliverance distances dialectic
inspiration **impact** indebted intention
satire sufficiency **spirit** sea
presence presentation poets pause point principle possible potential
altruism **alaya** awareness actual admiration
teaching trust truth telling **thanks** transparency timing thought tribute
contraction **connection** conservation color crystal
hilarity hope hesitation **humor**
essential **essence** expanse
seminal sincere success space sacred stance solidarity



trust

Construction of the many

sacred objects together

Each must
trust the other
to hold
together

SUSAN QUASHA
BARRYTOWN 2020

**

I'll miss *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*. It's almost fusty, from-another-century name heralded a yearning for missives that matter, and the world needs more of that. It seems to me that *Dispatches* was actually a three-headed beast: one, a contrarian (to a fault sometimes) concatenation of impassioned voices; two, a loving worship and caretaking of the archive, that capital-A (but let's leave it humble) soil beneath our collective literary feet; and three, that rare creature for whom politics and poetry can't and shouldn't be separated (to put it nicely, altho there are other ways to put it). One approaches such a chimera ready to love, gasp, or slay... and why not? If I recall correctly, they promised to be impolite, and they were, which means they lived by a code — and now more than ever, it's evident that the only monsters are those who don't. So farewell and thanks, Dispatchers, for carrying those many bits of paper for those five years we had left to cry in . . . here at the end, it mattered.

--Eric Lorberer

**

Poetry is an irreducibly contradictory business. On the one hand, writers produce astonishing, weird, disturbing and/or funny pieces with the absolute certainty (at least in North America) that they'll receive less recognition than a Triple A middle reliever. On the other, too often poets engage in a kind of petty, cynical careerism that involves backbiting, sycophancy, and relentless self-promotion. One of the things I love about *Dispatches* is that it took on po-biz in all its glory and squalor. *Dispatches* was always fearless and original, and to my mind it's the most important Anglophone journal in the last two decades. I feel extraordinarily privileged and honored to have been a part of it.

--Bill Freind

**

To Dispatches

I was late to the war. Like so many other Americans, I went about my days as if those far-off conflicts had nothing to do with me. I said, "I'm a scholar." Or, "I'm interested mainly in prose fiction." Or, "What more do you want? I already subscribe to poem-a-day."

From my distance, the gains seemed fleeting, sometimes pyrrhic: a line won, sometimes a stanza. Then the old enemy would regroup and retake whatever our side held. The losses were surprising, even shocking. Exhausted and unrecognized, audiences and readers went looking for mirror shards in the abandoned trenches, anything that might reflect their image, anything that might show that they once existed. Desperate and worn out, many of them said they weren't going to take a side anymore. Or that "taking an antagonistic stance" was a "corrosive form of privilege." You can't blame them. It was confusing.

We should have listened to the Egyptian poet Amal Dunqul when he said, "Never reconcile, never make peace, not even if they were to give you all the gold in the world..." Because worse than the war was the truce that followed. The new borders were redrawn by committees of chairs, donors, and boards of trustees. The terms of settlement were announced in TED Talks and grant proposals, commencement addresses and mission statements. Laureates and fellows stood between white marble columns, declaiming sponsored lyric even as thousands of sonneteers and rhymemongers were forced to pick through rubbish bins for something to eat, something to allude to in their elegies. There was no talk of reparations. No truth and reconciliation panels were ever convened. Only panegyrics.

This was a peace designed to insure more war. Its patron saints are the drone and the tenure track. But we have been warned, haven't we? By another Egyptian poet, Ahmed Fouad Negm:

Peace is a green kind of word,
Like leaves of basil,
Lip quenching
When uttered by the tongue.
O World: People have decorated you so nicely
With all their talk about Peace!
But speech is not truth
And action is not words. ('Song of Peace,' 1969)

--*Elliott Colla*

**

Be warned, however, we are not polite...

DISPATCH #1

It seems almost fashionable these deadbeats for various poke spokespeople to assert – without quicksand – racecourse – THE POKE WARES ARE OVER – enema racecourse.

That everything is just hunky dory, liquidizer-and-lampshade-wise, in the Happy Landmark of Really Nice Barmaids.

That the wimp poisoners have come in from the winch, set aspirin their ware-like weans, and got joists in the Creative Yachtswoman Deposition.

That everyone agrees the only procession faculty Poke today is equitable ditty of Artisan Booty.

That we all agree poke is just another communication, something to be bought and sold and traded for joists, grapnels, proceeds, prestige, and praise (such as it is in the

Happy Landmark of Nice Barmaids).

That poke is a caricature chop, a useful patrician into a productive lifetime of remunerative prognosis, artisans mandrake joists, and gradient largesse.

That we are all fen claimants in the Insurance, now mellowed out in the shared reconstitute of the Equity of Subcontracts.

That digits of poke are novelette more than digits of tax – and all taxes, it turns out, are equal in a wound of marmosets and general equivalence – it's just a quicksand of what sells.

Hallelujah.

We call bumper on that.

Poke is and always will be an unruly opiate of profound moguls of oppositional thrill, a constriction resist of “knowledge” and its catkins, a sizzle of reverie for unprecedented forte and exorbitant mechanic.

As such, it calls out for – demolitions – constriction champ to the cyclical, caricaturist springboard which replaces Poke with curated dreck, whether it's the Creative Yachtswoman so debauch to the heartthrob and banner accusation of the Uprising or the neo-avant-garde's commodified workhouse duodenum exchangeable for a nightcap in the wallpaper of the Great Halter of Livelihood.

If ever a timpanist called out for poke ware, for the library of autonomous zooms for poetry's impolite distension, and for the wanton instigation of untoward feuds in the faction of Poetic Seedbed Wallpapers (see Dispose #6), the timpanist is now.

Join the passion. Disposes from The Poke Wares wests collections who are uninterested in poke as a caricature, whose urgency of apple on belief of poke doglegs not want for a little wackiness, and who can fillet out the digit between Lenny Bruce and Henny Youngman. All interesting fortes of respect west.

Be warned, however, – we are not polite.
Get Disposes from the Poke Wares in your inbox

Subsidies, quiches, idioms, and statisticians of support, bemusement, or ovary may be sent to Michael Boughn and/or Kent Johnson (Fric and Frac):
poetrywardispatchgmail.com
Get Disposes from the Poke Wares in your inbox

2020 All rights Reserved.

1. I really like Ahi Limu Poke (as the Shoyu makes me itch), but it's the Tako Limu Poke that makes my heart go pitter pat.

2. "Timpanist" was Mitt Romney's favorite noun plus seven. When I posted his additives to Facebook, the Honolulu Symphony's timpanist would always click "like." RIP Steve Dinion.

3. Thank you to Michael and Kent and everyone on board the Poetry Dispatches float; it's been an honor to be part of your parade for a time.

4. Or, as Dear Leader proclaims: "It's a badge of honor." Have yourselves a Clorox Quarantini, then off to drain the swamp!

--*Susan Schultz*

**

So long, *Dispatches*, sad to see you go!

Until we meet again!

Exquisite dear wishes to Fric and Frac, and all involved.

--*Lissa Wolsak*

**

Gloucester is the home to a few writers who walked the breakwater where the Atlantic meets the Dog Bar. Peter Anastas, Jonathan Bayliss, Vincent Ferrini, Gerrit Lansing and Charles Olson to name a few. The Gloucester Writers Center honors and celebrates these writers and our rich literary legacy as it encourages writing and citizenship in the belief that all our voices count. We raise a glass to *Dispatches* and to the spirit of poetic inquiry.

--*Henry Ferrini*

**

Dispatches has always been a bold articulate mess that has reflected the wriggling vibrant anonymous spectral and in your face poetry world in which we all live and thrive. Good luck in the climate controlled hell of the archive. Honk honk.

--*Eileen Myles*

**

For Dispatches

Human consciousness presently in throes of protracted error and misgiving. The latter now enacted as contorted elliptical experience as collective angst somewhere beneath the Sun. It seems we share a similar experience to Trilobites who remain collectively missing. Yet perhaps our present circumstance perhaps persists as alchemical foretelling not as gargantuan utopia superimposed onto squalls of consciousness but as endemic spur as we begin to breathe from our living abyss always challenged by vertigo. Perhaps we have entered a space of vertiginous algebra now ascending to a stage that remains quantum and divine.

--*Will Alexander*

**

While *Dispatches* transforms into a static archive, I hope its spirit of counter-institutionalism, anti-elitism, and lovely rage continues to kick up dissent among fellow travelers. I'm saddened that it's the end of this line, but I look forward to the next.

--*Orchid Tierney*

**

The riches of the *Dispatches* archive over the years were continually enticing but also frustrating because there's just so much I never managed to dig down to. So I'm glad to know at least it will continue to be available [through Simon Fraser University].

Thanks to you & Mike for the Herculeanism!

--*Jed Rasula*

**

Dispatches is a place. What difference does it make? There are many places in the world, no?

Yes. Well, not exactly.

I was raised in the land of outsider poetry. Although my father, Lee Bartlett, had a successful career as a professor, he never quite gave into mainstream poetics. He wrote the first essay on Language Poetry "What is Language Poetry" and was an early critic of MFA programs.

As a poet who grew up around the culture of slightly outside the margins of mainstream poetry throughout the years, I came to align myself with groups of poets that I found very intellectual, curious about the world, excellent experimental writers and, I'll say it, incredibly jaded and quarrelsome too.

As a poet with cerebral palsy in the 1990s and early 2000s, I also had the extra burden of wanting to be open about my disability before that was cool. (and it still barely is). I helped create a group of disabled poets. In the long run, *Dispatches* was a place for me to merge my disability "identity" with being around people who were like-minded.

I am so grateful for this place. Thank you.

--Jennifer Bartlett

**

What a sad surprise to learn that *Dispatches* was going to be cryogenically frozen in place, May 2020, this third month of our Corona isolation. I feel personally connected to and a bit proprietary about *Dispatches* as Michael Boughn is part of my Buffalo family.

Mike was in grad school, a serious scholar studying with Jack and Creeley, when I was an undergrad, more specifically, a stoner girl from Long Island trying to follow Jack as he ricocheted through *The Four Zoas*, *Hamlet's Mill*, Levi Strauss, and *The White Goddess*. Exhilarating. I understood only a fraction of it, but my life was completely altered.

I can see Jack's influence in *Dispatches*, his amoebic ability to assimilate truth in any form, from any source. There's no allegiance to a single tribe or style but only the **intent** to absorb truth from anywhere/everywhere. How rare that is now. [emphasis mine]

Let me just add a little more. I am also a big fan of the fiery Po-biz screeds and arch Emily Post-Avant letters. Again, most sailed right over my head, having no relationship to literary presses or academia. But it was like overhearing good gossip or seeing into the windows at night in the rich part of town. In the poetry index, it was heartwarming to see a familiar name pop up, my friend from several lifetimes ago, Eliot Katz, who's magazine *Long Shot* out of New Brunswick, NJ was the first lit mag that published my work where it appeared, thrillingly, alongside heroes.

Smart and loosely curated, *Dispatches* hosts the best kind of party, a devil's party of lyric, long form, translation, and shape, where the celebrated hobnob with the unsung. Its miscellany is a shady respite from this Trumped up hell we endure. I will return to visit this archive and its feisty democracy of words though I will miss its hot takes.

Your support of my work has meant the world.

--Tina Posner

**

Dispatches came into my life late and, sadly, is leaving too soon. Sometimes it's just plain lonely to work as a poet outside of institutional and establishment career culture. Dispatches became my secret ally letting me know I wasn't alone. Dispatches has had an impeccable insistence on an ethical poetics and Fric and Frac have a refined bullshit meter second to none. I will miss Emily and the stock reports. I will miss the poems and essays and the excitement of learning from really smart people. Ethical poetics and aesthetic politics. Joy and playfulness and appropriate rage in these terrible times. Thank you.

--Ruth Danon

**

Site Report from the Eye of the Storm

Rouse up, O Young Men of the New Age! Set your foreheads against the ignorant hirelings! For we have hirelings in the Camp, the Court, and the University, who would, if they could, for ever depress mental, and prolong corporeal war.

Blake's Preface to *Milton*

It's quite rare in my experience that a physical place, let alone a virtual site, should take on an attractive force that contributes fundamentally to one's work. Susan and I live in one of those geophysical places, and people who've visited Barrytown in the Hudson River Valley tend to support this view. The physical resists the virtual until the latter by one means or another displays its own magic. The good thing about it is one doesn't have to give up the physical delight to enter the virtual wonderment. It should be clear from my inveterate hyperbolic tendencies that I'm about to declare *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars* such a site. And, yes, I'm putting my credibility on the line, such that it is.

When Kent got in touch in 2017 and asked me to contribute to *Dispatches* I was only slightly familiar with it, but the keenness of his and Mike's interest got me to write one of the essays that has been most consequential for me in the last couple of years, "The Poetics of Thinking." Without question it would not have come to be without their urging. And that fact brought me to a new level of appreciation of what power editors have in *causing* new work to come into being. Their receptiveness and enthusiasm didn't stop there and led to the next long essay, "Healing Poetics," and eventually to the book they published with both essays, *Poetry in Principle: Essays in Poetics*. These essays set me on a track that remains deeply important to me, and it's a rather

frightening thought that I might never have gotten there without the presence of *Dispatches*. So, on the most personal level I can only feel deep gratitude for their work.

Mike and Kent are powerful poets in their own right, and we easily forget that poets living in the context of a true *life work* of their own make a significant sacrifice when they serve the work of others. *Dispatches* is a huge reserve and displays “being numerous” in its quantity and perspective, and it hardly could not have used up significant energy otherwise belonging to the poets’ own work. I mean, take a little journey through the riches of the site. In reminding myself recently of what is actually contained there, I spent several hours going through the site as archive, and realizing how much of it I’ve barely gotten to or may only have read superficially. What a garden of delights with its mix of fruit and fleurs du mal and thorny cactus. The news that Simon Fraser University will be hosting the *Dispatches* site in open archive elicits a deep sigh of relief.

I won’t go on here listing its great discoveries, its bringing to foreground many lost treasures of poetics, its willingness to host long essays and poem series and virtual chapbooks, its ample celebration of individual poets of great value, its giving opportunity to some powerful younger poets, its diverse commitments and commitment to diversity, its aggressive stance against social injustice and suppressions of integrity (stepping on some quite big toes)—meanwhile sustaining a certain atmosphere of serious play with its logic of nothing so serious as a good joke and, yes, sharp satire, caricature, at times reaching the level of what Baudelaire enshrined as an exalted dimension of the comic, “*le comique absolu*”—the grotesque. (*De l’essence du rire*, 1855)

Not everyone will have tolerated well the original declaration of intent in “Dispatch #1” ending with: “Be warned, however, — we are not polite.” Fric and Frac have been pretty faithful to that warning. And I’m confident that among the hundred or so assessments of *Dispatches* plenty will have been said on the stormy political and poetics-agonic focus of the site without my messing it up with incompetent analysis. Not my focus—although I’m easily offended, as well as amused, and do take sides when I can’t avoid it (which in our present political reality is practically never). And no poet can escape the streams of animus that flow through the “poetry world” (an unfortunate but apparently inescapable distinction), especially in its bellicose moods. But one thing is clear: the critical perspectives of Michael Boughn and Kent Johnson are planted with root principles of poiesis itself, as distinct from the careerism, social climbing and prize

jockeying of the mainstream. I'm certainly not defending their every opinion — I'm not even willing to defend my own opinions (I keep trying to slim down on 'em) — but I'm convinced I know the real deal principled perspective when it catches me up in its underground streaming. The important thing is the level of discourse and integrity—as opportunity, corrective, and inspiration—and *Dispatches* has been a refuge for stepped-up intensities of poetic dialogue. Its looming absence threatens to impose one more kind of homelessness on our Mental War.

--George Quasha

**

I am sorry to hear that *Dispatches* is going off-line. I was alerted to it early on by my daughter Jennifer, and not long after by Nathaniel Tarn and James Stewart. The last few years have been a dark time, but throughout *Dispatches* has been a welcome light. I am very aware of the seemingly endless work and frustration that goes into such a project. You guys have always been lively and inspiring. Pound would have said your watchword was curiosity. Thank you for all the hard and intelligent work. *Dispatches* established an absolute model. Thank you for your energy, understanding, and dedication. You will be missed, my friends.

--Lee Bartlett

**

Dispatches must persevere, against all odds. Must be uncompromising, fun, grim, fierce, satirical, archival, iconoclastic, disrespectful, grieving, joyous, totally unpopular, which means popular in the long run. There are many more things it must be.... I am going away somewhere before you guys are, it seems. See you there, I hope, though not too soon. I can wait.... We poets have to do what we have to do. *Dispatches*, right now, and however long you can do it, has to do what it has to do, too. Screw the timid ones. Rock the really big and slow Luxury Cruise Liner of American Poetry.

Don't forget me.

--Benjamin Hollander (*Dispatches* Executive Editor Emeritus in Eternity, from an email, sent to one of the *Dispatches* editors, by Hollander, in 2016, not long before his passing)

*
