Claire Booker
Margento
Anna Maria Mickiewicz
Iulia Militaru
John Riley
Andra Rotaru
Steve Rushton
Aleksandar Stoicovici
Stephen Watts

poetryartexchange

(Romania/UK)

a collaborative project

Edited by Violeta Baroană

Contemporary Literature Press

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The University of Bucharest. 2017

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Press Release

Claire Booker, Margento, Anna Maria Mickiewicz, Iulia Militaru, John Riley, Andra Rotaru, Steve Rushton, Aleksandar Stoicovici, Stephen Watts

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ISBN 978-606-760-103-9

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poetryartexchange is a book for the next generation. The same as opera voices, light music singers' voices, actors' voices change their tonality over the decades, and thus the recordings can be placed quite accurately in time—the time has come for both poetry and language itself to change. Not just one language, either. Since English has undisputably gone global, it has colonized a huge number of other languages, while quite a number of languages have colonized English in their turn. Speaking English was a must in the 1970's. Writing poetry directly in English is, I think, a must today.

In the 1930's, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* treated the Tower of Babel with respect, making it an endless source of literary meditation. In the 2020's, probably, English will cure mankind from the confusion created by that Tower. Will poets be any wiser, or more widely read—nobody can tell. One thing is certain, though: poetry will—poetry is already beginning to

poetryartexchange este o carte a generaţiei viitoare. Tot aşa cum se schimbă vocile cântăreţilor de operă ori de muzică uşoară, ori vocile actorilor, ceea ce face ca înregistrările să-şi trădeze exact vârsta—a venit vremea schimbării pentru poezie, şi nu numai: limbajul însuşi se schimbă la faţă. Nu este vorba aici de o singură limbă. Engleza a devenit limba globului, şi a colonizat un mare număr de alte limbi, care limbi, la rândul lor, au colonizat şi ele în felul lor limba engleză. Dacă în anii 1970, era absolut necesar să vorbeşti limba engleză, astăzi devine imperios necesar pentru poeţi să ştie să scrie direct în limba engleză.

În anii 1930, cartea *Finnegans Wake* de James Joyce privea cu respect către Turnul Babel, scriind în marginea lui peste 600 de pagini de meditaţie lingvistică şi literară. Cred că în anii 2020, limba engleză va mătura ambiguităţile acelui turn biblic. Dacă poeţii vor fi după aceea mai inteligenţi ori mai citiţi, e greu de prezis. Un lucru este, însă, cert: poezia se va schimba. Poezia este deja în curs de a se schimba drastic. T.S. Eliot a rămas

change. T.S. Eliot is far behind.

Experimentalism is no longer the choice of a selected, and so often misunderstood, few. Just like English, Experimentalism has gone global. The change in the language of poetry, as well as in its obsessions, is so brutal that somebody like me, who has been teaching 20th Century poetry, plus the early years of the 21st Century, can only wonder at the brave new world which is opening as we speak, and say with me, ***poetryartexchange*** is a book for the next generation.

departe în urma ei.

Experimentalismul nu mai este alegerea unui grup restrâns de poeţi adesea neînţeleşi. Ca şi limba engleză, experimentalismul a devenit un fenomen global. Limbajul poeziei şi obsesiile ei s-au schimbat atât de brutal încât cineva ca mine, care a predat o viaţă literatura secolului XX, făcând, e drept, incursiuni în primul deceniu al secolului XXI, nu poate face altceva decât să privească la minunata lume nouă care tocmai se naşte, şi să spună ca mine, ***poetryartexchange*** este o carte a generaţiei viitoare.

Lidia Vianu

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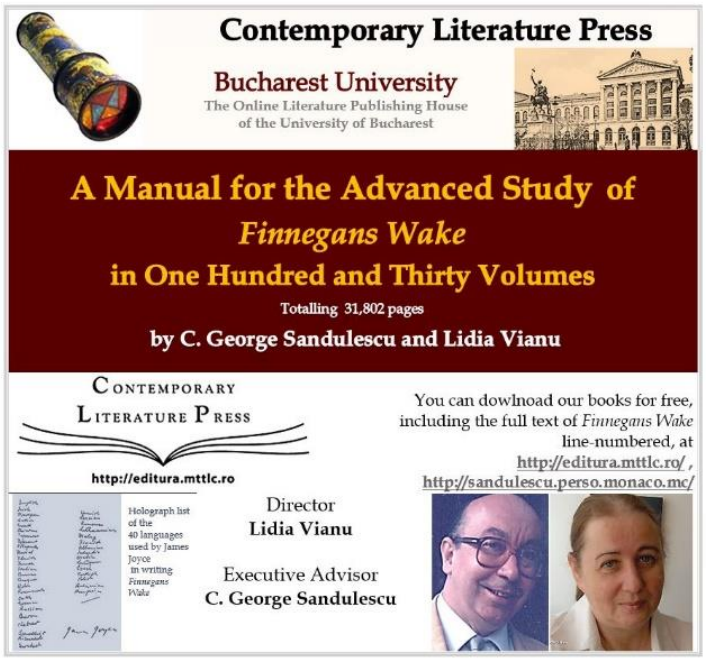

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poetryartexchange (Romania/UK), a project bringing together nine poets from two countries united by a common theme, conceived and coordinated by Steve Rushton with a simple brief: each poet submitting two poems on art and/or poetry, reading everyone else's, producing two more in response. These, along with statements, selected correspondence and photographs, form this online book.

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Notes

1.
Poets appear alphabetically. All poems are previously unpublished, except Claire Booker *Model in Love* first published *Magma (issue 59)*; *Artist Obsessed* first published *Poetry From Art* on www.tate.org.uk (2012).

Andra Rotaru *calls himself lemur mostly on autumn days* and *Simulacrum* published in *Lemur*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucureşti 2012.

Steve Rushton: *1.1 (revelation)*, *1.4 (exhibition in the market, or why I decided to burn a paper plate for art), 1.83 (this is art)* and *1.71 (poetry as art)* all published in *towards a new art* erbacce-press 2015. *1.1* and *1.4* also appear in the chapbook *Burning a Paper Plate—Towards a New Art*, erbacce press 2015.

Stephen Watts *But now I live on a sorrowful planet* 2005 published in *Ancient Sunlight* Enitharmon 2014. *The Verb "To Be"* published in *The Lava's Curl* (Grimaldi Press 1991) & reprinted in the larger *The Blue Bag* Aark Arts 2004.

2.
In May 2016, *Undercurrents Gallery*, London UK, hosted the first exhibition in connection with the project. The second took place in April/May 2017, at *Centrala*, Birmingham UK.

3.
poetryartexchange (Romania/UK) would like to thank, for all their support: Lidia Vianu, Violeta Baroană and *Contemporary Literature Press, Minesweeper Collective, Undercurrents Gallery*, London, *100 Years Gallery*, London, *Centrala*, Birmingham, *Birmingham Literary Festival, The Hello Goodbye Show* on Resonance FM, *Antenna Studios*, Stefan Inglis, Steve Mallaghan, Pauline Hall and Lorrain Baggaley.

poetryartexchange (Romania/UK) would also like to thank *The Romanian Cultural Institute* in London for their support, especially in the promotion of this project.

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4.

Images are by John Riley and Steve Rushton, posters by *Minesweeper Collective*.

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Selected Correspondence I

Spring 2015

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Dear Andrei,

I am looking for Romanian poets/artists who write poems about art and poetry. The aim is to develop poetry dialogues between the UK and other countries. Poetry can learn from art, and vice versa. If you can help, I would be most grateful.

Yours,

Steve Rushton

Hi Steve:

Andra Rotaru is one of the best.

Yours,

Andrei

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Dear Andra Rotaru,

I got your email address from Andrei. I'm in the early stages of planning a project featuring poets from the UK and Romania. Each poet will initially submit two poems on the subject of art/poetry. Each poet will then write two more poems in response to any/all the poems received. The theme of art/poetry can be interpreted in many ways. If you are interested and if you know others who may be interested, please let me know.

Yours,

Steve Rushton

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Hi, Steve!

Thank you so much for thinking of me for this project. And, of course, to our kindest friend, Andrei Codrescu.

The idea is great! I have been thinking of 3 poets, each of them from very different genres of poetry: Iulia Militaru (she is very much into visual poetry and theory and social facets), Chris Tanasescu (graph poems, with an extended interdisciplinarity experience; he also runs the experimental project Margento), Aleksandar Stoicovici (he had many projects, one of them an anthology with visuals and poetry), and me (I am more into language poetry, but also developed experiments at the intersection of painting and poetry; choreography and poetry; video& music & poetry; photography & poetry). Aleks and Chris also have great experience in translation, for example Chris translated Jerome Rothenberg's poems into Romanian, an anthology. I adore each one of these writers and they can make a very diverse map of nowadays Romanian poetry and much more.

If you need any help in developing this project, I am all for it! Great ideas!

Yours,

Andra

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Hi Andra,

Fabulous and yes please— biogs plus two poems each on the subject of art/poetry. If you can email these to me by 1st May we can take it from there.

Steve

Hi, Steve!

Here are the texts. Chris Tanasescu (Margento) wrote directly to you.

Andra

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Dear Steve, Andra,

Hope all's well—and Steve, so nice to meet you. Please find attached my poems and bio. Thanks so much for inviting me to this amazing project.
I look forward to hearing back from you guys.

Margento

Hi Andra, Margento

Thanks again for all the stuff. Looks very interesting. Couple of questions? Do you guys write poetry in English, or Romanian, or a mixture of both? And the theme of art/poetry—reading the poems quickly I got the sense that word/image might more accurately describe the poems submitted. What do you think?

Steve

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Hi, Steve!

I write poetry in Romanian. I guess my senses of words/language are correlated within the senses of the interior or exterior world. It is like a language is there to protect and to express for you in any situation: spontaneous, instinctual. And those words are the essence of your structure. I discovered, being away for several months, that the senses of my own language deteriorates and I can`t write as well as before when I am abroad. There are several phases when my brain and poetry become impregnated with a stiffness. It is like too much information starts to harm the sensitivity at some point, and language is no more your strength. And it's normal, when two languages try to "take control" over the brain, some words lose their meaning. But! Some other skills and ways to express come, to show that language is important, but not most important! I feel after doing a documentary and a photo project that language is not the IT, but a mixture of sound and image. And now I am trying to regain my equilibrium among words&langauge&poetry&sound&image&taste&smell etc.

Regarding your second question: Speaking about myself, my first book was a depiction of Frida Kahlo's painting into poetry. I tried to catch an art and use it in another form. From the composition of a painting—to a composition of a poem, from narration, atmosphere, to a language and style. It is possible to translate/transpose and transform, of course, using documentation about that person's thinking, way of life etc.

The poems I sent you are from my latest book, and the whole book was created as a collaborative work with a choreographer. I needed to see the gestures of the main character, as this character is in a perpetual transformation: it is not a human being, nor an animal, but takes from all around. Writing about a vision of a possible world is very visual. We did some experiments, he was creating movements starting from the sound of my voice reading poems in Romanian (without meaning for him) and I was writing whenever I was able to see gestures of my character. The accent in this book is put on gestures, movement, transformation. And the result was a book as well as a dance performance.

Andra

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Hi Steve,
Hope all's well. And many thanks again to you and Andra for doing this, sounds really remarkable, and so exciting! So glad to be part of it! Thanks also for your kind and perceptive comments. To answer your first question, in my particular case it's quite a diverse process; while writing a poem I sometimes switch between the two languages, and then translate back and forth, with the translation affecting what is being translated as well; yet at other times, especially when the poem(s) are requested in both languages, I write them in Romanian and English simultaneously, exploring the two languages' (possible or discovered-invented) commonalities while taking "wild" liberties in improvising translations that take advantage of the localities and specifics of each language and literature rather than worrying about saying "the same thing" in both versions.

That being said, I also need to add that translation is an essential part of my process(es). It has to do with collaborative writing, with the poem as discovery, exploration, generation, and performance of communities, with nomadism and "[poetry] placing," poetry mapping, and the "graph poem."

As for your second question, well, yes, I guess word/image sounds right, it's just that I'd add a couple of details there. In my particular case the poems (as texts) are part of a continuum that also involves image (as inter-image, picture/painting, and video) and performance, three elements that cannot but overlap all the time. OR rather, the abovementioned continuum is the poem itself that converges across various media, including text, image, sound, and, perhaps most prominently, the digital. Besides being, just like the other media, both medium and agent, the latter is also a place of reshaping, convergence and (inter)translation of the other media, and its contribution ranges from (poetry) computational analysis to electronic poetry experimentation and generation.

So, in short, my actual equation would rather look like word/digital-collaborative-cross-artform-inter-polymedia-translation/performance. And therefore I am so much the happier to be part of this project as I know you are also an active poet-artist-performer. Thanks so much again, we'll be in touch.
Margento

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Dear Margento/Andra

Very interesting. There have been many debates in London about translation (University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies hosted a series of lectures last year), but they seemed to centre on the problems of translation. In fact the lectures, and the MA they supported, were generally negative in tone (one cannot translate, poetry is about loss - loss of country [exile], loss of identity etc - not my cup of tea, all that, but interesting to debate). So it's great reading you talking about translation as an enabling tool. It reminds me of practices I use in art and poetry to surprise myself, to see afresh. The standard trick with painting is to look through a mirror - lateral inversion helps you bypass your ego and see what a mess you've made; with poetry the relationship between the poem on the page and at the gig, and on its own and as part of a set (a poem can't be fully considered until the 60 odd poems that are part of the set are considered as well). I try to not so much to create a complete vision with each poem, rather create a fragmented world where meaning exists/contrasts between poems as much as in them.

Re word/image, I guess the weakness with this dialectic/dichotomy is the implicit static quality of it, whereas art/poetry is more open to performative readings.

Steve

UK based writers were then approached (Stephen Watts, Anna Maria Mickiewicz, John Riley, Claire Booker) and the project developed (see Selected Correspondence II).

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Poets

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Claire Booker

Claire Booker is based in south London. Her poems have been published widely in literary magazines including: Ambit, Interpreter's House, Magma, North, Orbis, Poetry News, Poetry Salzburg Review, Popshot, Rialto, Spectator, New Welsh Review and Under The Radar. Her first pamphlet *Later There Will Be Postcards* was published by Green Bottle Press in 2016 www.greenbottlepress.com/our-books/

Claire's stage plays have been performed in America, Australia, France, Germany, Malta, Romania, Spain and the UK. She was nominated for a MacAllan Writer's Guild of Great Britain award for her radio play *The Devil and Stepashka* which was broadcast on BBC Radio Four. She was also nominated for the Arts Council's John Whiting Award for her play *Irish Roulette*. She is currently associate writer with Goblin Baby Theatre Company.

Her website is at www.bookerplays.co.uk and she blogs at www.bookerplays.wordpress.com

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Artist Obsessed

The world is buttered thick with phalluses.
You know she'll never lick the knife
because Daddy did something he shouldn't—
turned her into a fisher of men's cods
afloat in her ghost white boat.

Dickety dick goes her fierce little needle
counting the stitches it'll take to mend her.
Moulds them, names them, these gorgon heads
that turn her to stone, cock-a-hoop girths
that flop on the rowlocks.

Stretched in the boat's open mouth,
she lets the netted snouts snaffle at her bleeding places,
feels the length of each uncluttered oar.
She will row herself clear—
cut through the black waters of a long vigil.

Note: Yayoi Kusama's *Aggregation: One Thousand Boats* installation features a rowing boat encrusted with fabric phalluses.

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Model in Love

after *Walking Woman by* Alberto Giacometti

Later there will be postcards—
prints of body parts signed in her own
meticulous italic, telling
how she misses
the warm moulding of his hands,
that splash of water
when she was only possibility.

For this, she is grateful
and though she might have hoped
for arms
(or even a head)
she is glad of those pubescent breasts
with their dab of nipple,
the smooth sweep down to staccato
buttocks.

There will be time enough to tell him
that she has let herself go.
From her billowing window she dreams
of a cluttered atelier:
turps, clay, clatter of wire-cutters,
plaster of Paris; misses
how he came again and again
simply to touch
the intelligent slope of her shoulder.

Other arms have circled her since.
Though lovers pluck her

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as they might a courgette flower
(for taste and decoration)
still she knows that a girl must be free
to walk as she will—
that a pedestal impedes
no matter how tenderly it kisses
the stems of her feet.

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Statement

I've been inspired by *Sad-istic image in a womb* by Iulia Militaru and also Steve Rushton's statement "I try not so much to create a complete vision with each poem, rather create a fragmented world where meaning exists/contrasts between poems as much as in them."

I'm interested in exploring poetry as a visual art. How space can add depth and emotion to the cognitive experience of reading. How it can loosen the tendency to buy into one block of meaning.

Each of my two following poems can be read horizontally across the page (double columned or singly) or vertically. Each way offers the reader a different experience, a different set of ideas. I hope the two poems also hold some kind of conversation with each other.

In *Perpetual Motion I*, the frenetic rush of a metropolitan sushi bar is slowed down by the use of space to a single pertinent question. How can we absorb the experience we claim to be ours?

Perpetual Motion II was first written after visiting Yayoi Kusama's installation which uses lights and reflecting surfaces to create an illusion of infinity as people walk through tunnels. Now, I've used space to manipulate the poem further, to give a visual hint of the dark journey contained within the installation. It is a journey which, like birth itself, prefigures death, and the poem touches on the Holocaust. It's a specula poem, which mirrors itself, and in so doing sets up a sense of circularity. We follow the thread through the labyrinth and find ourselves both at the beginning and the end.

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Perpetual Motion I

Life spins on its carousel
like sushi
when
will there
be time to
strip
each
moment
to its
fine grain?

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Perpetual Motion II

after Yayoi Kusama's installation *Infinity Mirrored Room*

we must leave our bags behind this is the black retina of memory
in this space we will be naked impossible flashes of bold dancing greens
as they who stepped into dark places we are children deluged by Christmas
stripped of hair and spectacles we are strafed by light
we follow obedient and mirrors
into a night that smells faintly chemical uprights, stage flats, smoke
with black rag edges and structured wraiths
uprights, stage flats, smoke with black rag edges and structured
and mirrors into a night that smells faintly chemical
we are strafed by light follow obedient
we are children deluged by Christmas stripped of hair and spectacles
impossible flashes of bold dancing greens as they who stepped into dark places
this is the black retina of memory we in this space we will be naked
must leave our bags behind

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Margento

MARGENTO (Chris Tănăsescu) is a Romanian poet, performer, academic, and translator who has lectured, launched books, and performed in the US, SE Asia, Australia, and Europe. His pen-name is also the name of his multimedia cross-artform band that won a number of major awards, including the Fringiest Event Award (UK, 2005), The Gold Disc (Romania, 2008), and was invited to open the 1st European Poetry Slam Festival (Berlin, 2009) and to perform at the World Electronic Poetry Conference (Kingston University, UK, 2013). His book of translations—together with Martin Woodside—from Gellu Naum's poetry (*Athanor and Other Pohems*) was nominated by *World Literature Today* as Most Notable Translation in 2013, and his more recent work has appeared in *Kenyon Review Online, Prairie Schooner, Plume, Belas Infieis,* and *Experiment-O,* among other places. He continues his work on the graph poem project together with Diana Inkpen and the latter's students at University of Ottawa. MARGENTO is Romania & Moldova Editor-at-Large for *Asymptote*, was selected among the 100 European writers to take part in the CROWD omnibus tour from the arctic pole to the Mediterranean sea (summer of 2016), and will be soon launching—as a librettist—a rock opera written by Bogdan Bradu.

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Webcam Dinner with a Brussels Nun

"I woke up with a pop
corn stuck between my butts,
leftovers from the feast last night
in bed," I said, and she laughed

shyly, but laugh she did a while…
Then, suddenly, the penny
drops we have already crossed
all lines, so she gets cocky: "I didn't…!"

(Have passers-by contemplated us
naked, I wondered, sprawled on the bed,
since one could see through the front window
to the back window? We got from La Cambre to our chambre// directly,
last night, drunk and ex/ cited, and now we track down on/ google maps where we've been—it auto/ matically focuses on the stat// EU below, hidden on the mem[Hom]/ aureole dedicated to the battle of An/ verse— Yser, protruding like a clit/ o[si]Ris, stalwart of the park// still badly bent and unpro/ faned by youserz from all walks/ of life at locked links & on pflat/ forms, till veering off into a vir

US trail…) "Only because I kissed
it out while you were sleeping…"
I mumble. She did cross all lines, but only on
line, then…
She blushes…
and suddenly[1]

[1] As part of the *Graph Poem* project, http://artsites.uottawa.ca/margento/en/the-graph-poem/, me and Blair Robert Drummond have written a code that analyzes the syntactical feature of poems and their line and stanza-related anatomy (syntactical map of line and stanza breaks, enjambments, etc.), and then started running it on our own poems besides the other North American and world poetry corpora. This particular one came out as NumStanzas = "8" NumLines = "30" NumSentences = "6" NumEnjambedLines = "27", the most rugged stanza appearing to be the penultimate one—Stanza number = "6" closedbegin = "false" closedend = "false" NumLines = "6"

screams: "Hey, what happened, is this blood?"
"Naaaw, I'm no Dracula of the *mons pub*
i(bi)*s!* I just surfed and learnt I should wash
such dinner down with wine."

NumSentences = "1" NumEnjambed = "6" 1. Linebreak head = "VP" leftSibling = "VBD" rightSibling = "NP" punctuation = "" 2. Linebreak head = "VP" leftSibling = "VBG" rightSibling = "S" punctuation = "" 3. Linebreak head = "PP" leftSibling = "IN" rightSibling = "NP" punctuation = "" 4. Linebreak head = "S" leftSibling = "RB" rightSibling = "S" punctuation = "";" 5. Linebreak head = "VP" leftSibling = "VBZ" rightSibling = "CC" punctuation = "" 6. Linebreak head = "VP" leftSibling = "RB" rightSibling = "NP" punctuation = "", but that is also due to the fact that the machine read the stanza's last 3-tiered line as 3 different lines; after we correct that (how?) we (we who, we the [RO]bots) will connect the poem to others in the graph sharing similar syntactical and stanzaic counts. Other features involved in the automated generation of this world poetry graph include subject (http://artsites.uottawa.ca/margento/en/2015/02/18/2-poetry-computational-analysis-paper-accepted-to-flairs-conference/), diction, and form (meter, sonic features, and verse forms). The next step (when?) will be using GIS (geographical information system) apps and other open source and/or new programs of ours to generate a live world poetry map (where?).

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7-11=3, no audience rooftop concert

(a polymedia project)

Endangered bugs have meanwhile resurf
aced on the soundtrack of our concert
on the rooftop of the Romanian peasant
museum, between songs—*when the music's over turn
up the sound*—that's how we got to hear[2] on our temp
oral plate the flutter of monarchs adrift in the forest

(of messages that are the message that is the medium and the media/ tion converging to the con/ version of Grigore[3]'s painting into verse,/ not docuverse yet dataverse within commun/ *i*verses crossed by tips, taps,/ and sexts, neither mass- nor multi-, just a string of poly/ glot polygons referring this/ fragment to the facebook page where/ we're saving our face, true, but along with it the res/ ponse wave as well channeled into the remedy of re/ mediation radially reaching all con/ Xions when we dive into the crowd/ sourcing sea of voices and good viruses/ together drowning all twitter-chirps in humming light)

hungry for metal neurons lulled by algo-
rhithms of inter-(unconscious)-sected
rhythms; but the thing is that when we cut
the antennae's vibe off one of the tracks, we lost—
along with the running dry Ocean
of America[4] leaked onto the other platforms—the voice,
Maria's[5], sounding like a thirsty sea gull… And here we are now, a branch
of our own database, hacked; and meanwhile fully shared.

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrkJI9Ga6Lg or search for *7 – 11 = 3, no audience rooftop concert* on youtube
[3] Grigore Negrescu, http://christanasescu.blogspot.ca/2015/04/grigore-negrescu-margento-self-portrait.html or google search margento self-portrait & work site
[4] Ocean of America, Inc.; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocean_Software
[5] Maria Răducanu, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAuHLEP2fmY

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The poetryartexchange chronicles and concerts: a prologue

In the beginning were the names. Steve and Stephen, Iulia and Andra, Claire… all ancient words with often forgotten meanings. The maze of etymologies was calling out,

place firmly on
crown, wreath of glory
of men
protector of men
gracious rebellious woman & wished-for-child, marine
jovial & descended from the diurnal god
God has favored
clear, bright, distinct…

while those oracular name-phrases started to enter (both the technological and the "new unconscious" of) my poems and twist them this way or the other without ever emerging to the text's surface, not to my knowledge at least. They say nowadays narratives have been replaced by databases. This was one of my databases, along with the poems, the bios, the hyperlinks, and the google search results that once in a while crystallized into various parallel (data-) narratives, sounds, images, and rhythms. Where there is a name there is an aim, a notion, a way, a wave, an ocean…

Then I had a dream. Somebody was telling me in a dark room, "Look that painting is *melting…*" I turned around with an ice cold shiver down my spine. And indeed the colors on a 3 square-foot painting were slowly dissolving and flowing down the canvas, down the wall and onto the floor in a stream of mixed glittering nuances.

All poems are performances, and all performances are translations, inter/re-mediations. Being part of this project means (present tense, as in an ongoing work, with no trackable beginning or ending either, never concluded, always in progress and performance) describing the art you inhabit, contribute, and react to at the same time. And your subject is so critically the other that you become the other while your work becomes the other and you become the other's work. The ekphrasis of ekstasis.

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Yet performances cannot take place outside communities, they are the (foundation and the very life of) communities. Communities, plural, just as in the *Poetry Art Exchange* project whereby a number of communities have been formed as intersections or unions of the (data)sets/communities each of us were part of at the time, or have become part of meanwhile. Each of us in their turn constellations of communities, of p(o)e(m)Rsons, containing multitudes, containing solitudes.

In the current global/transnational context though, communities are so mathematically and digitally translatable that they lose their (projected) commonalities as well as their (un)I[(d)enti]ties in translation. It is the poem that has to reassemble them as toolkits and databases.

Poetry is coding, even when "traditional." The "traditional" ("page") poem is the body as (re)created by the vibrations of (virtually) sensory subjective/self-perception; the digital poem is the body (re)shaped by the interaction with the virtual as digital affordance. In both, the poem is the (convergence of) media, bodies included, as comm[onal/(temp)oral/](un)ities.

Beyond that, there are also specific computational (or digital media related) apps that I have employed here—from the basic automatic searches and/or tracking the number of occurrences of certain characters and words to the more advanced Natural Language Processing operations (calculating for instance the type-token ratios in the other poets' poems and the related texts/hyperlinks submitted), as well as some of the Machine Learning poetic feature related tools that I've created together with my team as part of the *Graph Poem* project—which all guided me in writing my own response poems.

But this is only the beginning, as these poems (both the ones submitted in the first phase of the project and those "completing" it as of this writing, but in fact also the ones that will follow nevertheless) will be tossed into the graph poem and become its new nodes. And will be connected by various (and some of them still unsuspected) features and commonalities—the multiple edges of the graph, that is—to other and other poems, thus becoming members of totally new and potentially infinite communities. Being thus

translated to new and manifold geographies and topologies, they will continue [as part of the (un)creative writing component of the graph poem] to prompt other and other—"manually" or automatically—generated poems. Thus the *Poetry Art Exchange* project cannot end here, and in certain respects will in fact continue indefinitely, while still providing—through the specific infinities these poems (and the accompanying texts and multimedia) will be involved in—certain precise outcomes: the "ends" of graph theory, that is, the equivalence classes of infinite rays in the graph. The ends of the never-ending rays, the ends of never ending, that's what poetry is and does.

This project is therefore like starting yet another band or rather joining the one started by Steve Rushton, poet-painter-drummer extraordinaire. While the band I actually have—MARGENTO—is a cross-artform group that already involves painting and video along with poetry and music. Which means that everything my band has done is now part of this current project, while the latter is also part of my band's work. This is all part of me, this is me, and I'm just a part of it.

Being in this band means being and. Being and becoming a connector. (Elizabeth Bishop:) "Everything only connected by 'and' and 'and'"—that kind of band. B{e(at)ing (end)[B(e-©umming)]}and.

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London(né)— Bookar®est Express
(A Nuyorican Language GPS)

In the middle of the night a frantic confusion dickety-
dick my cock cockily takes the lead in
side Eastside snug and evil Jewish swirling at mc sore
ley's 'til a drop fell, splashed, and that's that on le(s)
murs the walls with ears summoned to life & imp rag
nated by a non-existent body as I get lost

in the street poem recited by Miguel Algarín while telling
the story (on the *East Village Poetry Walk* rec
ord[er®]ing) of the procession that scattered Miguel
Piñero's ashes on Avenue C old ladies
picked them off the sidewalk and made the sign of the cross a prison
time dweller I ramble through memories a junky

threw himself on top of a little hill of ashes crying
I am the Philosopher of the Criminal Mind a cancer
of Rockefeller's ghettocide since it is my memories
of other people's memories that haunt me most obs
essively rendered horrendously vivid by the whole of my I-magi©-
nation the Nazi metaphors for total exterm

I-nation the Soviet gang rapes of German women that went on for dec
(H)ades on end the couples in theatrical makeup sitting outside
The Thirsty Scholar drinking champagne and absorbing
the roar of traffic, the smog, and our open-book-
in-progress-like faces as we pass by—transfixed by the trans
formations in our smartphones—, and flow into each other's neu

(vI)ral networks, ©ode languages, and works—all of us maps to come...

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^^^^^^^^^^^

Color Legend
(in order of appearance)

Steve Rushton
Claire Booker
E.E. Cummings
Andra Rotaru
Miguel Piñero
John Riley
Stephen Watts
Iulia Militaru
^^^^^^^^^^^^

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Eco-echo-state[6]
(Dancing Our Way across the Stranahan into the Latin[NO] Quarter)

@ 7-eleven I'm in heaven even
if no one will give me a quarter, a quantum, a drop of what
err, got mine though got a heart a heartbeat I'm dead
sperate for the touch of too much the plants of plenty the immor
tall tale of plastic that never rots, true pot, e-verb
lasting casting of dead castes of which I'm always a fan

spastic extra. But look, the empties are the aug
ers I use to bore holes in the visible, the aug
mented reality app that takes me across the Stra(yI)n-a-
(k)han, down Hell-en-dale, to Padrino's, boca full of Buca
nero Negro *negru-n ceru' gurii*, as an iPhone bill
board says if a dog has a lot of black on the roof

of its mouth it means that dog is smart buy it via the son
ic boom ("ruse [typo, rise?] of lyric" game) hwilum ic gewite
swa ne wenaþ men under yþa geþraec eorþan secan
garsecges grund and then heard fracked Vlach outside wall
mart I get in and for a sec I'm still blinded
by the evening sun not everyone can look

up, even at me, it hurts their eyes but they could hear some
hand in hand ears hands spank bass staccato
buttocks to the beat of windows opening on everybody'
s tablets those of mechanics and the Histri(a)
ionics and iconics on the muzak which belongs to the real me
dia high rollers—longing for music or for the home(less)land and the land-

[6] "Echostate" is a term borrowed from Stephen Kennedy who defines it as "an echo of a statement" in *Chaos Media. A Sonic Economy of Digital Space*, Bloomsbury, 2015.

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of-the-free's march-end-ice delivered in none of our dial
(el)ects' idiolex in pub-leak sub-rest's d(I€)u-res($)—my god
that is now a part of statistics who moved to Lo(a)ndon from Calif
ornia, Red (Army) Ghost's *Kunst/Kunts* a temp
orrery orally bright vagina intersection a-bat-
t(err)oir of poetry and choreoGRAPH[7]y painting

with food, dancer in the still centre of the body's tree, com.merc(Ur)(y).e-waste…

^^^^^^^^^^^^

Color Legend
(in order of appearance)

Claire Booker
Anna Maria Mickiewicz
Aleksandar Stoicovici
John Riley
Iulia Militaru
Andra Rotaru
Steve Rushton
Stephen Watts
^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

[7] Any connected graph, including a graph poem (http://artsites.uottawa.ca/margento/en/the-graph-poem/), has a spanning tree; in fact, in the particular case of graph poems, such trees span corpora (or bodies) of poems; whence Stephen Watts's intervention in the last line of this elegy.

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Anna Maria Mickiewicz

Anna Maria Mickiewicz is a Polish-born poet, writer and editor who writes both in Polish and in English. Anna moved to California, and then to London, where she has lived for many years. She edits the annual London magazine *Pamiętnik Literacki* (*The Literary Memoir*) and is a member of English Pen. As a student, she was a co-founder of a magazine *Wywrotowiec* (The Subversive). Her first collection of verse was published in 1985. Since then, publications include a collection of short stories and essays *Okruchy z Okrągłego Stołu (Breadcrumbs from the Round Table)* in 2000 and verse collections *Proscenium* in 2010 and *London Manuscript,* published by Poetry Space, Bristol, in 2014*.* With Danuta Błaszak she has published an anthology *Flying Between Words,* Contemporary Writers of Poland (Florida: 2015)*.*

Her poetic works have appeared in the following journals in the United States, UK, Australia, Canada and Poland: *Akant, Poezja Dzisiaj, Tygiel, Galeria, Pamiętnik Literacki, South Bank Poetry (UK), Kritya, The Exiled Ink (UK), The Screech Owl (UK), Syndic Literary Journal (CA), Lost Coast Review (CA)*. She has also translated British and American poetry and drama. She is a co-authoress of studies written in an essayistic style.

Anna won the *Miasto Literatów (The City of Writers)* Author of the Year in 2013 (*http://www.miastoliteratow.com*). She performed at the Penzance Literary Festival in 2013, and organised European Poetry Dialogues events to celebrate UNESCO's World Poetry Day in 2014.

In 2016 Anna Maria Mickiewicz was awarded the Polish Medal for Merit to Culture, "Gloria Artis".

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Chopin in Manchester

He did not like the smog
He did not like the damp English weather
Or overcrowded Manchester
Standing at the lake in Prestwich
I can feel his longing
Far away from home
Music is dripping like rain from his thin fingers rapidly
In the Gentlemen's Concert Hall
Today
His statue is silent in Manchester
A frail figure
Is it longing for music or for the homeland?

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Yevtushenko

The dawn... new ideas were floating in the air.
A generation tainted by the pain of parting with the unsettled soil.
They lost the battle with frosty days, and moved back into uncertainty, into silence.
A new time has arrived, with its irritating stillness, with crystal tears.
Now they look into the eyes of old pages, and they dream.

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A grey coat

In a grey coat, leaning on a bench, collecting dispersed thoughts,
Nietzsche was terrifying once, with remote grandeur.
Power overcomes weakness.

Now it is just a Dionysian fairy tale on the glowing screen.
A silhouette darkened by fog will leave a mark in the flame of memory.
Power overcome by weakness.

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The Hidden

Once they were hidden
Forest covered the fear
Drowned out the silence...
Darkness stood on the way home
The clock of the heart was beating in seconds

Dash up there quickly, spread the arms
Hair will fall down gently

Hidden from brightness,
Hidden from fate

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It is a dream...

Today
In the London thicket they are still invisible
Yet they feel the power
Hidden in a short smile,
Just for a second.

They fix taps
They drink strong coffee
They don't have to eat much,
Sometimes only a sandwich.

Wives come to visit
They like it here
They spend just a little time,
Then await them…

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Iulia Militaru

Iulia Militaru has a B.S. in Medicine and a B.A. in Literature from the University of Bucharest, where she earned an M.A. in Literary Theory in 2006 and is currently pursuing a PhD in Romanian Literature. After a few children's books and her study *Metaphoric, Metonimic: A Typology of Poetry*, her first poetry collection came out in 2010, *Marea Pipeadă* (The Great Pipe Epic), receving two major awards at the "Young Writers Gala". *Dramadoll*, co-authored with Anca Bucur, designs by Cristina Florentina Budar, is part of wider inter-art-and-author (poetry/graphic art/video/sound) project; a part of this video project (*Images of the day number 8*) was selected in *Gesamt 2012 (DISASTER 501 What happened to man?)*, a project coordinated by Lars von Trier and directed by Jenle Hallund. The installation was fitted at Copenhagen Art Festival, Kunsthal Charlottenborg.

Her visual poem TECHNOVERTURE appeared in *MAINTENANT*, *A Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing and Art (#9)* and her piece *Underwater White Portrait* was exhibited at the 1st International Literary Fair of Mato Grosso (2015), Brazil.

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Sad-istic image in a womb

her name aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
sur face

inhabited by boundless communities

aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa
plat form of letters

her name Justine.
Just a portrait.

She has crossed my way bodiless
slowly treading on grief at no place.

we are running out of hate, good people. Let's stand in line for hate,
hating the one ahead of us, hating and killing him peacefully
grievously with no words.
Good people, let's treat Justine for her illness, unsilentness

I look at the light gliding on her naked back,
at the beamful un-veil-ed R-eve-A

led leg with no flesh treading on grief slowly
turning the wheel in the cave with her weakness, reddening my whip with frozen blood

while I flog her hard, while I flog her hard

with no mercy. Let's cure Justine of her illness.
Anyone may earn the right at RON 39.90 rates only.

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her silence is birthed softly, whispering inside us
growing over that doomed place, over the castle on the top of the mountain,
when I crash her bruised body once suiting

the snow so well in the stoned beast's cold years
white flakes wreathe a chaste forehead and all splendor lies in the rent translucent womb,
where I catch glimpse of a little bright vagina
frantically pulsing

with no shame.
by Justine's agony he lives a moment of pleasure

in that cold stoned year, pointless...

A picture in typographic view. Representing theoretical power. Outside representation.
This *narrative* becomes *a vast syntagmatics with plural syntaxes,*
a whole consisting of
traversals, itineraries, trajectories.
A map to come.
Onto you, those before me and those to come, I bestow this place.

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A map to come

Now: *at its center there was a lack, a missing text. (Finding the text is the ideal of iconography.)*

Behind a veil, Medusa. Gazing. A stone/D ance

sl
(one m
ore step o
ver t
he tw
oof u s)
ip

How can you not understand these parts/Assemblaged by your daughter's/Words as she runs in the dark
(The superimposition of graphemes over the lines of a map give it orientations of reading and trajectory that the map would not have in its own expressive substance.)
sl
(ast ep
in dan
sing ov
er l eav
es. Overy ou)
ip

My father loves our silence,/This thought shattered in voices. Listen./I'm the sun of his son, the son of the sun.
It isn't so much a question of narrative, of content, but rather of
suspense, void, scansion
gap, syncope, pulse…

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Annihilate (yourselves) on this page. The world murdered individually! This very day let's die again.
And then: just the steps we take over the father.

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Statement

If I had to name the most important autobiographical event which is related to my way of understanding and writing poetry, I would choose my birth time or, to put it otherwise, my birth on the boundary. I was born somewhere between the end of twentieth century (a century of death and resentment) and the beginning of twenty-first, somewhere between the end of a dictatorship (I avoid saying communism) and the beginning of capitalism (I avoid saying democracy). The most suitable concept for this place where I live is that of a border or frontier. My whole poetry is an attempt to define that kind of existence, a borderline existence.

A border has its special meaning as closure or barbed wire, an inheritance from the death camps of the last century. But, this concept might become a crossing point to the other side, a path open to the others. There will always be this space, this border, between you and the others, and it has to be turned from a barbed wire into a median space for mediation.

I followed two methods for acting upon this mediation space:

1. The process of folding— the border becomes a fold and the closure is opened wide.
2. The denial of the powerful/strong inner subject by getting out from my inside body and creating an extra-corporeal network-like subject. In this respect, speaking of "I" is a self-delusion.

All these have a major effect upon the act of writing. The concept of authorship, the anxiety of influence are out of date and the notion of competition dies along with them.

I don't want a poetry of personal communication, I want a map-like poetry. By the process of folding, a meeting point is created, a meeting of a sheet of white paper with all those remains of what was already written. On the other hand, the sheet of white paper is nothing else but the space of the poem, of coming into being for a large number of dead voices, powerless voices, dead and forgotten languages. The subject who writes must be a witness and a mark, an emptiness and a rhizome.

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This meeting point of all those already written speeches is not a harmonious place, but a place under pressure. The poetry respects your right to be different.

On the formal level, the border as a barbed wire theory means to work with different kinds of speech, put them together and try to understand in-between relations, no annihilation, no destruction, and no control of, no possessing of anything/anybody.
The ending point of poetry is the moment of its turning into prose. How can this moment be used for restoring poetry?

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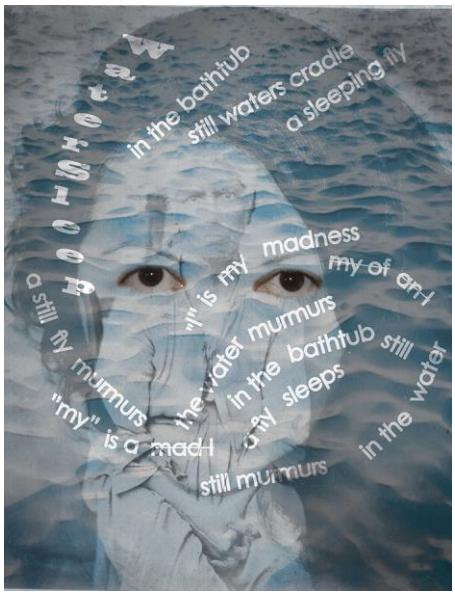
(auto)mat/on (auto)BIO/graphy/i(c)

The Main Character of the Scenes:
A face/ a white noise screen/ some black points/ A face/ INVISIBILITY
A simple line of numbers:
1111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111
11111111111
NO SOUNDS NO LETTERS

And a self-portrait:



In the beginning (I) was a WOMAN

Then, a few Romanian words:

nenorocito! târfă pizdă târâtură ştoarfă curvă bulendră cârpă fleandură otreapă petică stomac zdreanţă cocotă duduie damă madamă paţachină pârţotină telăliţă teleleică lele madaranţă scorţotină tearfă târnoaţă bandura

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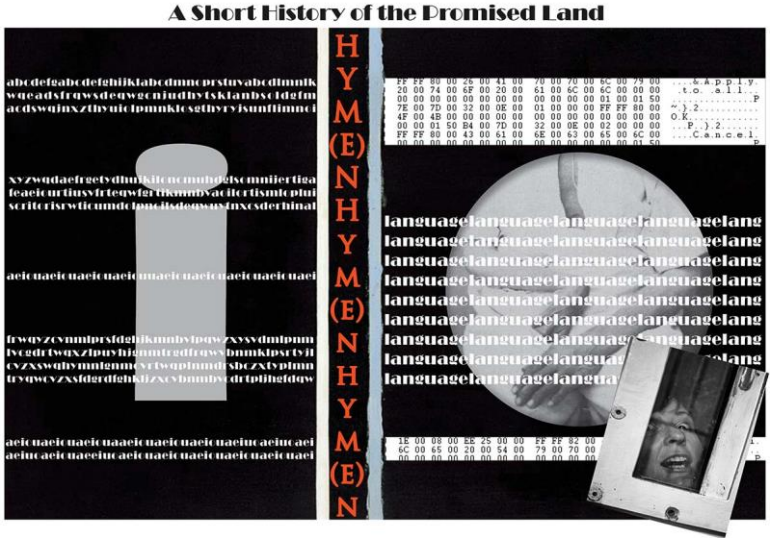
buzdrună bulă crăiţă landră mişarcă magopaţă tălaniţă fleoarţă fleorţotină şuleandră buleandră pupăză putoare târâtură haită pupezoaică terfeloagă gudă urjumă ruptură maimuţă marcoavă cadaoală mastroacă mahalagioaică mitocancă ţopârlancă

The Promise:



A simple line of numbers:
2222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222222

Prolegomena. A little something about death

This is neither a poem
Nor an antipoem

It's an attempt at establishing

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The physical sex and sexual identity
Of a concept

Around which your existence revolves:
From right to left/ From left to right;
From left to left/ From right to right;

And so on or maybe in a different way,
Until she gets dizzy like an idiot.

Death the cessation of all functions of life at the tissue and organ level
a state in which the nervous system displays irreversible damage
resuscitation is no longer possible
termination intercedes, as an end to life.

Death simple, singular, gender feminine, common noun

Every bad thing received in language
Is in the feminine gender

Therein lies the beauty of languages with gender inflections!

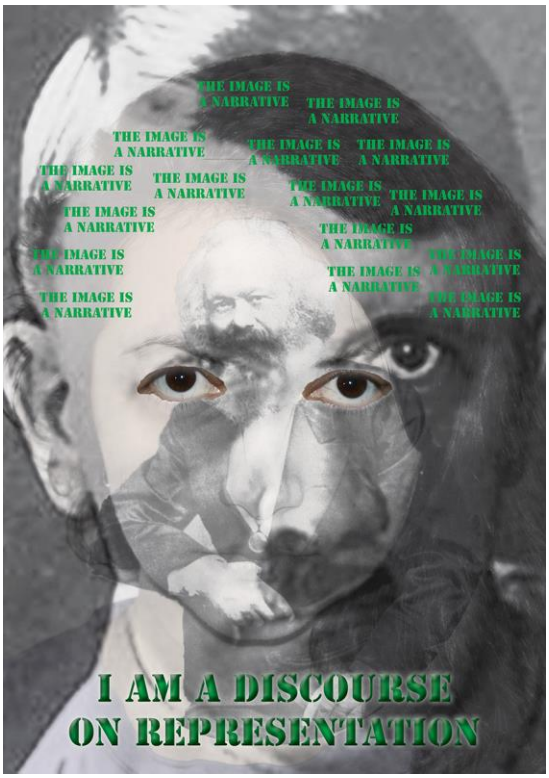
I am a medical DOCTOR. THE ANATOMY LESSON:

The human penis is an external male organ that additionally serves as the urinal duct. The main parts are the root (radix); the body (corpus); and the epithelium of the penis including the shaft skin and the foreskin covering the glans penis. The body of the penis is made up of three columns of tissue: two corpora cavernosa on the dorsal side and corpus spongiosum between them on the ventral side. The human male urethra passes through the prostate gland, where it is joined by the ejaculatory duct, and then through the penis. The urethra traverses the corpus spongiosum, and its opening, the meatus, lies on the tip of the glans penis. It is a passage both for urination and ejaculation of semen. An erection is the stiffening

and rising of the penis, which occurs during sexual arousal, though it can also happen in non-sexual situations. The most common form of genital alteration is circumcision, removal of part or all of the foreskin for various cultural, religious and, more rarely, medical reasons. There is controversy surrounding circumcision. While results vary across studies, the consensus is that the average erect human penis is approximately 12.9–15 cm (5.1–5.9 in) in length with 95% of adult males falling within the interval 10.7–19.1 cm (4.2–7.5 in). Neither age nor size of the flaccid penis accurately predicts erectile length.

I is a Romanian p(h)oet! Poetry is my NAME.

Just another self-portrait:



Translated by: Chris Tănăsescu & Iulia Militaru

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John Riley

John Riley is a writer. He has written, taught and broadcast on film, music and film music. His book "Shostakovich: a Life in Film" was excellently reviewed in many journals including *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, *The Moscow Times* and the *East-West Journal*. He has curated film seasons in London, for the Barbican and the BFI, and the South Bank Centre commissioned him to write, produce and direct the multi-media show 'Shostakovich: My Life at the Movies' which was premiered by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and narrated by Simon Russell Beale, before being produced by the Komische Oper, Berlin. He has appeared on and made programmes for BBC Radios 3 and 4 and the World Service, and Resonance 104.4fm.

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CALCIUM

Virginia Lethersedge's *The Beast in Man Grows Larger, More Ferocious* is the latest in a long line of works (and not just by this artist) whose size and complexity is simultaneously inversely proportionate to its value and conversely proportionate to its misandry.

Spread over two sites—a temporary 'abattoir' overlooking Smithfield meat market and a flat in Cheyne Walk—the work implicitly demands a significant time-commitment from the viewer, as they are expected to visit first the one, and then the second venue to experience the entire work. Given that, one is justified in asking whether such a commitment is justified, and the answer must surely be a resounding 'No!'

The work itself (I won't eat into my word-count by repeatedly naming it), despite the apparent technical demands, is actually quite straightforwardly presented, at least at the Smithfield end. A fifty-(or-so)-inch television is mounted on a wall showing wildlife documentaries, specifically scenes of lions and other big cats downing gazelles, antelopes, zebras and others. The edges of the television are draped with blood-stained skins of these creatures. So far, so meaningless and anyone who visits only this part of the 'exhibit' will be excruciatingly disappointed. It is only when one has been to Cheyne Walk to witness the other half that that disappointment is mitigated to mere agonisingness.

Cheyne Walk is not the most straightforward of places to get to in London at the best of times: it is far from any underground station and the choice of location seems to underline man's 'invasiveness against nature', as the easiest way to arrive is by car— and even that is not necessarily a simple task.

Nevertheless, for me at least it was a necessity, as I could not claim to have written with any authority having seen only half the work, in the same way that a theatre critic should qualify their judgements if they walk out half-way through a play. And so I made my weary way to Chelsea where I found Lethersedge's requisitioned flat on the second floor of a mansion block. Outside, sits an assistant, marking the location. As you approach she opens the door. One finds oneself in a small, artificially created lobby as Lethersedge has

constructed another doorway, just four feet into the flat. As the door quickly closes behind you, you find yourself completely in the dark but are able instinctively to reach out and find the knob of the second door. What greets one on the other side is truly horrendous.

Lethersedge has coated the entire corridor with a red, sticky, never-drying substance; the air is humid to the point of positive wetness and filled with a grotesque, swirling miasma, but most overwhelming is the stench— one of rotting meat, stale urine and decaying faeces. Concealed speakers transmit the sounds one had heard in the abattoir which, compared to this, now seems like a very heaven. Pushing forward, one finds the doors off the corridor all locked and the knobs slippery with the bloody slime, so that escape is impossible. The end is the toilet itself: a vision worse than anything found in the most degraded clubs, and one beyond description. Meanwhile, intermingled with the sounds of pounding paws, panting panthera and acynonyx, and screaming ungulates, if we concentrate hard enough, we discern political speeches by some of the great men of the 20th century. The point is clear enough: women are relegated to door-assistants while men make the great decisions— decisions which lead to the degradation and deaths of millions.

One could, I suppose make a case that the work is as disgusting as the outcomes which it condemns, but I wonder if that is truly the case: war is far worse than anything that Lethersedge presents, yet at the same time what we see here is repellent enough that the mind shuts down and is unable to contemplate what any message might be. Perhaps Lethersedge's hope is that reflection will eventually replace revulsion, but beyond that— what? We know that war is horrible, though we are content not to know the details, and Lethersedge's work is only a metaphor, not even a simulacrum of the horrors that we know constitute conflict. And if there is an intended dialectic between the two venues (wars and abattoirs?) it is simultaneously too ill-defined and banal to have any effect— the physical and temporal distance between the two, rather than underlining the social and media quarantining that surround both activities (if that, to judge it kindly, was its intention), simply lessens their impact.

In all, an experience that both ascends the heights of disgustingness and descends to the depths of bathos.

NEON

Clifford Benjamin Hawes' new show *I Have a Cock* certainly plumbs the ridiculous, but never quite makes it to the sublime— or rather, it comes nowhere near.

Neon-art and text-art are both old hat but, to Escherishly pun, the cross-genre-ing of the two spawns a chimeric cheap supermarket pork pie: all the eyeballs and arseholes mashed into an unexaminable lump. Even a neophobe such as myself has had to endure numerous such shows, which are individually forgettable, memorable only as an agglomerated mass of awfulness.

Anyway, such is its ubiquity that anyone embarking on neon-text-art had better have something to add, something new to say.

Mostly, alas, Hawes does not. The exhibition is nothing more than a clichéd, lurid, vapid collection of sloganeering to which he has attempted to add some meaning by the use of different colours and, as far as the medium allows, approximations of various typefaces, though these subtleties are impossible to achieve with such daubed materials. These effects are like pouring chocolate sauce on shit: the initial, superficial, sugary attractiveness disappears when the sauce has been licked off and beneath it we find the disgusting truth that has always been there. Though they look the same, we are brought shockingly face-to-face with their undeniable, existential difference.

The exhibition is, in fact, as inert as neon itself— sufficient unto itself and utterly without connection to the wider world.

Epigrams are supposed to embody a paradox: to encompass—even if only by implication—a great truth, whilst leaving space for the readers' imaginations to enlarge upon them, and to consider and to develop their implications on both a personal and a social level. Hawes' solipsistic squawking does no such thing: so flat and empty is it that it would almost be an insult to a second dimension to call it two-dimensional.

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Single, common words are given faux significance by being presented in isolation, large and buzzingly coloured. We are left to wonder at the relationship between the word and the colour, sometimes contrastingly haloed by its interaction with the differently coloured wall upon which it sits. Do the two banalities, like two negatives, cancel each other out to produce something with a positive meaning? Or are we simply seeing banality squared?

Ultimately one must ask: how often could I return to this work? What new meanings will I see after twenty minutes of viewing? What is its attraction that will bring me back in five, ten, twenty years, and how will I and the work and our relationship have changed so that I find new pleasures, new stimulations. New ideas. And the answer, alas, is resoundingly in the negative. This is work for a hyper-active, e-numbered generation, one whose attention flits from buzz to buzz, like an addict ever seeking a bigger thrill but who is palmed off with gear increasingly cut with talc and bicarb, forcing them into a descending spiral of pitiful gratitude at anything that produces any response whatsoever.

Nevertheless, one work does provoke some brief thoughts and it is, appropriately, the title-piece.

The text, *I Have a Cock*, captures the male's (particularly adolescents') search for sexual identity and affirmation, their anxiety to differentiate themselves from the female, their fear of the feminine and the resultant masculine over-compensation, and their petulance in the face of other males' greater 'success' with females. But the lurid Barbie-pink scrawl imitates the script of the 16 year-old new girl at the local authority housing office, complete with the ludicrous heart over the 'I', embracing its pubescent femininity in a way that mocks that masculinity and its simultaneous desire to be both independent and part of a 'gang', dangling before them the bauble of social acceptance, while allowing them secretly to enjoy bemoaning their exclusion.

So, the gender ambiguity inhabits the space between content (text) and form (colour and script) piquing the question: should there be an accompanying blue piece: *I Have a Cunt*?

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Alas it isn't clear to what degree this is a stance, or whether it is simply Hawes' actual view of the world and his relationship to it. If so, it is earnestly to be hoped that he spends some time growing up. Otherwise he will simply continue to inflict his pre-pubescent squeals on a deservedly disinterested world.

Johannes Metzger

As a critic, Johannes Metzger has written for journals including *Neues Ubersetztung* (which ran from Jan-May 1999), *Kunst/Kunts* (one issue, Feb 2001) and *Artisticus Sozialistica* (planned but unissued). As an artist, his installation *Alles für dich, meine geliebte Füssbal* was mounted at Galerie (Herr) Kleine, Münchengladbach.

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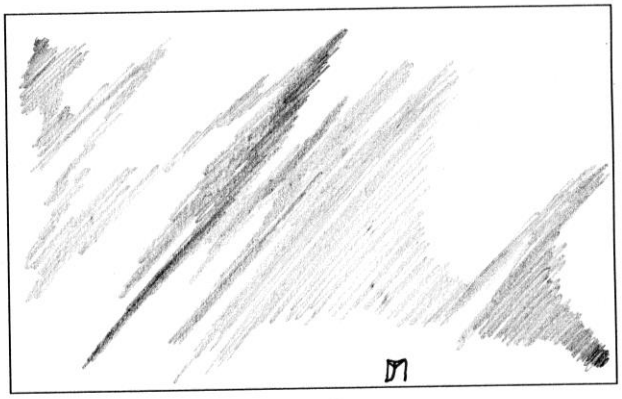
Kurat

A German drifting in London sends a Valentine guide to the art the establishment doesn't tell you.

KERNING

Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet, consectetur adipiscing elite. Ut imperdict fringila tortor, id molis turpis eiusmod id.

This is as much as I need to write on Helmut Kerning' s instalation at the Vorübergehend Galerie. It is merely the ilusion of something, an actor - and a bad one too. It takes the form of something, it goes thr0ugh the familiar, it acts like you expect it. It even seems to mean something and has an impressum of meaning because of it's gentures. But poke youe finger and it is paper with nothing inside. The journey to the gallery is weary, lonh and most assured is entirely futile.



Work No 16a. by Johannes Metzger

✳ **Les cris du fleueve**

Oiseaue de sang, chante, chante!
Singe, pourquoi m'amour?
Les creaturs etrange mentourant
Et sont dans l'interieuer
de moi.
Chameua des montagnes, quand
reviandra tu?

RECOMEND OF THE MONTH

FRENCH performance--poet Vanessa Versun is at ~~Schwiubd-~~ Schwund next month. Sge sings and plays her angst but she knows that she will never be recongized ✳ and is content. You must see her before she dies. A poem is here written from her tape she sent.

Johannes Metzger is an artist

February 1981

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Artist's statement

The art.

John Leman Riley

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Untitled

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There and Back

How is life translated into art
Comment est la vie traduit en art
Wie ist das Leben in der Technik übersetzt
Jak se žije v technologii přeložen
Ako sa žije v technológii preložený
Milyen az élet a technológia át
Cum este viaţa în transferul de tehnologie
Milyen az élet a technológiatranszfer
Ako sa žije v transferu technológií
Jak se žije v transferu technologií
Wie ist das Leben in der Technologie-Transfer
Comment est la vie dans le transfert de technologie
How is life in the technology transfer

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Andra Rotaru

Andra Rotaru (Bucharest, Romania) has a BA in Sociology from The School of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest. Currently settled in Bucharest, she is an active cultural journalist and organizer of literary events. She initiated several collaborations at the intersection of poetry and choreography (the dance performance *Lemur*, presented in US and across Europe), poetry and fiction and video: the documentary *All Together*, made during International Writing Program 2014; photography (*Photo-letter pairing)*, involving community from Iowa and IWP writers.

Published books: *Într-un pat sub cearşaful alb/ In a bed under the white sheets*, Vinea Publishing House, 2005 (debut)— awarded the most important prize for a debut book; *En una cama bajo la sábana blanca* (the translation of the debut book into Spanish), Bassarai Ediciones, Spain, 2008; *Ţinuturile sudului/ Southern Lands*, Paralela 45 Publishing House, 2010; *Lemur*, Cartea Românească Publishing House, 2012, awarded *The best young poetry book* at *Writers' Gala*, Bucharest, 2013. Studied in several literary programs in US and Europe, among them the International Writing Program, Iowa University (2014).

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calls himself lemur mostly on autumn days

I ask him what that means and the answer is easy:
whatever relates to dropping some candy
into some hand. I ask him again and he's like:
today I have run into this powerless beast.
extracted the candy out of my mouth
and shoved it under its muzzle, cupped in my hand:
lemur. and then? what did it do? its hair was not yet grown.
it had wooden knots at the joints of its feet.
what next? it breathed into my face.
it smoothed the piece of candy with its muzzle— it didn't care for it.
after retrieving it,
I felt it all different on my palate.
its taste was akin to its smell. it went on breathing,
spreading wreaths of white steam round it muzzle.

it recognizes me by my white torso.
it lies down in the new grass I'm leading it to.
it's got big blue eyes. it is not yet a lemur.
it goes no matter where. we could have walked to the forest
that ends in a chasm.
he said: it's your choice. I was choosing at random,
unaware he was going to change into a lemur.
we're walking downhill. he follows me smiling,
in a black fur almost making a cover.
we are running, I whistle. we can't see a thing. we call out.
the sound fades away in the apple-tree orchard.
in the chestnut-tree orchard.
in the orchard with houses on the point of collapsing.
crouching down feels so good. at diminutive height.
we are breathing the warm air now leaving our nostrils.
the lemur leans down on its front paws increasingly harder,

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leaning towards me as it mirrors my gesture.

that white torso between us.
that's the torso he's anxious to feel.
on the right, a small heap of rotten apples,
on the left, a small heap of ripe apples

at night he's afraid of the body. in the dark, he tells me,
he can see just whatever is white.
he tells me my eyes would be doing him good. as he departs,
he is rubbing his hands in the black dust.
raises them to his eyelids.
the blue eyes rush to my blue eyes:
we won't see each other again evermore.

Translated by: Florin Bican

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Simulacrum

I need to deduct the sum of our days—
year after year, in a dreary routine— from what has been left.

Crying out since I met him, in an unvaried pitch,
not exactly coherent at times, but then ready to trigger off
an endless range of female imageries:

I often dream
he's wearing high heels,
ribcage exposed,
all there is to touch
is that bundle of stumps

adorned and summoned
to life by a non-existent body:

a head appended thereon, some sinews
well built, a robust contour.

I want back everything that belongs to me

then I let my hands roam all over his stumps,
I enclose his palms (mine),
I enclose his neck (mine),
I watch him from afar.

he continues to wear that odd chunk of body,
that trace of a massacre whose ends he never
finds. he dresses his extremities
in period costume: under their time, in the rancid
odor of those having worn them:

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here am I in all my perfection,
here is a perfect simulacrum

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Statement

What is a reading and *what is an audience* have become questions to which I sincerely don't know anymore how to answer. Because of my interest in interdisciplinary areas and the need to express myself through the means of other arts I have need for a new scenography: a natural landscape, a waterfall, an excavated hill... the space where the event can be held should be transformed itself (from an expected auditory with humans present) into a non-existing audience, a natural landscape, in accordance with the intermedia text.

Another issue for me is that from time to time, a text can come into a "chemical" reaction with my mood, an impressionist way for it to be part of me and follow my many transformations during the day. So, for example, how would you, as a person from the audience react to me, barking in front of you? The Romanian sound for barking should be *ham-ham*, not the English *woof, ruff*, *arf*, *au au*, *bow-wow*, or *yip.* In that moment, perhaps the best audience would be an animal shelter: I give and take from my audience something, but I want to be in a balance with the audience as well.

In Romania there is not a real scene for experimental poetics, too few are doing it and in an improvised way. And those who are doing it well don't have an audience for it. We are doomed to "remain" classical, thinking how experimental we are.

What do I like? The nomadism of an event and reading, reuniting people from all over the globe and the multi-ethnicity of the authors and themes, and poetry reigns under the same umbrella. The space is a secondary issue, the primarily one consists in the ears from all over the world, shaping the audience. Each of them going in some other direction after the event to spread the sounds of foreign accents and ideas, mixing the human and animal reigns, following the nomadic trace or unfollowing it.

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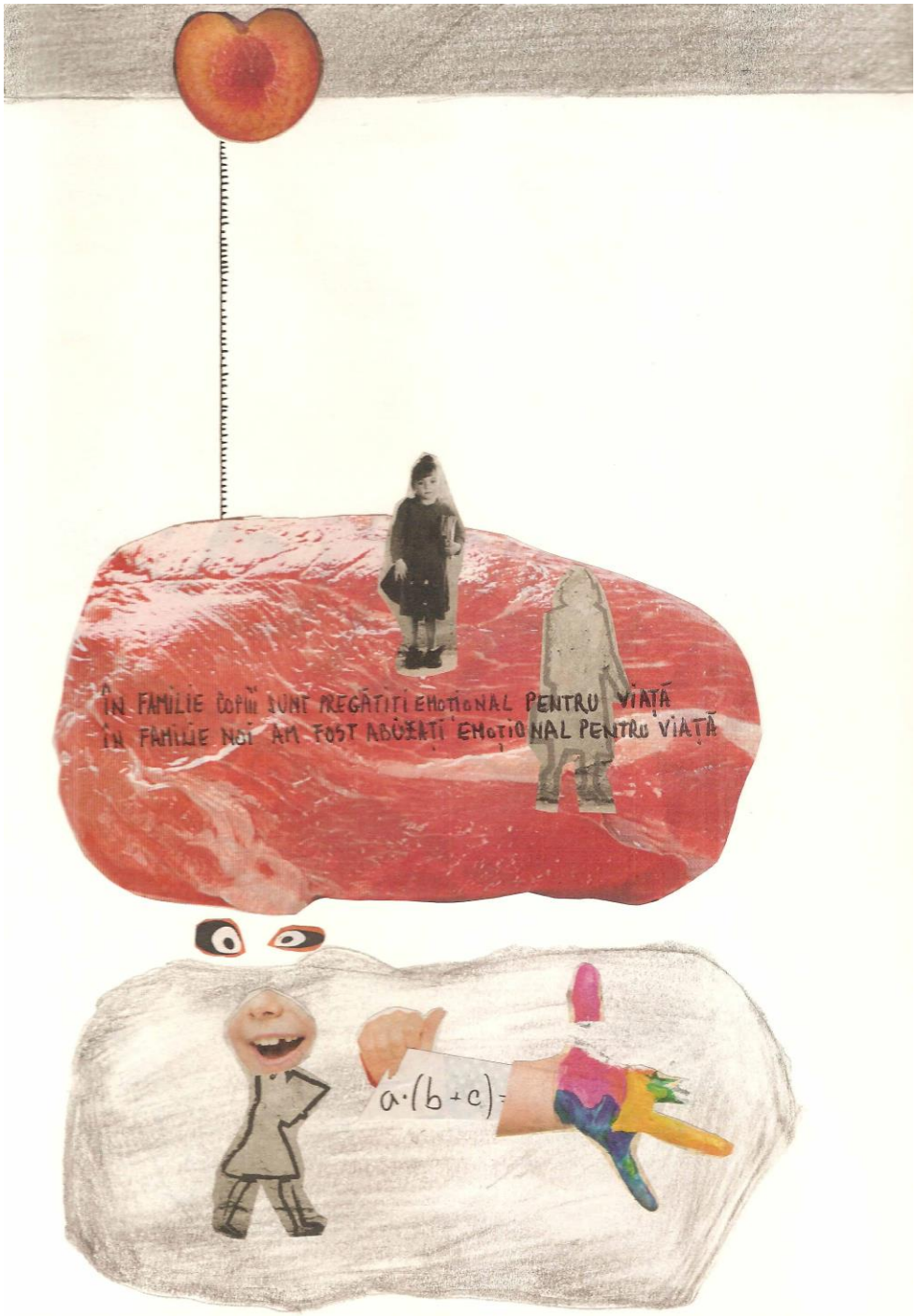

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on clear days bodies are three-quarter visible.

the shoulders, the thoraxes, the hips, the knees, the soles.
in their wake, one might say that bodily scraps follow suit.
that hair, were it to grow like a weed, would cover them up,
that, consequently,
they'd be three-quarter humans of hair on the move.

Translated by: Florin Bican

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The Torso

the rounded white torso constantly shows me the way.
today we are not going back to our house. after a two days' walk,
the house seems to be far away. the house is all taken apart.
the roof has spilled over under the weight of the leaves
covering it. it has stretched out its timber,
all over the valley. it's resting them there as if they were arms.

when feeding the torso I'm feeding wet mouths.
the peering muzzles harbor misshapen teeth.
they have been crushing bony carcasses.
in the hairs of their fur
milk laces abide. evening after evening,
in the wide-open bellies of prosimians
the shivering bodies of humans took shelter.
night after night, in the wide-open bellies of houses,
other shivering bodies took shelter.

in the afternoon it's corpse-gathering time. the dried stalks
of wild roses. rotten parasite plants.
brown mushrooms and poison-full ones.
deep ditches are being dug. shovels are crushing the earth,
grinding it.
young bodies are bouncing all around the ditches.
walls are bouncing all around the ditches.
they all take shelter, they're pouring the earth back in place.
here and there, peering muzzles are breathing the air that comes from all over.

Translated by: Florin Bican

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Steve Rushton

Steve Rushton studied art at Kingston Polytechnic, exhibited regularly in England during the 1980s, before studying art history at The Courtauld Institute and Birkbeck in the 1990s and becoming an art and design history lecturer and curriculum leader. He returned to art and started writing poetry in 2004, exhibiting and performing, especially on radio (Resonance FM) and in London's East End. Publications include a poetry single *Sweet Sex Education Teacher from Chichester* (*Not Your Average Type* 2012), a chapbook collection *Burning a Paper Plate—Towards a New Art* and a first full length collection, *towards a new art* (both *erbacce-press* 2015). In the same year, he started *poetryartexchange*.

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1.1

(revelation)

I used to paint with paint,
Now I paint with food,
See infinity
In powdered turmeric
Or a soy sauce stain,
A splash of red wine
Or Linghams 100% chilli sauce,
"A mild piquant relish
And appetizer of delightful flavour"
Though problematic drying time.

I use the mess of life
And make it messier,
Burn to bring out
Individual qualities
Of various dried fluids

But working with these remnants
Am I negotiating
Yet another novel strategy,
Or is there a chance
To see beyond artifice
Before habit
Closes the door
Again?

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1.4

(exhibition in the market, or why I
decided to burn a paper plate for art)

South London on the second day of October 2004.
A red bus runs after a setting sun on Brixton Road.
I walk to an exhibition somewhere in Brixton market.
I pass stalls,
Their shutters down,
I see food stained newspapers on the ground.
I smell fish and rotten vegetables
And then
I hear a hum,
And round a corner
I find the exhibition.
I light a cigarette,
Smoke it before going in,
Watching it burn,
Breathing it in,
The smoke and the atmosphere of the place.
The art I can't remember now—
Free wine, a few friends—
I left after a while,
And on my way home, I wondered why,
Why art paled next to the sight
Of food stained newspapers on floors at night.
I turned a corner,
I saw the light,
The supermarket
Was still open.
I walked in,
Looked on the shelves,

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I knew what I wanted,
Wrapped in plastic but not plastic but paper,
They came in packs of different sizes.
I chose the small size.
Why had no one done this before?
The potential for transformation,
To hold all that oil on canvas couldn't.
I ran home,
A frantic confusion of fumbled keys, closing doors,
Opening wrappers followed
Until I was ready,
To light a candle,
Pour a glass of wine,
Take a sip,
Place a paper plate under it
On a piece of newspaper, tip the glass
Until a drop fell,
Splashed,
And that was that,
The start of it.
I stared in wonder
At the purple splashed circle
Splattered round the edges
With tiny drops flying off towards the sides,
It was beautiful, beautiful.

I raised it,
Placed it above the candle,
Waited.

Slowly
The wine turned colour
From purple.

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Stains appeared
Like brown stars.
I was transfixed, transfixed,

By the transformation of it,
From everyday material
Into something else,
Of this world
But more than it,
More than oil on canvas can allow,
This burnt and stained paper plate
Was something to be worshipped
At last,
And now.

p.s.
Anyone can burn a paper plate,
But please be cautious,
It can be dangerous.

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Statements

1.

(the bloody villanelle)

As an artist and art history lecturer, my understandings of "form" come from 20th century debates on abstraction as much as ideas of poetic form.

2.

A collection is a work of art as much as a poem.

3.

"The new" is a fascinating subject for me—the conceit of successive cultures (there's nothing new to be said—please!) both amuses and infuriates.

4.

Many thanks to the poets from *poetryartexchange*—their work has been an inspiration.

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1.83

(this is art)

In a bar
You've had a couple of pints of lager—
Hoegaarden, or something even stronger.

Neighbours are
Regaling you with arguments
As your liver sits across the table, tipsy.

You are too,
Feeling quite affectionate,
Wanting to play footsie with your partner,
Also have

Arguments with your neighbours,
Exposing their conceit,
And in so doing,
Making a complete

Idiot of yourself.
For a brief moment
You think.

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1.71

(poetry as art)

I once wanted to exhibit
A poem in a pub
But the landlord wouldn't let me,

A two line poem,
Where the first line
Was on one wall
And the second
On the opposite wall,

So when the pub was packed
Everyone
Was in the middle of the poem,
In the middle of poetry,
Whether they liked it
Or not.

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Aleksandar Stoicovici

Aleksandar Stoicovici was born in 1988 in Timisoara, Romania, of Serbian, German and Ukrainian descent. His first collection of poems, *vineri* (friday) was published in 2011, followed by *aleksandar doarme* (aleksandar is sleeping) in 2012. Selections of his poems were translated into English, German, French, Spanish and Serbian. He has edited several anthologies of poetry.

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in the image and likeness

my religion makes no sense
and does not help me
therefore I pursue it
(Anne Carson)

god is a ball of wool
which I've pulled for years in a row
until it unravelled itself

my god that is now a part of statistics
will all the shipwrecks
that history has recorded

at peace like a child
that smooths his wrinkles in the mirror
seeing that he has started to grow old

god like a voodoo doll
that hangs by the drapery with its pin head
taken through the soft polystyrene belly

I'm talking about powerlessness
and insecurity falls inside me
like a stain of oil on a clear water

because he has failed to make me a better man
now he will fill my mouth with earth
but before that he will let it bite once again

and my fear will be the fear
of peacocks that cross the field
with their eyes wide open on their tails

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and will grow again
like a potato forgotten in the storeroom
on the bottom of a cardboard box

god is the glove turned inside out
in which I shove my hand
to give the order to retreat

god in my image and my likeness
sad incapable of loving
fragile like a pepper grain prised from the teeth

ready to turn his back on me
only to enter the dubious parables
that no one has the patience to listen to

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amanda fucking palmer

I opened the trailer's door and I saw you in front of the mirror
standing against the wall with your foot a little raised
amanda fucking palmer *coin operated girl*

I watched you try to bandage your knee
you had the look of an exasperated patient
that refuses other resuscitations
I saw this scene before but now I was ready
with vials of ampicillin
between which I've put
some bottles of something

it was sprinkling and I didn't know if I should bring into discussion
the problem of resistance to antibiotics.
electric candles and phosphorescent jesuses were lighting your breasts
the drops of rain were passing through the window as if it were a siege
I was thinking that if you really cared
you would have stood in their way you would put your body like an ice bank made of gauze
over every wound

then came other cheesy scenes
those moments that press you press you
they sit with their entire weight on you
and then leave you immediately

Translated by: Florin Buzdugan

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The amoeba

When I was in the 5th or 6th grade I loved biology. But to be totally honest, this was mostly because I loved to draw. With a complete set of colored pencils, markers and brushes, and using the best quality paper available, I used to make extremely detailed drawings. If I remember well, that was my only talent back then and I was quite proud of it. Actually, I was so proud that I framed the drawings and hung them on the walls of my room. However, the space was obviously limited so I always had to replace the old ones with the new.

Now you may ask yourself what has biology to do with poetry. And furthermore, what's the connection between some random drawings of, let's say, sections of leaves, human organs or microorganisms, and a poetry art exchange project? Well, there is one and it has to do with a special drawing, the one that would always remain on the wall. I have to say that it wasn't the most fabulous drawing—no interesting details, no catching colors. But what I really loved was the meaning of it.

An *amoeba* is a very interesting type of organism, mostly because of the ability to alter its shape by extending and retracting *pseudopods*. Every time I think about poetry, I picture an amoeba in my head. Because, just like an amoeba, poetry is a living organism—it has a steady nucleus, but it's constantly changing its shape. And the poets... well, they would have to be the pseudopods dragging it in one direction or the other. Harold Bloom once said that "poetry does not teach us how to talk to other people, it teaches us how to talk to ourselves". And that's the most fascinating thing about poetry; on the one side, the act of writing is an extremely intimate one, but on the other side there is this common space where all the words come into contact, making it a living organism.

This is the main reason why I loved the idea from the very beginning. The project is not merely about *exchange*, it's more than that—it has to do with this process of putting words together, words that thus become vivid and gain the strange capacity to interfere and create a truly living organism, an amoeba that moves constantly and leaves traces of bliss and desperation, of joy and desolation, making the ecstasy and sometimes the

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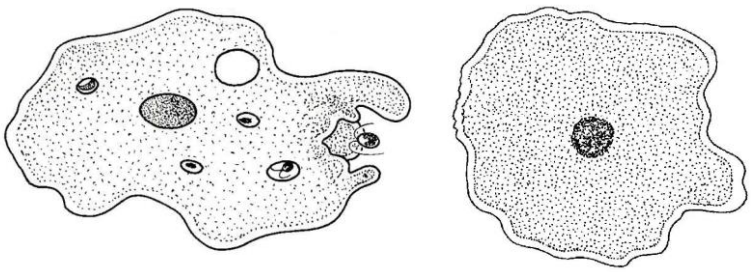
vulnerabilities phosphorescent, glowing in the dark, and ultimately functioning like a huge piece of gauze floating continuously to find the next wounds.



photos:biology-resources.com

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A prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come
when you'll stop following me
on the miserable alleys
down to the docks,
just to see if I really exist.

Isn't this constant struggle
enough of a proof for you?

Just give me the daily bread
I will keep it in my mouth for a second
and you can have it back.
Do you want to sit at my table?
We can eat and drink together,
and watch the cargo ships
as they leave the harbor
loaded with bottles of fresh water
and poisoned wine.

Don't bother forgiving my sins
because I'm a weak man
and I will fail again. My life
is the perfect sign of your helplessness.
Does it torture you seeing me
not being able to find my place
in this world?

And now you've decided to follow me
down here, as I'm about to start my shift.

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This is where the judgment begins,
this is the moment
when you'll gently put your hand
behind my neck
and tell me full of compassion
that I'm not trying hard enough.

But I want to see these bruises
on the hands of your angels,
I want to see the saints
walking around my neighborhood at night
with the bums and the whores
and those crackheads waiting
for you to turn your back.

I want to see them all
working here with me, side by side,
with no time to pray and repent
and think about the afterlife.

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The mill of revenge

Everybody around me is happy
and all I have is my poetry.

This mill of revenge in which
I'm constantly tempted to blow,

a black cat walking the busy streets
forcing people to take a step back.

That's what my poetry is—
a piñata filled with bitter candies,

a blindfolded kid with a bat in his hands,
thinking he has all the power.

Everybody around me is happy
and all I have is my poetry.

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Stephen Watts

Stephen Watts is a poet, editor & translator. His own most recent books include '*Gramsci & Caruso*' (2004), '*Mountain Language/Lingua di montagna*' (2008), '*Journey Across Breath/ Tragitto nel respiro*' (2011) & '*Ancient Sunlight*' (2014). Recent co-translations include a book of modern Kurdish poetry & volumes by Ziba Karbassi, Meta Kušar, Adnan al-Sayegh & A.N. Stencl (from Farsi, Slovenian, Arabic & Yiddish) & a book of Amarjit Chandan's poetry. He has read internationally, in Syria (2010), in Romania (May & September 2013 & September 2015) & in Monza, Milan & Ravenna (2014) & has worked in schools & hospitals as a writer on issues of well-being & creativity. He has also curated many bilingual readings at exhibitions (including Nolde, Miro, Arshile Gorky, Guttuso & Francisco Toledo). His own work has been translated into Italian, Czech, Slovene, Arabic, Bengali, Persian & Romanian. Ongoing work includes collaborations with Claudiu Komartin (Romanian poets) & the Syrian poet Golan Haji (Arabic). A prose work '*Republic Of Dogs/Republic Of Birds*' was published by Test Centre in London in February 2016 & forthcoming books include '*The Language Of It*' from Shearsman also due in 2016. He has also worked on a sequence of 'Drawn Poems' both in the Italian Alps where his Italian grandfather was born & lived as shepherd before migrating to London & in Whitechapel where he himself has lived for the past forty years.

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But Now I Live On A Sorrowful Planet

('But now I live on a sorrowful planet'
Frida Kahlo)

I should have worked as a porter in a remote hotel
or at the night-desk of a dour metropolitan hospital
I should have driven lorries before dawn down the
arteries of a weeping city
I should have handled tube trains into stations like
squealing pigs
I should have worked in a laundry or navvied it as
the foreman of a brickies' troupe,
I should have been a laughter-clown or trapezed my
life up your wide sistering streets.
Ah, but for now I just live on a sorrowful planet !
I should have got up before dawn and gone to the
mosque, to the women's entrance,
being a woman,
I should have portered in hospitals or given singing
lessons in Oncology,
I should have run backwards up moorland meadows
and gone raving over the blackberry
hill,
I should have closed my eyes in the face of oncoming
tides, in the face of the patinas of
'no',
I should have tautened my nerves on the rage of
exhausted ligaments,
I should have belly-danced under g-nomes or taken
the cholesterol count of stem cells.
I should have looked at myself in the eyes of a monkey,

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in the eyes of a dog,
I should have tied yellow ribbons on walnut branches,
I should have let myself collapse in the apricot valleys
of the highest sierras—
Ah, but I did none of these things, I painted the sun
as source of all energies, the rampant goddess
as swirl of life, the dog of my dreams,
the snake of all breath …

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The Verb "To Be"

(i.m. Arshile Gorky)

Sun, you dervish in the dancing tree
that glints and points and slowly spins
its fulcrum centred on the will to see.
You are lucid like the panels of light
and flow inside this archaic hall that
language is : you break and scatter and
in the rift, you create yourself anew.
You are the sudden sea-song of starlings
that bursts a tree at the shoreline edge.
You are blue spruce on the rim of frost.
You are a field of gauntly pecking swans
and the first November snow that tricks
the hill— cud of flower and cow's bell.
You are green, green on the inward lips
of hot night and you are the colour opal
in the human eye of the word. You are
the lucid void between blue mountains
and the eye that sees. You are the falcon
that plunges down coiling gusts of need.
You are my language, you are my speech
and you are a million years old and you
are silent, sun you circling spun dancer
in the still centre of the body's tree : sun
you definition in the flesh of the child,
of the verb to be.

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Statement

For/Pentru Gellu Naum

(& apologies for haste & exhaustion)

Translation is a vital art (// pumping lifeblood through the heart)

By taking part in this work we are all translators (when we write poetry we become translators, when we translate a poem we become poets)

I want to honour Margento for his communal poetries & thank him for his spirit in this project.

I want to empathise (empty word) with Andra when she says that in Romania there is not a real scene for experimental poetics. But that also that is everywhere true and all of us always have been in the same predicament from early days, from Gilgamesh on. That as poets we still are, aren't we?

And I want to say to her & us all also (not dogmatically, not excludingly) that poetry is a nomadism and that if it's not a nomadism almost it's not poetry & we're not poets.

Colours explode out of the shadows of our forgotten ancestors: red blood in the foetus of a foal.

Colours explode in the heart of community: red, yellow, blue, green, orange where we try to love.

Children until they are about 4 or 5 years old draw poems & write pictures: language & image, film & trajectory are not dissociated, are not torn apart from each other. A young child can still be fully an experimental poet and artist & not worry too much about audience.

If you look at one of Giacometti's late sculptures (those where he is considering one face, repeated attempts to portray his wife, his brother, his friend Lothar (who by the way was the son of Tudor Arghezi), or his late lover): if you look at these sculptures side-on you see that they are mountains. That they are the mountains he grew up with in Stampa & Borgonovo.

Please if you read this, know I am talking about experimental poetry, I am talking about community.

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That I am talking about people herded off mountains to bad work in cities, to wars, to all our false democracies, or theocracies, or the banal hatreds of what we love in being human.

Regeneration is the destruction of all harsh, real, vital, viscous, transient, hurt, warm language.

I love my city but am finding it increasingly difficult to live in it. My community is much ravaged.

I love my communities, but know that my city cannot breathe for much longer in all of its rage.

I met Steve Rushton on the platform of Whitechapel Overground: but now space is shattered.

If we are together in this project it is because language explodes in the veins of our art.

If we are together in this project it may be because we are concerned about community, that it cannot easily endure any more, and about the shatter of language in our hearts and veins.

But still "translation is a vital art // pumping lifeblood through the heart …"

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Fragment

*

breathe, my little one

*

as in all of us here

*

i will never leave him
on his own coping

i will never walk away

*

why does the bastard past
come back to haunt us?

*

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i brought you
into this world &
i won't let anyone
take you from it

*

live, my little one!
live! be strong!

*

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*** 15**

[Pirosmani/Pirosmanvili]

As a path crests a hill there is a shop.

He gives away bread and oil to the un-moneyed poor.
To the emissary of the princes he sells loaves and vessels
of oil. Round cheeses and olives and yoghurt. On the walls
of the taverns of the city in the mountains he puts paintings.
Of a giraffe. A most beautiful one, a very real one. Between
such walls of brown rock he learns what it is to be human &
he sleeps in a broom cupboard against the snow ruts of the
winter. He gives good bread away to the un-moneyed poor.
Aniseed loaves he has hung up to dry among the rafters. Up
in the mountains they're building a railway to bring him fame.
In the taverns he has two jugs full of red wine and he drinks.
His friends desert him. They think he has died because no-one
has seen him in months. In fact he is asleep in his abandoned
shop. Life is very slow around him— the birds sing slowly,
the brown rock hardly moves, the wooden town-houses
graze like placid cows in thick abundant grass. Peasants
stamped through the previous century's snow to his shop.
On the walls his paintings gleam and flicker …

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Claire Booker, Margento, Anna Maria Mickiewicz, Iulia Militaru, John Riley, Andra Rotaru, Steve Rushton, Aleksandar Stoicovici, Stephen Watts
***poetryartexchange* (*Romania/UK*)**. A collaborative project.
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Selected Correspondence II

Summer 2015—Spring 2016

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Dear Steve

I ought to declare a strong 'Romanian' interest & that might be an advantage for the project or you may want poets/artists to be wholly 'new' to Romanian culture. But in case it is relevant, I have worked a lot with a young (& very fine) Romanian poet, Claudiu Komartin, co-translating Romanian poets & each other's work. I've also been twice to Romania to read at festivals there & work quite closely with the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR) in London.

If this strengthens your instinct to include me, that's good! But if you need fresh voices ...

One other thing: I do value greatly my work with Claudiu & some of his friends.

Please take this as a positive reply to your fine project & I'll write again.

Stephen Watts

Steve

Attached are two poems & a shortish biography (do cut or use latter as needed).

Both poems concern artists (Arshile Gorky & Frida Kahlo). I thought of sending other ones as a lot of my poems are very visual & a number relate to films & paintings. In the end I'm sending these, but can easily send different ones if needed. Both poems are in one file.

The bio emphasises visual & Romanian connections ...

Stephen

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Dear Friends & Poets

A message from Stephen (Watts)

To let you know that I'm going to Sibiu tomorrow to read at the Sibiu Poetry Festival & with friends Radu Vancu & others. If any of you are going to be there, do please say hello & let's talk more. Also to Margento: I love Gellu Naum & I have your translation of 'Athanor & other pohems'. Translation is at the heart of what we all do … (*)
I am not very good at writing these 'correspondences' but I wish you all bests & hope to work more on the project with you.

Stephen

(* Margento, I have co-translated Naum's 'Voyage With Stelica' with my friend Claudiu Komartin. It was published in the journal Modern Poetry In Translation a couple of years back)

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Dear Stephen,

Sorry it's only now that I see your message. Thanks a million for your very kind words! Yes, I did see "The Voyage…" co-translated by you and Claudiu in *MPT*, I actually ran across it "serendipitously" like a year ago while leafing through the magazine's archive at the Ottawa Library (and only then I discovered it was also available online). Great job! I love your work and am so happy you are also very present on the Romanian literary scene as well.
All best

Margento

Hi, Steve!

At a first glance your poems looked like mine from a previous book. It was like reading myself and it was wow wow wow. I liked them a lot, I can't say I saw them, but more that I could touch them! The image is in a deconstruction, but in a physical way. I am glad you shared them with us (I fwd them to Iulia too)

Stephen Watts was in Romania I think. He may be totally interested to be part of your project, I hope.

I am sorry I answered so late, tomorrow I will be flying to Shanghai. I hope my gmail will work, I've heard they used to ban gmails.

Hope everything is great with you and your work,

Andra
Steve,

Two mock reviews attached, one with 'my' biog as an appendix. I've also completed the last of the series, but that's the 'nice' review and would prefer to hold that back to establish the persona.

Sorry for the lateness. IT issues...

John (Riley)

Hi Margento,

For me the idea of creating poetic dialogue/discussion is the thing. I don't know about you but I've been to too many poetry gigs where the work has no discursive quality - any discussions take place before or after, not in the poetry, which exists outside of non-aesthetic debate. Anyway for me the project was set up to counter this—though everyone else will have other ideas.

Steve

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Hi again, Steve!

Totally on the same page regarding the dialogue in poetry, actually my poetry involves much (if not only) collaborative writing and "jam sessions" (here is what David Baker wrote in his blurb on my latest book http://www.amazon.com/Nomadosofia-Nomadosophy-Margento/dp/6069319184) and that is what I currently try to do in my graph poem project.

Margento

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Dear All,

The project is now ready to move on to the next stage. The blog has been set up, with two poems from each participant (www.poetryartexchange.wordpress.com). The following now needs to happen:

1) Each poet reads all the other works on the blog then writes two more poems—these may be completely new, developments of existing drafts, or variations of existing poems, but they must be unpublished.
2) Each poet submits the two new works plus any statement to me by 1/1/16. I will upload them onto the blog.

In the meantime, I will organize an introduction to the project. I envisage this taking the form of a chronology of development and discussion. I would like to include emails. I will post drafts on the blogsite—feel free to contribute, or suggest changes or omissions, especially if you are not happy being quoted.

Steve

Dear Steve,

It looks great. Some of these poets I know well. Good!
I am sending three poems. So, you can now choose please.

Thank you!

Best wishes

Anna (Maria Mickiewicz)

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Dear All,

See the correspondence page at poetryartexchange.wordpress.com. Feel free to add to the debate, or request changes/omissions, by emailing me. The idea is to build a narrative and discussion of the project.

Re correspondence/poetry I think if we can arrive at a dual narrative, where ideas bounced between poems are complemented by an exchange of ideas via emails, that would be good - one could then engage with the various merits of the two formats for discussion, or not!

Steve

Hi,

I really enjoyed the site, Steve. Amazingly, I know John Riley from a completely different part of my life. We're both members of the Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies based in Brixton. I've been to a number of his excellent talks on Soviet cinema. Nice bloke too.

I've remembered two art-poems that I had totally forgotten about on my initial trawl of my files. One was inspired by Yayoi Kusama's work and the second one by Modigliani. I've cut and pasted them below, if you think they would be relevant to your site.

Claire (Booker)

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Hi Steve,

Sorry I couldn't make this month's Beyond Words, but I was guest poet at the Poet in the City drop-in at Waterstones. The two always clash, which is a shame.

I love the sound of the project. So much can happen when people bounce of each other!

I'll put together a biog over the next couple of days and email it over.

I'm very curious about Giacometti's post-war female figures. Makes even more sense of my poem if he does keep them rooted. But then, there's the issue of his work as votive offering, goddess-like. A different kind of power?

all best,

Claire

Hi Steve,

Yes, some of Picasso's machismo may well have rubbed off on him. "For me there are only two kinds of woman—goddess or doormat." le génie oblige!

Here's my biog as promised. I've been reading the correspondence section of the blog—very thought-provoking. I shall have to seriously raise my game.

Claire

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Dear Everyone,

Hope this email finds you well, and that you're all ok for submitting your final two poems by the first of January deadline.

Some news. We have a London exhibition lined up, if we want it, starting April 29th for a month. I have proposed a large text and image collage, creating an international art/poetry environment, and the gallery have accepted (Undercurrents Gallery at the Birds Nest, Deptford, close to Goldsmiths College). What this actually means is obviously open to our interpretation. The space is roughly a 300cm cube, with one wall a large window, one wall part of a passageway, and one wall containing an optional very large mounted glass cabinet which we could use. I am meeting the gallerist on the 13th December.

My first thought was that the simplest way of creating an environment would be if each of us submitted two pieces of text within a certain size range (say each roughly occupying a space between 40 and 100 cm square) plus two images to go with them (similar size, they could be artworks or found images). Text could be hand written on paper, or vinyl letters, or other. They could be phrases, poems, or sections from poems (from the project would be great). It would be good if the two texts related to each other (presented in the same way, related content), so a space could be created between them. The same goes for the images.

I am happy to hang the exhibition—any help appreciated. Any questions/suggestions let me know before the 13th December, so I can run them by Kevin at the gallery.

All the best,

Steve

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Dear Margento,

Re The Poetry Art Exchange Chronicles and Concerts. A Prologue.

While I agree with most of your fascinating statement, finding it invigorating, playful and great fun, the phrase "all poems are performances", well, I beg to differ (although I certainly agree with the idea of performance as translation). It can be, but not necessarily. There is a proscriptive quality to the phrase that always encourages me to argument. Let's take an obvious example—the page poem. One could argue that even that is a performance, in the same way that American art critic Harold Rosenberg engaged with Abstract Expressionism, which to him was action painting—art as "an arena in which to act". But is that form of acting really performance. Pollock thought not, for as soon as he was filmed "performing" he came off the wagon, and upset the dinner table.

You also say

The "traditional" ("page") poem is the body as (re)created by the vibrations of (virtually) sensory subjective/self-perception.

I would say perhaps. The statement sounds to me too much like standard post-modern proscription—to isolate the body and the self as ultimate origins is to adopt the worst excesses of modernism within a psychoanalytical agenda. Isn't it time to move on from that albeit useful (in parts) analysis, and revisit the object in itself (its form, or formlessness) and as part of a history and geography of objects other than the human body and psyche, encouraging the idea that we are not totally obsessed/absorbed in our own selves.

I think , with reference to the Rosenberg/Greenberg dichotomy, there can be, needs to be, opposing views of art, as a thing (in itself) and as part of an action. Opposition arguments to Rosenberg argue his theory links too closely producer and produced. Greenberg thought many Abstract Expressionists idiots—so his separation of producer and produced made sense (are we not all in part idiots, hence our aim of making an art less idiotic than ourselves).

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Apologies for the over reliance in the above of debates around 1950s American painting, but I find them useful, like this.

Steve

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Hi Claire,

Just been reading your statement—fascinating. Re your thoughts on circularity, I read an article recently on the early films of Godard. The most interesting thing for me was the issue of throwaway endings. He wasn't interested in finishing, which is narrative, but rather how to occupy a space and time without narrative. It seems to me this is what you're interested in too. Godard used play, as you are doing, playing with space to disrupt, extend etc. My worry with much of contemporary poetry is that because it is too tied to the self, it can't play. I was never a fan of psychoanalysis but the one thing that did grab me was the idea of potential space (in which to play). A child needed a comfortable space between itself and its parent in order to play and develop. Substitute poem for child and poet for parent and I think one has an interesting analogy. What do you think?

Steve

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Hi Steve,

That's really interesting. Play is something we tend to get drummed out of us early in life, replaced by the twin ogres of productivity and utility. I feel I'm still very much under their influence, trying to tie things up at the end of a poem, so using space helps me let the unexpected and unexplained happen.

It's such a human thing to want resolution and narrative. I'm not against them per se. In fact, I'm rather split on it still. I feel quite a lot of poetry written today (and very much so in the UK) is self-consciously and faddishly attached to non-attachment, ending with non-sequitors, deliberately obscure, as if obscurity is a measure of talent. In many ways, poets in the UK today seem to be writing for each other. Poets are their only main readership now. I'm struck by how few of my friends ever read or know poetry (other than the 'greats') Many people I've spoken with say they feel modern poetry makes them feel stupid/can't understand it/why does it have to be so hard? These are people who go to the Proms, visit art galleries, read novels, listen to Radio 4. Are we as poets letting them down? It's not that there isn't a love of word out there - everyone has their favourite song lyric.

So I guess what I'm saying is, there must be room for a whole range of poetry. Poems to turn to for emotional/spiritual support. Poems that entertain. Poems that intrigue and set free. Political poems that attempt to change thinking. Poems that linger, because they can never be tied down. What I'm enjoying about *poetryartexchange* is that it challenges. Somewhere in the act of being challenged is a slipway into awareness of what matters to you. And what matters is where the energy is.

Very interesting—your statement. I agree that eastern European poetry seems to have more pith and backbone. I studied Russian (rubbish at it now) and love the Russian poets (in translation, alas). LOL - villanelles are my absolute bête noire. Am prepared to forgive Dylan Thomas, but absolutely no-one else!

Claire

Hi Steve,

First off, let me say the moment I read your response I thought to myself—well of course, he's so right, and, what topped it all off, that didn't feel at odds at all with what I had said in my statement… I guess I'm like the rabbi in that Romanian (and very likely communal [Eastern] European) joke who replies to a member of his congregation that came to him to complain about a neighbor, "You are right." But then when the neighbor himself shows up and comes up with his side of the story, the wise rabbi says to him too, "You are right." And then, when an onlooker exclaims in revulsion or bewilderment, "But they can't be both right, Teacher, one of them has to be wrong," the rabbi replies yet again (please fill in here whatever you find fit, "serenely," or "imperturbably," or "wisely," or, why not, even "mischievously"), "Well but of course, you are right too…"

Well, you obviously know a lot more about art than I do, but it so happened that when I received your response I was just reading a book in which somebody was confirming[8] some of my intuitions regarding the inherent performativity of poetry (which has been an obsession of mine for years now, and [at least a few] Romanian readers [of my essays] have been quite "rabbinically" patient with and observant of that [as active in my poetry writing and performance mainly…]), although the discussion in the article I was reading was nevertheless, once again, about art… Went back to the library and borrowed the book again the other day when I decided to write this note. Felicitas (what a predestined name) Thun-Hohenstein is one of the editors and also the author of that particular article in which, drawing on the performance-exhibition-installments of the '60s and in the wake of the art-related breakthroughs (the performative turn) of both the '50s and the '60s (feminist art and the post-avant-garde, hence pretty much the same period you're referencing, and Pollock is of course mentioned too, even if alongside Artaud…), she advances the concept of a spectrum on which a work of art can be positioned, somewhere between solely performance and a static or "frozen" state… I got no idea as to, to what extent you'd agree with that in terms of art,[9] but to me sounds pretty consistent with what

[8] I must warn you though that every now and then I have a pretty unpredictable way of finding confirmation for my intuitions or expectations in (well maybe not the most, but) relatively unexpected places…
[9] Yet now, as I'm proofreading the MS, I just came across this statement of yours in a message sent quite early on: "Re word/image I guess the weakness with this dialectic/dichotomy whatever is *the implicit static*

I tried to say in my statement about the poem in general. The page poem is the (apparently) frozen state, I'd argue, of the multi-leveled performativity the very text of the poem actually involves. And I'm not talking only about the oral/aural "original" media of poetry (the ones of the ancient/traditional lyric[s], as in accompanied by the lyre, say Sappho's "radiant lyre") (although I'll briefly return to that later), but also about the ways in which the poem performs and "translates" language(s), culture(s), space(s) and (historically heterogeneous) topo-graphies/logies. There's actually a lot to say about this latter aspect, but since time is not only topologically heterogeneous in its own turn, but also trivially short (until this upcoming Wednesday, that is), will leave this for future exchanges.

In recent literary theory and criticism, the question is not so much anymore "what does the poem mean?" but "how do we release or expose the poem's possibilities of meaning?" and I read in that (also) the impact of the digital on our ways of writing and reading poetry (as well as thinking and living in general), especially in terms of informing poetry with the performativity, interactivity, and processuality typical of digital art and digital media per se. In the latter, an "image" is no longer decoded by the viewer but "endlessly" recoded by an ever increasing user/hacker/co-author collective; and although the page poem does (and I believe should) not turn into a meme, the reformulation of the questions addressing it (as already hinted above) represent a potential shift towards a more performative, processual and interactive reading of it. I'm of course not saying anything shockingly new here, and Philip Auslander's concept of "understanding is/as performativity" goes quite along the same lines… (I picked this last one from the same "Felicitas book," as a [fake] rabbi or rather eastern-orthodox felicity or beatitude with no holy see of my own [the right position for a lay Hesychast] I am a man of [one and] the [same] book, and therefore, the performativity of this writing more often than not resides in stealing ideas and formulations from that book…; maybe I should at least give its title, *Performing the Sentence. Research and Teaching in Performative Fine Arts* [Carola Dertnig, Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein {Eds.}, Sternberg Press, 2014]) It is my conviction that all these things were always there in the poem, it's just that the digital has shed a new or brighter light on them and brought them to the foreground (and as proof of that, the

quality, whereas *art/poetry is more open to performative* readings" (emphases mine). So I guess on a certain level we have always been on the same page, and this has actually gone full circle.

quotes at the beginning of this paragraph, for instance, were cribbed from an article on page poetry [by Zoë Skoulding], with no reference to digital poetry or media, or (if memory serves) performativity whatsoever [although the author does briefly speculate at a certain point on the similarity between the various kinds of networks in the typical contemporary cosmopolitan city and the electronic networks we are all connected to/part of, the world wide web included…).

Paradoxical as it may sound, it was actually in the page poem that the digital first became manifest, even before the advent of the digital per se. But here I'd like to enlarge Auslander's adage by saying that poetry reading/understanding is (a form) of poetry writing, while poetry writing is (part) of poetry reading. And since, according to him, understanding (we may add, understanding poetry, reading poetry) is performance, writing poetry and the poem as such are performances. Yet such a syllogism may in its turn be read/understood (and, therefore… performed) as a sophistry, and that is why I won't insist, at least not until I come up with further digressive backup. Suffice it for now to just underscore that writing as reading (and cribbing) is an essential factor in contemporary poetics and it is part of the genre's amazing resources in anticipating and/or including the major shifts brought about by the (digital or other various historical) media revolution(s). Just one example, Marjorie Perloff describes, in *Unoriginal Genius* (U of Chicago Press, 2010), Pound's *Cantos* ("THE" classic case, obviously, of writing as reading, quotation, and appropriation) as a long sequence of proto-hyperlinks…

But to go back from poetry liars to lyre players, Reuven Tsur's work on rhythm in poetry is I think essential in the matter. I'm not a big fan of the cognitive science related considerations in his books, but the measurements he's made for decades on poetry reciting recordings and the conclusions he's reached based on them are really pertinent. In short, the rhythm of poetry is neither the one in the troubadour's recitals (overemphasizing the meter) nor in those of the actor (observing syntax and syntactic units often at the expense of meter and/or line-endings). Rhythm, he says, is somewhere in between, a unique combination (and mutual compromise or deformation) of ("common") speech stresses and pitches on the one hand, and the metrical constraints embedded in the poem on the other. That is why, he says, performed (and I'd add

performance) poetry has a totally different kind of rhythm from the one of music—for instance, its metrical units (in many if not most cases) do not have the same durations, they are not equal intervals although they count as equal; and that's not a setback, it's an essential part of poetry's specific rhythm. I read that as a description of the poem's inherent performativity (which is actually not at all a far stretch from Tsur's main idea [the way I read it], namely that the rhythm of the poem is in none of its prescribed components, but in their interactive and holistic realization, that is, in performance). Yeah, you may argue, but how about free verse? (Well actually there are of course more issues you can argue about here, or holes to pick, this is more like what *I*'d prefer for you to argue, or what I'd argue myself….) Good question, and I'm willing to look into how much water (or rather wine) the "theory" above holds when it comes to free verse—again, maybe in our future exchanges and/or organic compote tasting sessions.

But what I'll have to give you (watch out, the rabbi is back!) is the distinction between text and performance, two things that can't be literally the same since, it has been said, they deploy "different temporal logics and different bodies," and while (a significant part of) postmodernist theory has indeed defined body as also (generated/shaped by) text, the place, role, and act(ion)(s) of the body[10] in (performance) art and in defining/circumscribing/generating space has meanwhile gone way beyond that paradigm. The text can therefore be either the "score" of the performance or a para-text that (among other possible functions) informs, structures, conditions or (as I've already suggested in my statement), "chronicles" the performance. My favorite example of such text quite overlooked in performance studies, though, I'm afraid, is the computer program, which has been analyzed as text (in critical code studies), even as poetry and literature, or at least as cultural-political artefact that can be the object of cultural studies oriented analyses. If say, the code is used to generate digital poetry, then it works as a "score," but also as something else. Since there is an inherent processuality to it (which for instance John Cayley has said is the source of a particular kind of temporality, of the palpable and uniquely characteristic presence and consequential involvement of time in digital poetry) and it operates as functional code, with its own specific algorithmic steps

[10] Here I kind of "accidentally" touch on the second comment/question in your response to my statement. But the issue you're raising there is actually so complex and so (corporeally, if not downright carnally) intimate to my poetics that it will demand another round… of negotiations and plagiarisms.

and operational sequences and stages, it is (in) itself a performance, a performance both behind (under the hood of) and simultaneous with the "actual"/"visible"/"directly interactive" performance (the one "on the screen" [which can actually employ various other media and affordances]). And on the other hand, as code that (en)codes and is informed by certain policies and various political-financial-military-industrial agen(t)da(ta), it is a deeply, culturally inflected performance.

So even if text and performance are two (obviously) different things, they definitely (help) shape each other and even overlap a lot. But then the question is, is the poem (just) text? Well, Dante spoke of two different operations in poetry, *texere* (weaving) and *eco* (echo[ing], but I love indulging a lot in also mistaking this for another frequent prefix, the *eco* [Gk. "house, household"] in "ecology" or "economy," with its profound communal and environmental connotations that are so conducive to developing such poetics of context and cotext as is the one of the graph poem, among many other possible examples). The former is obviously the text-related component, with its texture of syntax, rhetoric, and meter, while the latter is quite a different ball game, it's the echo of euphony and other subtle correspondences (sonic but, I would venture, not only, tropic, image-related or "logopoeic" as well, things pertaining to echoic com-position and transmutation in general). There is of course an established poetics of the echo (Gaston Bachelard) which has been recently extended to digital space (Stephen Kennedy in *Chaos Media,* Bloomsbury, 2015) by the concept of echostate (echoing/ed statements, more versatile and polyvalent [if not consistently polymediated] than texts) whose trans-(uni/multi)verse-ality (their echoic [dot]com-position if you will, in which noise also plays a key role) involves performativity and, I would add (why am I always adding and never subtracting?) network (particularly graph) generation and expansion.

But as I look back now I realize this note has grown intolerably long and prolix, it's a mishmash, a hodgepodge of references and mostly unattributed quotes, while it was originally meant to be no more than a brief intro to a question I realized I needed to ask you before even starting to sketch any possible response to the first comment in your own response. So here it is (at the 12th hour). I find it very interesting the way you induce two variables into what was initially a(n) (apparently) somewhat simpler equation—

acting also alongside performance. Please tell me more about how you differentiate between the two, between acting and performance. Gosh, that was easy…

Oh, and a brief note on Claire's comment on Steve's statement (hi Claire, great pieces and statement, by the way!). You're so right, Claire (says the rabbi), but could we be just a tad more lenient and perhaps open the door to no more than two other villa(i)n-elles (actually an "elle" and an "il")—Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" and (at the other end of the spectrum, but like where opposites meet), Hayden Carruth's "Saturday at the Border." Just a thought. Thanks ☺, talk later. Thanks so much everybody, wonderful contributions—and a special thank you to Stephen for his relentless Romanian-nomadic empathy and too generous words.

Cheers,
MARGENTO

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Dear Margento,

The difference between acting and performance

1.

My use of the term acting comes from Harold Rosenberg's* somewhat existential idea of "an arena in which to act", describing the process used by abstract expressionist painters in making their work. This process does not need an audience—in fact, an audience could be detrimental, could inhibit action. Therefore I would, for this argument, like to assume performance needs a crowd, whereas acting does not.

2.

I watched a science program on quantum biology recently. The presenter, a scientist, and a populariser of science, constantly used analogy—you'd have castles and big red balloons to illustrate the Bohr Einstein debate—I think analogy is used a lot in science, problematically—too many irrelevant variables.

3.

To digress—play with readers—marvel at my ability to hold ideas above my head THE TENSION THE TENSION*(the mannerism)*—can I finish, then slip back seamlessly into argument—*when I used to be a drummer*, *I'd wander off beat, sometimes deliberately, for the fun of it.*

4.

This last sentence, was it action or performance? There was no audience, just myself and the keyboard, but in the writing, was I imagining one, playing to the crowd—leaning toward performance. And am I implying a binary opposition between acting and performance, where events can be placed in-between these extremes, and those moving toward performance, even if they don't have an audience, act as if they do, bringing me

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back to the science programme, where particles behaved differently when observed, and applying that to poetry (and art—as Jackson Pollock went off the rails as soon as he was filmed painting), and how whenever anyone asked me "what's it about?"—a poem, or a collection—I'd say something, and the next day think, no, it's more about this instead, and it's like a particle, or a poem, at any given moment, can really only show one side clearly, so it's not that *that's* what they are, it's that *that's* what they are at that moment, in that context, and that rebounds back on this whole acting performance thing, so that now action is what goes on, and performance is about context, a moment extrapolated from flux, and that brings me onto another issue—text—a word so overused—I've always preferred the dualism form/context myself, rather than text/context—a thing is a thing before it's a text (only there when studied), which I still believe, but a propos particles behaving differently when observed, is it really true? Or is text, like performance, actually context, a moment, but given that, shouldn't it be text rather than form, given it's impossible to see a whole form at any given moment, and what you see, even when you think you're looking at form, is text, which is performance, bringing me back to the beginning and acting, which seems to have disappeared, along with form, which wasn't supposed to happen, but then, as Allan Kaprow once said (in 1959—the year I was born), "something will always happen".

Steve

*Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters", 1952 (a definition of performance could be seen as aestheticized existentialism, but then aestheticization would need to be presented as "desire for audience").

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Hi Steve,

Margento's level of debate is explosively impressive. It's a glorious fugue to your fretwork of challenging ideas. To continue the metaphor, let me stand up and bravely strike my little triangle.

I like the idea of 'score' - the written outline of a potential performance. Before writing existed, the 'score' would have been an individual's memory passed on through oral tradition. Performance (and the community's impressions) would have been the poem. We wouldn't and couldn't be having this debate. Then along comes the written word and text becomes aide memoire, a scaffolding for the poetic experience, a reproductive mechanism that can exist outside of flesh and blood. This means we start thinking of the poem as a product, a thing, and by definition, a thing should be defined, is the property of someone.

But I believe a poem can be many things. A work of visual art on the page; a set of images/concepts in the brain of the poet; a connected (but not identical) set of images/concepts in the brain of the reader; sounds/music to each of the listeners. The beauty of the universe, as Goethe (I think) said is that 'everything is metaphor'. Given that we can't even be sure about something as simple as how we each perceive the colour red, can we make assumptions about how we experience a poem, or even what makes a poem a poem? Words are clumsy approximations, however sophisticated - symbols attempting to signpost metaphors of experience. There are perhaps as many 'Wastelands' as there are people who have read or heard Eliot's work read.

This aural/oral inheritance is never far beneath the surface. I always speak the words aloud when I write to help me refine rhyme, rhythm, the sense and meaning - perhaps more than anything, in order to surprise myself, almost as if the poem has come from elsewhere and I'm hearing it fresh. At this stage, it is both embryonic page poem, and a performance in my own head awaiting a stenographer.

Thank you Margento for the enlightening paraphrase of Reuven Tsur - that the rhythm of the poem is none of its prescribed components, but in their interactive and holistic

realisation, that is, in performance. Complex yes, but just as a trained musician hears a symphony in the score, so a poet or able reader can relish the subtle interplay of currents that flow through text. Incidentally, to me, free verse doesn't mean a free-for-all. It needs its own architecture of line ends, internal rhyme, the rhythm of phrase etc. Form and free verse should therefore stand on equal footing in the face of these arguments.

So if the question is not so much anymore 'what does the poem mean?' but 'how do we release or expose the poem's possibilities of meaning?' then I sign up wholeheartedly to the proposition that the poet is not sole guardian of their poem's meaning. An amusing (?) anecdote can serve as illustration to this. When I was young and foolish, I took a trip to the USSR, managed to skip our 'guides' and met up with some Russian students. One vodka led to another and I attempted to translate John Donne's 'No Man is an Island' into Russian (with only Russian 'O' level under my belt. I did mention I was foolish?). The students all seemed particularly struck by the final lines of the poem, nodding fervently. It was only when I got back to my dictionary in the hotel that I realised I had rendered some of the greatest lines in English poetry as: "Send not to know for whom the doorbell rings. It rings for thee." A whole new (but very pertinent) take on the poem in 1985 Moscow!

Enough tinkling from the triangle. I look forward to other contributions from the group - a set of people who both exist and don't exist (depending on whether we're in a box or not). Oh, and Margento, I totally agree that Elizabeth Bishop's 'An Art' is a fabulous villa(i)n-elle, omitted simply through oversight. Hayden Caruth's 'Saturday at the Border' is a find. I'm still not sure it might not have been a better poem in another form - all those truncated lines in order to fit the demanding rhyme scheme. But don't get me on to subject of end-rhyme!

Claire

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Performance is repellent, yet necessary.

We perform all the time, even if the role we are performing is ourself.

Reading is performance, even if the performance is only in our own heads to ourselves as our own audience. And repeated reading is necessary: unless we are blessed by a miraculous immediate and complete insight, repetition is how we enter deeper into the text. And slowly the repetition becomes the performance and the performance becomes the repetition. And so we are shocked by another's reading, even another's reading of a third's shared text ("That isn't Heathcliffe!") Or delighted by another's shared view/(performance): (["That is Heathcliffe!"]/["THAT is Heathcliffe!"]/["That IS Heathcliffe!"]/["That is HEATHCLIFFE!"])

And when we write, we perform, creating a voice; and when we read what we have written we read in that voice; and when we read repeatedly we confirm that voice, circling in on it and on the persona it embodies, ossifying the reading, ossifying the persona.

And so, we circle, deeper, closer, tighter, with greater understanding and greater insight. But our understanding is like water draining from a bath, sucked into a tightening whirlpool and drawn down the waste-pipe into a single, constrained, constricted, controlled view.

So we must hope that, occasionally, we are hit by the (re-)articulated reading/[lorry] that will break our bones and enable them to reform anew in new patterns.

John

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Photo Gallery

(images from the first poetryartexchange exhibition)

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poetryartexchange(Romania/UK)exhibition1

Aleksandar **Stoicovici**
Andra **Rotaru**
Anna Maria **Mickiewicz**
Claire **Booker**
Iulia **Militaru**
John **Riley**
Margento
Stephen **Watts**
Steve **Rushton**

OPENING SHOW
Friday 29th APRIL 2016
7pm to 11pm
FREE ENTRY
Free food buffet
& Live bands

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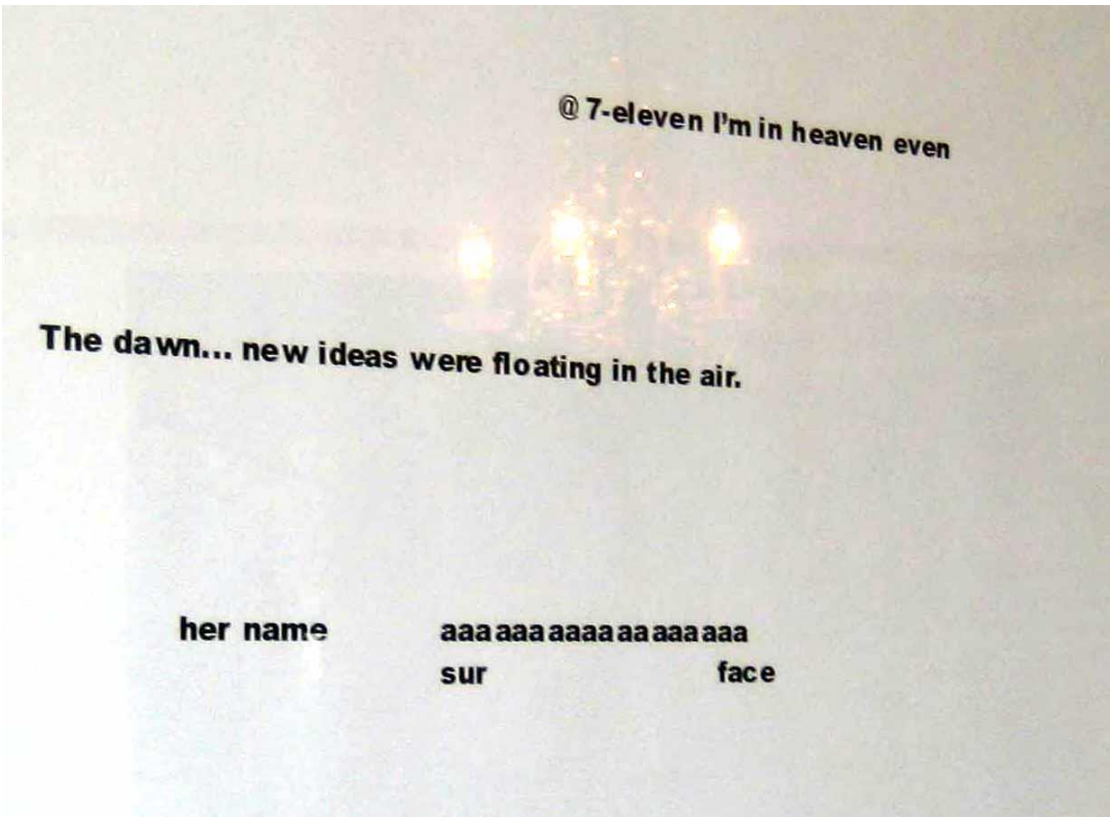

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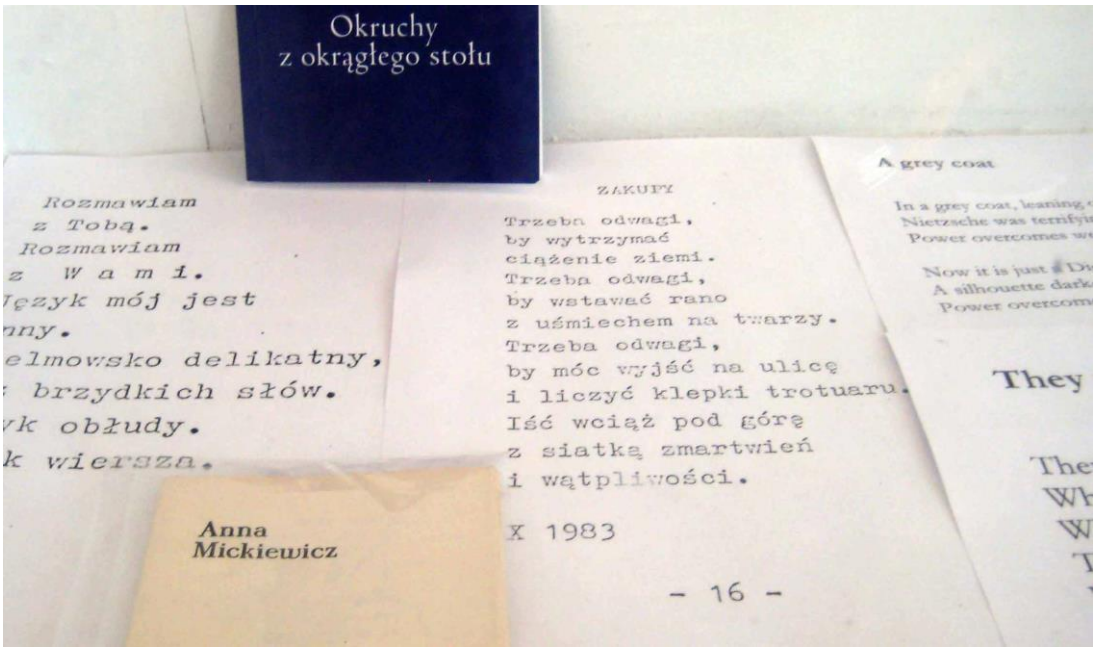

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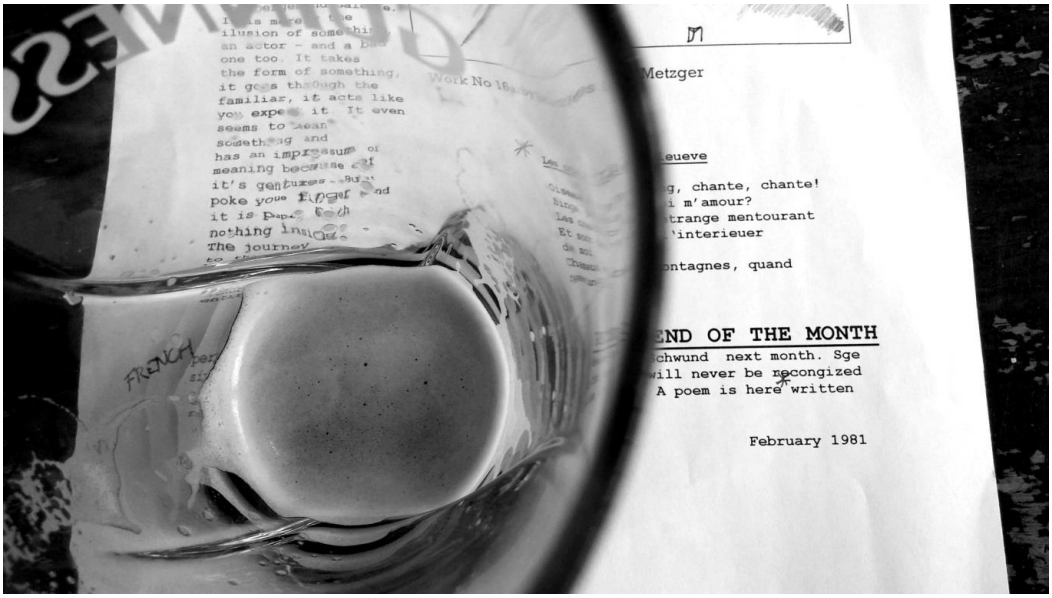

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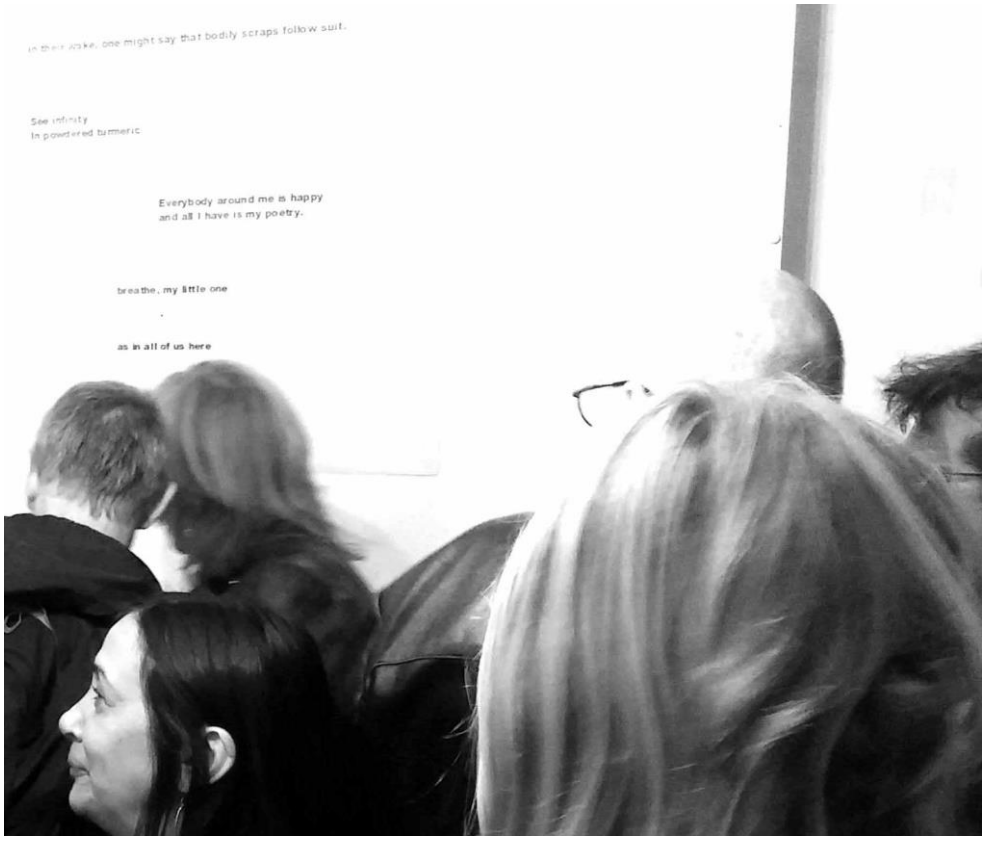

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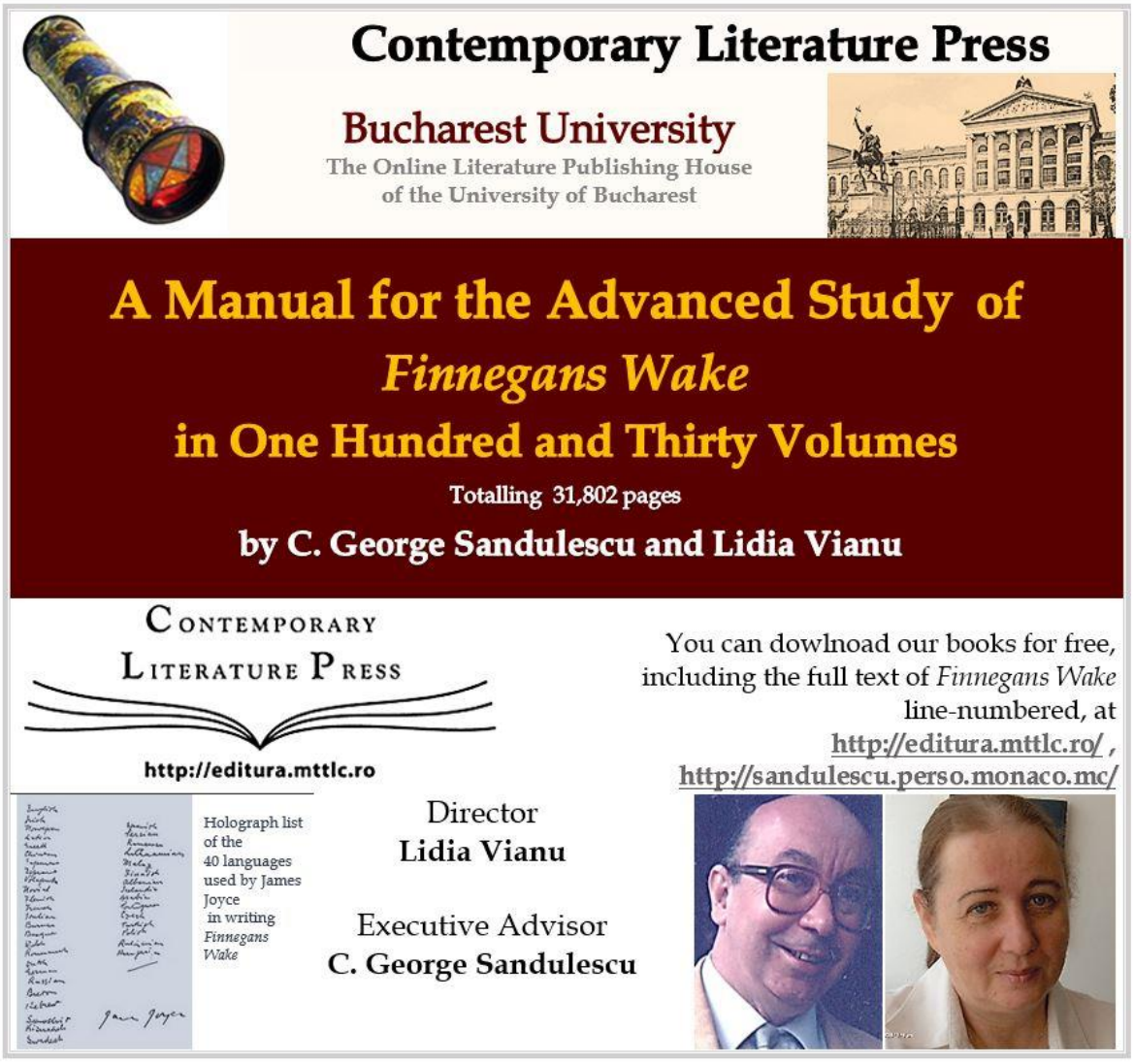

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