

PHIL JOHN KNEIS

POETRY READING AT ATELIER & GALERIE KÜMMELE & KNEIS

Berlin, May 5, 2007

www.philjohn.com

I: Starters	2
"IN ALABAMA" (#266, 2004)	2
"BERLIOZ IN THE LOO" (#259, 2004)	2
"CULTURAL IMPERIALISM" (#281, 2004)	2
"CIVILIZATION" (#381, 2007)	3
"OBSCENITY" (#390, 2007)	3
"ANIMALIC YOGA ALPHABET (SHORT VERSION)" (#343b, 2006)	3
II: Parts from "The Tetralogy"	4
from "THE WOODS" (THE TETRALOGY PART I / #275, 2004/05)	4
Interlude 4: "OUT OF THE WOODS"	4
Nr. 46: "SHOWING"	5
from "THE DESERT" (THE TETRALOGY PART II / #315, 2005/06)	8
Interlude 2: "VIRGIN LAND"	8
Nr. 47: "ALONE"	9
from "THE SEA" (THE TETRALOGY PART III / #329, 2005/06)	10
Nr. 23: "SKYLLA FLIRTING WITH CHARYBDIS"	10
Nr. 34: "LOOKING FOR BIRD SHIT"	11
Nr. 44: "CHRIST-BEARING DOVE"	12
Nr. 45: "ATL-TLACHINOLLI"	13
Nr. 46: "WHITE FIELDS OF DEATH"	14
from "THE STARS" (THE TETRALOGY PART IV / #364, 2006/07)	14
Nr. 1: "SINGULARITY"	14
Nr. 11: "MERCVRIVS"	15
III: Depressing Stuff	15
"A SMILE SO FORCED" (#278, 2004)	15
"DEPRESSIONS" (#286, 2004)	16
"TWO WOMEN ON THE TRAIN" (#355, 2006)	16
"THAT WOMAN ON THE TRAIN" (#213, 2003)	16
"THERE'S A CORPSE" (#223, 2003)	16
IV: Final Words	17
"NON-FICTION" (#261, 2004)	17
"FLEETING MOMENT" (#388, 2007)	17
"MY BEARDED SELF" (#290, 2004)	17
"LOVE" (#324, 2005)	17
"TO BE OR NOT TO BE" (#269, 2004)	18
"VOCATION" (#299, 2004)	18
"LYRICAL I" (#276, 2004)	18

I: Starters

“IN ALABAMA” (#266, 2004)

you need to listen to Eminem
in Alabama
you need to read Philip Roth
amongst other things
(and ignore the Gideons at your bedside)
I heard a woman talking
about the power of patriotism
instead
I had forgotten my CDs
and only later on
on the road
did I find NPR
what a relief
there's more to it
it's beautiful though
in Alabama
but my sweet home
it quite ain't
but surely, stars fell on it
I'm confused
in Alabama

“BERLIOZ IN THE LOO” (#259, 2004)

I'm sitting here
sort of necessarily
the tunes I hear, familiar
un bal
that's what it is
how fantastique
I'm listening
to the idée fixe
while sitting on a toilet public
somewhere
in Croatia

“CULTURAL IMPERIALISM” (#281, 2004)

damn those damn imperialists
it's all their fault
that I'm eating Hamburgers in Berlin
that I'm drinking coffee from Seattle
damn these Star*uckers in the first place
creating coffee of their own
I would, otherwise, be drinking German coffee
or did the Italians invent it
like they invented the tomato?
why must I eat pizza
or sushi
or Döner
yea,

these Turks have even more power over Berlin than the Italians
the Americans
the Greeks
these Thai-people
those with the raw fishes
these with the strange dishes
those with the bowel enticement
all over again
I could be happily eating my Sauerkraut and rye bread!
recently I read
a sign
Germans! buy German bananas!
and gladly, it loses nothing in translation
oh, damn me,
writing in a foreign language
damn these outsiders
forcing another perspective on us!
who we don't understand
the irony of the own:
and all its absurdity
tell me, please
whatever happened to the Weltbürgertum?

“CIVILIZATION” (#381, 2007)

I saw a crow
by the road
eating some leftovers
from MacDonald's

“OBSCENITY” (#390, 2007)

what's so bad
about four tiny letters?
what possible harm
could they possibly do?
'midst all the turd and crap and shit
it's such a game around the big one
in far a scape, it's all just felled
'midst battling stars, it is all fragged - but, really,
what's the big deal?
even "Bush" is a four-letter word
(if spelled with a W)
fuck
jeez, go figure

“ANIMALIC YOGA ALPHABET (SHORT VERSION)” (#343b, 2006)

advancing aardvark
burping bear
categorical cat
occasional drosophila
cleanly e. coli
frigid frog
grinning gator
humping human
itchy ichthyosaur

invincible jackalope
cavorting kangaroo
lousy louse
meagre manatee
naughty nautilus
comely opossum
picky pigeon
serpent-less quetzal
floating rhinoceros
stilting stegosaur
tip-toeing tapir
skeptical unicorn
dieting vampire
atheist wasp
wormy xenoturbella
yapping yak
optimistic zygote

II: Parts from “The Tetralogy”

from “THE WOODS” (THE TETRALOGY PART I /#275, 2004/05)

Interlude 4: “OUT OF THE WOODS”

out of the woods we kept calling
and out of the woods we keep crawling
out of the woods we keep falling
not into place
but something different quite
insanity
inanity
in vanity
in-vain-ity
in vain it, I
fear it is
quite more than German angst it is
a staring into the abyss
of human intellect's worst fruits of cold deducing
cold seducing of the underworld
the underwood
beneath the shades
hiding
it's hiding beneath the shades of the trees of the forest of the thoughts
thought so long we lost it
lost it ain't
lost are we
lost in thoughts and lost in passions
patience gone
and all our serenity 's faded to darkness
fire's flying in its place
in its locus
locusts like we've infected the world
like we're about to do it to others
go west
go space
face the new monsters we'll see out there
emerging within our selves

we don't need an other to see our selves
we see our selves
our worst intentions
in the others
we attack what's of us
in the others around us
can't stand we ourselves
can't stand we
the insanity
the inanity
the unbearable gravity of being
the trees for the forest
the forest for the trees
how sweet look the woods
when you enter them
how impenetrable
once you need to leave
leaves fall under the summer sun
fallen leaves they soon will be
but winter leaves
once winter left
we'll be thrown back to the summer, the zenith, of all our discontents
and worries
in summer
the weather's hardly to blame,
no, forget that
we can
we will
always be blaming the weather
ask Aristotle
but maybe still there's something to it
the heat gets to the brains, the minds
propelling them to frenzies of inanity, insanity
the cold
freezing the minds and freezing the hearts
somewhere in Africa,
blood flowing down the hills
somewhere in Europe,
white flakes of human ash clouding the entrance to heaven
how can we go on after this?

Nr. 46: "SHOWING"

I want to show you the world, my child

her wonders and terrors
the good with the bad
the simple magnificence
all in its workings
all in its majesty
all in its wake:

for that's how it goes
and that's how it is
nature's quite
the way it is
not 'cause it should be
not because someone just said so

it's how it is
and simple rules
(in utter complexity)
and we inside
and we in sight!
and we, incited here
to see
to speak
to do
to show:

I want to show you the world, my dear

how out of the fog of ages past
life's come to pass
and moves now all over
some crawling
some digging
some swimming
some walking
some soaring up high
a rainbow of options
of ways
and of means
what means it all? oh, that's just human obsession with cause
but prior to cause
shan't look we at things, how all quite unfolds?

a cat so daringly and soothingly
looking at me
so quite like a deity

a dog so fearfully, adoringly
looking at me
so quite like a deity

and us in the middle
wondering
whoever is right?

look quite at a flower we
a rose quite red
and filled so with mystery
all our emotions
leading quite up to it
a red one
of hope
of some day
presenting it
to another
or being given it
whichever way
a function, attached
to the nature at hand
(but shows us a rose how its wants it be treated?)
shows quite us nature, how shall we possess it?
is but a flower
a gift to be given
a snack to be eaten

a thing to be used
to be plucked and
de-flowered?
is that a telos
or something that happens?
and what of the pollen
carried away by the bee
what of the bee
drinking the nectar of roses, of flowers of shapes, colors different?
what of their honey?
see we a telos
see we a purpose
see we a cause
or see we
just life?

the black cat meowed at a fly passing by
and a crow waited on road-kill by the side of a truck
a bear coming out of the woods, looking at tourists looking at him
and an octopus came to play with the divers
while the dog went to go for a swim
the black cat, again, talked to a squirrel
(which he may have killed later that day)
and squirrels go nuts for the nuts thrown to them
in Battery Park, the squirrels feared pigeons coming too close
(maybe sensed a sense of the dinosaurs living in them)
while in Trieste, a penguin complained 'bout his cage
and a shark swam in circles
and a coral fish swam to his anemone home
the black looked so jealous when the grey cat brought mice
but yesterday, the black brought a tit,
today but, the grey though returned with a similar kill
(who says, only humans murder for fun...)
while the old one had waited for food from the turkey
the toads, interlocked, they feared not the road
like two bugs, one went forward, one backward, all way,
the he-goat screamed out: he was tied to a tree!
(the scapegoat was killed, any-all-way)
while a dog I once knew wanted to play
and the sparrow flew through the window picking on apples
and tits waited loudly for me to put food out
the squirrel in Bryce was shy not the least
in Yellowstone though, his cousin (?) just fled
and a turtle just didn't quite care in First Landing
and the camel in Egypt
still seemed to know so much more
but knew it of octopussies running two-legged like men?
of little wasps living in figs?
of dinosaurs proud, now circling the skies, though much smaller?
of others extinct like them? beings and cultures?
of what once quite came
out of the woods?

knew it, much more, of things you can see
only when looking quite hard
and with help?
a help not transcendental but real
and of science
not tales

of questions
not doctrine
of answers
and not just out of belief?

the pleasure and pain all
pleasure and pain all

not quite with cause
but quite for a reason
and not with directions

and visible all!
(for those who want see)
so different perspectives
converging in beauty

so much I have seen
so much I've been shown
so much I have been
much more want I be
much more want I show
much more want I see

I want you to show me the world, my love

from "THE DESERT" (THE TETRALOGY PART II / #315, 2005/06)

Interlude 2: "VIRGIN LAND"

a distant, haunting melody
in all that is
in all to be
and all that was
and all in all
connected here
concocted her
to strangest quite an invocation:
that all be new
once we arrive
the slate be cleaned
the bills all reckoned with
with ease
and all we shall see
a land of plenty
a Canaan of hope
a city so shining
upon a hill
by dreams it all built
with dreams it all filled
and all in its wake
all terrible fate
dissolved
and diluted
with cheer built, with life
contesting all strife

in theory
that's clear to see
and clear to be claimed
and claimed it now be
whatever we see
virginity seeking
the being untouched
by the toxic touch
of life

a claim
and a ploy
a queen of virginity
queen of all chastity
(touchable
yet still untouched)
an image of greed
an image of lust
of possession
yet to be filled
with sanctity
all violated
and all is sacred still
and right...

Nr. 47: "ALONE"

once there was sanity
once was inanity
of doing
what was wanted so
and tied to a game
tied to a meaning
names all
and words:
just words
and unjust ones
meaning
no, meaning nothing
we mean
or I?
mean I
on my own?
mean I
or does the world?
(means it all and not to better)
turns!
what turns?
shall we take turns?
who lives?
who dies?
or shall we connect:
collate all that here
and thread them
and bind them
a catalog of life all visible
a library of blood
and minds:

mind we not
the rejection of the I?
shall seek I
or want I be sought?
shall want I
or want to be wanted?
shall make I
or want to be made?

and even if not all the time
some moments there are, I'd like to unweave
what's holding me
tying me
trying me
by standards
of --
of what?

shall value I sanity
value what's right
value what's wanted.

or value I
what's neither-nor
and so unwanted
cause "want" would be something?

for in the end
(and in the beginning)
there's just an I
opening eyes
only to close them
again
and in between
what has id seen? and done? and
lived?

from "THE SEA" (THE TETRALOGY PART III / #329, 2005/06)

Nr. 23: "SKYLLA FLIRTING WITH CHARYBDIS"

hello my dear,
how I adore
your thirst so immense
your voracious appetite
for life
sucking all in
leaving quite nothing
to be desired:
a completion
of consumption
quite so alluring
a mouth
that takes all
yours, S.

hey gorgeous one,
how through your strength

your head-strong initiative
quite see you all
in coldest apprehension
seducing me
by picking apart
'fore my very own eyes
what by me
could only be swallowed
wholistically
yours truly, CH.

honey-mouth you,
your mystery deep
is drawing me in
almost
at least
it's drawing me close
to see
take a peek
t'wards your secrets quite innermost
should lose a branch I
lose a head
inside your beauty so skewed
I'll just grow a new one
knowing
I'd have surrendered not
just given in
to a sublimity
supreme
love, S.

hey you,
somehow
I feel
that even though
we've split up the sea
quite neatly between us
your efforts towards me
must stay quite in vain:
'cause fixed here we are
your searching inside of me,
must stay it in vain:
nevertheless
let's have a ship
now and then
and do lunch
regards, CH.

Nr. 34: "LOOKING FOR BIRD SHIT"

empires
have fallen
and survived
by the supply
of the dinosaurs' heirs:
fields of dignity and promise
fueled
by the droppings
of those

descending from giants:
the shit-miners
upholding
the shit-minders
above?
(oh, that's gross)
(but still)
now, we can make
can artificialize
what used to be natural
can separate
content
from form
can make
what had to be made
by others:
but still:
SSDD

Nr. 44: "CHRIST-BEARING DOVE"

behold!
here comes no single man
single-handedly he's erred
so profoundly
has he calculated Earth too small
finding now India
in America
what a troll
but with a mission
a determination:
here comes no single man
sent by the kings and popes and majesties all
a dove
coming in peace, he says
bearing
a boy
a baby boy
on his shoulders
Saint Christopher
of the Santa Maria, the Pinta, the Niña
bringing
the all-important gift
he knew:
the destruction of culture
far more valuable
than the mere killing of life:
kill a man
you kill his future
kill a culture
you kill a tribe
in all these times, past, now, and coming:
but how
please
could this be
called a war:
look at the innocence
of baby Jesus
in sweet immaculate Mary's arms

I doubt not the picture
I do doubt the pictor
I do doubt the holder
of that image:
"God wills it"
the fakest excuse
the perfect excuse
now's legitimate all:
now come
and cry havoc
and unleash
the dogs of war

Nr. 45: "ATL-TLACHINOLLI"

behold!
here comes no single man
here comes, in all his glory, might
a man of court, high up his horse
he'll know Malinche
he'll know so many, many more
his court will blast away
the one from the cactus by the lake
while his bizarre friend
will spread the word far south
and head-of-cow will write all down
blood now flows from pyramids so steep
has it flown ne'er before,
now it will:
(God wills it)
let water mix with fire
both will scorch in blood-dimmed tide
and gods from ancient times will fall
to be reshaped now into faces
of the virgin-born destroyer
that all be saved
that turn 'nto lambs
to be slaughtered, or to serve
that all be withered
brutally away
by the sword that's the word of the chosen
so that be known
(i.e., be raped)
this virgin land
and books be burnt
and words erased
and people will be disappeared
if not conform they
not confirm they
the wills
of Cortés
of Pizarro
of Jackson
of Custer
and all the white knights
all these high men
these horsemen
revealing the truth
of conquest and war

of hunger and pestilence
and so much more
God willed it,
you know
yet they willed it more

Nr. 46: "WHITE FIELDS OF DEATH"

a scene so calm
a picture acquiescent so
a field of whiteness reaching far into the sky
and hear I chanting?
hear I happiness?
for sure!
there's black a caravan of innocents
who've been blessed by carrying the whiteness
so that the world may see it
white bales of fluffy happiness
to clothe the world
to cloak the world
from all the sadness, all the pain
all the blood that made the Atlantic
a Red Sea of fate
parting north
from south
that the white of holiness and mind
be in perfect a contrast
with the black of savagery and shame:
poorest Cain
bound to the cane
by a web of lies
in a coat of savage compassion
(Christ willed it, you know)
that be these beasts of burden
healed
through their mark of pain
that once they might dream
of partition to end
that once they may dream
to be heard, not just seen
that once they can dream
for all but to live

from "THE STARS" (THE TETRALOGY PART IV / #364, 2006/07)

Nr. 1: "SINGULARITY"

there's something here
that cannot be seen
because all sight
gets lost
because all light
gets lost
disappears
and not even it might now arise:
there's something here
ungraspable
untenable
something is pulled

out of the fabric of reality
out of the logic of the now
a force
not making any prisoners
(xcept, say, have you heard the hypothesis
that pairs of nothingness
could channel stuff right out of a black hole?)
the stuff is stuck
needs get unstuck
maybe
if there's more
so much more
just fit all in
and let all things now come closer
closer
closer
here!
and send them in
they keep being crushed
keep being altered
and sucked all right in:
but see:
there's a chance
a new verse is borne
a new verse then spoken
and new a creation
might now unfold

Nr. 11: "MERCVRIVS"

in the twilight of the sun
a winged messenger
carrying Wotan's staff -
or a rock
circling in heat
around a star it cannot escape from?
that's what the Mariners found
it's probably more substantial
than the remnants of mythology
assorted

III: Depressing Stuff

"A SMILE SO FORCED" (#278, 2004)

I've seen you smile so oftentimes
and yet, your eyes seemed unaffected
there's a muscle, you know,
that only moves when you truly smile
you cannot force it
you'll be recognized wearing a smile so forced:
so why do you do it
and what's missing
for you to smile truthfully?

“DEPRESSIONS” (#286, 2004)

I saw a woman today
sitting at a mall
at her bookstand
prepared to sign her book
people moving round and round
passing her by
her book was about depressions
so silently she sat
quietly
depressed, probably
hell means indifference

“TWO WOMEN ON THE TRAIN” (#355, 2006)

one woman cried
another put on her make-up

“THAT WOMAN ON THE TRAIN” (#213, 2003)

that woman on the train
looking so sad
so sadly beautiful
reminding somehow of Cate Blanchett me
her eyes were screaming, tired but
laid her head upon the saddle of her bike
it made her chin look funny somehow
sadly funny
she looked in my direction
yet there was no direction in her look
a ring was on her finger
and sadly she looked
rose
and left the next station
and I stayed put
we didn't talk
how could we have
I wish we had

“THERE'S A CORPSE” (#223, 2003)

there's a corpse
sitting in front of me
her eyes are damp, have lost all light
a certain air of desperation
a certain sense of all that's been
she's sitting there, and checks her schedule
on her way to work by train
she's been broken, looking stiff
her eyes might tell of past a sparkle
oh, if they could
but they've been killed

IV: Final Words

“NON-FICTION” (#261, 2004)

went to the bookstore
browsing
stood there a Bible
filed under non-fiction
how cute

“FLEETING MOMENT” (#388, 2007)

all it comes down to
at the end of the day
all it leads up to
when all moments are gone
when all judgments are passed
when all statements are made
when all glances have lingered
all it comes down to
all this depends upon
all that decides
upon love and indifference
peace and war
truth and repressing
search and evading
all it comes down to
is

“MY BEARDED SELF” (#290, 2004)

my bearded self looks different
as if from an alternate universe, almost
I must admit
I always preferred Spock with a beard
and once I look into the mirror
it's still me
and yet it isn't
fascinating,
I could say

“LOVE” (#324, 2005)

at time's end
(during the darkest of the night)
who'd you be crazy 'bout losing
(who'd you be crazy ha'in lost)
who'd you want
be with
even if were it
for the last
fleeting
moment?

“TO BE OR NOT TO BE” (#269, 2004)

it's better to be

“VOCATION” (#299, 2004)

sometimes
the question precedes the answer
asking for a response to make sense

sometimes
the answer precedes the question
asking for the sense to be a response

sometimes
you aspire
seeking the future to make sense of the present

sometimes
you aspire
preserving the present for the future at hand

some things
you seek

some things
you know

some things
need doing

some things
are done already

some things
you'll be

some things
you already are

“LYRICAL I” (#276, 2004)

they say I'm not quite real a voice
just 'cause I live in a poem
I'm an I
that's called lyrical
merely
well,
I'm better than you
see
I know I'm a poem
but do you know:
who are you?
what do you want?
at least I ('m assumed to) know my limits here!

just within
the confines of the text
oh, baby,
don't you see
I still can misbehave!
I'm doing things with words
I'm a mind-fucker
that's what I am
I'm getting physical with the psyche
I'm getting neurons to fire! to move!
don't say it's just a text
it's a recipe for disaster!
the fundamentalists know:
I can be evil
if seen in the sense they quite mean:
I am quite mean
towards their institutions
towards their inner hopes and wishes
I'm a bad boy
(or girl, whatever you like)
I could even be a cat, my dearest!
fear the mighty claw of the cat domestic!
what a misnomer! you should never believe
a cat could be domesticized
but I'm straying away here
't may be I'm a stray cat
a smelly cat
you look at me
and I'm so pretty
you come near and want to pet me
want approach me
and now that you're near
I stink! a smell
penetrating your every pore
making your nerves go AWOL
or DOA even
I move neurons
again I tear at nerves
you tell me, I stink?
take your dirty little thoughts now off me!
I'm not a toy
I'm not to be cuddled
not to be embraced, dear god!
I'm a poem, darn it, imbecile!
you wanna chase me! encase me
you want
but you won't
cos I am quite
a universe
in my self
the drop is the ocean
so see you not
hear you not
know you not
what I've been telling all along?
for I can be good
as well
telling the truth
in all my rudeness

invading your utmost splendid isolation
(you'd have to be isolated
come on now
who would read poems if had they a life
honestly)
'tis almost as bad as being the poor schmuck writing them...
maybe sitting in a coffee-shop now
a Starbuck
too timid to do it like Ahab and go get the whale
the poet only travels along
in need of telling the tale
later on
(or wasn't it Ishmael? or Isaac?)
experience is for suckers
phor photographers maybe
greedy little bastards trying to own the soul of the world
through primitive snap-shots!
ha!
I say to you
well, I say nothing cause I just ignore you
I'm literature
I'm beyond your understanding
go away!
get a decent paper cut
that's the only literature worth showing
but no, all those darn "experiencers"
all in all earnest
have to go out
fight in wars
fight with the bulls
have it their way
see, I'll have it mine
and you're not invited
I'll retreat into my text
my 600 words
which all are just pointers to all quite in language!
and to not be so alone
I'll quick include some other ones
bereshit aasa der logos et el slovo fut allah
blah blah blah blah barra barra
(barbarians invited all!)
mmph grmpph ta ta humpty dumpty
yada yada yada yada!
that should suffice
for the beginning
maybe I'll return
write a new one
a sequel to the text
but just for now
I'll leave you alone
ponder
on the I and the author
the text and the context
and all these neat platitudes
that all are in vain
now, leave me alone,
go away now,
AWAY!