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Thursday, May 5, 2011

Re: Penn's Kenneth Goldsmith to perform at the White House next week

Hi Al,

To be a minstrel for a mass murderer is nothing to be proud of, Al. This just heightens my contempt for the state of American poetry. Did Bertolt Brecht dance for Hitler? Future generations will look back at us and retch. Very sad.

Linh

--- On **Thu, 5/5/11, Al Filreis** wrote:

From: Al Filreis
Subject: Penn's Kenneth Goldsmith to perform at the White House next week
To: "Al Filreis"
Date: Thursday, May 5, 2011, 9:06 AM

Dear friends:

Below is a statement just now released from the White House. Kenneth Goldsmith, who teaches in the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing (CPCW) here at Penn and is a close affiliate of the Kelly Writers House, will be among the poets performing at the May 11 event. And with Mrs. Obama, he will

lead a poetry workshop for children.

Kenny has been teaching a Creative Writing workshop called "Uncreative Writing" for a number of years at Penn. And every other year (continuing in 2011-12), he teaches an innovative year-long contemporary art/writing seminar that is a collaboration of CPCW and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA).

For more on Kenny:

<http://writing.upenn.edu/cw/faculty.php#Goldsmith>
<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Goldsmith.html>

- Al Filreis

Al Filreis
Kelly Professor
Faculty Dir., Kelly Writers House
Dir., Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing
University of Pennsylvania

- - - - -

“An Evening of Poetry”

Event Continues Arts Education Series at the White House on May 11th

The President and Mrs. Obama will host a celebration of American poetry and prose by welcoming accomplished poets, musicians and artists as well as students from across the country to the White House next week. Participants include Elizabeth Alexander, Billy Collins, Common, Rita Dove, Kenneth Goldsmith, Alison Knowles, Aimee Mann and Jill Scott who will read, sing, and showcase the impact of poetry on American culture. The President will make opening remarks at this event held in the East Room, which will be pooled press and streamed live on www.whitehouse.gov starting at 7:00 p.m. ET.

As part of this special event, Mrs. Obama will host a daytime workshop for hundreds of students from California to New York on May 11th at 2:00 p.m. ET, where students will work with and learn from many of the evening’s performers. First Lady Michelle Obama and administration officials will deliver

brief remarks to highlight a new study detailing the importance of arts education. This event will be streamed live on www.whitehouse.gov and students all over the country will be invited to watch the workshop. This event is open press but space is very limited so please RSVP to firstladypress@who.eop.gov.

First Lady Michelle Obama kicked off the White House Music Series in 2009 with a Jazz Studio, and since then has hosted a celebration of Country Music, Classical Music, Motown, a Fiesta Latina, a salute to Broadway, Music of the Civil Rights Movement and a dance tribute to Judith Jamison. Many of these events included evening performances as well as daytime educational workshops designed to educate and inspire talented young people to use their gifts to develop a future for themselves in the arts community whether as a hobby or as a profession.

Share

Posted by Linh Dinh at 10:40 AM 

Labels: [Al Filreis](#), [Barack Obama](#), [Kenneth Goldsmith](#)

42 comments:



knott said...

remember Sharon Olds, who refused just such an invitation— whatever you think of her poetry (which I happen to love and admire), give her some respect for that—

May 5, 2011 12:28 PM



Linh Dinh said...

I agree with you completely, Bill.

May 5, 2011 12:31 PM



Bhodda's My Ba'aag said...

Obama = Hitler?

I think you people need spend a bit more time with history and a little less with the flowery words.

May 5, 2011 12:50 PM

Linh Dinh said...

I'm sorry you don't understand the term "mass muderder," Bhodda, you purveyor of cliches and stereotypes, i.e., "flowery words." You're in the wrong neighborhood, lady.

May 5, 2011 1:20 PM

Dan Coffey said...

I'm sure she understands the term "mass murderer," just as she understands that the analogy between Obama and Hitler is itself a cliché, as well as uninformed, puerile, and irresponsible, especially for someone who deals in words.

May 5, 2011 2:41 PM

Linh Dinh said...

I've written about Obama extensively and have never said that he was a carbon copy of Hitler, nor am I saying it now. Mass murderers are all different, but to point out that Obama is a war mongering mass muderer repnsible for the death of many thousands, now and in the future, is hardly puerile and irresponsible, my friend. My only point here is that one should never collude or allow oneself to be used by such a criminal. Instead of focusing on my main point, you've chosen to insult me, so do you feel better now. How old are you, by the way?

May 5, 2011 2:50 PM

Dan Coffey said...

I'm sorry. I'm not up for a semantic war (i.e. I said analogous, not carbon copy). This is your fiery turf, and I respect that - and I like what I've read of your poetry. I shouldn't stick my nose in other people's blog back doors without knowing entirely where they're coming from, but honestly the idea of Obama being a mass-murderer instead of someone searching for the best way to get out of an untenable situation, handed to him by someone whom I could be convinced is a mass murderer, floored me. I don't read your blog, I just saw this pop up on Facebook.

I'll get my hat.

Oh, and I'm four, but I'm attending a Montessori school.

May 5, 2011 3:07 PM

knott said...

both Bhodda and Coffey are trying to sidetrack the issue by pointing fingers at your hyperbole rather than addressing the main question of whether any writer/artist should participate in such events when our country is pursuing three wars (to count only the overt ones, the subvert ones in Venezuela et al are too many to number). . . as I mentioned above, Sharon Olds was invited to a White House poetry shindig by the Bush administration, and she refused to attend.

May 5, 2011 3:08 PM

Linh Dinh said...

Dear Dan Coffey,

Our main difference is I think Obama is a mass murderer and you don't. This clarification from you is enlightening, and I respect that.

May 5, 2011 3:11 PM

Linh Dinh said...

Dear Bill,

Please provide a link to your wonderful blog post about this very subject, where you talked about Ashbury, DeKooning and the Shah of Iran.

I, for one, would love to read it again.

May 5, 2011 3:14 PM

knott said...

I don't remember the De Kooning post —though of course the CIA promoted and helped finance the elevation of the New York School of artists to prominence, which in turn helped advance the fortunes of the New York School of poets—

maybe this is what you're referring to: <http://knottprosepo.blogspot.com/2011/05/reprint.html>

—Avantgardistes like Goldsmith (currently touted as hotstuff by Perloffty profs of the Poetics Dept) dismiss the poetry of Sharon Olds,

just as I'm sure Ashbery disdained all those antiwar poems Robert Bly wrote back in 1973 when he (Ashbery) and John Cage and Robert Wilson and other famous Avantgarde sponge-artists were sipping champagne from Empress Farah the Shah of Iran's oily heel—

...

May 5, 2011 3:41 PM

Bhodda's My Ba'aag said...

Your premise is confused from the outset. Hitler would've never asked Brecht to perform for him. He would have had Brecht killed.

All the more amusing then to watch the commentary here descend down such an anti avant-garde rat hole.

I can think of more than a few dead mass-murderers who would find the irony a bit funny.

May 5, 2011 5:07 PM

Linh Dinh said...

Boddha,

Bill Knott is pointing out the irony of Avant-Garde artists being funded by (and entertaining) reactionary elements, but I can see that you are clearly a very literal person, so no irony, hyperpole or humor, dark or light, for you.

May 5, 2011 5:20 PM

knott said...

it's sweet that Al Filreis and his fellow Avantlypoohs are thrilled and proud that one of their own is being invited to the party,

but hardly surprising considering how much they sillipersonally whine about being oppressed and marginalized by the evil OVC . . .

May 5, 2011 5:31 PM

Linh Dinh said...

To follow up on Bill Knott's point: in Capitalist countries, artists are almost never killed, only ignored or co-opted, so the choices come down to being irrelevant or a house slave, if only for a moment.

May 5, 2011 5:39 PM

Ian Keenan said...

One of the functions of writers is to bring clarity to what a nation's public policy is doing, to counter the prevailing propoganda, and there will of course always be writers that repeat the propoganda, thinking that this is what they, the "writer," should do. The narrative of Obama being the anti-war force in Washington is frequently repeated in the media, and he was the only advocate of withdrawing from Iraq promoted heavily by them in 2008, despite several candidates with that position and an overwhelming majority of the public behind an immediate withdrawal. There has been less reporting of Obama adding a military base to Colombia, where labor leaders are being killed, supporting a military coup against an elected president in Honduras, where more labor leaders are being killed, banning the most popular political party in Haiti to promote a candidate that is re-training Duvalierist militia that he supported back in the day, supporting open killing of dissenters in Bahrain and arrests of doctors that treat the protestors in the hospital, and civilian-killing drone bombing campaigns in Pakistan and Afghanistan, sanctioning of "kill teams" there, in addition to his perpetuation of war in Afghanistan, transition of the Iraq War to expensive contractors, detainment of Bradley Manning and broken promise on the Guantanamo base which violates US and international law, and his failure to consult congress in compliance with the US constitution before invading Libya. In these and any number of other instances of international expansion of military rule, Obama is able to do things that Bush would have never been able to do without more opposition because of his public speeches that appropriate progressive activism while invoking, for instance, Martin Luther King while accepting the Nobel Peace Prize. Martin Luther King's views of this sort of military expansion and extrajudicial killing were unambiguous.

May 5, 2011 6:04 PM

Ian Keenan said...

Invoking Brecht and Hitler can be interpreted a number of ways, but I interpreted it to mean that Brecht was suggesting an alternative "national character," like Ginsberg, Whitman, and many poets who won't be invited to the White House, and doing this would not have been possible for Brecht if he were enamored of his succession of political rulers. Poetry

Foundation president John Barr, who contributed the maximum to Guiliani in March 2007, says that more poets should, like Hemingway and Barr, hunt animals, but Hemingway also fought fascism.

Dinh fights fascism well - with the pen - and calls it out whenever he sees it. I haven't heard back from the Poetry Foundation as to why he was the only Harriet columnist with over 50 past columns that wasn't invited back this year (Dinh has the 4th highest number of total contributions). On Barr's behalf, Goldsmith used elinationist rhetoric against Ron Silliman - Death of a Kingmaker - much like Glenn Beck calling for Michael Moore's death, and the Poetry Foundation continues to misrepresent Ron's words about the status of his blog. Goldsmith was angered by Ron's statistics of readership on behalf of an organization that claims to be promoting poetry and maintains that poetry has to be dumbed down and irrelevant to reach a wider audience. I'm not the Kenneth Goldsmith expert that others are, but some folks at the White House must love the promise of The End of Expression, the persistence Goldsmith brings to this promise after the initial giggle-inducement, and the way Goldsmith persistently attempts to misinterpret the legacy of conceptualism in this way.

May 5, 2011 6:05 PM

Ross Brighton said...

While I'm not sure the Hitler hyperbole serves anyone's best interests, I fully agree with you Linh. I've found the blood-lust of the last couple of days particularly repulsive, especially in the majority of people's unwillingness to discuss the discrepancy between the 3000 civilians who died in NY and the 34 000 (estimated, there aren't even verified figures) killed by colalition forces in Afganistan up to 2009 (so you could add another couple of thousand to that total).... It seems the dead only get a voice if they're "ours".

That being said, if I was offered this invitation, I'd probably take it, if only to ask uncomfortable questions and make a scene. I think that might be a more effective gesture of resistance than removing oneself from political engagement.

May 5, 2011 10:54 PM

Linh Dinh said...

Hi Ross,

If you know me at all, then you'd know that I'm fully for political

engagement. What I'm against is ass kissing and being seduced by power. I've written quite a bit about this.

May 6, 2011 12:07 AM

Linh Dinh said...

Also, to sing and dance for a war criminal is not political engagement. These poets are not invited to this White House soiree to discuss anything. They're expected to do their little number, shake the master's hand as part of a photo op, then leave.

May 6, 2011 12:18 AM

Ross Brighton said...

Oh, believe me, I'm not advocating singing and dancing. I'm more thinking that that proximity, that platform, could be utilised somehow, in a way that would be more effective than a refusal of the invitation, which distances oneself from the power one is trying to fight... which could create the illusion that "opting out" is a possibility - you can't opt out of the power struggle/structures of capital.

Do you get what I'm gesturing towards? I'm sorry if it's vague, I'm not sure what I'd do, but I'm at the same time trying not to write an essay and hijack this thread

May 6, 2011 3:09 AM

Ksou said...

Hmm, While I somewhat get your point on this Linh , I think your criticisms are rather harsh .

I'm sure any poet who shows up to this event is only there to read some poems and become better known .

Keep in mind when we voted we had a choice between John Mc Cain, who doesn't trust the KGB Spy filled Russian government. John Mc Cain, who believes the Vietnam war was winnable, wants us to take a harder stance on Russia and China, filibustered unemployment benefits(way to take away from people who already have nothing) and I believe is still bitter over losing 40 years ago. Thus the need to find new wars, remember back when Georgia was invaded and John Mc Cain said "Today, We Are All Georgians" For the record, I don't even know where Georgia is.

Or Obama.

Bush started 2 wars , Obama just isn't doing much of anything . But in my personal opinion any president who immediately demanded an end to all wars would be impeached ASAP . The current problems of today are far more complicated to be fixed by one magic savor in a week . Something like 30% of our economy is based on military spending(ether directly or indirectly).

Transition to a peace based economy will be a difficult process .

May 6, 2011 3:32 AM

Ross Brighton said...

@Ksou -

I get your point, but I think it is more complex than that. I don't think anything politically progressive will be achieved by ego-motivated gestures, such as "getting better known". And as for the alternatives being this Obama government of McCain - I think you're missing one - a better government , which may or may not have Obama as president. It could be worse, but that's no reason to not try and make it better - push for change, push as hard as possible.

May 6, 2011 4:30 AM

allyssa said...

I completely agree, Linh.

yrs, opening-of-the-field-slave

May 6, 2011 6:54 AM

bstefans said...

In your worldview, Linh, everyone's a mass murderer. Is there a single nation today that doesn't have a period of "mass murder" in their history? Comparing Obama to Hitler is just plain idiotic. You're as much a problem when it comes to poets responding to political and social conditions effectively as KG is, in this case. Your use of the word minstrel is also telling.

May 6, 2011 9:35 AM

Linh Dinh said...

Brian,

I'm not indicting an entire country, with all of its history, but a specific man. Of course, every country has crimes in its past, but America has also produced Mark Twain and Cindy Sheehan, for example, and not just Bush, Obama and, unfortunately, a clueless dupe like you.

Obama is a war mongering mass murderer leading an empire on world conquest. Ditto, Hitler. You and others can't seem to see this pararell, hung up as you are on the body count. It's time to take down the YES WE CAN poster, Brian. You are worse than pathetic in your delusions.

Obama's policies have already killed many innocent Afghans, Pakistanis, Palestinians, Iraqis and Libyans, among others. With his torture, indefinite detention and endless war, Obama qualifies as a monster in my book.

Obama is only a front man, however, as I have repeatedly pointed out. Hitler was a dictator, Obama merely a dictator manque, but both are still mass murderers.

I've published more than [40 essays](#) on the state of our union, but all were ignored by the poetry community, which is fine by me, but with my Hitler soundbite, these poets suddenly showed up to call me uninformed, puerile and an idiot! Mission accomplished, poets, you can go back to your circle jerk now.

May 6, 2011 10:49 AM

Linh Dinh said...

Trying to get rid of one of my double posts, I accidentally deleted this from **Ian Keenan**:

The analogy of Robert Lowell (cited by Al Filreis) or Steinbeck hanging with LBJ relates more closely to the character of what Obama is doing and how he functions as a leader. Comparing LBJ to Obama is another can of worms I don't want to get into. But one problem with comparing Billy Collins' hobnobbing with Bush and Obama to Lowell and LBJ is that both LBJ and Obama are the recipient of sanctifying propaganda which don't shed light on what they're actually doing, which caused Daniel Ellsberg to shout out the number of Cambodians and Vietnamese killed in bombing raids by Nixon the previous day whenever there was a microphone on him,

because it wouldn't be reported elsewhere. Comparing Bush or Obama to Hitler has been all over the internet for the last decade, and though there are differences in the structure of authority and the number killed, it punctures the mythology that fascism has been vanquished and that the methods the Third Reich invented to attempt world domination were eliminated after WW2. Literature very rarely rises above the level of military propaganda or crucially contradicts it. Orwell couldn't find a publisher for *Animal Farm* when the UK was allied with Stalin, but when the Cold War started it was heavily promoted. Orwell did rise above military propaganda by creating a threshold of the "Orwellian" that governments couldn't cross, and by inviting a more thorough review of his life's work. It can be done by some.

May 6, 2011 11:14 AM

Linh Dinh said...

Hi Ian,

Apropos Fascism, I wrote this in my "[Channel Surfing the Revolution](#)":

"On a California campus long known for its supposed radicalism, I talked to a highly regarded young professor. "You can talk about Fascism nowadays, but if you criticize Communism, people still cringe," I observed. "Who's talking about Fascism?!" she responded.

[...]

We watch the foreign protests and think, Damn, that's dangerous! People actually get killed! Our protests, by contrast, are civil displays of brief durations. They threaten and disturb nothing. We ask permission beforehand to be allowed to parade down the street, carrying cute signs. Our protestors vie with each others to come up with the cleverest signs. Though seen by almost no one, they are dutifully photographed by their makers to be posted on FaceBook.

[...]

Our President can now declare anyone a terrorist, and order him locked up without trial or even shot, without anyone knowing. If that isn't Fascism, stupid professor, what is?!"

May 6, 2011 11:15 AM

friedpudding said...

Hey Linh, i love the way you spell Brecht (Bretch) to get it rhyming with retch ;=) and i take your general drift here in terms of critiquing Obama's foreign policy. He has not been any better at home, to be honest, what with resigning the patriot act and carrying on the war on drugs and the fence / wall into Mexico et al. But i wonder about the example of Brecht, purely because he did do dance kinda for Stalin and that gentleman was no less of a mass murderer than Herr Hitler . so Brecht is not the virtuous example that you might be making him out to be . although he does, in your spelling, ryhme with retch . so maybe you are being ironic in using him. Otherwise, terrific to see some fire here in the discussion and thanks for provoking that. xx cc

May 6, 2011 11:44 AM

Linh Dinh said...

Hi Friedpudding,

That was just a typo, so I fixed it. Thanks for pointing it out!

I cited Brecht only in his home context, under Hitler. Brecht was wrong about Stalin, but so were many people at the time. Stalin was our ally in World War II, for god's sake! Americans were told that the Soviets were our friends, that Stalin was "Uncle Joe." So Brecht was wrong about Stalin, but he couldn't have been as cynical about this butcher as Roosevelt, whom Americans worship now.

Fleeing the Nazis, Brecht fled to Sweden, Finland, then through the entire length of Russia, in 1941, before boarding a ship for Los Angeles, so Stalin's Russia was also part of his escape route from the Nazis.

Speaking of Stalin, I ran into Jack Hirschman in San Francisco a while back. Hirschman is still gung ho about Stalin now, so that's a lot less excusable than Brecht supporting Stalin way back then. But like Brecht, Hirschman never had to live under Stalin, or any Communist country, for that matter.

In sum, we may be excused, somewhat, if we don't know what we're talking about in regard to another country, but as Americans, here and now, we must try our best to understand what our nation is about, and what are being done in our names.

May 6, 2011 12:48 PM

Ian Keenan said...

Well-distilled column, Linh..

Actually Brecht wrote a prototype of Animal Farm with much the same message a few years before Orwell started his: Me-ti or the Book of Changes (1935-38), in which the Soviet personae appear as Chinese philosophers rather than farm animals: "Later the workers.. obtained power; but.. Ni-en (Stalin) acted exactly like an Emperor. The backwardness of the country of Su (USSR).. did after all show itself in this phenomenon. The great machinery was built up not by the citizens under people's rule, but by workers under the rule of an Emperor.. Me-ti (the philosopher) expressed his disapproval of Ni-en (Stalin) because, in his trials (Moscow Trials) against his enemies in the association he demanded too much confidence from the people. He said: If I am being asked to believe something which cannot be proven without furnishing the proof, that is tantamount to my being asked to believe something that cannot be proven.."

May 6, 2011 1:09 PM

anne said...

Why are so many caught up in the ethics (or accuracy) Linh Dinh's analogies here? The analogy is *not the thing*: KG's act is.

The political situation is far stranger than we could imagine -- or rather, hopefully no one imagined an America at 3x declared war, the DOJ in collusion with Bank of America to blackmail journalists, torture of a political prisoner who is an American citizen, etc. If only it were so simple as Lowell & LBJ, or Olds & Bush, but it is worse, more insidious, with the "crimes" of the administration hidden under a veil of tolerance and glamor.

Though it makes no difference to those under drone attacks or those being imprisoned without hope of trial, this kind of erudite evil (& this scrim of liberal tolerance) effectively lulls what would otherwise be outraged citizens.

KG appearing at the White House, though, is not a shocking part of this strange era: it seems to fit exactly. He seems deeply invested in 20th century notions of art (or at least a poetry celebrating a capitalist dreamscape). I think though, that this is an instructive moment for the rest of us who do not care about "popularizing" poetry in that way.

Or rather, as Linh often points out, despite the wretched position of poets there are plenty of opportunities left for little bits of courage in act, as well as in speech.

Anne

May 6, 2011 2:23 PM

friedpudding said...

i get your USAmerican perspective Linh, and what you say about Brecht's "debt" to Stalin's Russia. He's still a problem child . and i like him as a problem child. Interesting discussion. Thanks

xx

May 6, 2011 2:49 PM

Linh Dinh said...

Hi Friedpudding,

Speaking of Stalin, I just reposted a piece from 2008:

<http://www.sonneteighetencom.blogspot.com/2011/05/are-there-still-sky-and-earth.html>

May 6, 2011 3:12 PM

Henry Gould said...

I think you confuse seriousness with provocation, and rage with righteousness. And this confusion infects your rhetoric and your view of the world. Rage excites people, it grabs readers, it causes alarms, it scares people - it makes them take you seriously... but in the process it blurs language and misuses facts and obliterates distinctions. It creates propaganda where there might be dialogue and analysis. But this kind of thing is sexy for the angst-ridden rebel artist like yourself, it's a way of behaving that seems cutting edge.

Obama is not a mass murderer. Nations have a right to defend themselves. Bin Laden was a general in a covert war that has actually mass-murdered thousands of civilians. This does not make the USA pure and clean or righteous or safe from the abuses of war and torture and the treatment of people as means rather than ends. But your simplistic rants do not really

get at the truth, either. They merely stir up more wrath among the overly self-righteous and the narrow-minded fanatic America-haters.

May 6, 2011 4:18 PM

Linh Dinh said...

Henry,

I remember you defending Israel's assault on Gaza in 2008, so I am not at all surprised you would say this. Thanks for stopping by.

May 6, 2011 6:03 PM

Henry Gould said...

Yes, I suppose I'm one of the ideological untouchables in your mental universe. I actually don't believe Obama is a mass murderer. I believe Israel has a right to exist. I even defended the Iraq war! How's that for you. But you wouldn't want to actually debate with me : you might dirty your beautiful mind.

May 6, 2011 8:01 PM

Steven Augustine said...

"Your premise is confused from the outset. Hitler would've never asked Brecht to perform for him. He would have had Brecht killed."

Even Fascism has its learning curve. The New Face of It clearly works for you (but that's usually the case on the *safe side* of the bombs-n-bullets divide). And selective obtuseness works better than Ambien on the good old home front. Hope Heil.

May 8, 2011 3:00 PM

Paul said...

This post has been removed by the author.

May 10, 2011 3:15 PM

Amish Trivedi said...

Brilliant. Waiting for my eight minutes at the White House--

May 14, 2011 1:03 AM

Richard said...

knott said...

" it's sweet that Al Filreis and his fellow Avantypoohs are thrilled and proud that one of their own is being invited to the party,

but hardly surprising considering how much they sillipersonally whine about being oppressed and marginalized by the evil OVC . . .

"

You seem to be very bitter. You are 70. You have got into hardly any anthologies (big deal, I write poetry and don't ever expect to be in ANY anthology and I'm 63, in NZ BTW), but you attack writers such as Ashbery and Goldsmith.

(I do understand that (e.g.) some of the Langos etc tend to form a kind of "in-group" run with a lot of complex theoretic jargon etc but can we avoid theory? That is another complex area...you are simplifying Bill..Don't throw the baby out with the bath water...)

Apart from that Sharon Olds and such as Rita Dove seem to me to be rather forgettable poets. And this nonsense about the CIA etc funding Ashbery and Koch etc (There maybe complex case of Pollock but that doesn't knock him out). JA was chosen by chance by Auden who I doubt was on the pay of the CIA!

BUT it is true the CIA etc get up to some bad stuff and I agree that Obama (while not a "mass murderer") is continuing the Imperialist policies of Bush (and I am no supporter of US Imperialism - over here I was in protest against NZ SAS going to Afghanistan. N.Z. SAS etc have been involved in atrocities in Indonesia and Afghanistan as well as probably Vietnam (Joanna Bourke in 'An Intimate History of Killing' has some interesting stuff on all of that.)

So I agree that whether such as Goldsmith or a very different artist such as "Common" should dance before the President is indeed problematic.

Obama COULD actually shut down Guantanamo immediately and pull all troops out (from all foreign wars in few months). Nothing bad would happen. In fact it would be a hugely positive and innovative move. As it is he is going to disappear into history as just another leader of an Imperialist nation that is slowly dying of itself. And (by default) he is tsu killer. And he

and many others need to be brought to an international tribunal and tried as the Nazis were in Nuremberg. That I would agree with. (Then there is a huge cost of reparations that need to be paid for 60 years of exploitation and wars and millions of civilian deaths caused by US wars). There IS a parallel with Hitler. He is thus by default as Bush et al were), almost by what he doesn't do.

If they go these poets need to be very forthright in telling the President they want him to pull out of these conflicts (immediately) and to work for the poor (more) and so on. He is hampered of course by the extreme right and the Congress...

Just as he was "seduced" into power, I think these poets will be "corrupted" by the opportunity to extend their "fame".

It probably matters neither way (as Obama isn't going to act because of poetry - here I have to agree with Auden and Jack Spicer) but the questions raised are important. (But Spicer refused to sign a loyalty oath which is good).

But who knows, maybe poetry (rap or uncreative or not) can have some political effects.

May 18, 2011 10:16 PM

Richard said...

BTW Bill that wasn't meant to be an attack on you or your art and writing. I accept and understand your anger here, if I don't quite agree with everything.

Who or what are the OVC?

May 18, 2011 10:18 PM

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Hola, It's Io

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- Audio files on Pennsound
- YouTube videos
- Posts at the Harriet Blog
- Free Love Pix
- Two poems at Green Integer
- Two poems on Mipoesia
- Two prose poems in Jacket
- Poems translated into Arabic by Tahseen al Khateeb
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- A translation of Roberto Castillo Udiarte's "Vita Canis"

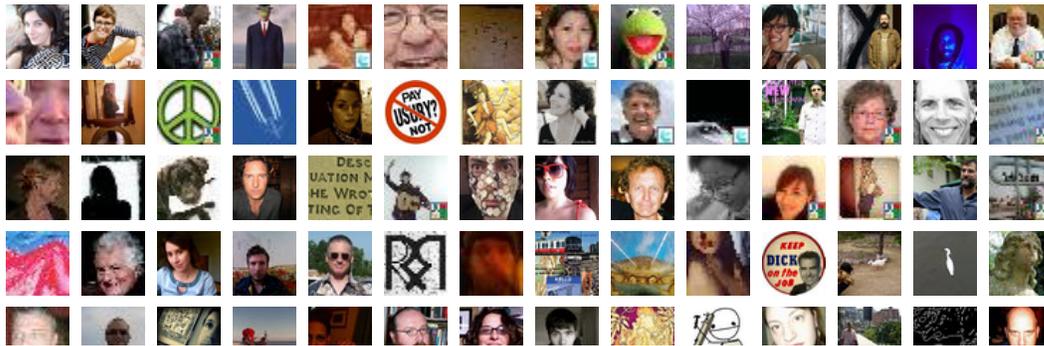
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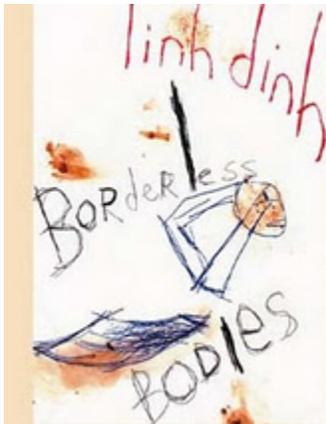
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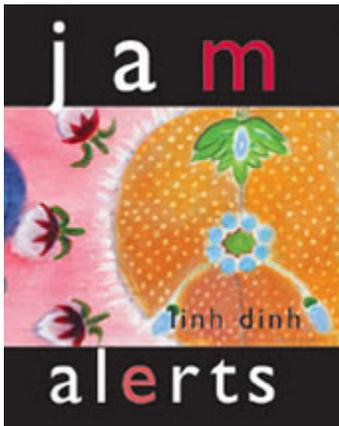
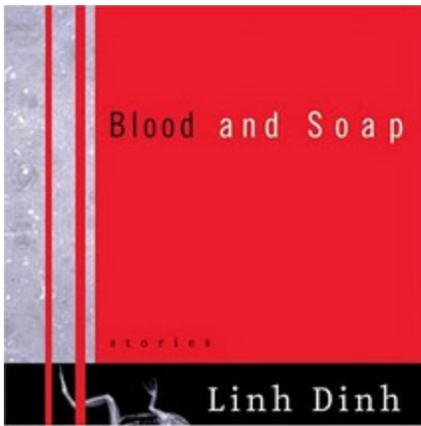
Bouncer, Janus, Bellhop

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Choice Verbiage

- All Around What Empties Out
- American Tatts
- Blood and Soap
- Borderless Bodies
- Fake House
- Jam Alerts
- Love Like Hate
- Night, Again
- Night, Fish and Charlie Parker (Phan Nhien Hao translated into English)
- Some Kind of Cheese Orgy





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