

George Oppen: A Centenary Conversation

Wednesday, April 23rd, Thursday, April 24th and Friday, April 25th, 2008

To celebrate the life and work of George Oppen on the occasion of his 100th birthday, the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo will host a three-day event involving panel presentations, roundtable discussion, keynote addresses from invited guests, and celebratory readings both of Oppen's work and work inspired by his life and practice.

Keynote addresses and poetry readings by **Stephen Cope**, **Rachel Blau DuPlessis**, **Susan Thackrey**, and **John Wilkinson**. Roundtable conversation among SUNY Buffalo faculty members **Joseph Conte**, **Myung Mi Kim**, **Steve McCaffery**, and **Krzysztof Ziarek**

This event is sponsored by the **Poetics Program** at SUNY Buffalo (David Gray Chair Steve McCaffery), the **English Department**, the **Humanities Institute**, the **Graduate Student Association** Scholarly Symposia Fund, the **College of Arts & Sciences** Fund for Conferences and Lectures, the **History of Ideas**, the **Graduate Poetics Group**, the **Comparative Literature** Graduate Student Association, and the **English** Graduate Student Association. Special thanks to the **Poetry Collection** at SUNY Buffalo, the **Karpeles Manuscript Museum**, and **Rust Belt Books**.

Schedule of Events

Wednesday, April 23

Rust Belt Books (202 Allen St)

- 7:00PM: "Presenting the (New) Disaster: Recent Poetics of Consequence after George Oppen," Thom Donovan
Readings by Thom Donovan Rob Halpern
- 8:00PM: Conference participants will be reading from Oppen's work and/or their own.

Thursday, April 24

Poetry/Rare Books Room (420 Capen Hall, SUNY Buffalo North Campus)

- 9:30-10:00AM Coffee
- 10:00-11:00AM **Keynote: Stephen Cope** (Ohio University)
"This With Which We No Longer Share the Century: Some Futures for Oppen Scholarship"

11:15 -12:30PM

Panel I: Disaster / Catastrophe / Accident

"How Do You Spell Modernity?: Oppen and Adorno on Poetry and Disenchantment," David Collins (SUNY Buffalo)

"What Whitman Leaves to Oppen," Zack Finch (SUNY Buffalo)

"George Oppen's Aesthetics of Accident: 'The wheels of the overturned wreck / Still spinning –,'" Aaron Lehman (University of Rochester)

"Oppen and the *Body Snatchers*," Jill Richards (UC Berkeley)

12:30-2:00PM

Lunch

2:15-3:30PM

Panel II: Dwelling, Domesticity, and the Urban

"Becoming a Patient of History: Oppen's Domesticity," Rob Halpern (Independent Writer)

"George Oppen's Urbanizing Pastoral," Todd Thorpe (University of Notre Dame)

"'The Shipwreck of the Singular': George Oppen and the American Experience of Dwelling," David Miller (Manchester Metropolitan University, UK)

**Thursday Evening Events in Downtown Buffalo
Karpeles Manuscript Museum (453 Porter Ave)**

7:00PM

Opening Reception

8:00PM

Keynote: Rachel Blau DuPlessis (Temple University)
"Oppen from Seventy-Five to a Hundred, 1983-2008"

Readings by John Wilkinson and Susan Thackrey

Friday, April 25

Poetry/Rare Books Room (420 Capen Hall, SUNY Buffalo North Campus)

9:30-10:00AM

Coffee

10:00-11:00AM

Keynote: John Wilkinson (University of Notre Dame)
"The Glass Enclosure: Transparency and Glitter in the Poetry of George Oppen"

- 11:15-12:30PM **Panel III: Translations and Re-Visions**
- "To Memory: Oppen, Buddhadeva Bose and Translation," Pat Clifford (Independent Scholar)
- "'The little hole in the eye:' George Oppen's Critique of Vision," Grant Jenkins (University of Tulsa)
- "'It seems necessarily true that I did not read those sentences': Oppen's 'Route' and a Practice of the Actual," Andrew Rippeon (SUNY Buffalo)
- "Oppen's 'We' and the Poetics of the First Person Plural," Siobhán Scarry (SUNY Buffalo)
- 12:30-2:00PM Lunch
- 2:15-3:30PM **Roundtable: SUNY Buffalo Faculty**
Joseph Conte, Myung Mi Kim, Steve McCaffery, Krzysztof Ziarek
- 3:45-4:30PM **Keynote: Susan Thackrey**
- Evening Events in Downtown Buffalo**
Karpeles Manuscript Museum (453 Porter Ave)
- 7:30PM **Reception**
- 8PM **Readings by Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Stephen Cope**

Biographical Notes

Keynote Speakers:

Stephen Cope's poems, essays, and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *XCP: Cross-Cultural Poetics*, *Mirage#4: Period(ical)*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Shark*, *Sagetrieb*, *The Germ*, *Jacket*, and elsewhere. In Spring 2001, he served as guest editor of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction's* special issue on the work of David Antin. Cope received his PhD in 2005 from the University of California, San Diego, where he was a research fellow at the Archive for New Poetry. He has taught at universities in California, Iowa, and Ohio, and is currently a lecturer in the English Department at Ohio University in Athens as well as a faculty member in Bard College's Language and Thinking program. His edition of George Oppen's *Selected Prose, Daybooks, and Papers* has just appeared from the University of California Press.

Rachel Blau DuPlessis is a poet, feminist literary critic, and editor of Oppen's *Selected Letters* (Duke, 1990) and, with Peter Quartermain, *The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics* (Alabama, 1999). *Blue Studios: Poetry and Its Cultural Work*, a book of essays, was published by the University of Alabama Press in 2006; in the same year, Alabama reprinted DuPlessis's now classic *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*. Other recent critical work includes *Genders, Races, and Religious Cultures in Modern American Poetry, 1908-1934* (Cambridge, 2001). Her most recent collection of poetry is *Torques: Drafts 58-76*, which continues her long poem *Drafts*. Other volumes of this project include *Drafts 1-38, Toll* (Wesleyan, 2001) and *Drafts 39-57, Pledge, with Draft, Unnumbered: Précis* (Salt, 2004). In 1999, DuPlessis received Temple University's Creative Achievement Award, and in 2001-2002 a Pew Fellowship for Artists. Also in 2002, she was awarded the third Roy Harvey Pearce / Archive for New Poetry Prize, given biennially to an American poet/scholar who has made a significant lifetime contribution to American poetry and literary scholarship. Recently, she has been awarded a National Humanities Center Fellowship for 2008-2009. DuPlessis teaches at Temple University.

Susan Thackrey's poems have been widely published. She is the author of a book of poems, *Empty Gate* (Beyond Baroque, 1999), and *George Oppen: A Radical Practice* (O Books, 2001). She is an analyst member and on the teaching faculty of the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco, and she has a private practice in San Francisco.

John Wilkinson is a poet and professor at Notre Dame University, and he also has a professional and academic background in mental health. Wilkinson has been Frank Knox Fellow at Harvard University and Fulbright Distinguished Scholar at the Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research. Recent books of poetry include *Effigies Against the Light* (2001), *Contrivances* (2003), *Lake Shore Drive* (2006) and *Proud Flesh* (2005), all from Salt, and his poetry is also represented in the *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2001). His critical writing has appeared in *Cambridge Quarterly*, *Critical Quarterly*, and *Chicago Review*, and *The Lyric Touch: Essays on the Poetry of Excess* collects his critical essays on British and American poets.

Panelists:

Pat Clifford is the author of several chapbooks including *A story by fair: Rules for Radicals* (2006) and *Ring of Honor* (2007). Work has appeared in *Boog City* and *Black Robert Journal* and is forthcoming in *CyPress Magazine*. His work has been translated into Bengali. Pat is the Director of the Drop Inn Center homeless shelter in Cincinnati, Ohio.

David Collins is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Comparative Literature at SUNY Buffalo. He has an MA in Theory and Criticism from the University of Western Ontario and a BA in English/Philosophy from the University of New Brunswick Saint John. His academic interests include modernism and Continental

philosophy.

Thom Donovan lives in New York City, and works as a teacher, writer and archivist. He edits the weblog *Wild Horses Of Fire*, curates *Peace On A* events series, and co-edits *ON: Contemporary Practice* (a magazine culture forthcoming in May, 2008). Recent work can be read at *The Fanzine* online, and with *Damn the Caesars*, O Books' *War and Peace* vol. 3, and *Modern Painters* in print.

Zack Finch is pursuing his doctorate in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo. He has been a visiting lecturer in Creative Writing at Dartmouth College and has published work in journals such as *P-Queue*, *Poetry*, *American Letters & Commentary*, *Radical Society*, *Tin House*, and *Boston Review*.

Rob Halpern is the author of *Rumored Place* and *Snow Sensitive Skin* (co-authored with Taylor Brady). Two collections of poems, *Disaster Suites* and *Music for Porn*, are forthcoming. He's currently co-editing the writings of the late Frances Jaffer together with Kathleen Fraser, and translating the early essays of Georges Perec, the first of which, "For a Realist Literature," can be found in the current issue of *Chicago Review*. His essay on George Oppen, "Of Truthful 'I's,'" appeared in *Tripwire* #3. He lives and teaches in San Francisco.

Grant Jenkins, Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Writing Program at the University of Tulsa, teaches 19th and 20th Century literature from both sides of the Atlantic, as well as creative writing. His research interests include poetry and poetics, contemporary American literature, African American and Jewish American literature, female editorship in 19th Century British novels, Modernism, and critical theory. His book, *Poetics of Obligation: Ethics in Experimental American Poetry Since 1945*, was release just this month from the University of Iowa Press. He is currently working on a book-length study of experimental black poetry written after 1970, including the work of Nathaniel Mackey, Erica Hunt, Harryette Mullen, and Mark McMorris. His current creative projects include work with digital flash poetry, image, and sound.

Aaron Lehman is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Rochester, where he has taught courses in both the English and Writing Departments. He is currently working on a dissertation which analyzes the role of chance and accident in the poetry and poetics of Williams, Moore, Crane, and Oppen. He lives with his wife and daughter in Irondequoit, New York.

David Miller completed his BA in English at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2004. An award from the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) in 2005 meant that he was able to complete a Masters in Critical Theory, whereupon his thesis "A 'Humanitarian Urbanism': George Oppen and the Modern City" – which examined Oppen's poetry in close proximity to twentieth century discourses on dwelling and modernity (Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas) – won the Anthony Easthope prize. He is currently engaged in writing a PhD on Oppen and dwelling thanks to a three year research scholarship at the MMU.

Jill Richards is a graduate student in the English Department at UC Berkeley. She received her B.A. in French and English literature from New York University in 2006. Her research interests include American poetry, media theory, aesthetics, and film.

Andrew Rippeon edits *P-Queue* (a journal of poetry, poetics, and innovative prose) and *QUEUE* (a chapbook series adjunct to the journal). He lives in Buffalo, NY, where he is a participant in the Poetics Program at the University at Buffalo.

Siobhán Scarry is pursuing a Ph.D. in English at SUNY Buffalo. Her creative work has appeared in *jubilat*, *Greensboro Review*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Five Fingers Review*, among other journals, and is forthcoming in *Sentence: A Journal of Prose Poetics*. Her poem "Jubilate: Burden, Kansas" was recently nominated for *Best Poets 2008*.

Todd Thorpe is a University of Notre Dame Ph. D. candidate in English. He works on modern and contemporary British and American poetry and is completing a dissertation entitled, *Poetry, Modernity, and Urbanization from Twentieth-Century Chicago to Twenty-First-Century London*. Research interests include urban theory, history of pastoral, ecocriticism, and queer theory.