

Tom Raworth and the Tale of No Ordinary O

Alastair Johnston

Tom Raworth (1938–2017) was a major figure in the British poetry revival of the 1960s. Charles Olson praised his first book *The Relation Ship* as “preternaturally wise.” Ted Berrigan wrote: “His poems are not afraid to be beautiful, & they are not afraid to seem clever ... He’s as good as we are, & rude a thing as it is to say, we don’t expect that, from English poets today. (I wonder is he better?)” Raworth said: “I was a Teddy Boy in the days of bicycle chains and razors. A police record for stealing a lorry. Didn’t like the idea of publishing myself, & didn’t while I had the magazine *Matrix*.” After *Outburst* magazine and *Matrix* (1961–4), which were the first to publish Olson, Zukofsky, Dorn and other Americans in Britain, Raworth collaborated with Barry Hall in Goliard Press (My bibliography of his press activity is online, at booktryst.com as of this writing).

<http://www.booktryst.com/2012/10/a-checklist-of-matrix-press-london-1961.html>

After Raworth left it became Cape Goliard, as a prestigious poetry loss leader for Jonathan Cape, who brought in Nathaniel Tarn as editor.

In the early 1970s Raworth came to the USA to teach and ended up staying (illegally) for six years. He was poet in residence at King’s College Cambridge in 1977, but always struggled to make a living. He travelled all over Europe giving poetry readings & made annual trips to the USA to read at a few spots – Buffalo and San Francisco among them – where he had a big audience. With my partner in Poltroon Press, Frances Butler, we published four of his works.

Tom didn’t like to talk on the phone and was terrible at interviews but a great correspondent. In the days before the internet he created zines and collages which he sent through the mail. Once cyberspace took hold he posted intricate photoshopped collages as annual greeting cards for all to see. These showed acerbic political and social commentary but he had a wickedly insightful take on his fellow poets also, which was generally limited to the few friends in his address book.

I met Raworth in San Francisco in 1974 and was quite starstruck. I treasured his Tri-gram press books and had memorized parts of them, but he had never been a part of the poetry circuit in England in the late 60s when I started going to readings: the reason being he was in Mexico and the United States.

Tom had come to the United States to teach at the University of Austin in Texas but chucked it in, unsuited to academia. The Raworths lived in Chicago and visited their old London friend Anselm Hollo at the Iowa Writers Workshop in Iowa City. Visiting the Dorns in San Francisco they decided to stay. It was a productive time, Ed Dorn had worked in the print-

shop at Black Mountain College and had hooked up with Holbrook Teter and Michael Myers of Zephyrus Image Press on Geary Boulevard in San Francisco and lived around the corner. Dorn was working on his epic *Gunslinger*. The Raworths moved nearby and Tom joined into the printing mayhem, with his own background of printing at Matrix and Goliard presses in London. Zephyrus Image spoofed current events, such as the kidnapping of heiress Patty Hearst, or Gary Snyder receiving the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1974. Dorn's vehicle was a newspaper called *Bean News* which they filled with all sorts of crazy stuff, rebuses, attacks on the Nixon White House, pieces on environmentalism and contributions from their network of correspondents. Their visas expired and Valarie Raworth took jobs as a housecleaner to support their young family. When their building was due to be demolished they lived in the Dorns' apartment while Ed was away teaching, then moved to the Teter's cabin in Camp Meeker up in the dank redwood groves of Northern California. It was a typical hand-to-mouth poet's existence. Tom went on reading tours. In Buffalo he was being seen off at the Greyhound station by Bob Creeley when some undercover customs agents heard his London accent and asked to see his papers. The Raworths were ordered to be deported. At the Immigration hearing in San Francisco the official told Val, "You shouldn't be here — you're white!"

For once they got a break. In 1977 Tom was offered the Chair of Poetry at Kings College, Cambridge. Val found, after 6 years away, that "everyone in England had gone really loopy." Inevitably after a year the position was turned over to another poet and Tom went on the dole while their precarious housing situation resumed. At the same time Tom's poetry was being taught at Cambridge — I wrote to the professor who reportedly was handing out Xeroxes of our book *The Mask*, saying this was illegal and the book was in print. He wrote back that \$7.50 was too much for his students to pay. And obviously paying the poet to come in and talk about his work was out of the question too.

Tom's letters which arrived once or twice a month were usually full of gloom, though he remembered to send me jokes. ("I called the IRA hunger strikers' hot line: eight nothing eight nothing eight nothing.") He had bronchitis as well as a bad heart and was perennially broke. My letters and tapes of music cheered him up, and he was always asking for drugs, "to be mailed with fake return address". His own letters came from addresses such as "R. Mugabe / "See Few" / Kraal Ave / Zim-ba-bwe." Or he would address the letter in rhyming couplets, making me Johnston Al, to go with Berkeley Cal.

An aerogramme, sent 6 June 1979 was decidedly perky:

c/o Dr John Barrell

(5 sneezes)

(gets out of bed to find handkerchief — 9.10 returns

with red spotted handkerchief – 9.11 – notes problem with digital clocks
– journey to jeans only took 8 seconds)

June 5th

Dear Al – Your *Freshest Advices* arrived and were read straight through (and believe me – most that arrives don't attract more than a flick and a throw) – apart from the “fact” that they are readable I like (a) the occasional informational quote and (b) certain observations I would have made in your place. Meanwhile I drank the large glass of KNOCKMEDOWN 12 year old whisky that was on the mantelpiece shielded from flies by the invitation to “Mr & Mrs Tim Raworth” to attend the party to open the Pottery Festival to be attended by A Ginsberg, A Davie, A Waldman, A Sissons and Uncle Tom Cobblers and all. But believe me, we have a plan – nothing less than the first issue of *The Times* since it stopped last November. Fun's the thing!

Well, I just called room service (jiggle the extension and *someone* always picks up the kitchen phone) and my tea and mail (letter from Ed, cheque from Social Security) should be up in a moment.

Yesterday we went to the English Faculty party and I had a minor heart attack – we were whisked off in a cab and I later discovered a bright student had phoned for the Fire Brigade and an Ambulance – I'm sorry I missed the ensuing chaos.

Despite a minor heart attack the impending poetry festival in Cambridge spurred Tom into action. With typewriter, collage and rudimentary paste-up skills he & his friend Dr John Barrell (an old friend from Essex with whom he was living), a Fellow at Kings College and author of works on John Clare and Coleridge, produced a two-page Xeroxed paper “The Times” with attacks on the contemporary poets reading at the festival.

The main article is a piece on Charles Olson “No Ordinary O” with subheads taken from an article on the “gas industry”:

Opportunities in the Gas Industry

By Nikki Newstub / Energy Correspondent

The news that ‘big’ Charles Olson did not die of verbal diarrhea a decade ago, but was misfiled in his own archives while searching for his marbles has stunned the poetry world. Rumoured as the man behind the notorious ‘Closed Form’ deaths, CO (as he liked to be known) told of his horrifying

years as a culture fragment of himself. “In all labour” he murmured “there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.”

Sinking and Boring

In the rarified atmosphere of the vaults his very chemical structure has changed. But, shrugging his Nordic shoulders, he thought it poetically just that his reappearance should be as CO₂. “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels” he billowed.

Boring and Tunnelling

Dr. George Bowering, Curator of the Charles Olson Archives, is not convinced. “How do we know,” he asked, “that this isn’t a lot of hot air? The Charles I knew wouldn’t have been breathed in by a plant.”

Wellborers and Sinkers

But in New York, writer Fielding Dawson (“The Stain on the Union Carpet”) takes a different view. “Of the 400 father figures I’ve had so far” he punned, Chas. was numero uno. To think that each time I breathe out I’ll add a little of myself to him is more than a son could dream. Baseball’s a great game.”

Air Con Man

Asked if he would make a surprise appearance at the festival, CO₂ glyphed “If that’s the way the wind blows.”

(“Talk leads to penury,” is from King James’ *Book of Proverbs*; “I am poured out like water,” is from *Psalms* 22.) Charles Olson had been a major figure in American letters and Dorn had been one of his students at Black Mountain, even taking on his lifelong project of writing about the American West at his teacher’s suggestion. But Dorn gradually came to think of him as a burbling old fool, producing in 1977 the spoof *Folger’s* (instant coffee whose TV spokesperson was Mrs Olsen; the tenuous connection being their slogan, “It’s mountain-grown”). Raworth had been impressed enough to publish him for the first time in England in his magazine *Outburst* in 1961. Olson’s book *West* appeared in 1967 from his Matrix Press. But Raworth found the big man’s endless monologue hard to take when he came through London. Then, said Raworth, “Olson bombarded us with letters about *West*: move this here, move that there, do this, do that — until we stopped opening the mail, did the book the way we thought, and on publication received an ecstatic telegram of thanks.”

On a reading tour, Raworth visited the Charles Olson archives at the University of

Connecticut. He was astounded when George Bowering, the curator, demonstrated how big Olson had been by putting on his raincoat and showed such reverence for the odds and ends of clothing and paraphernalia they held, as if they were religious artifacts. On being shown the marbles Olson had played with as a child Raworth couldn't resist the temptation to stick a couple in his pocket, hence the allusion to "Olson's lost marbles" in the story.

But how did Fielding Dawson, a seemingly sympathetic writer from Black Mountain, end up getting slagged off in here also? Dawson had used to his connection to Dorn to come and visit Holbrook Teter and Michael Myers when they lived on a remote mountaintop outside Healdsburg, California. Dawson insisted on a diet of fresh calves' liver and vodka every day, which required Holbrook driving down the treacherous mountain road to Safeway. Meanwhile Dawson lay on a rock intent on getting a perfect suntan.

Gary Snyder is next to get a turn in Raworth & Barrell's barrel. The poet, whose ex-wife Joanne Kyger referred to him as "one of the Zen Boy Scouts," affected a back-to-nature earthiness while surrounded by young acolytes in the California back country. Zephyrus Image had made several attacks on the Hippies.

A still from an old Western is captioned "**Help save this vanishing America,**" and "Crossing Turtle Island, Gary Snyder tells John Wayne how to cut loose from the cancer of exploitation-heavy-industry perpetual growth and eat only true bio-regional-proto-mytho-poeia."

Older Establishment poets Donald Davie and C. H. Sisson are satirized as a couple of stoners in a Brixton squat. In his *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (1952), Davie suggested a "return to Hardy" and two decades later was rejecting the influence of William Carlos Williams on English poetry.

Tom & Dr John write, under the found cut-up heading

Tell us about pingoscope and pogrit

From his squat in Brixton Donald Davie explained that in the debate on Poetry and Commitment he will base his argument on the structured non-linear text which will begin with unemployment and uneasy near-blank pages. As a time is defined across scrawled lines / rips, slowly a collection of declaration and comments will build up over assorted fairly morbid visual designs. He passed the pipe to Sisson who added, "The piece centres on an empty score. At the end the same time reappears – little has changed. The text evokes a combination of emptiness and schism across an authority dispute and is moving without forcing sentiment."

Richard Burns, presumably a Thatcherite education minister, appears under the heading

MORE WORK ON CHILD MIGRANE

Richard Burns has announced that, in solidarity with local teachers' refusal to monitor extra curricular activities, the Poetry in Schools programme will now take place during the summer holidays.

SUMLOCK CALCULATING SERVICES

Sound Poets were discussing last night their strategy for this weekend's meeting. News that the Arts Council had cut their grant by 50% forced them to debate whether all should read at normal volume for half the given time, all should read in a whisper for the whole time, or half should read twice as loudly for half the time.

This is amusing in light of the fact that later in his career, Raworth began reading his poetry at breakneck speed. The rest of the front page is taken up with a crossword which I am sorry to say I cannot complete, though 1 Down: Will Alfred get her into the garden? must be MAUD. Other clues are "How a sound poet and Jane Fonda might express themselves (10)"

The "Arts Diary" on page two starts with

LANGUAGE JUST FOR TWO

A few weeks before the Festival opened, there took place in Cambridge one of the most popular events in the poetry calendar, a reading of women's poetry by Wendy Mulford and Denise Riley.

Screw man

The voluptuous Miss Mulford was showing off her new, "way-out", "afro" hair style, and looked more attractive than ever in an off-the-shoulder, ankle-length kaftan in a charmingly feminine pink and white floral print (£75.50, from Liberty's), which fell in gentle folds from the bosom. Miss Riley's outfit was equally attractive, and just a little more daring - a peep-hole cat-suit in "nigger" brown did full justice to the sinuous lines of her slender figure.

Gangmasters

With such a delectable pair of lady-poets, the reading was bound to be a huge success, but what did the audience think of the poetry itself? 'Who cares?' said reading organizer Mr. David Lloyd: 'what red-blooded male is

going to listen to poetry with two such gorgeous lovelies to look at?

Miss Mulford agreed: 'We've got to get away from the whole concept that what women can contribute to poetry is just poetry: they bring qualities of gentleness and beauty to occasions like this which men just can't supply.'

Hardcore Merchants

The public's pleasure during the Festival will be doubled with the arrival from North America of Miss Rosie Waldrop and Miss Anne "The Thinking Buddhist's Patti Smith" Waldman.

The intentional gratuitous sexism of this piece may seem a little over-the-top now, but it's worth it for the payoff about Anne Waldman. Raworth wrote to me in June 1979:

There was a Pottery Festival here with International Banjo Stars. John & I whipped up this little item and had it distributed by a gang of punks as the well-dressed poets entered Trinity College for their get-together party. Now I have incurred the wrath of Universal Lady Poets (who still haven't answered my last year's question "Why are you 'Women Poets' if you don't want to be called 'Bus conductress' or 'Lady Doctor'?"). Denise Riley (really a man who lisps) took great offence — but I've countered that with rumours that I'm passionately in love with her; and this week I've had a badge made saying WEAK AT DENISE. Anne Waldman, to give her her due, thought it was the only lively thing at the festival.

D. Davie and C. H. Sisson (the right wing — Davie's latest piece in *Stand* includes a sentence about how he can quite understand how an intelligent English youth could join the National Front) I did not see. But I heard from your old chum T. Pickard, who had it from Allen, that Sisson was very chummy to him (A.G.) through the festival, asked him to lunch, expressed interest in his poetry and buddhism — and then when A.G. got to London he received a most abusive letter from S. calling him, among other things, "a boring little jew"...

love / M. T. Bochs

His return address was "Nubar Gulbenkian / National Front /Blackheath"

The rest of the second side of the sheet is taken up with expository ripostes to John Wilkinson and David Gascoyne, the gay Surrealist poet whose letters to himself had recently been published:

GASCOIGNE PEES

David Gascoyne, a leader of the neo-desperatist movement in the thirties, today disclaimed any connection with the neo-gasumphers of Lower Sloane Street. ‘They’re spelt differently,’ he pointed out, ‘and besides, I don’t.’ It is this serene quality of confidence, so notable a feature of his recently published Journals, that enables Gascoyne to endure uncomfortably long sessions in the Union Chamber without complaint.

Jig and tool design

‘If nothing turns up,’ he explained, ‘I usually find it quite easy to do without till the next time. One could hardly call this being “enflamed”— just moist warmth and a gentle pain between the thighs.’

The icing on the cake is the final three column inches about our old friend the self-publicist and ‘Beat’ poet Allen Ginsberg. Again there’s a found headline that kicks off the story

GINSBURG SON’S PLEA REJECTED

Passaic, N.J.

An unnamed New Jersey kindergarten teacher revealed today that her newborn son is the long-awaited Ginsberg Two. Petite, dark Mrs. X-stein (28) paused in her cooking to tell our reporter: ‘At first I didn’t believe it ... we’ve always been a normal family. Joseph, my husband, has been abroad for two years planting trees, so when a plump Oriental wearing evening dress, drinking champagne and smoking a cigar, appeared in the den on a yellow silk cushion I thought at first he was from Western Union. He told me to take off my clothes and, as I am an anarchist, I complied. Over a bowl of chicken soul he explained his mission, checked the baby’s I.Q., counted his toes, and declared himself totally satisfied. Then, with a “poof”, he vanished. Five seconds later a lady calling herself Ann Charters rang the bell, since when she’s huddled beside the crib day and night with a tape recorder. I suppose it’s for the best.

(I thought “chicken soul” was a nice typo.) In addition to the endless Naropa scandals, another of Raworth’s pet peeves was the way the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets (or Linguistas for short) co-opted poets retroactively, claiming him, among others, as one of their own. Raworth had little time for them, apart from Kit Robinson and later, Fanny Howe and Lyn Hejinian when they were able to finance him on reading tours. “I hear I can earn \$15 for Sebastopol reading for Bromige!” he wrote in 1993, and “Ray Di Palma writes me that HE invented L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry,” he told me. He hated poetry movements especially militant ones

run by arrogant pricks and silly men. He wrote that he “sent a box of Alphabet Spaghetti to some folk in Ohio wanting a response for their magazine.” Later he was astounded when they sent him a copy of the magazine and they had divided up his package of pasta and put one or two letters in glassine envelopes and tipped them into the magazine under his name. His next letter arrived with the return address “International Committee for Violent Red Revolution by Art Terror and Public Breast Feeding / Malcolm X Tower / Havana / Libya”.

After another heart attack in May 84 he wrote:

“Fourteen books by Philip Heaney-Hughes Plath were listed best of the century by a committee of megaliths last week. Bunting and Pound just scraped in beating Douglas Dunn by well.... I FELT the team thought in fact he had the MORAL VICTORY. But pickpoets are everywhere, wanting it to be ‘accessible’. You can detect I feel like shit and am trying to distract myself.”

Sadly it was a constant problem: “Patchy note, I know, but I feel like shit – and the bronchitis cough always fucks up my heart (“Avoid infection” says the consultant – you’d really pay for advice like that).”

Tom carried an ampule of nitroglycerine in case he had to restart his heart, though if he was unconscious it’s hard to imagine how he’d do this: he once wrote that he collapsed in a field and was woken up by a cow licking his face. His struggles with his health were exacerbated by having to move or having landlords seize his property, on more than one occasion, causing a loss of his library as well as furniture. “Books arrived, safely forwarded three times” he wrote in April 1980. He promised me a tape of a conversation between John Latimer and Pip Benveniste: “I was amused when John Latimer explained that Asa [Benveniste] was the only small publisher of the period who actually set type himself. A few weeks after that I got a program from the same place, and Nathaniel Tarn was reading ... he was listed as ‘founder and editor of Cape Goliard, and publisher of Olson, Dorn, Zukofsky and many others for the first time in Britain.’ Thus do the ignorant brush away our tracks in the sand.”

This same letter (November 29 1995) was written at “a gloomy time” but lightens up for some juicy literary gossip:

As far as I know, Stefan Rutabaga is in Paris where, no doubt, he is the Clayton Eschelman of the expats, swilling vino and getting tattooed with Oliver and Notley (purveyors of fine groceries to the Princess of Wales). My last information was some months ago, when I had lunch with Claude Royet-Journoud who said to me “Ooo eez zees Rodifer? I am in my apartment one evening, I ’ave zee curtains drawn, I want to watch something on my television. Zere eez a noise een ze street. Someone shouting my name. Of course I egnore eet. But zen some’ow ee get eento my building,

ee eez up ze stairs, pounding at my door, shouting “Claude ... Claude ...” — so he’s alienated the natives. Andrew Sch.... I met only once, in Boulder, at a dinner at Bobbie-Louise’s ... he was reputed to be terribly intelligent... which apparently was based on his translations from a language no-one else knew. His writing I found tedious in the extreme. I am not Ernest Hemingway.

I’ll stick a copy of Barry [Hall]’s obit... not much to be done in that formal space except try to note the “British” events. Now with him, Asa, Piero [Heliczer], all gone, there are very few voices to tell the tale of those times.”

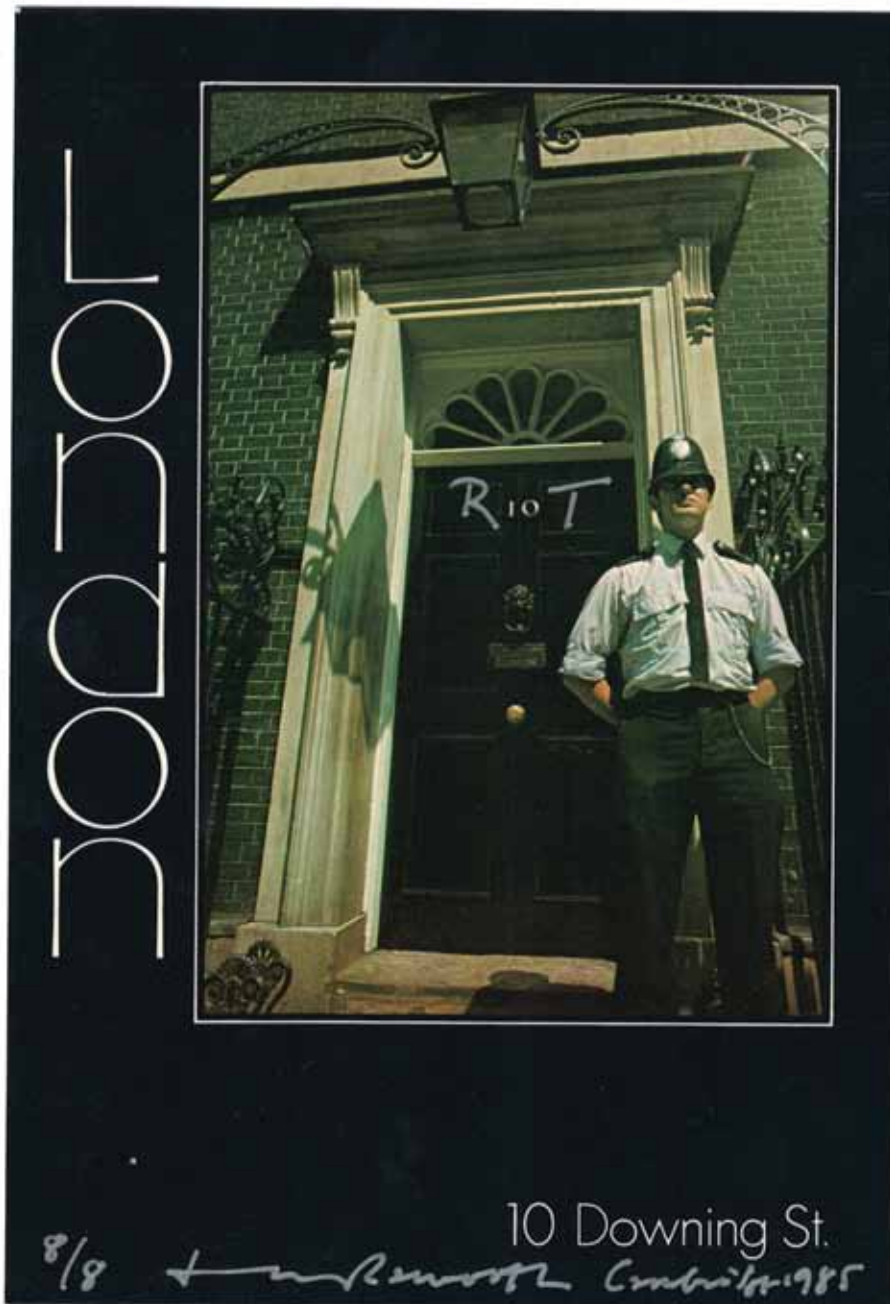


Polaroid of a painted bicycle store window in Cambridge, sent to me by TR 1980; left: Tom & Valarie Raworth, “Reality Check-point” Cambridge, August 1980; photo by AJ



AJ & Valarie Raworth, 132 Ditton Fields, Cambridge, August 1980; photo by TR who wrote to Holbrook Teter: "Alastair came by today, looking about as Berkeley as you can get..." Below: collage by TR 1993





*Altered postcard by TR 1985; opposite: The Times, June 1979,
by Tom Raworth & John Barrell*

No 60,473
Price fifteen pence

THE TIMES

Fashion: Facing
both ways,
page 2

NO ORDINARY OPPORTUNITIES in the gas industry

By Miss Rowland

The news that 'Big' Charles Olson did not die of verbal diarrhoea a decade ago, but was six-footed in his own archives while searching for his marbles has stunned the poetry world. Renowned as the man behind the notorious "Cannex Form" deaths, CO (as he liked to be known) told of his horrifying years as a culture-fragments of himself. "In all labour," he murmured "there is profit: but the talk of the lips treads only to penury."

Sinking and Boring

In the rarified atmosphere of the vortices his very chemical structure has changed. But, shrugging his Nordic shoulders, he thought it peculiarly just that his re-appearance should be an O2. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels" he believed.

Boring and Tunneling

Dr. George Bowering, Curator of the Charles Olson Archives, is not convinced. "How do we know," he asked, "that this isn't a lot of hot air? The Charles I knew wouldn't have

been breathed in by a plant."

Wellhorers and Sinkers

But in New York, writer Pauling Dawson ("The Stain on the Union Carpet") takes a different view. "Of the 'CO' father figure, as I've had so far," he punned, "Chas. was numero uno. To think that each time I breathe out I'll add a little of myself to his is more than a son could dream. Baseball's a great game."

Air Can Men

Asked if he would make a surprise appearance at the Festival, CO glibbed "If that's the way the wind blows."

PETER BACON
WOPFOLKS ONLY
FRAGMENTIZER
Buyers of all kinds of Famous
Non-Famous Mugs
Also Candles & Paper
BEST PRICES
FRIGHT PAYMENT
ASHWICKEN 281

SUMLOCK CALCULATING SERVICES

Some Poets were discussing last night their strategy for this week-end's reading. News that the Arts Council had cut their grant by 50% forced



Help save this vanishing America

Crossing Turtle Island, Gary Snyder tells John Wayne how to cut losses from the cancer of exploitation-heavy industry perpetual-growth and eat only true bio-regional-proto-mytho-poets.

Tell us about pingscope and pogrit

From his squat in Brixton Donald Davis explained that in the debate on Poetry and Commitment he will base his argument on a structural non-linear text which will begin with unemployement and uneasy near-black pages. As a time is defined across scrawled lines of collection, and comment up over a morbid view passed by Dixon who piece center arose. At same time little was, last evokes of certainties across an epistle and is out forcing

them to debate whether all should read at normal volume for half the given time, all should read in a whisper for the whole time, or half should read twice as loudly for half the time.

- Answers to the Times Crossword Puzzle
1. A 1000 to attract this poet (7)
 2. This article was also for certain area (7)
 3. The lead the way? These fall for a read see (3)
 4. The little devil followed by fifty of you suggesting something (5)
 5. Rise of her year over her try lead's edge (5)
 6. Landing a temperature about a short (10)
 7. See in early lift some not alone (10)
 8. Peter Jackson would be dressed right if he heard I had followed (10)
 9. "Till '76" and "and" and "and" see the end (10)
 10. A fast reader digesting will lead's preposition (10)
 11. At night on St. Friday (11)
 12. Stories of an armer provide the cross (11)
 13. In trouble? Try to (11)
 14. See and the French sometimes after relating (10)
 15. It's not always with the side, but has certain social possessions (17)
 16. A poet brought before a member and his offering could be some (10)
 17. In Kentucky, we find (10)
 18. How a good poet and Joe Fonda might appear themselves (10)
 19. Introducing the village with about research, with forces involved (10)
 20. History shows it, ignoring (10)
 21. (a) He is there, his get with conversation at hour (8)
 22. The team a poet roughly, to act like a devil (8)
 23. The "Man" a spirit or an act of remembrance (10)
 24. What the "Poetry" festival purports to be (8)
 25. A meal with the special something about the middle (10)
 26. He left away, confused by poetry, perhaps? (10)
 27. Ted made his across far (10)
 28. What those who are in the direction should be put on (10)

CHILD
Richard Burr said that, with local, Paul to curricular, Poetry in range will during the days.

SHAH REPORTED TO HAVE MOVED
A major theme of this year's Poetry Festival is Poetry and Commitment, but a notable absentee from the great debate on this theme in the Union Chamber was John Wilkinson, the leading poet of the ultra-left in North Cambridge. "The whole assumption on which the debate was based," he explained to me over tea in his elegant but comfortable study, "was years out of date. 1000 years of craftsmanship," he continued, "have blunted the cutting edge of the language. Committed poets are increasingly rejecting the whole concept of poems that still use words -- they're turning to numbers instead." He took a sumptuously bound volume from one of the mahogany bookshelves that line the walls of his study -- it was the limited edition of his own "Poems in Mathematics" -- and opened it at the first page. In that excited but somehow indifferent tone of a poet who speaks his early work, he read "2 + 2 = 5".

Number Blasting
"That was my first number poem. In it I was trying to disrupt the expectations and inherited cultural determinations on which the whole of the western technological society is based. The reader, you see, expects the last number to be 4."

Gascoigne Pees
David Gascoigne, a leader of the neo-separatist movement in the thirties, today disclosed any connection with the neo-gangsters of Lower Elope Street. "They're spelt differently," he pointed out, "and besides, I don't. It is this sense of continuity, as you know, that is the feature of his recently-published 'Journal', that enables Gascoigne

to endure uncomfortably long sessions in the Union Chamber without complaint.

Big and Tool Design
"If nothing turns up," he explained, "I usually find it quite easy to do without till the next time. One could hardly call this being 'unfazed' -- just so to speak and a gentle pain between the thighs."

ARTS DIARY



LANGUAGE JUST FOR TWO

A few weeks before the Festival opened, there took place in Cambridge one of the most popular events in the poetry calendar, a reading of women's poetry by Wendy Mulford and Denise Riley.

Composers
With such a delectable pair of lady-poets, the reading was bound to be a huge success, but what did the audience think of the poetry itself? "Who cares?" said reading-organiser Mr David Lloyd; "what red-blooded male is going to listen to poetry with two such gorgeous ladies to look at?"

Hardcore Merchants
The public's pleasure during the Festival will be debilitated with the arrival from North America of Miss Rania Waldrop and Miss Anne "The Thinking Buddhist's Patti Smith" Waldman.

QUOTEL



Concrete Farmwork

An un-named New Jersey kindergarten teacher revealed today that her newborn son is the long-awaited Gineberg Two. Patricia, dark Mrs. I-stain (28) passed in her making to tell our reporter: "At first I didn't believe it... we've always been a normal family. Joseph, my husband, has been abroad for two years planting trees, so when a plump Oriental wearing evening dress, drinking champagne and smoking a cigar, appeared in the den on a yellow silk cushion I thought at first he was from Western Union. He told me to take off my clothes and, as I'm an anarchist, I complied. Over a bowl of chicken soup he explained his mission, checked the baby's I.Q., counted his toes and declared himself totally satisfied. Then, with a 'poof', he vanished. Five seconds later a lady calling herself Ann Charters sang the ball, since when she's huddled beside the crib day and night with a tape recorder. I suppose it's for the best."

Tool Manipulator Equipment
Vibration Consultant
"There's something to be said for that," he agreed, "if we could be sure that the reader would be sufficiently disoriented by the notion that--that--the one volume from one of the mahogany bookshelves that line the walls of his study -- it was the limited edition of his own "Poems in Mathematics" -- and opened it at the first page. In that excited but somehow indifferent tone of a poet who speaks his early work, he read "2 + 2 = 5".

CONCRETE FARMWORK

Concrete Farmwork
Vibration Consultant
"There's something to be said for that," he agreed, "if we could be sure that the reader would be sufficiently disoriented by the notion that--that--the one volume from one of the mahogany bookshelves that line the walls of his study -- it was the limited edition of his own "Poems in Mathematics" -- and opened it at the first page. In that excited but somehow indifferent tone of a poet who speaks his early work, he read "2 + 2 = 5".

CINSBURG SON'S PLEA REJECTED

Pasasio, N.J.
An un-named New Jersey kindergarten teacher revealed today that her newborn son is the long-awaited Gineberg Two. Patricia, dark Mrs. I-stain (28) passed in her making to tell our reporter: "At first I didn't believe it... we've always been a normal family. Joseph, my husband, has been abroad for two years planting trees, so when a plump Oriental wearing evening dress, drinking champagne and smoking a cigar, appeared in the den on a yellow silk cushion I thought at first he was from Western Union. He told me to take off my clothes and, as I'm an anarchist, I complied. Over a bowl of chicken soup he explained his mission, checked the baby's I.Q., counted his toes and declared himself totally satisfied. Then, with a 'poof', he vanished. Five seconds later a lady calling herself Ann Charters sang the ball, since when she's huddled beside the crib day and night with a tape recorder. I suppose it's for the best."