ARMED CELL 1

ARMED CELL 2

ARMED CELL 3

ARMED CELL 4
BRIAN ANG  CAN POETRY HAVE A SOCIOPOLITICAL IMPACT?

DAVID LAU  from COMMUNISM TODAY

JOSEF KAPLAN  from EX MACHINA

BRIAN ANG  from THE TOTALITY CANTOS

STEVEN ZULTANSKI  from UNTITLED POEM FOR POLICE
LOG AND MINUTE HAND

MAYA WEEKS  from EASTBOUND/NORTHBOUND

WENDY TREVINOS & DERECK CLEMONS  COMPLETE DESTRUCTION, OR TOTAL FREEDOM

JASPER BERNES  from WE ARE NOTHING AND SO CAN YOU

JOSHUA CLOVER  from QUESTIONS OF THE CONTEMPORARY

ANNE LESLEY SELCER  “AN ACCELERATED ALPHABET...”

Texts for Brian Ang’s “Post-Crisis Poetics” seminar at Crosstalk, Color, Composition: A Berkeley Poetry Conference, University of California, Berkeley, June 15-18, 2015. All issues of ARMED CELL are available at armedcell.blogspot.com.
Poetry can have a sociopolitical impact through how it constitutes communities toward forms of struggle adequate to acting on historical conditions. Within historical conditions, the totality of poetry’s social networks breaks down into overlapping communities defined by common aesthetic and political values, an expression of struggles within and between communities over those values. Within and between these communities, individuals struggle over values through the production and circulation of their poetries and other writings related to poetry, which manifest the values they want to advance. Poetry’s ordering of values can constitute communities with senses of their historical conditions, including desirable sociopolitical futures and forms of struggle adequate to those desires.

In a forthcoming essay, “Post-Crisis Poetics,” I connect readings of poetries that I’ve published in my magazine ARMED CELL. I started my magazine in August 2011 to publish poetry and poetics open to values emerging from the global waves of struggles since the 2008 economic crisis. The magazine’s title was drawn from a desire for militant intransigence signified by that form of struggle, a value of the California anti-austerity university struggles that began in 2009,¹ the first significant resistance to the crisis in the United States.² The university struggles are the context for the magazine’s first poem, David Lau’s “Communism Today”³: its first section ends “Occupy everything, including Humanities,” an extension of the university struggles’ slogan that influenced the Occupy movement⁴ that began in September 2011 from a politicization of space and time toward a politicization of knowledge, an emblem for the magazine’s desire for an historicized

Response to “Can poetry have a socio-political impact?” for Jacket2’s Quick Question series (February 2015).

¹ See After the Fall: Communiqués from Occupied California, http://afterthefallcommunicnes.info (February 2010), an anthology assessing the events of 2009.
⁴ See Joshua Clover, “The Coming Occupation,” in Kate Khatib, Margaret Killjoy, and Mike McGuire, eds., We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation (2012), 95-103.
critical poetics. My editing has aspired to assemble complexes for thinking about each issue’s moment’s unfolding multiple dimensions suggestive for further critical writing.

My essay elaborates what I find suggestive in these exemplary poetries for further critical writing in the post-crisis period in progress, including David Lau’s representation of the university struggles’ emergence in an historicized cultural matrix of meaning, Josef Kaplan’s transgression of moralism’s repressive representation of Palestinian violence, my desire for more totalizing signifying possibilities adequate to investigating reality, Steven Zultanski’s making legible of the police’s ideological propounding and subtle repression in daily life and Maya Weeks’ representation of hegemonic ideology’s continuous deintensification so that they can be continuously challenged and overcome, Wendy Trevino and Dereck Clemons’ representation of the Occupy movement’s horizons for future acts to open them further, Jasper Bernes’ possible future making post-crisis limits and prospects more legible for struggles to navigate them, and Joshua Clover’s inquiry into capital’s post-crisis dynamics for where to intervene.

To multiply the discussion, my essay closes with an invitation for further perspectives about what poetry and poetics contribute or could contribute to critically thinking about the post-crisis period in progress for a series that I’m editing to be published over the course of a month. The project of post-crisis poetics is the constituting of a community for searching out historical conditions, sociopolitical desires, and forms of struggle adequate to those desires in the period’s unfolding transformations to come.
Call-in request line binding force
cut back, fought
with Mozart and the percussion great
called Non-Los Angeles.
They came around the

building with our comrades
in front of them as shields.
Fuck Dave Kliger.
Which one of these anarchist faggots stole my SIM card?
See if the janitor has the key to open these doors.

He’s the person we need everything.
The telos today closer to undead,
insurrectionary Velazquezes incapable
of enduring independent labor monitors—
wild Mike is straight up drugs.

Sri Lankan and subjective confusions
adopted that language
as in Balzac when rude boys
had rivers to cross.
A snort of laughter to knot

en El Encanto Sanitarium
near the freeway river flowing 100,000 stanzas,
let Placitas bloom 1,000 at a time
quickly into inauspicious jobs.
Occupy everything, including Humanities

First poem in ARMED CELL 1 (August 2011).
On the morning of April 16th, 1993, Hamas operative Saher Tamam al-Nabulsi drove a Volkswagen Transporter to Mehola Junction, a rest area on the Jordan Valley Highway in the West Bank. Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas bombmaker, had rigged the car to explode using three large propane tanks and explosives collected from grenades and other ordinance.

Just after 1:00 AM, al-Nabulsi pulled the car in between two buses and reached for the detonator switch Ayyash had connected to the driver’s controls… but suddenly Athena, daughter of Zeus, who bears the aegis, shouted aloud for him to refrain. Al-Nabulsi’s hand curled in pale fear and the switch remained untouched. And all lived.
from THE TOTALITY CANTOS

Relaxation churches unintentionally restructuring mastery exception manuscripts
Known cultural able-bodied simple plutocratic proportion dualism energy signs
Home death tendency novelty alliance guard failure overstressed Predicative
Old world-laden frustration copy act around return coterie rebellion mistresses
Available earth interlocutors moderate fashion emperor Better bland origin
Restless gunpowder disemboweling hierarchy philosophy
Pagan century party withdrawn Difficulties stirred
Hand introduction symbol man storms paradigm conference School portrays
Made rights dealt disparate poetry counties
Temporal intelligence number

From ARMED CELL 2 (January 2012).
from UNTITLED POEM FOR POLICE LOG AND MINUTE HAND

12:01 a.m. Group of people outside yelling.

12:02 a.m. Violation of the city noise ordinance.

12:03 a.m. Police respond to a report that a snow blower is keeping residents awake, but no one is seen using a snow blower.

[...]  

12:16 a.m. A 24 year-old man was assaulted in a home.

12:17 a.m. A woman calls to report that a male wearing a black hoodie and a surgical mask over his face had been following her. Officer Hickey located the subject and he was sent out of the area.

12:18 a.m. Assault.

First poem in ARMED CELL 3 (June 2012).
from EASTBOUND/NORTHBOUND

it’s just the same as last year 
enjoy the evening 

indeterminate bias 
youngish in the 
kitchen a damn 
sexy mess

it is the function 
of a preposition 
to locate 
the position 
of a thing 
to which 
it relates

OCCUPY GET THE FUCK 
OUT OF OAKLAND

this is not the way i understand 
justice and forgiveness

handwashing always easier 
than expected

First poem in ARMED CELL 4 (February 2013).
COMPLETE DESTRUCTION, OR TOTAL FREEDOM

Relying on relations, exploiting them in order to compensate for the ways your privilege has not prepared you for the work you do

*

You go over & over what someone said—

How friendships forged from the hatred of a common enemy

Are less secure, you forget, than what—

Thinking instead of the lack of an unnecessary center,

How the marches converged in Cairo & Montreal,

How by the time you got to the square you were thousands,

You were pulling down a fence

First poem in ARMED CELL 5 (August 2013).
This was one of the first depots to emerge from the revolutionary wars. It was used, originally, as arms stockpile and supply zone for partisans who did not fight in order to create communism but for whom the creation of communism was itself an act of war. The elaboration of zones like these – places where anyone could take what they needed – was an offensive act, more powerful than blowing up a bridge or a munitions factory. You can still see the battlements lying around in the middle distance, and this explains, perhaps, the somewhat heavy-handed design of the depot, constructed by people who were born in and had lived decades under despotisms of all sorts, under the boot of wage and market and compelled work, and who carried these things in them, they felt, as one carries disease in remission. Literalists of the revolution, then, whose penchant for overkill was held back, thankfully, by the modest range of their power.
Some big container ships are coming back some are underwater. One standard 40 ft container equals two Twenty foot Equivalent Units or TEUs but so does one Hi-Cube despite eight additional m$^3$ it’s not an exact science like Max Martin. Just a slab of unfigured air a kind of room to move. The desire of a planetary civilization three pct maybe three point five and enough left over for the aesthetic. Annualize that shit.

What if it’s just cruel mercantile plus dubstep from here on out.

What if it’s just if the rich win the living will envy the dead. Why do things keep on because reasons.

First poem in ARMED CELL 7 (July 2014).
An accelerated alphabet
a mumbled picture

a ridiculous florescence of page after page
peacocked on a green screen

as if each term flagrantly raised an objection
against its own denotative power

under local clouds

now it’s your turn to fall down
from the love of the look

that turned politics to puddles
turned it to feathers

slowed it to pollen
slowed it to oil which shimmers in a slick

a scripto continua an angel wrote
then threw like a parachute into thin air

each corner held down by a small child
who, unemployed & not yet signified sings,

“empire is everywhere nothing happens
everywhere everything happens all at once.”

First poem in ARMED CELL 8 (February 2015).