

ALMOST ISLAND

Contributors: Monsoon 2007

Sarah Shun-lien Bynum's first novel, *Madeleine Is Sleeping*, was nominated for a National Book Award. Her short fiction has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Tin House*, *The Georgia Review*, and *Best American Short Stories*. A recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award and an NEA fellowship, she lives in Los Angeles and teaches writing at the University of California, San Diego.

Mikhail N. Epstein (Epshtein) was born in Moscow in 1950 but has lived in the United States since 1990, where he teaches at Emory University. He remains one of Russia's most respected philosophers and theorists, and the author of a range of quirky, highly individualistic, somewhat Borgesian projects—invented researches, disciplines, arts, neologisms on subjects as varied as “touch art”, new movements in Russian poetry, and “post-atheism.” He works through what he calls “potentiation” that “both inherits the method of deconstruction and moves beyond it”—towards a kind of constructive inventiveness. His latest project is “On the Future of the Humanities: Paradigmatic Shifts and Emerging Concepts”. Translations of Epstein's 17 books and approximately 400 essays and articles can often be found in library catalogues under his Russian surname, Epshtein.

David Herd is the author of a book of poetry, *Mandelson! Mandelson! A Memoir*, two books of critical prose (*Enthusiast! Essays on Modern American Literature* and *John Ashbery and American Poetry*) and co-author (anonymously) of *The Enthusiast Field Guide to Poetry*. From 2002-5 he was co-editor of *Poetry Review*. His poems, fictions, essays and reviews have appeared in, among other publications: *The Guardian*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The TLS*, *The New Statesman*, *PN Review*, *The Enthusiast*, and *Another Magazine*. He lives in Whitstable with the members of his family. He is currently writing a long story featuring a hut.

Kent Johnson is the editor and literary executor of the poets Araki Yasusada, Tosa Motokiyu and Alexandra Papaditsas, the translator into English (with Forrest Gander) of the major Bolivian poet Jaime Saenz, and the author, most recently, of the books of poems *Lyric Poetry After Auschwitz: Eleven Submissions to the War* and *Epigramitis* (epigrams on 118 living American poets). An important selection of his various works recently appeared in Bosnia, from Eiffel's Bridge Books. He grew up in Uruguay and worked in rural Nicaragua in 1980 and 1983, teaching basic literacy and adult education during the Sandinista revolution, translating and

compiling an anthology of Nicaraguan working class poets. He currently teaches English composition and Spanish at Highland Community College in Illinois.

Rakesh Khairalia [*Cybermohalla Collective*] was born in 1978, in Chakpheri Village, Uttar Pradesh. Rakesh did several jobs after finishing school. After an attempt to set up his own courier company failed, he worked in a printing press (screen printing), as a marketing agent and supervisor for different companies, as a cashier and as an agent in a job agency. He joined the Cybermohalla Lab at Dakshinpuri, in 2004. He is currently researching how different kinds of conversational contexts in the locality can be learnt from and deepened.

James Alan McPherson was born on September 16, 1943 in Savannah, Georgia. He is a short story writer and essayist, and a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1973. His books include *Hue and Cry*, *Railroad*, *Elbow Room*, *A Region not Home*, and *Crabcakes*. He won the 1978 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, for his short story collection, *Elbow Room*. He was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in 1981. His work has appeared in twenty-seven journals and magazines, seven short-story anthologies, and *The Best American Essays*. In 1995, McPherson was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was educated at Morris Brown College, Harvard Law School, The University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop, and the Yale Law School. He has taught English at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Harvard, and also lectured in Japan at Meiji University and Chiba University. He is now a professor of English at the University of Iowa.

Tosa Motokiyu (along with collaborators Ojiu Norinaga and Okura Kyojin) first came to prominence in the mid-1990s as a purported translator of the Japanese poet and survivor of the Hiroshima massacre, Araki Yasusada. When Yasusada was revealed as an elaborate fiction, Motokiyu presented himself as the author of the works in question, and subsequently asserted that "Motokiyu" itself was merely the pen name of an author whose legal will requested that his true name never be revealed. As with the transcribed "tape-essay" here, Motokiyu's works locate themselves in a truly international sense of the avant-garde, and often take apart the idea of authorship in ways that are both playful and dark. He was believed to have died of cancer in 1996, but the tape essay included here carries some surprising new news. An introduction to the Yasusada controversy can be entered online via *Jacket Magazine*.

Jaanu Naagar [*Cybermohalla Collective*] was born in 1985, in Badagaon, Machihari, Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh. He completed his school education in Fatehpur and his BA first year from Delhi University. He taught for one year in Janhitkari Saraswati Vidya Mandir in Fatehpur. He did a one year computer course from Daryaganj, Delhi. He has always nurtured an interest in writing in Hindi. He joined the Cybermohalla Lab in Nangla Maanchi, Delhi in 2005, where he lived, and till August 2006, when Nangla was demolished, he created an archive of audio recordings about Nangla. Presently he continues to be with Cybermohalla.

Srikanth Reddy's first collection of poetry, *Facts for Visitors* (UC Press, Berkeley) was widely acclaimed in its "attempt to reconstruct a history of our kind as if from some as-yet unknown vantage point" (Jorie Graham) and also received the 2005 Asian American Literary Award for Poetry. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *American Poetry Review*, *The Canary*, *Fence*, *Grand Street*, and *jubilat*. Reddy is currently an assistant professor of English at the University of Chicago.

Rodrigo Rey Rosa was born in Guatemala in 1958; his fiction has been translated into English (by Paul Bowles), French, Italian, German, Dutch, Danish, Greek, Portuguese, Swedish, Russian and Japanese. He is the author of four short story collections and eight novels. Some of his titles include *The Good Cripple*, *The Pelcari Project*, *Dust on Her Tongue* and *Ningún Lugar Sagrado*. He lives and works in Guatemala.

Yashoda Singh [*Cybermohalla Collective*] was born in 1983, in Delhi. Yashoda left school after ninth class, and began to write after emerging from a difficult marriage. She has been with the Cybermohalla Lab at LNJP, Delhi, since 2001 and is presently the editor of the quarterly Cybermohalla broadsheet, *Bade Bade Shehron Mein Kuchh Numm Baaten* ("Soft Sounds and Conversations in Large, Loud Cities").

George Szirtes was born in Budapest in 1948. His family were refugees from the 1956 Uprising and settled in England where he studied sciences at school, trained as an artist and finished up being a poet and translator. His first book, *The Slant Door* won the Faber Prize in 1980. His twelve books since have won various awards, most recently the T S Eliot Prize for *Reel* (2004). He has been translating from the Hungarian since his first return in 1984 and has published over a dozen books of translated prose, verse and drama that have won a number of prizes. He has edited a number of anthologies of Hungarian writing and written a book on art as well as a number of libretti and musicals. He reviews for *The Guardian*, *The Times* and other papers and teaches part time at the University of East Anglia. He is

married to the artist Clarissa Upchurch, with whom he has published *Budapest: Image, Poem, Film* (2006)

Eliot Weinberger's books of literary essays include *Works on Paper*, *Outside Stories*, *Karmic Traces*, and, most recently, *An Elemental Thing*. His political articles are collected in *What I Heard About Iraq* and *What Happened Here: Bush Chronicles*. He is the editor of *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry* and *World Beat: International Poetry Now* from New Directions. Among his translations are the *Collected Poems of Octavio Paz*, *Jorge Luis Borges: Selected Non-Fictions* (in the UK: *The Total Library*), *Vicente Huidobro's Altazor*, and *Unlock* by Bei Dao.