11-2001

Bern Porter International: Volume 5 Number 21 (November 1, 2001)

Bern Porter
Sheila Holtz
Natasha Bernstein

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters

Part of the American Literature Commons, Art Practice Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation
Porter, Bern; Holtz, Sheila; and Bernstein, Natasha, "Bern Porter International: Volume 5 Number 21 (November 1, 2001)" (2001). Newsletters. 65.
https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters/65

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Bern Porter Collection of Contemporary Letters at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsletters by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby. For more information, please contact mfkelly@colby.edu.
EAVESDROPPING IN AMERICA

Poems in Progress
by Natasha Bernstein

1.
After September 11th
at McDonald's in Connecticut
beautiful Caucasian women
still talk about
shopping

2.
After September 11th
at McDonald's in Connecticut
beautiful Caucasian women
in designer jeans
wear little enamel stars and bars
on their turtlenecks.

After they leave
a minimum wage worker
with dark skin
and a long white braid
busses their American trash
wipes their American masonite
sweeps their American floor.
NEW YORK IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY OF PEOPLE WHO COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

TODAY THE PEOPLE OF NEW YORK HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ, VIETNAM AND OTHER COUNTRIES WHO HAVE LOST LOVED ONES TO AMERICAN BOMBS. SOMEONE WANTED REVENGE ON THE UNITED STATES AND THEY GOT IT. NOW IT IS AMERICANS WHO WANT REVENGE.

WE CAN HAVE OUR REVENGE. THERE CAN BE LOTS AND LOTS OF REVENGE. OR WE CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER HOW TO FORGIVE, AND GROW.
"First Writing Since" by Suheir Hammad

September 25, 2001
Suheir is the author of "Born Palestinian, Born Black" and other books.

1. there have been no words.
   i have not written one word.
no poetry in the ashes south of canal street.
no prose in the refrigerated trucks driving debris and dna.
not one word.

today is a week, and seven is of heavens, gods, science.
evident out my kitchen window is an abstract reality.
sky where once was steel.
smoke where once was flesh.

fire in the city air and i feared for my sister's life in a way never before. and then, and now, i fear for the rest of us.

first, please god, let it be a mistake, the pilot's heart failed, the plane's engine died.
then please god, let it be a nightmare, wake me now.
please god, after the second plane, please, don't let it be anyone who looks like my brothers.

i do not know how bad a life has to break in order to kill.
i have never been so hungry that i willed hunger
i have never been so angry as to want to control a gun over a pen.
not really.
even as a woman, as a palestinian, as a broken human being.
ever this broken.

more than ever, i believe there is no difference.
the most privileged nation, most americans do not know the difference between indians, afghanis, syrians, muslims, sikhs, hindus.
more than ever, there is no difference.

2. thank you korea for kimchi and bibim bob, and corn tea and the genteel smiles of the wait staff at wonjo the smiles never revealing the heat of the food or how tired they must be working long midtown shifts. thank you korea, for the belly craving that brought me into the city late the night before and diverted my daily train ride into the world trade center.

there are plenty of thank yous in ny right now. thank you for my lazy procrastinating late ass. thank you to the germs that had me call in sick. thank you, my attitude, you had me fired the week before. thank you for the train that never came, the rude nyer who stole my cab going downtown. thank you for the sense my mama gave me to run. thank you for my legs, my eyes, my life.

3. the dead are called lost and their families hold up shaky printouts in front of us through screens smoked up.

continued on page 6
BIGGEST HAUNTED HOUSE

SEE ALL YOUR FAVORITE HORROR FILMS LIVE

URBAN LEGENDS NEVER DIE.

All proceeds go toward H.O.M.E. Co-op to make houses and feed and help.

BLESS YOU!!!!

Halloween: The Homecoming Horror
With rumors that the infamous Michael Myers is still alive, a group of teenagers stage a fire in the house on Halloween night. Stars: Jamie Lee Curtis, Tyra Banks, Busta Rhymes.

See LIVE Alfred Hitchcock's Shower Scene with ELABORATE MOVIE SET.

See ALL LIVE LIKE HOLLYWOOD CANDYMAN.

The Exorcist: Come into Steven King's Needful Things and Thinner.

The Shinninining

DIRECTOR: BRIAN KUZINA

P.S. You don't have to go to the city for high quality ART...
BE ENTHUSEASTIC

PLEASE JOIN IN TO BE A PART OF OARLAND MAINES

FIRST EVER HALLOWEEN SPECTACULAR

CELEBRATION

HAUNTED HOUSE

A DARK HUMOROUS CHUCKLE FROM EVERY ADULT & TEEN

YES ME AND MY COVEN WILL JOIN YOU "BE STEREOTYPED GHOSTY CELEBS"

AFTER ALL, HOME CO-OP TEST

HAS BEEN SO GOOD TO ME. TRY TO EVERYONE!
we are looking for iris, mother of three. please call with any information. we are searching for priti, last seen on the 103rd floor. she was talking to her husband on the phone and the line went. please help us find george, also known as a! i del. his family is waiting for him with his favorite meal. i am looking for my son, who was delivering coffee. i am looking for my sister girl, she started her job on monday.

i am looking for peace. i am looking for mercy. i am looking for evidence of compassion. any evidence of life. i am looking for life.

4. ricardo on the radio said in his accent thick as yuca, "i will feel so much better when the first bombs drop over there. and my friends feel the same way."

on my block, a woman was crying in a car parked and stranded in hurt. i offered comfort, extended a hand she did not see before she said, "we"re gonna burn them so bad, i swear, so bad." my hand went to my head and my head went to the numbers within it of the dead iraqi children, the dead in nicaragua, the dead in rwanda who had to vie with fake sport wrestling for america's attention.

yet when people sent emails saying, this was bound to happen, lets not forget u.s. transgressions, for half a second i felt resentful.

hold up with that, cause i live here, these are my friends and fam, and it could have been me in those buildings, and we"re not bad people, do not support america's bullying. can i just have a half second to feel bad?

if i can find through this exhaust people who were left behind to mourn and to resist mass murder, i might be alright.

thank you to the woman who saw me brinking my cool and blinking back tears. she opened her arms before she asked "do you want a hug?" a big white woman, and her embrace was the kind only people with the warmth of flesh can offer. i wasn't about to say no to any comfort. "my brother's in the navy," i said. "and we"re arabs." "wow, you got double trouble." word.

5. one more person ask me if i knew the hijackers. one more motherfucker ask me what navy my brother is in. one more person assume no arabs or muslims were killed. one more person assume they know me, or that i represent a people.

or that a people represent an evil. or that evil is as simple as a flag and words on a page.

we did not vilify all white men when mcveigh bombed oklahoma. america did not give out his family's addresses or where he went to church. or blame the bible or pat robertson.

and when the networks air footage of palestinians dancing in the street, there is no apology that hungry children are bribed with sweets that turn their teeth brown. that correspondents edit images. that archives are there to facilitate lazy and inaccurate journalism.

and when we talk about holy books and hooded men and death, why do we never mention the kkk?

if there are any people on earth who understand how new york is feeling right now, they are in the west bank and the gaza strip.
6. today it is ten days. last night bush waged war on a man once
opened funded by the cia. i do not know who is responsible.
read too many books, know too many people to believe what i am told.
don't give a fuck about bin laden. his vision of the world does not include
me or those i love. and petitions have been going around for years
trying to get
the u.s. sponsored taliban out of power. shit is complicated, and i
don't know what to think.

but i know for sure who will pay.

in the world, it will be women, mostly colored and poor. women will
have to bury children, and support themselves through grief. "either
you are with us, or with the terrorists" - meaning keep your people
under control and your resistance censored. meaning we got the loot
and the nukes.

in america, it will be those amongst us who refuse blanket attacks on
the shivering. those of us who work toward social justice, in
support of civil liberties, in opposition to hateful foreign
policies.

i have never felt less american and more new yorker, particularly
brooklyn, than these past days. the stars and stripes on all these
cars and apartment windows represent the dead as citizens first, not
family members, not lovers.

i feel like my skin is real thin, and that my eyes are only going to
ger darker. the future holds little light.

my baby brother is a man now, and on alert, and praying five times a
day that the orders he will take in a few days time are righteous and
will not weigh his soul down from the afterlife he deserves.

both my brothers - my heart stops when i try to pray - not a beat to
disturb my fear. one a rock god, the other a sergeant, and both
palestinian, practicing muslim, gentle men. both born in brooklyn
and their faces are of the archetypal arab man, all eyelashes and
nose and beautiful color and stubborn hair.

what will their lives be like now?

over there is over here.

7. all day, across the river, the smell of burning rubber and limbs
floats through. the sirens have stopped now. the advertisers are
back on the air. the rescue workers are traumatized. the skyline is
brought back to human size. no longer taunting the gods with its
height.

i have not cried at all while writing this. i cried when i saw those
buildings collapse on themselves like a broken heart. i have never
owned pain that needs to spread like that. and i cry daily that my
brothers return to our mother safe and whole.

there is no poetry in this. there are causes and effects. there are
symbols and ideologies. mad conspiracy here, and information we will
never know. there is death here, and there are promises of more.

there is life here. anyone reading this is breathing, maybe hurting,
but breathing for sure. and if there is any light to come, it will

shine from the eyes of those who look for peace and justice after the
rubble and rhetoric are cleared and the phoenix has risen.

affirm life.
affirm life.
we got to carry each other now.
you are either with life, or against it.
affirm life.
Famous important men
of history
Archimedes, Plato, Aristotle
Hitler, Stalin, Tojo
Elvis & Joe Dimaggio
Osama bin Laden
is a piker compared to
any of the above
Goehring and the Luftwaffe
Himmler
Rommel & Gudren
Patton
them too
The siege of Leningrad
however
was all
I
wanted.
Winter ice and snow
starving every day
no fuel for heat
except
dead bodies.
A little bit of cooking grease
was all that was
saved
by Jesus and
the clergy.

#1
he wrote
poems
in
second grade
became an accountant
to earn his
living

#2
docile
factory
workers
needed
followers only
no
imagination

#3
in the good old USA
families ate
chemicals
for dinner
plastic forks
speared
the
buffalo heart

#4
dead indians
officiated
at
the
bacon
awards
on
TV

#5
they wrote
poems
in
second grade
became an accountant
with no
imagination

#6
some of them
escaped
from the
planet
beforehand
leaped
forward in
time
some of them
Japanese
Kamikaze
pilots
reincarnated
all
made
of
succulent
bacon

---

Bernstein & Holtz, eds.
BERN PORTER INTERNATIONAL
50 Salmond Street
Belfast, Maine 04913

We intend to try.

GIVE US
OUR DREAM

Green
Earth

With you we can do it.