

# A Rhythm Party

## Invitation

As for the poem, I claim rhythm's major role in its constitution of language-subjects. Because rhythm is no longer, even if certain illiterates haven't noticed, the back-and-forth play of the metronomic grammarians: rhythm is the language-organization of the continuance we are made of. With all the alterity which founds our identity. Scram, grammarians! All you need is a poem to lose your footing.

—Henri Meschonnic, "A Rhythm Party Manifesto"

We are considering hospitality a new discipline.

Georges Bataille, in *The Accursed Share*, studies gestures of waste and extravagance in terms of a general rather than a restricted economy.

From this perspective, the extravagant abjection of poetry is not a useless production but a necessary expenditure.

The conventions of hospitality are grounded in a closed system of gift and reciprocation.

Within an unrestricted economy, however, reciprocation opens to an unmeasured distribution of possible futures: infinite movement, or rhythms.

Under the auspices of this new discipline the university has extended invitations to two young poets living in Toronto, and asked them, in turn, to extend the invitation to two poets of their choice.

Aisha Sasha John and Liz Howard are the two initially invited poets. They have invited Erin Robinsong and Mat Laporte.

The poets will travel here in early May and stay for two or three nights, during which they will participate in a rhythm party.

—Lisa Robertson and Orlando Reade  
Princeton, March 2014

## Your Invitation

We did. We rhythm-partied: dinners, readings, dancing, writing, and conversation were means by which we elaborated a theory of poetry. Yes: in May 2014, four Toronto poets—Liz Howard, Aisha Sasha John, Mat Laporte, and Erin Robinsong—were hosted by students and faculty of Princeton University’s English department. Jeff Dolven, Dixon Li, Jesse McCarthy, Javier Padilla, Orlando Reade, and Kate Thorpe are the hosts whose works grace this folio. Our party was perfected by the presence of New York poets Katy Bohinc, Joni Murphy, and Ariana Reines. Henri Meschonnic’s “A Rhythm Party Manifesto” serving as our house, we were careful, generous entertainers to works on hospitality by Benveniste, Bataille, Derrida, and Ovid; in an exorbitant spirit of conviviality, we were radical hosts to each other. Our party bore fruit: forthcoming from Radiator Press is the chapbook *Canadian Xtasy*—and now, welcome here to our “illustrious useless poeisis.”<sup>1</sup>

—Liz Howard and Aisha Sasha John  
Toronto, January 2015

1 Robertson, Lisa. “Untitled Essay.” *Niling*. Toronto: Bookthug, 2012.