

ROGER FARR / Six Bay Area Poets with Varying Degrees of Affiliation with the 95-Cent Durruti School of Social Poetics

In 2010, Joshua Clover and Juliana Spahr called for an assembly in Berkeley—“the 95 Cent Skool”—of writers whose work was in some way informed by social struggle, emphasizing in particular self-identified Marxist and anarchist tendencies in contemporary poetics. As they wrote in their initial call:

Our concerns in these six days begin with the assumption that poetry has a role to play in the larger political and intellectual sphere of contemporary culture, and that any poetry which subtracts itself from such engagements is no longer of interest. ‘Social poetics’ is not a settled category, and does not necessarily refer to poetry espousing a social vision. It simply assumes that the basis of poetry is not personal expression or the truth of any given individual, but shared social struggle.

In response to this call, more than 20 people turned up from Canada, the US (including Hawaii), and the UK, to discuss the tensions, variants, and possibilities of a newly engaged social poetics. No consensus was reached and a very good time was had.

The following year, a second, smaller gathering took place, this time under the banner of the “Durruti Free Skool” (provocatively titled after the infamous Spanish anarchist-militant Buenaventura Durruti). A full account of this second session, by Brian Ang, can be found online at *Lana Turner*.

In this section of *TCR*, then, I have collected work by some of the Bay Area-based writers I met at the gatherings and whose work I admire. While I would not want to make the reductivist claim that the work in this section elaborates or represents the concerns that surfaced over the course of the two assemblies, it is worth noting that many of the Bay Area participants and organizers later became active in the Oakland Commune, a “zone of opacity” that completely blew up—in a good way—during the Occupy Wall Street actions of 2011. Certainly, *that* historical moment—“the first of many last resorts”—materializes here.

—ROGER FARR, August 2012