

UNBEARABLES FROM A TO Z

INTRODUCTION

The UNBEARABLES are a Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) of noir humorists and beer mystics. They first met in 1985 at the Tin Pan Alley Bar in Mid-Town Manhattan to drink and talk about literature, and to bemoan the shitty state of American culture. Peter Lamborn Wilson, one of the original members, got them a reading series at the Life Cafe in the East Village. By this time they were known as "the Unbearable Beatniks of Light" from a story about them by Mike Golden. After a series of performances of "the Crimes of the Beats" during which they took the Beats to task for selling out, they dropped "Beatnik" from their name, becoming simply "the Unbearables." Since then they've protested the academic poetry in the *New Yorker* magazine, chanting and carrying signs outside their offices on 42nd Street, and, following that, liberated the Brooklyn Bridge every September 13th for a number of years by reading erotic poetry to the passers-by. What follows, then, is a non-oral, hermetic self history of this "wild bunch," from A to Z.

(A) THE PHILOSOPHY

Is it possible to make oneself a genius? *Of course* -- that notion is no big deal. The greater conundrum would seem to be: how the hell can you create a roomful of geniuses? It has happened before, of course, if unsystematically. Look at the Parisian surrealists or the Anthrophagie movement in Rio or, for that matter, the farmhouse in North Hampshire that contained Anne, Charlotte and Emily Bronte. I guess it boils down to environment. Sukenick, in *Down and In*, lays out the equation simply enough. If you're not familiar with the book, it traces the leading lights of NYC creativity from the 1950s to '70s as they drank in the Italian bars of the West Village, then the Ukrainian bars of Loisaïda, and finally the saloons filled with the *petite riche* off Union Square. He demonstrates that it is not connections, *Zeitgeist*, friendly competition, creative misreading, etc., that creates a swarm of greats. On the contrary, the value of an avant-garde is *totally determined by the bars it frequents*. Once the Unbearables realized this, they collectively abandoned the half-assed artistic ventures they were engaged in and rushed off to find a dive where they could suck on the waters of inspiration.

The avant-gardes over the last one hundred years can be neatly bifurcated between those groups that drank in middle-class saloons and those that drank in working-class pubs. Hence we have the Surrealists vs. the Dadaists; the Futurists vs. the Constructivists

or, to speak of groups in New York City, the 1890s Decadents, like Stephen Crane, Henry James and Edith Wharton, who hung out in the high-toned Pfaff's on Broadway vs. the Village Bohemians of around 1910, such as Eugene O'Neill, Jack Reed, and Louise Bryant, who went down to Macdougall Street to drink at Rollo's Sponge Room. That

brings us to the present where we can delineate the same duality. On one side, the Beatniks drinking champagne cocktails with Steve Allen in Club 21, and on the other, the Unbearables, downing boiler makers with Tuli Kupferberg in Rollo's New Sponge Room. From this perspective, we have been granted the courage to undertake our greatest project. To analyze all the genres of American literature (and sub-literature) and then refract them, as beef is refracted by a meat grinder.

(B) THE BARS

It was the bars, it was the bars -- more even than the writing, it was the bars. In the beginning it was the Cupping Room on Tuesday nights, starting at the very beginning of Happy Hour because they served free chicken wings, and every single one of us was strapped for cash. What a sight we must have been, six or eight or ten not-so-well dressed men clustered around the serving table where they'd set up the wings, like derelicts around a trash can fire, our lips brushed orange with barbecue sauce, fingers shiny and finger-licked, streaking the sides of our beer glasses with grease. The first time I met Ron, he said, "Hey Dave, hee hee hee, good to met ya, man," and asked me if I liked to drink in bars. As I recall, we both had beers in our hands, and I mumbled something like, "Cool," secretly relieved that it was the Cupping Room he was talking about and not some place clear on the other side of town. In those days, I was living on Thompson Street, and I hated leaving my neighborhood, or even traveling more than a block or two from my house. But the Cupping Room -- I could nearly see it from my living room, or could have, if my window didn't open onto a bricked up courtyard and the back of the building around the block. After that, every fourth Tuesday, I'd make my way down West Broadway, lit up by evening's crepuscular glow, thinking about drinking as the orange city sky turned on.

It was a mellow crowd. In fact, there was only a handful of people who made the scene on a regular basis, and conversation was wide-ranging and sharp. We'd talk about projects, or writers we liked, and although one night someone did ask, in a put-upon tone, "You mean they're making a movie out of *Batman*?" all I thought was, "Shut the fuck up, you asshole," before jumping into a conversation about Alexander Trocchi instead. This was July 1989, when it was impossible to walk five yards down any street in Manhattan without confronting the image of Michael Keaton in his rodent fetish suit, and I couldn't believe anyone would pretend to be so obtuse. It hardly mattered, though; I'd been writing in a vacuum for most of the previous ten years, feeling like I was the only person on earth who cared whether or not Jack Kerouac had really written *On the Road* in one long, continuous, amphetamine-fueled run, and, all of a sudden, I was sitting at a table with other writers, most of whom couldn't care less about Jack Kerouac, but were happy I'd asked the question all the same.

Later, we moved to the Life Cafe, and then I decided to leave New York. But just thinking about the Cupping Room makes me want to drop in for a quick one, which I try to do any time I'm back in town.

(C) SCHISMATIC

In the beginning, there were the Bearables. And they worked hard, never partied, got fired or did dumb, artistic things. And they bore the burdens of mankind and bored each other. There were some among them whom no one could stand -- they were too egotistical, alcoholic, artistic, or anarchistic -- and they were told to split, man! So they gathered unto themselves, and split off from the Bearables. And thus by this first schism were the Unbearables born.

The Unbearables, having a natural affinity for beer, agreed to hold most of their meetings in bars. But which bars? The tiny, dark downtown ones with cheap drinks and a pool table? Or the tiny, dark, downtown ones with cheap drinks, but without a pool table?

And what to drink?

There was the beer mystics faction, the largest by far, which insisted upon beer, preferably Rolling Rock, as the supreme Unbearable drink. Breaking off from them was the Bud Light splinter group (splintered off from their bottles). Then there was the coffee mystics faction, which insisted upon the metaphysical rightness of that inky beverage when consumed in cheap cups in seedy dives, not Yuppoid coffee palaces, as emblematic of the pointy-eared and all-seeing visionary hyper-alertness and awareness of *echt* Unbearableness. And a few, too few to be counted, who preferred the mixed drink, the gin, the tonic.

Next arose the Women Question, which caused a run in the pantyhose of the more cross-dressed of the group. Should girls be allowed to pollute the pure Unsullied Maleness of Unbearableness? Could they also hang out in bars, and drink, if not bond, and be funny or obnoxious, or at least, moody? Could they also drink beer or coffee as convincingly? There was slow, but general agreement that they could, and Unbearable women slowly swelled the ranks.

The one difference of opinion that almost knocked the Unbearables from the literary barstool was that of publicity. Should they allow themselves to be photographed in the nude without their beards, for magazines such as *Shallow*, *Famous for Five Nanoseconds* and *Corporate Rock N' Roll* or stick to their philosophical roots, and continue to support the publications that had put them where they are today, such as *The Manhattan Mumble*,

Obscure Poetry Weekly, *Stapled Yesterday*, *The Disheveled Poet*, and *Loud Poetry Today*. Should they consort with the mainstream media and educational system merely for the sake of notoriety?

The overwhelming consensus was: Of course!

(D) UNBEARABLE WOMEN

Beauty will be *unbearable*, or not at all: Breton.

Thus it is for the women of the Unbearables, wedged between the wedgies of our estrogen-challenged *freres-en-poesie*. Most people think that the Unb's are just a bunch

of sleepy beefs from the Jersey swamps, but au contraire, *tête-de-derriere*. The *ovial* members of the Unb's meet once a month for stogies behind the *abattoir* to compare cramps. We have a cosmopolitan disregard for danger and carry, instead of mace, squirt guns full of menstrual blood. We are the subdural haematomas of the Unbearables, the Matriot Missles of the Lower East Side Theater of Operations, and no scud intercepts us. Between yeast and Yeman we implode. Jill Rapaport, Bonny Finberg, Sharon Mesmer, Carol Wierzbicki, Catherine Sand, Lorraine Schein, Susan Scutti, Tsaurah Litzsky, Judy Nylon, Daisy Decapite, Pat Fried.
Beauty is the beginning of terror you are only just able to *un-bear*: Rilke

(E) THE STAFF OF LIFE

Call it Life affirmation. Back when the Unbearables were the Unbearable Beatniks of Life* (in the late '80s, as I recall), David and Cathy Life sponsored a reading series at their eponymous coffeehouse, the Life Cafe, on Avenue B in the Lower East Side. Once a week, for several weeks, a cadre of Unbearable Beatniks provoked Life Cafe audiences with totally intolerable poetry and prose. My favorite weekly theme was "Big Cigars," but for some reason I stayed away from the humidior that night.

The reading I attended featured contributors to *Red Tape*, Michael Carter's art-lit journal. Patrick McGrath read some Gothic horror, Ron Kolm recited some minimal horror, Carter himself delivered some romantic horror, and I presented some silly horror. After my segment, an audience member told me she did not know what I was talking about, but she had experienced some nice, trippy trails. This was so far back that I was not yet a sexual deviant. (I did not chase Cathy Life, nee Kirkpatrick, with a whip.) I was merely a human hallucinogen.

There would be plenty of time, later, for my literal psychotropism to give way to libidinal perversion.

*Milan Kundera, author of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, so far has not acknowledged his debt to the Unbearable Beatniks of Life, as they have to him.

(F) INITIATION CEREMONY

My name is Jake. Jake Scully. I ain't related to that bitch on TV. I may believe in flying saucers, but I hate poetry. I don't like storytelling much either. I moved to New York mostly to drink. Maybe have my way with tall skinny models with lots of money. I figured after I eased my way into their confidence (if you get my euphemism) they might be happy to give me a tour of their pocketbooks. Well, it didn't happen. What did I know. I was from New Orleans by way of Tulsa and Hammond, Indiana. We got models back there, too. But they only cost ten bucks. Anyway, so I go in this place called No Bar for a drink. Some punk with a beard and a cappuchino cup in his hand said, "Can't you read the sign, pal. This ain't no bar. How about a nice piece of cake or a salad?"

Ha-ha, I laughed. He could shove his salad up his ass. I needed a piece alright but it wasn't cake. Or maybe it was.

I saw some hot looking chick sucking suds at one of the tables so I figured it must be okay to BYOB. So I bought me a forty of Ballentine Green Death at the bodega and went back in to ply my trade. The door closed behind me with an ominous slam. See, I figured I'd rub up against the swells and see if any sparks jumped. But the joke was on me. All the babes went all wall-eyed and started speaking gibberish. The guys all had shopping bags full of flyers for future events. They'd pull out a leaflet and, with that dazed monotone of the aesthetic abductee, try to make me read one. I guess they were recruiting for the cause. But I knew better.

I cruised the room. It was the usual New York scene. Cameras, video cameras, microphones, people pointing fingers at themselves. Then I saw a couple of honchos in the corner who looked like they were being briefed by a couple of other honchos. Odd implements were passed around and secret handshakes. Then the self important honcho clowns laughed sadistically and looked over at some other slightly less self important clowns who seemed like they were being dressed for Easter dinner.

Apparently, I had stumbled into some kind of cult meeting, like the Moonies or the Harry Krishnas. So that's why everybody was wearing wierd vests and overwide ties. I hadn't noticed how sinister it really was.

Then I saw someone trying to eat the whole *Norton Anthology*. All two thousand fucking something pages of it. First he shredded up the pages then chewed the hell out of them, then swallowed them. Then he puked the whole thing back up in some kind of cleansing bulemic act of redemption/creation. People stirred the vomit with special poetry sticks and tried to make a new poem out of it. Said they got the idea from Bill Burroughs. I didn't know who the fuck he was so I left them alone. The room was full of funny odors which should have been a clue to funky goings on. Indeed, the stench of human sacrifice could barely be masked by the sweet *faux* perfume of wild sex action and fat wallets. Suddenly the truth knocked me in the head like a doorknob on the nose of a peeping tom.

Yeah, there was something going on alright. Apparently a couple of chumps were getting initiated into this silly group and they had to do something humiliating in public to prove they were worth it. I guess poetry is about as humiliating as you can get, and the crowd was getting juiced up just so they could stomach it.

A few wise guys tried to make light of the whole thing, telling jokes and carrying on, and just generally being jerks. They thought they were funny, but they just looked tired to me. Half-baked East Village losers with nothing better to do than join another club.

You can pile on all the symbols you want, it all boils down to the rutting instinct.

Besides, I'd seen all that *Necronomicon* stuff before anyway, and the swords and scrolls and human skulls and bowls of blood were nothing new either. After all, I'd been to Freemason society gatherings and I'd been to country fairs and I've listened to Black Sabbath and Metallica in my friend's basement. I knew something about paranoia. These people talked the big talk but I'd like to see any one of them kill their parents.

Even the guy who ran the place was bored, so he finally asked everybody to leave. But they wouldn't do it. So I volunteered. Figured to beat the rush.

"I'm outta here," I said. "By the way, who are these freaks anyway?" I asked some

geezer who was slapping his belly with a pie plate and laughing like a jackass in the corner. He wasn't listening, he was reading a comic book.
"They call themselves the Unbearables," he said without lifting his eyes from the page. Well, at least they got that right.

(G) NEW YORKER ACTION

Unbearable accused Alice Quinn, the *New Yorker* poetry edit, of taking off her pants in his presence and exposing herself to him and then fondling him -- after printing his poems and taking him to lunch on several occasions. Ms Quinn sd it was all lies, a prevarication as bad as his poetry. The US Supreme Court gave an exact description of her genital area. Ms Quinn suggests Bob undergo psychiatric evaluation and cancel his subscriptions to *Penthouse*, *Big Tits*, *Foot Fetish*, *Hustler*, *Passion*, *Screw*, *Hot Crotch*, *Buns*, *Big Bang*, *Pink Pages* and *Playboy* magazines. She also told him to stop watching TV and stay out of Billie's Topless and the Baby Doll Lounge.

When Sparrow heard of this, Sparrow one of the most Unbearable of the Unbearables, sd: She did that to you too!

Has this event damaged Sparrow's mayoral campaign? As sd he is a leading Unbearable. Well, the Unbearables and the general public were mightlity amused by it all. And the polls still show Sparrow maintaining a slight lead over rival candidate the Reverend Alfred Vitale.

The Unbearables are unshakeable in their support of Sparrow. To show that support they recently voted him a 10 lb bag of birdseed.

(H) BIG FISH EVENTS

Then Sparrow, one the wisest men who ever slept, spake : "Nature has o'erflooded us with calumny -- bloody storms, earthquakes, brushfires, cyclones, typhoons, dread drowning squalls and violent volcanic vomit. We must rise up, as the First Colonists did, and resist this thievery."

And thus did Steve Dalachinsky, Jim Feast, Yuko Otomo, Brendan Lorber, Jim Nachlin, Marcella Harb, Susan Scutti, Frank Nims, and Sparrow herself congregate at the sacred Chez Rollo one Friday in May 1995, to shout down Nature. They were written up in the *New York Observer*, and later appeared on three TV talk shows ("Alice," "Cindy," and "Kwon's"*).

Then Sparrow arose again, like the prophet Micah, to say: "For 2 1/2 days in human history, just one atom bomb was dropped. Let us pray to return to this 2 1/2 day furlough, in our mind's face, to see how the one-bomb earth resembled."

And the Unbearables didst respond, to this hirsute summons, to the No-Bar, where they assembled only one copy of the "Between the Bombs" issue of the fabled *Big Fish* magazine. This copy was later dropped on Cincinnatti, where it, sadly, exploded.

*in Singapore.

(I) FOAMOLA

FOAMOLA is the best band of all time. The trio has played in every club, in every town and city in every part of the globe, and there isn't a living person alive anywhere who is not a fan. LAWRENCE FISHBERG writes the greatest melodies in the history of mankind, SPARROW is the most poetic lyricist that the English language -- or any other language -- has ever produced, and ELLEN CARTER is the most dynamic performer the stage has ever seen. Not only have their songs been translated in all languages spoken on this planet, but their every move is followed religiously by an adoring world-wide public, desperately waiting for their next song, their next fashion statement, the next anything coming out of the miracle of miracles that is FOAMOLA.

Somehow in this immense giddy blur of adulation, FOAMOLA has been able to produce an EP, "May I Take a Bath," chosen by everyone as the greatest single ever produced, and an album, "Please Kill Us," unanimously regarded by every critic everywhere as the best bunch of songs ever recorded by anybody. FOAMOLA has written numerous other tunes that are so incredible it is impossible to describe in words how incredible they are.

In addition to being great musicians, the members of FOAMOLA are also great writers. LAWRENCE FISHBERG is completing a novel that God has said will be "the most important piece of writing since the beginning of time." SPARROW has just put the finishing touches to a book of eight hundred poems that is already mandatory reading in all public schools on Earth. And ELLEN CARTER is the most dynamic performer the stage has ever seen.

(J) CHEZ ROLLO

I remember Chez Rollo when they were doing live sex shows there instead of art. The immortal Stacy Keech fucking the chicken in the film adaptation of John Barth's *End of the Road* was rehearsed there. Not with Stacy Keech of course. They used stand-ins to get the chicken ready for a human pecker. Which is where I first met Rollo Whitehead. No high adept or even low rent boho then, Whitehead was a fly chasing speed freak who worked Tompkins Square Park like a carny barker, recruiting innocent young stand-ins to do the chicken. I'm not sure whether Ron Kolm or Jim Feast was first in line -- they were both fresh off the boat from Iowa, so to speak -- but I do remember afterwards everybody went into shock when the chicken died. Well maybe the expression "died" is a bit misleading -- that gives the impression the chicken was split wide open by somebody's mighty dork, when in fact, the chicken actually did itself in 'cause it couldn't get no satisfaction. If you've ever seen a chicken laugh, then you can imagine what happened when it looked over at young Kolm's corn fed limpguini, before holding its breath and making one mighty leap for mankind, corkscrewing itself up Rollo's fat butt to meet its Maker, drowning in a flood of homemade molé sauce. After that, there wasn't much else to do but put the dirty little bird on the fire.

That *Rollo Roasted Chicken* never took off like *KFC* was always a sore spot with

Whitehead, but it just proves that in this game of life, timing is everything, and once again Rollo was ahead of his time. After all these years, I try not to think of Rollo at all, especially when I'm eating, and, for whatever it's worth, to this very day, I always avoid ordering white meat.

(K) THE CRIMES OF THE BEATS

There was always something creepy about the Unbearables -- something you could never quite put your finger upon. But one thing that was always clear, especially at those shocking public displays known as their "Crimes of the Beats" readings, was that they spent much more time drinking and partying than they did discussing Art and Literature. And what's more, they were proud of it.

Ron Kolm going on and on about tub toys. Michael Randall with his sound poems for infants; "Goo goo goo, ga ga ga: Banana!" Mike Golden (who had been shoving yams up his ass decades before Karen Finley first experienced her proud epiphany that "the world is pooh pooh") wearing a mohair sweater and nothing else as he sang the "Theme From Shaft" in pig Latin. bart plantenga, clad in a frumpy house dress, demonstrating the proper way to make a vegetable frittata. José Padua, dressed as a priest, presenting that frittata to Debbie Pintonelli with the words "The body of Peter Lamborn Wilson." Sharon Mesmer, Jill Rapaport and Michael Carter conducting a roundtable discussion on the benefits of replacing one's lower intestines with a colostomy bag...

"What does any of this have to do with the Beats?" was the inevitable question posed by outraged members of the audience. "This doesn't have anything to do with the Beats" was the Unbearable emcee Jim Feast's inevitable reply. And that was precisely the point. Because the Unbearables understood before any one else that *all the arts sucked*. That it's better to be part of an insane world than to just *write* about it. That they continue to write is part of the beauty of it all. To quote Paul Newman's immortal line from Irwin Allen's classic, *The Towering Inferno*, they let their work "stand as a monument to all the bullshit in the world." Whether you're good at what you do or bad at what you do, one thing is sure: They will trash you. And the Crimes of the Beats readings were an example of them trashing the latter. (Just in case anyone missed the point.)

(L) THE UNBEARABLE SEANCE

Forget *Monsieurs* Kolm and Sukenick? Forget the Raptures that transpired on that Night of Noughts? Nay, never, *nada se nada, nein, nix-nux, Nynex!*: I'll not soon forget the **Night of the Unbearable Seance** -- O lurid enchantment! O flagrant evisceration! -- when the ghost of Yeats was channelled not through Ouija board of decorous trust-fund poet, nor by mercenary psychic or new-age-muzak-addled actress, but rather One-on-One, Without Dilution, though the Inspired Drunken Ravings of Michael Carter. I'll not disremember the pall of the windows shrouded in Bedeviled Rice Paper -- of paper that was Ritually Cleansed through Cabalistic Ritual, until it became the very *Jalousie*, the very One-Way Portal, through which Literary Epistemological Spirits traveled and then

were trapped like vision of the wrong side of the eyelid. Never will memory omit the Rabid-Banjo-Twiddlings of Carl Watson, the Ghost-O'-Poe Gesticulations of Sharon "Mesmerist" Mesmer, the Lacerating Lozenges of Jill "Claymore" Rapaport, nor will I erase from recollection how the distribution of space within those ghastly rooms grew even more with the Watusi of deceased members of the Rhymsters Club, until the ghost of Dowson slumped in a corner, stroking his One Girl's Hair -- affixed as it was (poor lock from Porlock!) to the skull of a mouldering Sarah Bernhardt doll in a soldier's jacket -- and Lionel Jonson Himself appeared before us shrieking Catholic dogmas in Latin, and toasting the Virgin Bark of All-Ulcerous-Dogs-Day. Dolently, Jonson chugged a flask of Hennessy, rose from his stool, staggered to the floor, and promptly passed out. Only then did the piquancy of the spell disperse: Rice-paper tore, exsanguine light pierced the must of those deceased inner chambers, and the scent of one-hundred orchids permeated the sickly air. Only then did the demoniac prayers of Pastor Feast ascend through the imprisoning must:

Deliver us, Lautremont, From All Manner of Heliotic Hauntings! Wrest Our Smouldering Souls From the Trajectory of the Supernal Saphira -- From the Singeing of Necrotic Suns! We who have invoked Infernal Utterance now Seal All Coffers with the French Kiss of the Spiritually Syphilitic. Good Night, Sweet Ponce, Sweet Fever-Dreams Forever.

(M) ENDANGERED SPECIES AND UTOPIA EVENTS

Then there was the ENDANGERED SPECIES reading. Each reader brought a living sample of a species endangered or defended. There were spotted owls and snail darters, of course, perching and darting through the room. There were rare ferns, a whole savannah of lost grasses, and seven varieties of pond lily in sinks and bathtubs. Someone had dragged in a panda, who slumped in a corner, watching the goings on with a jaundiced eye. Turtles and a buffalo, a hummingbird, a bald eagle, a herd of mustangs roamed the room, not to mention the nineteen species of tropical insect, a general practitioner and a silent film star. The aromas were ripe, and the din, though it had a kind of natural, postmodern musicality, made it impossible to hear what any of the writers read. Whatever it was worked wonders, though, for the dark loft filled with light, like dawn spreading over fertile plains, and songs awoke in every heart, beast, bird, and woodpecker alike. This song we sang. And sang for days. It was truly an unbearable event, as miracles are unbearable.

Concentrating on only one species for the next event, the Unbearables cast their eagle eyes upon the nearly extinct *Utopians*, roused to passionate defense by the electronic media's massive onslaught on the very idea of utopia. Frightened of spirit and dedicated to making everything smaller than life, caught in a box and measured in dollars per second, the Masters of Media would reduce all humankind to strung-out *sofakartoffeln*. NOT THE UNBEARABLES, WHO AIM TO MAKE LIFE LARGER, FULLER, TRUER, FREER! So when Medicine Show Theater invited them to do THE UTOPIA

READING, the Unbearables leapt. The reading took place at Medicine Show's spacious theater in Hell's Kitchen, so far west some folks missed the street number and fell into the Hudson, swam to New Jersey and wandered for days, muttering "Utopia? Utopia?" They got no further than Utopia, New Jersey. The rest got utopia galore. High points? It was all high: Emcee Banquet. "Sailor Moon." Shine On, Harvest. Hypnosis. Krebbs, I'm Not. No Mass P.O. Murder. Elementary, My Dear. Keep On Truckin', Hauler. Stockholm. Stolen Gender. It's All A List. And Many, Many More.

(N) OFF THE ROAD

I was in a snit, fit to be tied, that day, if you want to know. I was angry at all three of them, laughing and giggling like kindergarten kids in the three seats in back of me while I tried to get comfortable on an aisle seat of the Boeing 737.

It was Sharon who saw to it that I sat alone. She didn't like my attitude and wanted the boys to herself, so she could tear at their ears and fall asleep while they talked to her. Actually, if I remember correctly, she sat and read a book on Ahkmatova and diddled with a lipstick past its prime. I was pretty sick of being on dumping ground wavelength, which I, with my subtle paranoia and threadbare self-esteem (that commodity that's been cropping up on exchanges from here to East Delancey Street in front of the 3rd World Conway's), had been experiencing since sitting in the Shandon before our trip had even started, Hakim asking "where'd they all get the money to travel?" when I was right within earshot of him, too intimidated by the hype of him to answer: "working for gofer money from giant midtown corporations, not like you, with your trust fund and radical speaking engagements and in spite of all else your patrician demeanor that connotes an independence of wealth that could buy and sell me seventeen times over and a few of the rest of us thrown in for good luck."

Plus the fact that I was scared of airplanes, especially small ones with only three seats on either side of the aisle, so that there was no way you could avoid the recognition that you were leaving the earth in the stomach of a giant metal bird with too many miles on it and technicians who signed its inspection papers off without looking, one hand on the clipboard and the other on the baksheesh cup, shopper's ash dotting their jumpsuit cuffs. I couldn't think of anything but my flight anxiety and I was wedged in tight next to some sappy businessman in an ugly V-neck pullover.

I had the *New York Times* bought for a dollar in San Francisco airport and I finally took it out and focused my eyes but not my mind on page one, trying to avoid the rising panic I felt at becoming airborne. I had extracted a promise from Alfred that he would sit next to me and hold my hand when the plane took off and keep holding it till the stewardess came by with honey nuts. Sharon had put an end to that nonsense -- she needed the boys in her three seat radius and that was that. She took the window seat so as to inconvenience them maximally when she got up numerous times to go to the toilet. There was possibly also an element of wanting to wag her ass in their faces when there was nothing they, with their loyal girlfriends back home, could do about it. I already hated her far more than I had ever liked her, at least for that week.

The crappy businessman was reading his *New York Times* as well. I was interested, in spite of myself, in a San Franciscan who reads the *Times* in flight. The businessman held his paper up to read, in the style of the old gentlemen in gentlemen's clubs -- I almost scented Kampuchean cherrywood and Flanders green velvet. The left edge of his upright *New York Times* edged closer and closer toward my already painfully cramped right shoulder, which I kept pulling further and further away from him, getting angrier with each move. Pretty soon, I was protruding into the aisle on my left side, with no room left to maneuver my *Times*, which I was trying to manipulate upon my fold-down tabletop, a failure. The flight stewards and stewardesses walked briskly up and down, generating stiff gusts, each time sending me dirty looks because I had invaded their territory, preventing them from sailing easily down the aisle. Out of the corner of my eye and soon more and more overtly, turning my head more and more toward him, I began to address the nuisance businessman with glances freighted with smoldering indignation. My traveling companions had begun a minor conversation about who was better, Phillip K. Dick or Homer. Overhearing them, I was filled with anger, since they made no attempt to solicit my opinion on the matter, all because they had forced me out of their company and stranded me up front with a protoplasm-wasting businessman beside me relentlessly crowding me out of my paid-for turf and not even the affectionate attendance of the flight crew to keep me happy. The businessman's paper was now leaning on my shoulder, boldly and unapologetically having invaded totally my airspace.

To make a subtle point, I loudly and energetically turned around in my seat, letting my *New York Times* rustle and crumple intemperately, and craned my neck to see Bart and Alfred. I was prepared to trade forgiveness toward them in return for the more strident warning I would issue in the businessman's direction. I noticed that Sharon had headphones on and was staring dreamily out the window. We were flying somewhere over the Oklahoma panhandle, the Laramie lariat on the Elvis sideburn, if I wasn't mistaken. Bart smiled at me. A fresh stain rode his upper lip. He was drinking a glass of dark red wine.

"Where'd you get that?" I asked him, with some resentment. He pointed to the steward's station in back of the plane. They were pouring wine for the restless, since they had extra and the lunch was delayed.

Alfred looked at me through half closed eyes. He had placed the American Airlines blanket over himself and was trying to begin a nap.

I glanced furtively at the businessman. He seemed entirely unaware of my existence. He didn't turn to smile or frown, didn't move back into his space even though that had been the calculated objective of my having scrambled around in my seat -- I had thought the torque would set him back if nothing else, and I could pretend it had been an accident.

I wanted to teach him a lesson and was formulating all the approaches I might use. It had ceased to be a question of whether I was going to speak to the businessman about his invasive body language and was now merely a question of how--

(O) UNBEARABLES CHICAGO ACTION

In athletic support to their anthology, the Unbearabulls, like a mean dog, left their mark on the seat of Cook County. The day's itinerary was a sandwich with bread of leavened prose and meat of goat. At 5 PM, case-hardened members bart plantenga, Jill Rapaport, Sharon Mesmer and Alfred Vitale harangued passersby from the Michigan Avenue Bridge with outbursts of erotic and cogent verbiage. On a tip from the adVice Unit, the infaRed Squad closely monitored their action, smug in the belief that poetry doesn't destroy order, poets do.

One irony-deficient man on the street started demanding credentials and he was joined by an advil chorus from passing busses, shouting, "My 30 year old can write better than that."

Police helicopters dripping burnt coffee descended at either end of the bridge just as it opened to let pass some big fish, the crew slid to safety, commandeering the Royko Room of the subterranean Billy Goat Compound. They guzzled schooners of Schlitz and Old Dutch and glowered at other patrons. When they tried to pay the tab with an insufficient fund of good looks, they were punished by being forced to wear *ersatz* newsprint caps selling Cheezborger Cheezborgers.

Their humiliation turned to triumph that evening when the crowd, enticed by a salacious photograph of Sharon Mesmer that appeared in the paper, jammed the luxurious Babar's Bookstore. Unfortunately, the crowd was peppered with perverts who had cut out Sharon's picture, slit her mouth and were sticking their fingers through from behind in ritual imitation of swollen tongues, tarnishing the luster of the event somewhat.

They played the crowd of morbid, thrill-happy NY sycophants like a washtub bass. plantenga hit a responsive chord with his viewpoint of Disney's dog, a breathless Debra Pintonelli elicited confessions and proposals with her riveting memoirs, Rapaport's tale conjured characters so real they creaked the folding chairs, Vitale exuded a masculine menace in the red zone and dissolute tourguide Kevin Riordan tried to calm the crowd down with frothy doggerel. It was fortunate that the police had infiltrated the crowd for when Mesmer took the mike she spewed a stream of dissing at Chicago that made tall buildings shrink. The mob was evenly divided (slow/instant death) and the beefy porkers had to form a superhuman bridge and subhuman shield to get them out. Anyone who picked up (let alone bought) one of the books had to give a nine digit zip and blood sample, assuring a deviant database of sympathizers.

(P) UNBEARABLE ANNUAL BROOKLYN BRIDGE SUNSET EROTIC READINGS

Poets on the Bridge -- Poets are the bridge to expansion, understanding, ecstasy -- and to celebrate poetry the New York based poets collective, the UNBEARABLES sponsors a yearly reading on the Brooklyn Bridge.

One weekday evening in early September about an hour before sunset, the exact date varies according to convenience, circumstance and destiny, the poets gather on the

Manhattan side of the great bridge. While the UNBEARABLES sponsor and publicize the event, it is open to all poets, even poets for the evening.

The poets string out across the bridge, every 20 to 50 feet or so, depending on the number present, and recite their work to all and sundry bridge walkers and bicycle crossers. The suggested theme is the erotic landmarks of New York, i.e., the Empire State Building as a giant phallus, the World Trade Center as 2 giant phalli, the Statue of Liberty as mammoth siren of desire, but the suggested theme is just a possible point of departure. Some poets read from their books, some improvise on the spot. Last year one poet read Hart Crane's glorious "The Bridge." Interested passersby gather around the poets, some even join in. This exciting event was inaugurated in 1994. Interest and attendance has grown greatly each succeeding year.

It has become the custom to finish the evening off with a party in the apartment of one of the Unbearables who lives directly under the Brooklyn Bridge. Legend has it that Hart Crane once lived in this apartment and certainly his voice joins that of the poets and their friends as the revelry continues far, far into the night.

(Q) UNBEARABLE APPEARANCES

The Unbearables rarely appear in bars without a mission, preferring instead to conduct their readings in the feeble guise of a themed event. Among the most noteworthy recent liquor-infested performances are the following:

-- "The Mrs. Jim Thompson Beauty Pageant" at Willie's Tavern in Newark where the readers dressed as saucy broads sporting a visible deformity and red bedroom slippers with four-inch heels, reciting respectful homages to the master of *noir*. When Carl Watson's third foot began thumping against his left crutch in rhythm to his poetry, Jill Rapaport's suppressed hysteria caused her pink Woolworth corset to break open, which in turn made Joe Maynard miss his cue to hobble onstage. Chaos ensued. The pageant was won by Ron Kolm, not for his slick-backed auburn locks, but because he distracted the judge with hieroglyphic submission guidelines disguised as a map of the sewage tunnels in Detroit.

-- "The Quaker Explosion" at the Brigley Bar near Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, inspired by the idea that the inner divinity of those other American rebels, the Quakers, made itself felt by a furious trembling. Unfortunately, Jim Feast was the only one to appear in full-on traditional Quaker costume and the audience only consisted of a few college students incapable of understanding the Quakers' *modus operandi* of "breaching the peace" and "disorderly behavior," thus unable to place Michael Carter's admirable shivering fits (during which he managed to crack a hole in the table he was performing on) in the proper context. First recorded instance of clogged toilets in the lady's restroom during an Unbearables reading.

--The now legendary reading at the One-Stop Cocktail Lounge in Kensington, NY, mercifully themeless until an unknown perpetrator opened the gate at the nearby petting zoo and led the docile animals into the already malodorous bar interior, where they hesitantly flocked toward the red-lit stage. Mike Golden was just reciting a problematic

theological verse and raising his arm, as the light dimmed, surrounding him in a moist, pink shimmer otherwise only in seen in 3-D Mexican postcards, and the sheep rushed onstage, butting their heads against his thighs and licking his hand. Only Sharon Mesmer's sobs disrupted the sudden awed silence. Mike, bathed in a supreme supernatural glow, remained motionless before the captive audience, which waited patiently for their water to turn to wine.

(R) UNBEARABLES INVADE EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

A group calling themselves the Unbearables, trying to escape obscurity in their home base in New York City, fell upon the unsuspecting small town of Easton, Pennsylvania, last week. Eight of them showed up at the bookstore/cafe The Quadrant to read their so-called literary work. This motley crew of *New Yorker* rejects, Jill Rapaport, Bonny Finberg, Jim Feast, Joe Maynard, Michael Carter, Jordan Zinovich, and Rob Hardin, arrived one hour early, giving them time to fuel up at the local pub. When they finally got to the reading, it was obvious they were unable to focus their eyes. Starting forty minutes late, these unruly derelicts staggered into the back room. The eight of them read to an audience of six, which included one blind person, a couple on a blind-date, and two friends of Michael Carter. The blind person and her friend left after the second reader. After the reading the Unbearables sang an impromptu medley of old Rolling Stones and Motown favorites, driving out the rest of the customers, who'd come to drink coffee and eat carrot cake in peace. Phoebe Brain, the young woman on a blind date, told this reporter, "I'm glad we stayed for the whole thing. It was a very romantic first date. There was so much to talk about afterwards. I hope they come again." Phoebe attends a local community college where she is studying bead sorting.

(S) WANKERED AT THE WOODEN WOODIE, OR WHY PHILADELPHIA'S UNBEARABLE

On a chilly evening in late November 1996, (I'd prefer to forget the exact date), a grizzled group of veteran Unbearables, Ron Köln, Bob Halfwit, Joey Homocide and Rolf Slackerman staged a lame reading and walkout at Borders Borscht in *Philadelphia*. Ostensibly this action was conducted in reaction to the evil chain-store behemoth's labor practices, viz., the firing for a manager for wanking off on a copy of *Long Live Man*, or something.

Meanwhile, Michael Carter had decided -- abruptly and moronically -- to join the quartet in Philly. He and Carl Watson had just notched another thrill-filled day at Vile and Malevolent Graphics, pondering the punctuation of electro-ejaculation. Although Carter offered to buy him a warm Rolling Rock once they got there, Watson was non-plussed.: "Whaddya delirious? I hate fucking Philly. Its sucks and it's gonna take you till next week to crawl back." "Nah," said Carter, "Ron told me the new Septic trains there are real cheap and real fast ..." Carl muttered something about how the whole thing smacked of a bogus, cheap fake-radical P.R. stunt. "Leave the Ricans out of this..." shot back Carter.

"You'll be sorry..." chimed Watson as he spat a golfball of phelgm and sauntered up Bleecker. Carter however was undeterred: they'd featured his name prominently in the Borders propaganda, and he was sure some prima anarchist poetess gottabe would wet her panties when he read his heartbreaking squib about being pounded by the pigs. Didn't matter he now had only two hours to get there, and nearly got the train to Montreal instead. Another half hour passed before Carter finally found the train to Trenton. He chugged a cold one and hopped aboard, convinced he could still make it if the Septic connection was perfect.

And so it was. As the express rolled into that capitol of wonders, Carter dashed right onto the waiting train. Shit on a pringle, I'll make it if this Septic barge don't burst, he thought. Vision of anarchist poet babes with rusty nails through lips and earlobes throbbed in his sodden melon. But a glance at the route map proved almost sobering: there were at least fifty stops till Philadelphia (and wasn't that where Tom Hanks died of AIDS??) It was after 8:30 when the Septic wreck flushed through the tube to Philly.

...Well, Carter surmised, at least they'll be hanging at the Wooden Woodie, a local anarchist basement bookstore that doubled as an S&M parlor, where Ron said they'd be sure to PARTY through the night, though he had absolutely no idea where that might be (Probably in South Philly, where they ram your car and throttle you. But I don't have a car, thought Carter, warming up to the idea, I cant even drive)

Readying to exit the station, he spied three familiar greasy eminences gnawing on what appeared some kind of deep fried rodent legs. Ron, Rolf and Bob. "It's over," mumbled Bob in his most profound dead pan, "We did it." "Burned Pal's books!!!" "Nah, we just pulled down our pants and said 'Eat this, Borders..." explained Ron, "There were about six people in the audience and twenty policemen. But Joey cut a fart and they all passed out; they forgot their gas masks. It was one for the anals of unbearability." "Where's he now? Cops get him?" "Nah, some crack whore thought it was very heroic, gave him a free blowjob on the spot. They're at the Woodie with the anarchists celebrating," averred the bespectacled Halfwit. "Wow," Carter thought, "this City must be cool ... Wait'll Watson hears about this ... Where is the Woodie?" "About five blocks up, seven over, three across and one down. Kinda thataway," pointed Ron, toward the station exit, and bounded on the incoming train back to Gotham.

Outside it was about ten degrees with a sixty-mile-an-hour wind. Carter had to pass through the entire business district of Philly; it was Tuesday and the streets were deserted, desolate. Carter got lost more than a few times. Scratching his balls, he asked a sweet young transvestite where the Woodie was, and the TV got this salacious grin. On second thought, mused Carter ... and scampered in the opposite direction toward William Penn tower. He reversed his field again when a huge goon in an army jacket asked him for some dope: "Whaddy mean ya aint got no dope. You a drug-addict, aintcha??" as he pulled out a boxcutter, and Carter ran straight through traffic towards the docks. Friendly city, he thought, Brotherly love, etc. He followed what he thought for sure was a crack whore for a few blocks, then lost her in an alley only to hear weird loud sucking sounds, industrial vacuum. Dejected, he popped out of the alley to

find himself in front of the Woody, but it was chained closed and dark, with a sign affixed: "Gone to Croatan, Sucker..."

Carter was cold and thirsty. There weren't many bars around there, but eventually he found one, an overpriced yuppie shithole called O'Fooles. He devoured a cheesecake on a tasteless roll and pondered the day's events. He sucked down an unsettled, watery Guinness, paid his twenty dollar tab and slunk out. He passed by the Woody but it was still dead. "Fuck Ron Köln," he thought, "Fuck A. Vitale and fuck me for being so late and so stupid," lowering the flaps on his Russian dead-cat headdress to blunt the winds. An icy rain began to fall, and Carter started back to the station by much the same indirect route he'd used before. It was nearly midnight, and the next and last train left in an hour. Some guy who smelled like the horses he used to clean up after as a kid was occupying most of the only bench with his fat ass, and Carter squinched to one side, read Watson's story, "The Noise of Fleas" from his coprolite classic *Beneath the Empire of the Turds*, as the Septic express eventually arrived with its 50 stops to Trenton. It was kinda uplifting. There Carter had to wait another hour because the train to New York bolted the very minute the Septic caboose arrived. Carter lost thirty bucks at three-card monte to a one-eyed, welfare-cheating grandma, then went back to his book, while a few seats away an argument broke out and a kid with a shirt saying *Satan Teens Rule* whacked another in the arm with a two-foot machete ... Carter snuck quietly into the waiting train, which shortly departed toward the Apple. Slowly, too, since there'd been an AMTRAK derailment over the same creaky bridge in the wastelands of New Jersey a few days before.

It was about 3:55 when Carter rolled into Lakeside for one last one. He knew Watson would be there at 9 AM the next morning to remind him what a godawful fool he'd been. Shit, spat Carter, if Ron Köln ever has another bright idea like this, I'm gonna supplicate old Allen Ginsberg and try to become a card-carrying Beat. At least they know how to cash in the chips.

(T) WASTELAND NOT

In my bathroom hangs a poem by T.S. Eliot, which I might never have noticed except for Sharon Mesmer pointing it out. Mesmer's prodigal memory, coupled with that of the other Unbearables, laid waste to the competition in a recent "slam" testing poetic knowledge.

"Poetry is something we notice in its absence; it shares this invisibility with toilet paper," says Unbearable Michael Randall. "The Unbearables demonstrate that you haven't lived until you've wiped your ass with T.S. Eliot."

(U) IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS

On an icy February night in this late 20th Century, I attended a gathering of the Unbearables at *the Homestead*. The plain faced, walk-down bar stands on 1st Avenue and is owned, I believe, by Polish immigrants -- it least it appears that the idle men supporting the bar are Slavonic and the bartender, a plump blond, has a thick Eastern European accent and the alert demeanor of an intelligent woman.

Before leaving the *Homestead*, Mr. Kolm buttonholed me and asked if I would write a review of an Unbearables' reading. Shown the list of many consummate events, I chose the Impeachment Proceedings despite the fact that the only thing I could remember is that Ron Brauer had very generously hosted the event at a Chelsea coffee house, *Eureka Joe's*, one Saturday night two or three years ago. I did not know if the reading occurred in spring, say, or fall, yet I vaguely recalled that at least 20 readers turned out to read comical pieces about the American Presidents.

Weeks passed. Occupied with personal concerns, I infrequently worried that I had nothing to write. In some final 3 am effort at memory, I decided to strategically call one or two Unbearables on the following day to ask what they'd read and whether they might recall anything from that particular reading.

And then, I completely forgot about the assignment.

Comfortless reader, how to describe the next event in my arch typical Unbearable saga? Just three weeks ago, I entered a discussion with the poet Brant Lyon. Oddly, the first topic to occupy the foreground of our conversational landscape was the *American Experience* Thomas Jefferson special on Channel 13. Our thought ran the usual Jeffersonian course: did Brant believe that our honored *Presidente* slept with his slave, Sally Hemings?

"Probably" was his immediate reply.

I then mentioned the fact that when asked the same question, my current boss, the Urcorporate-power-bitch -- who can be glimpsed rushing in and out of our mid-town building wearing a *faux* leopard-skin coat -- said (in her deadening voice), "Exhume the corpse and run a DNA test."

After agreeing that exhuming the corpse was an alarmingly delightful idea, Brant's conversation wandered, oddly enough, to other Presidents. (How often does one discuss American Presidents?) He mentioned the possibility of his sister's riding horses with one or another of the descendants of Zachary Taylor. Because neither his sister nor his father could remember anything about this particularly forgettable president, they asked Brant to do a search on the Internet for information about Taylor.

"I printed out my favorite article and am going to send a copy to my father. See? It's hilarious. It's all about Zachary Taylor's resemblance to a muskrat."

Incomprehensibly, I stared at a copy of Dave Mandl's Impeachment Proceedings piece, mumbling, "You got that off the web?"

"Yes. There wasn't much on Zachary Taylor, but this was definitely the best. Written by someone named Dave Mandl."

"I know him. He's an Unbearable."

"A what?"

"This is really weird. Dave wrote that for a reading the Unbearables did years ago and I'm supposed to write a review of that reading. I can't believe you have that."

"What are you saying?"

"I'm part of a group of writers named the 'Unbearables' and we did a group reading years ago and I'm supposed to write a review of that reading. I couldn't remember much about the reading and I thought I had nothing to write but suddenly I'm talking to you and you are holding in your very hand an article from that reading. This is incredibly weird." And so our conversation continued in that vein. Pray tell, virtuous reader, what might one unfamiliar with the world wide web's zeitgeist distill from my humble disclosure? Exhume the corpse and run a DNA test.

(V) UNBEARZINE

Books. Good god. What are they good for? Those piss wankin', lap spankin', no good overworked poetic waxings. Look at any trash heap and what' there? But magazines, that there's the shit. Though horizons may look dim, what with slapped dead careers, lost love, impotence and urban blight, pick up any sassy "zine" cutie and return that sarcastic sneer to your downs syndromed visage. Dare your favorite zine to bore you, and a new one appears over the horizon. Atop Paris's literary judgments are those lovely "little" magazines friendly to Unbearable antics. Yes, the Unbearables are nothing more than marginal outcasts, but the world just couldn't function if these mignons of calculated posturing had their way. Too clever for their witz, The Unbearables inhabit the cracks of the dullards' superhighway.

They're annoying little gremlins that keep the boss on his toes.

Big bombs come in little packages, and certainly this is the case with *PUBLIC ILLUMINATION MAGAZINE*. Around for more than a decade, this 3 inch Lilliputian carries the weight of Deuteronomy in the "zine " underground. A myriad of scribes scribble issue to issue in pseudonym around themes like "Enemies," "Neighbors," Balls." *APPEARANCES* takes on many shapes and sizes but with each incarnation, you can bet you won't walk away unaffected. Blurring the line between art and literature, sincerity and punchlines, the thread bears enough weight to fish with. Back in the days, *RANT* had its place, and left it. Though editor Vitale tired of his editorial duties, we shall remain grateful for the five angry and often incoherent, but always provoking if not even thoughtful issues birthed. A daze worth of antisocial ax-grinding puts the grit in your teeth. *BEET* is a mish-mosh of incomprehensible monologues, goofy cartoons and grungy fiction often bearing inserts and smaller zines within the larger. If *RANT* blew the lid off the pissy politics spectrum, *PINK PAGES* enabled many a frustrated pervert to air their pissy underwear in a frustration friendly zone. Sometimes masturbatory, but always provoking, *PP* treads the territory sex journals are too squeamish to tackle. Then there's the one and only *UNBEARABLES ASSEMBLING MAGAZINE* in which each writer xeroxes his/her own piece, collating it into the fire. But the official encyclopedia of downtown writing is *RED TAPE*, the tragic-comic issue. With over a hundred pages,

and at least that many artists and writers appearing within, the East Village energy of the 80s is forever pickled for posterior.

(W) *UNBEARABLES ASSEMBLING MAGAZINE*

The *Unbearables Assembling Magazine* (née the *National Poetry Magazine of the Lower East Side*) takes on a life of its own every time we get together to put it together. This utter Frankenstein has drawn first breath at King Tut's Wah-Wah Hut (now some anonymous bar at the corner of 7th and A), the Avenue B Garden (where we once braved rain and wind), the Spiral Bar, the Cedar Tavern, Chez Rollo, and CBGB's Gallery. Carol Wierzbicki admitted trying to kill it but others resurrected it; it will not die. It's an opportunity for a changing cast of characters to spoof their status as drones (indeed, many of us hold lower-echelon positions in publishing), a no-holds-barred frenzy of collation and refutation. And a chance to democratize the publishing industry on our own terms.

(X) DOCUMENTING THE UNBEARABLES WITH RALPH ACKERMAN

In the summer of '89 in the heart of New York City's Soho district, Ralph Ackerman and Mike Golden were involved in the publishing of a national popular culture magazine using the writer as the cultural icon -- A freak thing happened, the US of A was not ready to give up their rock 'n roll, Rolling Stoned, cultural icon as the center of its universe. Even with John Lennon on the cover, teenagers and yuppies were not ready to accept artists that locked themselves up in their rooms for months and years at a time to write as the center of their "we just want to have fun" world. Burnt, disillusioned, and pissed off, Ackerman was rescued from disappointment by a group of downtown poet "terrorists" known as the Unbearables. Mike invited him to join the Unbearables' weekly meetings at a local bar, this time Miladys in Soho. Ackerman was so affected by this experience that he has dedicated his life to using his filmmaking and publishing skills to document the Unbearables.

He admires the Unbearables unrelenting attacks on the commodification of art in our culture. He even joined in when the Unbearables took it upon themselves to translate the poetry of the *New Yorker Magazine* into plain English and hand out their translations while protesting outside the magazine's offices. They were there outside as always protesting when NYU held a Jack Kerouac conference. The protest confused many of the Beat participants who didn't understand the irony of the establishment honoring them, the very ones who had at one time protested the establishment. When the old beat protesters came outside to argue with the younger Unbearable protesters, the visual image was confusing; Ackerman had to resort to a lot of voice over narration.

Indeed Ackerman has had to use every trick he has learned in his 35 years as a documentary filmmaker: hidden camera, fake press passes, camera helicopters to get behind estate walls and out to writer's retreat sweat lodges, telling persons he is filming

for PBS, he has even had to wear his tuxedo to a black tie event on more than one occasion.

The process has taken him far and wide, eg., documenting the Unbearables as they read in several of San Francisco's better poetry dives promoting their Unbearable anthology. He traveled to Philadelphia to cover the Unbearables as they met in a basement of a local Indian restaurant to plan the poetry reading "walk-out" of the local Borders bookstore to protest the firing of an employee for trying to unionize. It's hard to eat and film at the same time. When the Unbearables did their "Crimes of the Beats" reading in Washington, DC, he couldn't get there with his camera. Undaunted, Ackerman arranged to have it fed live on the Internet and posted it right in the heart of old Beatnik land, San Francisco.

Recently when a Japanese magazine, *American Book Jam*, decided to put one of the Unbearables up at the Chelsea hotel to write a "Chelsea Girl" journal article, Ackerman had to pull out all the stops for a week long documenting. So he wouldn't miss even those late-night intrigues, he slept in the lobby. Ackerman hired a three-person film crew, complete with film truck outside to document the Unbearables poetry reading in the poet's room (the very room where Thomas Wolfe wrote the book *You Can't Go Home Again*). By the time it was over, Ackerman and the poet were barely speaking to one another, but that's not unusual after spending a week in a hotel with a stranger and a camera.

Even the more simple book parties and poetry readings have Ackerman often taking abuse and side comments about his camera, like, "You're trying to steal my soul." Ackerman tries to reassure them that stealing souls is not his "thing," he is "just a filmmaker." Ackerman says it's all worth it when he gets to spend endless hours reliving the events while editing his opus maximus, "The Unbearable Unbearables." Ackerman doesn't seem to mind all the beer drinking the Unbearables, "Beer Mystics," are known for. He swears that the beer doesn't affect his ability to film in focus or out of focus. Ackerman not only uses his filmmaking skills but also to date has published two letterpress limited editions of Unbearable portfolios. The world may not be ready for the Unbearables' compulsive unbearable satire, but Ackerman will continue to compulsively document and publish their hammer slams at "culture" till the air is cleaned up enough to get some breathing room. Then he'll go back to Vermont and make TV commercials for Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Ben or Jerry should have an Unbearables flavored ice cream by then.

(Y) THE ALFRED VITALE IDEA BOYCOTT

One of the lesser known Unbearable events was the "Great Unbearable Anarchist Neoist Operation" (affectionately called GUANO by those who didn't enjoy it) which kicked off with a reading on the New York City Subway. It was plagued by mishaps. Jim Feast, one of the Unbearables, actually got arrested for fare beating on his way to the reading. Alfred Vitale walked around with a cup and made \$10 in change, only to spill it on the tracks as he crossed between cars. Jill Rapaport, Ron Kolm, Sharon Mesmer and Joe

Maynard each read a poem in a different car, but the train stalled and they were stuck between Union Square and Astor Place for over 30 minutes.irate passengers started yelling at the readers and fights ensued. In the scuffle, as Maynard put it, "Someone got kicked in the butt again!"

But the history of the Unbearables hasn't always been fun and games. Alfred Vitale, the idea-man for so many of the Unbearables activities, could stand being ignored no longer. His "Idea Boycott" of 1996 caused ripples that still exist today ... as is evident by the Unbearables' recent embarrassment at the Whitney. There, the Unbearables were the focus of an exhibit which lasted a mere 3 days due to the fact that it was just like any other exhibit of hack writers.

There were even incidents of violent clashes. At the Beat Symposium held at NYU, the Unbearables were set upon by anti-Unbearables (rumored to have been Barnes & Nobles employees) who waved berets in the air and held up signs saying "Unbearables, Unhip" & "What did the Unbearables ever do for culture?" Not knowing how to counteract this counter-protest, the Unbearables wound up fighting among themselves. In the ensuing cacophony of clashes, they all decided not to speak to each other again.

Now, they are reuniting only for interviews ... pitifully few that there will be.

The Unbearables, since Vitale's disappearance in 1996, have sunk to new lows. Their work has become imitative of styles that are imitative of styles that were terrible to begin with. Some of them have even been published in the *New Yorker* and worse, others have begun to teach poetry at local universities ... and the mean average of their age has shot back up to the over-40 realm.

Sadly, the skunks at the garden party are starting to smell nicer ... the biting satire and chez rollo absurdity has fizzled and turned into chapbook orgies at art galleries, appearances in respectable places and fear of burning bridges.

(Z) UNBEARABLES' OBITUARY (File copy, *New York Times*)

Unbearables (b. April 27, 1986, New York -- d. Dec. 7, 1994, New York), also called UNBEARABLE BEATNIKS OF LITE, WANNABEATS, UNBEARABLE BOOTLICKS OF LIFE, UNMENTIONABLES, UNBEATABLE SCRIVNIKS OF SPITE, UNBEES, were a "literary" movement based on the transgressive mediocrity concepts of micro-hyper-marketing and post-ironic juvenile delinquency manifested in their strategic recuperations of self-loathing, rehabilitation of ASTS, and their action rants.

"Founded" in 1986 at Pin Tan Alley, renowned Mid-Manhattan cocktail redoubt for sundry disaffected "bourbon socialists."

Miguel D'Oro, returned in 1987 from a "past life makeover retreat" with group's first moniker, Unbearable Beatniks of Lite. Revealed misgivings of "to be or Unbe" and "founding what is unfounded" to other original members: Rune Köln, M. Blague (see Fr. for "joke"), and b.p. ummm. 8 years later D'Oro regrets "having killed it by naming it." They mainly engaged in a strange hybrid of beer-enhanced kvetching until, in late 1987

proto-Unbearable, Rollo Whitehead, offered them "valises of Dutch beef," brutal koans of "necessary I-lessness and djinnism [mis-heard by them as "gin-ism"] -- invasions of de-centered essence into the concrete.

They grew to some 40 "members" and were known but quickly forgotten for a variety of events that wrote their names in the "anals of perpetual obscurity."

See also:

- Baudrillard, Jean (comment at New School "Anti-Teach-In": "their things extinguish themselves in spectacle, in a magical and artificial fetishization.")
 - Beer (psycho-activity and mysticism)
 - Blue Collar Chic ("couching erudition in post-trucker dumb-down Loisadix.")
 - *Bolo'Bolo* (author P.M. critical of Unbearable misreadings of *Bolo'Bolo*: "Those who try to get out of the Machine fulfill the function of picturesque 'outsiders' -- bums, hippies, and yogis.")
 - Chaste Rollo (see also Malcolm McLaren--Tommy Hilfiger fragrance copyright controversy.)
 - Connolly, Cyril ("The only way for these writers to meet is to share a quick beer or pee over a common lamppost.")
 - Convenience (service sector fast food "time constraintment [sic] ethics" studied by R. Köln, leads to famous slogan "no time but in hurry.")
 - Crisp, Quentin (review of 1992 Unbearable event: "the Grateful Dead of New Fiction.")
 - Disney World (Unbee contract extension to perform "No Borders" at Mickey Rican Poetry Cafe denounced by ex-member Alfonse E. Vitalis as "dicking with the mouse.")
 - D'Oro, Miguel (auto-ousted member chided Unbees for "wanking in between creation and recreation wherein lies profit margins .. and true Unbees.")
 - Hagen, Nina (context of '94 Biblios "Anti-Slam" denunciation: "I'm not your Eurotrash prosthetic writing thing!")
 - "Hanging Sausage Summit" 1995 at Katz's Deli becomes known as "Night of Gleaming Cleavers" and leads to rancorous dissolution of Unbees as they "were or weren't." Boh'y comments, Unbees aren't underground so much as 6 ft under." See also Chickenhawk, *New Yorker*.)
 - Happy Hour, The (post-'87 imbibing respite redefined as "time-sensitive autonomous zone by Hakim Boh'y (see also Bey).)
- unbearable history 30
- Köln, Rune (haiku master translator of Joyce's *Ulysses*, "24 hours in 17 syllables." Included in time capsule to Mars, 1996.)
 - Messmere, Charo (ref. to article: "From Men to Menses: Life as a Gyno-Unbearable.")
 - Pin Tan Alley (closes its dutch doors in 1990. See Disney "vision.")
 - Pudenda, Joe (Unbee member of Lord Burlap "singing" group. Song "Me & My Teddy Unbear" lyric: "Those not busy being ignored are busy lying.")

- Rants, Action (1990-95, trademark events marked by underattendance, inebriation, bad haircuts, harmless defiance, expressed dislikes--presidents, corporations, atomic bombs, and obscurity. See Chickenhawk.),
- Revisionism (original 4 pre-Unbees in 1991 Faction of 5. In 1993 there are 7 "original members.)
- Rondo, Michelangelo (D.C. member remakes *Potemkin* as surfer-dude B-movie.)
- Snarn, Wembley (Thai-based State Dept. spook and "long-term fan"--of Boh'y's "Alehouse Boysterism" infiltrated Unbee meeting at Shandon Starsky Bar.)
- *Unbearable Bassington, The* (1912 novel by H.H. Munro. Manners as meaning, surface as substance.)
- "Wandering Tribes of Stout, The" (*Condé Nast Travel*, Aug. 1995, documents 5-year "Ale House Trek" of Unbees scouring NY for "beerhead" paradise--resonance, spacious silence, affordable, gurney-accessible. See Shandon Starsky.)

A LOST PROPHECY OF NOSTRADAMUS FOUND BY DAVID HUBERMAN AT
A&S BOOKSHOP ON FORTY-FIRST STREET AND EIGHTH AVENUE

The hawk will scatter bones
under the ancient Coliseum
where a sheepdog will lead the masses
to a Feast in New City.
After Appearances with a golden halo,
they dare judge Sparrow, a hexed woman
and worshipper of the Earth Mother,
Unbearable, yet divine.

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