

Classic Poetry Series

**Aaron Fogel**  
**- poems -**

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## Aaron Fogel(1947 -)

Aaron Fogel was born and raised in New York City. He graduated from Columbia and Cambridge Universities, and holds a Ph.D. from Columbia. Fogel currently occupies a space on the Boston University faculty, a position he has held since 1978. He lives with his wife Barbara and his son Adam in Cambridge, MA.

### <b>Works</b>

Aaron Fogel's books include Chain Hearings (poems) and Coercion to Speak: Conrad's Poetics of Dialogue (criticism). Backdoor Books will soon publish his chapbook, Ornery Language Philosophy. His poems have appeared in such places as The Best American Poetry, Boulevard, AGNI, and Slate.

### <b>Awards</b>

2001: Kahn Award for The Printer's Error

1987-88: Guggenheim Fellow

1967-69: Kellett Fellowship

# Cobblestones

The coffin, set up as coffins always are, near the grave, contained the father. The sentence, set up as sentences always are, on the page, contained the words. The meat package, set up as meat packages always are, with cellophane covering, contained the chops. The synagogue, set up as synagogues always are, for people, contained the rabbi. The classroom, set up as classrooms always are, for chairs, contained the professor. The coffin, set up as coffins always are, beside the grave, contained the mother. The word, set up as words always are, beyond hearing, contained the syllables. The prose, set up as prose always is, in census-rectangles, contained the phenomena. The nation, set up as nations always are, in questionnaire rooms, contained the sworn. The can, set up as cans always are, with ornate paper covers, contained the chicken o'noodle soup, with the circular noodles. Abacus, guitar, and quipu, set up as abacus, guitar and quipu always are, hieratically on notional strings, contained tobacco's troubadours. The coffin, set up as coffins always are, next to the grave, contained the sister. The elegy, set up as elegies always are, dishonestly, contained the family. The steak, set up as steaks always are, artificially reddened, contained the fat. The rectangular venetian blinds, set up as rectangular venetian blinds always are, in the windowframe, contained the slats. The DNA, set up as DNA always is, in double helixes, contained the and. The word people, set up as the word people always is, in writing, contained the o.

Aaron Fogel

## P.S.

P: The statistician and the poet need each other,  
But not yet.

S: You need us now.  
Without a theory of probability  
To guide you -

P: Not the unguided but the unguarded moments  
Are the most beautiful

S: Poetry is measure and measure now is population  
All signs signify groupings: we count people.

P: There are nonmeasurable groupings that defy  
Time and space and run wild as numbers

S: We call that Brownian motion, stochastic.

P: Stochastic rain, stochastic snow, the populace,  
The monkeys who sleep in different groups each night  
Unpredictable in the rain forest.

S: I seem to remember that image from the work of Cohen,  
A statistician of monkey sleeping groups

P: This is the rain forest and it has no scientists  
Only invaders, stripminers, depopulators  
The clever critic made a joke about the word  
Depopulator and the sophomores laughed.

S: What you need isn't the apocalypse but the apocalyx  
Taking off the green shield of the flower  
In whose middle you'll find the new peopling

P: Number may be the sine qua non of lyric  
But without number lyric is still lyric  
Without number or the space or time it yields it is still lyric  
But strip statistics of number and there is nothing

S:There is collective rhythm

P:The next dance then?

Aaron Fogel

# Pupils Slip Up

I have several questions.  
For a few months  
A radio business channel  
In Boston carried

Thrice hourly reports  
On the stock market--  
The Bloomfield report.  
Suddenly it was gone  
And replaced by a  
Monotonous religious channel.

I couldn't find it  
Anywhere on the dial.  
Why did that happen?  
Massac came from Casamusetts.  
Cassam came from Massachusetts.

They tell you that vitamin E,  
Grape juice, and aspirin  
Thin the blood and  
Reduce cholesterol buildup  
But if you take two  
Or three of these

Substances regularly, do they  
Thin it too much,  
Causing other, unforeseen  
Dangers of an interactive sort?  
Massac came from Casamusetts.  
Cassam came from Massachusetts.

If all politics is a lie  
We tell ourselves, if  
People who think they are  
Conservative have horrible  
Anarchic lives, raping children

And people who think  
They are radical, and  
Tell you so, typically,  
Are repressed, authoritarian, and  
Thinly frigid in their  
Personal bearings,

Leaving the world on both sides  
To be divided up between  
Aggressive territorial types  
Finding ideological excuses  
To kill other people's children--  
If all this is patently,

Obviously so, so that  
Only poetry, and not  
Politics can save us--  
Is there any hope for us then?  
Massac came from Casamusetts.

Cassam came from Massachusetts.

Aaron Fogel

# The Man Who Never Heard Of Frank Sinatra

The man who had never heard of Frank Sinatra: he lived  
A perfectly ordinary life in America. Born in 1915,  
He followed all the fads, read the newspapers, listened

To Television, knew who Dean Martin and Sammy whathisname  
Were (Sinatra's friends), but somehow, by a one in a  
Zillion fluke, whenever Sinatra came up, he was out of the room.

Or his attention was diverted by something else, and  
(You will say this is impossible, that it cannot be), never  
Heard him sing, like a man in my generation who somehow

Missed the Beatles though he had heard everything else.  
Once, just as he was about to hear the name Frank Sinatra  
A plane flew overhead--he was fifty-five years old--his hearing

A little more impaired. He had heard of Humphrey Bogart,  
Of Elizabeth Taylor, of Walter Cronkite, and of perhaps a hundred  
Forty thousand other celebrities names by the time he died,

And yet he had never heard of Frank Sinatra. The Greeks had  
That famous saying, &quot;The luckiest man is he who was never born.&quot;;  
Which is kind of gloomy, but I think they were wrong.

The luckiest man is he who never heard of Frank Sinatra.

Aaron Fogel



# The Printer's Error

Fellow composers  
and pressworkers!

I, Chief Printer  
Frank Steinman,  
having worked fifty-  
seven years at my trade,  
and served five years  
as president  
of the Holliston  
Printer's Council,  
being of sound mind  
though near death,  
leave this testimonial  
concerning the nature  
of printers' errors.

First: I hold that all books  
and all printed  
matter have  
errors, obvious or no,  
and that these are their  
most significant moments,  
not to be tampered with  
by the vanity and folly  
of ignorant, academic  
textual editors.

Second: I hold that there are  
three types of errors, in ascending  
order of importance:

One: chance errors  
of the printer's trembling hand  
not to be corrected incautiously  
by foolish professors  
and other such rabble  
because trembling is part  
of divine creation itself.

Two: silent, cool sabotage

by the printer,  
the manual laborer  
whose protests  
have at times taken this  
historical form,  
covert interferences  
not to be corrected  
ensoriously by the hand  
of the second and far  
more ignorant saboteur,  
the textual editor.

Three: errors  
from the touch of God,  
divine and often  
obscure corrections  
of whole books by  
nearly unnoticed changes  
of single letters  
sometimes meaningful but  
about which the less said  
by preemptive commentary  
the better.

Third: I hold that all three  
sorts of error,  
errors by chance,  
errors by workers' protest,  
and errors by  
God's touch,  
are in practice the  
same and indistinguishable.

Therefore I,  
Frank Steinman,  
typographer  
for thirty-seven years,  
and cooperative Master  
of the Holliston Guild  
eight years,  
being of sound mind and body  
though near death  
urge the abolition  
of all editorial work

whatsoever  
and manumission  
from all textual editing  
to leave what was  
as it was, and  
as it became,  
except insofar as editing  
is itself an error, and

therefore also divine.

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