

137 Cottage St.
New Haven, CT 06511
July 9, 1997

David Gullette
The Poets' Theatre
Simmons College
Boston, Mass. 02115

DAVID
GULLETTE - 1

Dear David:

Elinor Fuchs tells me that she was talking to you about my plays and that you expressed interest in reading them for Poets' Theatre. I'm pleased to hear it. Enclosed find two recent scripts of mine, The Muse of Self-Absorption and In the Black and White of Fire.

I'm not sure if you remember, but you and I knew each other slightly at Harvard in the early 1960s. We were both involved in a triple bill at . . . Dunster House, was it?: two Yeats plays and an early one-act of mine. A few years later, I recall running into you and your wife socially at Marina Levin Frederiksen's. Speaking of your wife, I crossed paths with Margaret just last year in Milwaukee, where she and my wife, Susan Letzler Cole, were each delivering papers at the "Women and Aging" conference. Please give her my regards.

It's heartening that you are trying to bring back to life, or make a new life for, Poets' Theatre. When I was in high school in Brookline in the 1950s, Norma Farber, the mother of a friend of mine, took me several times to Poets'. Norma was, as perhaps you know, a singer, actress and poet who appeared in a number of Poets' Theatre productions. Thanks to her, I got to see their Finnegans Wake adaptation and some Yeats one-acts. I still remember the shock I felt on hearing that their wonderful little performance space behind the Coop had burned down.

Well, I hope you enjoy the plays. If you would like to discuss them and/or the past and future of Poets' Theatre, give me a ring at one of the two numbers below. Meantime, best of luck with your work of (re-)creation.

Best,

David Cole

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New Haven, CT 06511

phone: in NEW HAVEN 203-624-3982 (machine is on in whichever
in NEW YORK 212-989-1648 city I'M in)

P.S. I think you may be interested in the statement on language in the theatre that appears on pp. 54-55 of The Muse of Self-Absorption.

received Fri, Dec 6, 1997

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

DAVID
GULLETTE - 2

1 Dec 97

Dear David ,

I'm really sorry not to have gotten back to you after all this time. **The Muse of Self -Absorption** and **In the Black and White of Fire** have been making the rounds of the various members of the Script Reading Committee of the Poets' Theatre, and these folks do tend to drag their feet. I'm sorry to report a lack of enthusiasm for either play. Bottom line, the readers feel (and I include myself) that the plays are too static, too intellectually self-involved, not dramatic enough and (except for a few passages) not really lyrical enough. I guess we disagree with your belief that "it is only by abiding, musingly, within itself that writing can be an event for the theatre." We think writing has to meet the audience in some DMZ between writing's refusal to deal with the theatre and the public's desire to be moved, shaken, intrigued, seduced. And to the question, "What is theatre but the spectacle of writing keeping dramatically to itself?" we answer: "Writing is dramatic not when it keeps to itself, but when it gives itself to the Other."

Hey, we old Yeatsians and Beckettians are not fool enough to think that what has passed and now passes for "dramatic action" is essential for the theatre to rise into its true potential. There is a supercharged stasis which is more exciting than all the pistols and fisticuffs in creation. That's why we PT types are restless with theatre that has none of the drama/cadence/music of poetry, and with poetry that refuses to allow itself to be performed.

Still, I admire the stubborn fixity-of-purpose of your project in these plays--a sort of philosophical polemic about the impossibility of writing and drama getting into bed together. The sheer talmudic tenacity is a thing to behold!

I was in a recent production of **The Bacchae** at Agassiz (C.K. Williams translation, directed by Kathryn Walker) and Caroline Cross Chinlund came up from NYC to see the show. We reminisced about the 2-Yeats/1-Cole Tri-Bill, and decided that it was not in Dunster but in the weirdly Moorish lobby of the old...shit, what's the name, the house for commuters...anyhow, you know which one I mean: it was on Dunster STREET, across from the barber shop: we acted in and out and among the white stucco archways and pillars; I think Amy Greenfield danced in **The King of the Great Clock Tower** (she is now a leading exponent of Feminist Erotic Dance in New York (stand back!))

Norma Farber! A name to conjure by. I'm afraid the Poets' Theatre Revived is in a low point these days--too few poets, too little energy. We had a good run for about 8 years, but there's something missing from our formula. We hit the target (when we do) more by accident than design.

Best wishes. Keep in touch,

David Gullette