

# OCCUPY THE INAUGURAL



STEPHEN RUSSELL

# Occupy the Inaugural

Stephen Russell

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

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## Occupy the Inaugural

The young people chant --

A better world  
is possible.

A better world  
is possible.

The world as we know it,  
isn't good.

A better world is possible.

It's impossibly awful,  
what's been going on.

The president, about to speak,  
is interrupted by an infant's shrill sobs.

A better world --  
... is one still possible?

The World  
as we know it,  
still revolves.

## Hate Mail

same guy:

i see him  
                  everyday

*on my side* of the street,  
i'm reminded of my father--

those eyes:  
                  indefinite, cold & blue

(they hone in)  
what do they want from me?

i could ask  
i keep walking ...

\*

                  at the methadone clinic  
they make you piss  
                  into tiny plastic cups

eventually, the world becomes this giant bladder

\*

i don't need a woman

i don't need a gun

i want a bullet's simple calm  
i want the kind of death that growls

\*

at the deli  
across the street,

an elderly, Korean man  
pitches me another stare,

enough to make a hired assassin giggle like a girl.

on CNN  
i saw a parade of coffins  
draped by flags blue, red, & white--

the next time a soldier salutes,  
i'll know which arm to amputate

\*

he's dependable:

he's become a landmark,  
a footnote, a history too private to record.

where he should have an arm  
there's an empty sleeve.

something hangs from his neck,  
a medallion he wears like a crucifix void of Christ,

must have got it in 'Nam --

Valor, a jungle sniper aiming for the heart.

When the next helicopter lands,  
he'll be lifted off,  
at home among the wounded.

## Gary's 2nd Tour

Only part of Gary came back,  
not the Gary who started as point guard when Bishop  
Moore

"shocked" Edgewater, its superior rival, in the State finals,  
not the Gary who played piano and drums and dreamed of  
touring live and traveling

in a jet. He wasn't our mother's son anymore;  
He wasn't our older brother.

Innocent infant laughter triggered something inside of him;  
Our sister Celeste had to leave her baby boy

at home. We never knew what we might step  
on if we got too close to Gary,

maybe we'd tweak a nerve we shouldn't have touched,  
or brushed aside a thought that meant *You*,

*pay attention*. I always thought that men who returned  
from war left their battles buried in the past,

but Gary's wounds were 2 black eyes  
that wouldn't heal. When Gary watched TV,

it was like he was staring at something  
that wasn't there. He seemed to belong to a world



where we weren't invited. Something changed him  
from the brother I could playfully slug or hug

or toss a football with to someone  
like the people downtown who lived wrapped up in  
blankets

and stood in line for soup. I couldn't talk  
to Gary anymore. He was like a piece of furniture

I ignored. When we found Gary slumped over  
the dashboard of Mother's station wagon with the engine  
running,

I opened the garage door while Mother dialed 911.  
When the ambulance arrived, I snuck upstairs to my room

and rang up Susan Price. I wanted to do something  
normal.

I wanted to date a pretty girl. I wanted to forget what  
happened

to my brother downstairs and go on with life as I had  
known it.

## Campaign Promises

I

There's a trick to standing behind podiums:  
Clearing the throat like a lover unable to propose,  
Adjusting one's posture until the most maudlin speech

Burns with the rich smell of truth.

Wave as the crowd surrounds you:  
Your confidence, poise: feel it?

Blow a kiss towards a cloud to make it rain  
So they're happy in farm belt, Wisconsin.

No gesture's too obvious.

In the dark rows of the balcony,  
Someone reaches for a gun.

## Reading After Midnight

Hour after hour, they watch the tube.  
No one in the rehab reads.

They remind me of bored household pets.

Perhaps it's self hypnosis.  
I almost envy their rapture, their zombie gaze.

The mad house fills --  
The shelters fill --  
The graveyards fill --  
The crack house is full again --

There will always be a void inside of me.

The counselors advise me to read steps 2 & 3 from the AA  
Big Book.  
Came to believe...

Someone changes the channel:

It's a show about a *brother* on parole who ends  
up in the joint again  
is sprung, hooks up with a beautiful mobbed up crack  
head:

Together, they're a sort of inner city Bonnie & Clyde  
ripping off drug lords  
while gaining insight

about themselves without the benefit of middle class  
psychotherapy.

t's a show about growth.

It's the one time in rehab where everyone is silent:

...believe that a power greater than ourselves could  
restore us to sanity:

Before sanity, sleep.

I weep for the simplest pleasures:  
I want myself, to be by myself.  
I want to hear myself think.

Consider the body: So vulnerable.

It needs food.  
Clothing.  
Shelter --

Why does anything exist?

There's a void inside of me.  
There's a void inside most all of us.  
I've come to believe that no one thing will ever change  
that.

## Locofo Chaps

2017

Eileen Tabios – *To Be An Empire Is To Burn*

Charles Perrone – *A CAPacious Act*

Francesco Levato – *A Continuum of Force*

Joel Chace – *America's Tin*

John Goodman – *Twenty Moments that Changed the World*

Donna Kuhn – *Don't Say His Name*

Eileen Tabios (ed.) – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry*

Gabriel Gudding – *Bed From Government*

mLEKAL aND – *Manifesto of the Moment*

Garin Cycholl – *Country Musics 20/20*

Mary Kasimor – *The Prometheus Collage*

Iars palm – *case*

Reijo Valta – *Truth and Truthmp*

Andrew Peterson – *The Big Game is Every Night*

Romeo Alcala Cruz – *Archaeoteryx*

John Lowther – *18 of 555*

Jorge Sánchez – *Now Sing*

Alex Gildzen — *Disco Naps & Odd Nods*

Barbara Janes Reyes – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry, vol. 2*

Luisa A. Igloria – *Puñeta: Political Pilipinx Poetry, vol. 3*

Tom Bamford – *The Gag Reel*

Melinda Luisa de Jesús – *Humpty Drumpfty and Other Poems*

Allen Bramhall – *Bleak Like Me*

Kristian Carlsson – *The United World of War*

Roy Bentley – *Men, Death, Lies*

Travis Macdonald – *How to Zing the Government*

Kristian Carlsson – *Dhaka Poems*

Barbara Jane Reyes – *Nevertheless, #She Persisted*

Martha Deed – *We Should Have Seen This Coming*  
Matt Hill – *Yet Another Blunted Ascent*  
Patricia Roth Schwartz – *Know Better*  
Melinda Luisa de Jesús – *Petty Poetry for SCROTUS' Girls,*  
*with poems for Elizabeth Warren and Michelle Obama*  
Freke Rähä – *Explanation model for 'Virus'*  
Eileen R. Tabios – *Immigrant*  
Ronald Mars Lintz – *Orange Crust & Light*  
John Bloomberg-Rissman – *In These Days of Rage*  
Colin Dardis – *Post-Truth Blues*  
Leah Mueller – *Political Apnea*  
Naomi Buck Palagi – *Imagine Renaissance*  
John Bloomberg-Rissman and Eileen Tabios –  
*Comprehending Mortality*  
Dan Ryan – *Swamp Tales*  
Sheri Reda – *Stubborn*  
Aileen Cassinetta – *B & O Blues*  
Mark Young – *the veil drops*  
Christine Stoddard — *Chica/Mujer*  
Aileen Ibardaloza, Paul Cassinetta, and Wesley St. Jo – *No*  
*Names*  
Nicholas Michael Ravnikaar – *Liberal elite media rag. SAD!*  
Mark Young – *The Waitstaff of Mar-a-Largo*  
Howard Yosha – *Stop Armageddon*  
Andrew and Donora Rihn – *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*  
Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt – *Extreme Vetting*  
Michael Dickel – *Breakfast at the End of Capitalism*  
Tom Hibbard – *Poems of Innocence and Guilt*  
Eileen Tabios (ed.) – *Menopausal Hay(na)ku*  
*For P-Grubbers*  
Aileen Casinetta – *Tweet*  
Melinda Luisa de Jesús – *Defying Trumplandia*  
Carol Dorf – *Some Years Ask*

Marthe Reed – *Data Primer*  
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Amy Bassin and Mark Blickley – *Weathered Reports: Trump  
Surrogate Quotes From the Underground*  
Nate Logan – *Post-Reel*  
Jared Schickling – *Donald Trump and the Pocket Oracle*  
Luisa A. Igloria – *Check & Balance*  
Alik Barnstone – *So That They Shall Not Say, This Is Jezebel*  
Geneva Chao – *post hope*  
Thérèse Bachand – *Sanctuary*  
Chuck Richardson – *Poesy for the Poetus. . . Our Donaldcito*  
John M. Bellinger – *The Inaugural Poems*  
Kath Abela Wilson – *The Owl Still Asking*  
Ronald Mars Lintz – *Dumped Through*  
Agnes Marton – *The Beast Turns Me Into a Tantrumbeast*  
Melinda Luisa de Jesús – *Adios, Trumplandia!*  
Magus Magnus – *Of Good Counsel*  
Matina L. Stamatakis – *Shattered Window Espionage*  
Steve Klepetar – *How Fascism Comes to America*  
Bill Yarrow – *We All Saw It Coming*  
Jim Leftwich – *Improvisations Against Propaganda*  
Bill Lavender – *La Police*  
Gary Hardaway – *November Odds*  
James Robinson – *Burning Tide*  
Eric Mohrman – *Prospectors*  
Janine Harrison – *If We Were Birds*  
Michael Vander Does – *We Are Not Going Away*  
John Moore Williams – *The Milo Choir Sings Wild Boys in  
Trumplandia*  
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Stephen Russell – *Occupy the Inaugural*

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