
Abstract: On 13 September 1994, a loose collective of Downtown poets known as the Unbearables lined up on the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian walkway, all the way from Manhattan to Brooklyn. During rush hour, they simultaneously ranted erotic poems in six-minute loops, so that, at least theoretically, “a few words from each reader would have reached each pedestrian’s ear, and the whole string of phrases would add up to a single ‘stochastic’ poem, a different version for each and every passerby” (Bey 1994, n.p.). The Unbearables’ thirty-minute performance was repeated in six consecutive years with only minor variations. The current article reconstructs the annual Brooklyn Bridge readings on the basis of previously unpublished sources that include personal interviews with the Unbearables and archival material from New York University’s Fales Library Downtown Collection and the SUNY of Buffalo Poetry Collection. On the basis of this reconstruction, the article analyzes the event as a poetic implementation of anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey’s theories on the Temporary Autonomous Zone, Poetic Terrorism and Artistic Disappearance.