



Photo by Kevin Powell

## New Possibilities: A Monthly(ish) Newsletter by J.R. Barner

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Welcome to the inaugural newsletter! I've been wanting to put something like this together for a while, but it made more sense to wait until I had [a sparkly new website](#) to, er, *administrate? manage? deploy?* it. I may not be up on the appropriate technical jargon. Still, I make two promises to you: 1.) This is where I will share what's happening with me, where and when I'll be reading, and preview new work with you directly, but also solicit your opinions, ask and answer questions, trade advice, and generally *have a conversation*, you know like we used to do? Sound good? Please? 2.) I'm not going to use this as a platform to sell things. Your emails are safe with me. We all know that I have [things for sale](#). Please know that I am incredibly grateful to everyone who has bought a book or come to a reading. And, truly, I would be so honored if you would continue to support my writing or share links to my wares with others who might be interested and so on, but, I think, for now, they will be referred to minimally, if at all, in these missives. **This is a place for us.** Commerce can wait.

Which brings me to the title. This title has kind of been a mantra to me lately and I think pretty accurately encapsulates the spirit of this newsletter. It comes from [an interview with one of my favorite poets](#), J.H. Prynne, who said:

***"I want a poet to break out of his or her poetic identity, to establish a whole new set of possibilities for the reader and for him- or herself."***

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In the aftermath of putting together, publishing, and touring my first retrospective collection whilst simultaneously starting from a blank page on a brand-new one, this was something I needed to hear. I'd expended so much energy on establishing who I was that I had stopped challenging myself. Rather than living in that big emancipatory moment of sharing my voice with the world, it was as if I was hired on as a "poet." I needed to show up on time, park in the designated area, and only take ten minutes for tea breaks. Prynne's words woke me up and got me back on track, both by challenging myself in my writing practice and also by challenging myself with *how* I shared my writing. Hence, this newsletter!

### Asking the (Dreaded) Social Media Question

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From "The Last Judgement", Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1482, or a typical day on the socials.

So, I'm [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), & [here](#). It's a lot

First, let me admit that, in the days immediately before lockdown, when I started to share my writing, I benefitted from social media. It was a lifeline. It was supportive, encouraging, and 99% positive. In starting my website and sending these letters, I'm being honest with myself that I'm slowly, but deliberately, taking a step back from social media. But, at the same time, I sometimes feel (except one, single-lettered social which shall remain name-, or letter-less) that by doing so I'm kind of callously hacking off that sense of community and support. So, dear readers, I ask the difficult question. Should I take that above list down to maybe one or two places? What social media platforms do you like? Which ones do you avoid? Send your advice to [jrbarner@gmail.com](mailto:jrbarner@gmail.com). I appreciate it!

### **This Is (Still) (Not) A Book Tour, Southeastern Leg + NYC**

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I'll be reading on a handful of dates throughout the Southeast in October and November, starting with listening to one of my favorite poets at my local monthly open mic and ending in the City That Never Sleeps.

**Oct. 1st Athens Word of Mouth feat. Amanda Dzimianski**

**Oct. 6th Athens Poetry Potluck II @ Oconee Cultural Arts Center**

**Nov. 10th FreeVerse in Charleston, South Carolina**

**Nov. 11th Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, Charlotte, North Carolina**

**Nov. 12th Wits End Poetry, Greenville, South Carolina**

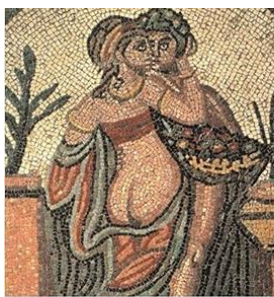
**Nov. 25th Pine Box Rock Shop in Brooklyn, NYC**

More details on the website. All locations and performances are subject to change.

### **Reading & Listening This Month**

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Here's a quick peek into what's on my stereo and bedside table:



PENGUIN CLASSICS

CATULLUS

The Poems



**Catullus, *The Poems* (Penguin Classics, 2006).** I've been spending some quality time with Catullus lately, who was one of the gateway poetry drugs for me, the poet whose story, words and style intrigued me so much it had me [thinking about the Roman Empire](#).

**Yard Act, *The Overload* (Island Records, 2022).** It is hard to believe this record is nearly a year old. The pride of North Yorkshire, this Leeds quartet makes it all about the lyrics on their Mercury-nominated debut. Addressing ripped-from-the-headlines issues through the lens of world-weary class consciousness has never slapped so hard.

## & Now, the Poem

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This is practically a transcribed conversation overheard in an airport. Fair warning: overheard conversations in airports are catnip for poets.

## Roaming

We were beating the retreat  
From that tapas place on Charlotte Street  
When you noticed that you'd lost service.  
Your widening eyes had that mix of  
Fright and genuine surprise I'd last seen in *Poltergeist*  
When JoBeth Williams thought a tree had just eaten her son.  
We'd run the clock out talking shite about your ex-wife having it off  
With some Pilates instructor from the Maldives  
She'd met at a wellness retreat.  
I said it couldn't get any worse & thought you got off pretty cheap.  
Waiting for the cab, you look down at your mobile, again.  
Bemoaning the sorry state that it's in.  
When your eyes seem to glimmer with hope  
Or maybe just reflecting the light from the phone.  
Either way, you look the happiest you've been in ages,  
    & with a beatific grin you say  
That you were only roaming,  
That you'd only been roaming  
All along.

## Disclaimers, etc.

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You signed up for this! Or, at least I think you did. Send the word UNSUBSCRIBE to [jrbarnes@gmail.com](mailto:jrbarnes@gmail.com) if you don't want any more. That is also the address if you want to speak about happier subjects. I'd love to hear from you!  
More 'New Possibilities' in (around about) a month!