

POSTSCRIPT

Among the collection of ads that concludes this issue, readers will find an unusual creature—*Cabinet's* "Statement of Ownership" for 2009. Some readers may have seen a version of this strange artifact in our pages before—every US periodical, from *Vogue* to the tiniest journal, which wishes to mail at the heavily discounted Periodicals rate must file such a statement with its central post office on an annual basis. It then must print that information in the first issue it publishes following October 1. But what distinguishes this year's bureaucratic exercise from last year's is the colossal but invisible hermeneutic struggle that has taken place between *Cabinet* and Brooklyn's postal powers-that-be over how to interpret the following two sentences in Section 8.3.3 of the Domestic Mail Manual, the bible of rules and regulations for the United States Postal Service (USPS):

"The publisher of each publication authorized Periodicals mailing privileges as a general or requester publication must publish a complete statement of ownership, containing all information required by Form 3526, in an issue of the publication to which that statement relates; other publications are not required to publish this statement. A reproduction of the Form 3526 submitted to the USPS may be used." (emphasis added)

For years, *Cabinet*—like every other magazine in the country—had declined the post office's generous offer to reproduce scans of Form 3526, opting instead to publish this information in "editorial format," as suggested in another USPS circular. But this year, the Brooklyn post office rejected our previous format: it did not, they pointed out, show "all information" on the form, including the instructions. For example, we had neglected to include the words "Do not leave blank," an instruction that appears after several questions. While we were recuperating from this first kick, they continued to point out other flaws, one of which was that we had omitted question 13 ("Name of Publication"). We countered that this question simply repeated question 1, and that it occurred at the top of each of the two pages of their form simply in order to allow them to identify and collate the two sheets in case of separation. They responded by asking if we understood what *all* meant. Like many literary exercises, our *disputatio* ended with a naive discussion of the relationship between form and content, one in which the post office representative, let's call him Tim, finally brought closure to months of

phone calls and faxes when he announced that it was in fact impossible not to deform the information if the relationship between columns and rows as it appears on the form were in any way compromised. Though the Domestic Mail Manual asserts that a reproduction of the form "may be used," the mandate to reproduce all the information, Tim concluded, meant that in practice a reproduction of the form "must be used." The fate of the magazine depends on us maintaining our Periodicals permission, and so we capitulated. It turns out that this interpretation of the rules is specific to Brooklyn. Over the past two months, it has pained us greatly to see that no magazine based elsewhere in our vast nation has been forced to publish Form 3526 in all its facsimilar glory.

There is no great novel of the common cold, as one of our editors has observed in these pages. And surely offering up the leviathan that is the USPS to the collective imagination requires nothing less than an epic. Until that day when a bard with sufficient time and extravagant grievance against the mail system is moved to pen a *Postaliad*, poet and literary scholar Jeff Dolven has graciously made a preliminary foray by writing a prose poem that wrestles with the evil beauty that is Form 3526. We hope that his brave and pioneering act of sublating bureaucracy into art might offer our borough's benighted magazine editors some small consolation.

FILING FORM 3526
(FOUR DRAFTS FOR THE BROOKLYN P.O.)
Domestic Mail Manual, *with* Jeff Dolven

The information provided on Form 3526 must allow the USPS to determine whether the publication meets the standards for Periodicals mailing privileges.

This information includes, as applicable, the idylls of the idler, the massaging idler, the blandishers, and yearners; the yearning cooperative and its sharesharers; nude blisshandlers, moremakers, and other sublimity-harborers; and the ecstasy and nakedness of the celebration of the pacification, infolding the numberless copia disinhibited, the mayday of disinhibition, and how much of the celebration is play, in whole or in part.

(rejected)

This information includes, as applicable, the integrity of the edified, the more-or-less edified, the penitents, and the honest; the honest commons and its staunchholders; noble freeholders, manatees, and other serenity-shoulderers; and the extenuations and negotiations of the certification of the petition, implicating the niceties of comprehensive dissemination, the mayhap of dissemination, and how much of the petition is staid, in whole or in part.

(rejected)

This information includes, as applicable, the agony of the undertaker, the menacing undertaker, the punishers, and groaners; the groaning commonweal and its slaveholders; numb bondsmen, mortality, and utter sanity-moulder; and the rent and rupture of the survival of the nation, incomprehending the numbness of communities disintegrated, the mayhem of disintegration, and how much of the nation is betrayed, in whole or in part.

(rejected)

This information includes, as applicable, the identity of the editor, managing editor, publishers, and owners; the owning corporation and its stockholders; known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders; and the extent and nature of the circulation of the publication, including the number of copies distributed, the methods of distribution, and how much of the circulation is paid, in whole or in part.

(pending)