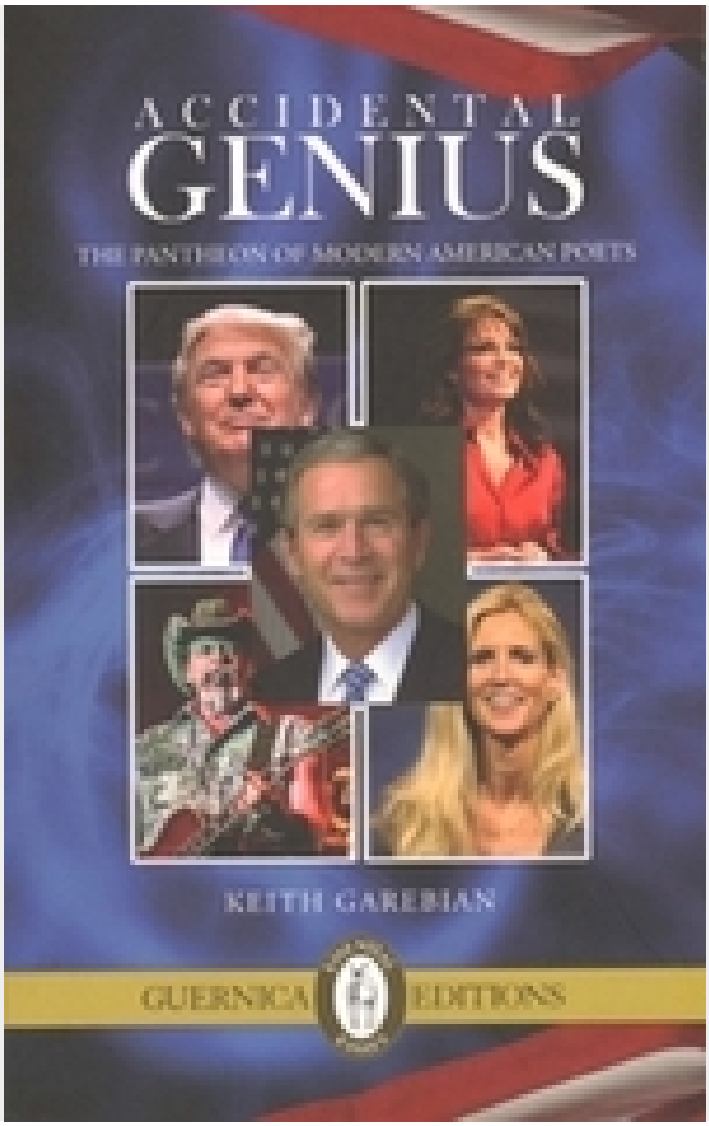
FOOLS, CLOWNS, AND 'GENIUSES'

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By **Jirair Tutunjian**, Toronto, 31 March 2015

Keghart.com contributor Keith Garebian's new book is titled "Accidental Genius". Alternate titles could have been "Ship of Vociferous Fools", "Caravan of Unintentionally Funny Clowns" or "Have Mouth, Will Shout".

An award-winning author, who has written 3 books of literary criticism, 9 books on theatre, a memoir, and 6 books of poetry , and who reviews theatre, dance, books, and film for some of Canada's most prestigious publications, Garebian takes on the clownish yet influential noisemakers of the United States: the motor-mouths whose favorite perch is often the Fox-TV network; the irascible talk-show hosts, haranguing and inane TV evangelists, brain-dead politicians, redundant political pundits, and several idiotic actors who should stick to their scripts rather than express "deep thoughts" about the human condition.

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"Accidental Genius" (Guernica Editions) is a hilarious anthology of short "poem" quotes by such eminent bloviators as Sean Hannity, firebrand Michelle Bachmann, ponderous Rick Santorum, "America—right or wrong" Newt Gingrich, rabble-rousing Sarah Palin, venomous Ann Coulter, self-worshipping Donald Trump, air-head Paris Hilton, soapbox orator Jerry Falwell, snake-oil salesman Pat Robertson, dunderhead George Bush, war-monger Donald Rumsfeld, blabber-mouth Rush Limbaugh… Other than being voluble, every member of the accidental geniuses happens to be of Right Wing persuasion.

One of the early quotes is from the voluminous verbiage of Hannity:
"Halloween is a liberal holiday
because we're teaching our children to beg for something
for free.
We're teaching kids to knock on other people's doors

and ask for a handout."

Speechifier Michelle Bachmann is pithy:
"Planned Parenthood is the Lens Crafters of big abortions."

Failed presidential candidate Mitt Romney:
"I'm not familiar precisely
with what I said,
but
I'll stand by what I said,
whatever it was."

Indefinable air-head Paris Hilton:
"Barbie is a role model.
She might not do anything,
but she looks good doing it."

Another failed presidential candidate and Alaskan "feminist" Sarah Palin:
"On Bombing Libya
Do we use the term intervention?
Do we use war?
Do we use squirmish?
What is it?"
There are 120 pages of similar gems in "Accidental Genius: The Pantheon of Modern American Poets".

Garebian, who won Armenia's William Saroyan Medal in 2013, has his tongue deep in his cheek when he describes these blowhards as "poets". They're poets if Britney Spears is Peggy Lee.
Describing his choice of "poets", Garebian says in a blithe Preface: "The poems here, anthologized can now take their proper place alongside the 'greats' of the past, as their poets rub shoulders, so to speak, with the immortals of the craft: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton…Homer, Larkin, and others from our modern high culture."

He also points out that the fact that all these poets happen to be Right Wing Republican, or in the Moral Majority is not a "happy accident of genius. After all, modern American Conservatives are the gifts that keep giving."

Whether the reader is Right or Left Wing, Centrist or Independent, "Accidental Genius" is a gift that keeps giving sharp-edged laughter.

It has been a bumper season for Garebian. In a rare coup, two books penned by him are being published within a few months, something that doesn't happen to most authors in a whole year. This spring Guernica will release the "Accidental Genius," and Quattro will publish "Georgia and Alfred," a

collection of poems about artist Georgia O'Keefe and photographer Alfred Stieglitz.