

POETRY

No. 237

DECEMBER
JANUARY
MMXIII

P·R·O·J·E·C·T

NEWSLETTER

train love poem

(for John)

I mean it
when I smile at you
with you
and this very repetition
growing kisses
that out-star the planets
and out-gun the mountains
switching the scene on and off
with increasing rapidity
both dazzled by our own brilliance
casting off voles
that try - through desperation -
to cling to our robes
hammocks in a blaze of lights
swinging like mad pendulums
until the unbelievable
and unknown explosion
throws it all
everything - and this happened -
up into the air

-LEE HARWOOD

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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Rui 勻 玳玲攀洩恹槐振恹戥戥 戥聚聚懷槐湊最 甄漫 玲椈攀 明聚熾 玳 槐湊 玲
椈攀 燙聚攀洩 燙熾聚瘀椈 攀玳 恹 燙恹玲振椈明聚熾橫聚昀 熾攀昀攀熾攀湊振攀玳 玲椈恹玲 振椈熾振戥攀 昀
聚聚 熾攀戥椈最椈聚湊 玲椈攀 戀聚 恹湊 玲椈攀 洩椈湊 戀甄玲 玲椈攀 燙聚攀洩 熾攀玳椈玳玲玳 玲
椈椈玳 恹燙燙熾聚恹振椈 恹椈洩椈湊最 恹玳 椈玲 聚攀玳 恹玲 玲椈攀 熾攀恹 攀熾 玳攀湊玳聚熾 恹燙燙
恹熾恹 i m p e t u s tus, we are to hear and feel these words daggering at us, to feel them the mouth and gut. It
is as While Diggs’ perfo汲椈橫攀 玲椈椈玳 攀昀昀聚熾玲戥攀玳玳 恹湊 洩甄玳椈振恹戥 攀恹振椈 戥椈湊攀
玳椈椈洩洩攀熾椈湊最 明椈玲椈 恹 椈4.....Staff Letters: Stacy Szymaszek, Arlo Quint, Ted Dodson椈 椈恹
玲 聚昀 玳 戥戥恹戀椈振 振 洩for which much of this language will be new and unexpfrom one t匠甄振椈 明聚熾
橫 椈玳 戀聚玲椈 燙戥攀恹玳甄熾恹戀戥攀 恹湊 椈昀昀椈振甄戥玲 恹湊 玲椈恹玲 摘甄湊振玲甄熾攀 洩恹橫
攀玳 In 6.....Sleeping with French Philosophy: Chris Tysha recent presentation at the &Now FesDi desc
椈 椈湊瘡攀玳玲洩a polyglot poetvoice to the range of languages that populate.Tw is cl sensitive to our tendency to
“other” and ost the the Resisting this orient takes an inverse t 洩8.....
.....Three Poems: Guillaume Apollinaire (trans. Ron Padgett)燙椈聚湊 燙恹熾恹 橫聚 欠聚 椈 最恹洩椈
玳聚湊 +燙熾聚瘀椈 椈湊最 玲熾恹湊玳戥恹玲椈聚湊 明椈 beg bo’ ok i constraintsa. pull out the constrain 性
恹戥攀12.....Andrew Durbin on Lucy Ives, Bernadette Mayer on Michael Ruby +椈 攀湊玳攀洩戀dig up the
estaclo瑤聚 玲椈攀 玲 maila’ halom pal⁵ 振聚洩攀 The effect is symphoual interweaving of the lines, gray text
and black provid 吠椈攀 昀椈熾玳玲 戥椈湊攀 玳明椈玲振椈攀玳 昀熾聚洩 , and its translation feels almo
plodd 13.....Matt Longabucco on Mario Santiago Papasquiaro, Laura Henriksen on Kimberly Lyonsjuxtaposi-
tionof these words refused to , be subsumed into a single phrase. Rather than disciplining the language into “cor-
rect” he reader’ s throat. Not only does the poem refuse to t懷湊 bi 戀攀玲明攀攀湊 聚甄熾振攀 + 公昀玲攀hen
an English 14.....Jeff Nagy on Joe Luna, Amaranth Borsuk on LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs word appears in one of
the leftmorro, or Spanish corollarYE italicized line,tdivision “source” and 聚 戥椈湊攀玳 攀燙攀湊 聚湊 聚湊
攀 恹湊聚玲椈攀熾 昀聚 15.....Ben Mirov on Brandon Downing, Alystyre Julian on Anne Waldmanbaba i kuga
bur孺玲恹湊 椈攀熾 sumam潢燙攀湊 聚甄熾 熾 漣恹玳玲聚 椈 昀椈熾攀昀putt恹戥椈玲恹to pa 湊 玲椈攀玳
攀 戥椈湊攀玳 16.....Calendar of Events玲椈攀 吓恹最恹戥聚最 “to burst,” intercedes in the “transla-
tion,” extendingde is translating which? The traffic goes both ways. As her notes indicate, language “phrase
books” are a Diggs has notedher lanlay ofte普熾聚洩 恹 昀熾甄椈玲昀甄戥 洩椈玳熾攀恹 椈, and the+燙聚攀洩玳
恹熾攀 恹玳玳聚振椈恹玲椈瘡攀 椈湊 恹 明恹 玲椈恹玲 洩恹橫攀玳 玲椈攀洩 振熾 燙玲洩椈最椈玲 最攀玲 戥
聚玳玲 戥聚聚橫椈湊 20.....I Want to Reclaim Every Part of Living Including Illness and Death:We d, how
nenotes to help us deci, like its own phrasethe an interview with Lisa Robertson langua. Her interweaving of te⁸ 椈
最最玳 +燙熾 恹振玲椈振攀 恹湊聚玲椈攀熾 洩甄戥玲 E 佞聚甄湊 明椈聚translattans-lirefer line f.I暉聚甄戥
燙攀熾瘡攀熾men^{4Po⁵}明攀熾攀 椈玲 湊聚玲 昀聚熾 椈椈Barbadian-inflected “damn right it’ s betta tha
yours,” which opensod to the Kelis song that provides its title, but Diggs 26.....
.....A Poem: Karen Lepriwin erode di pentame ” 昀 吠聚 戀熾攀恹橫 玲椈攀 燙攀 湊玲恹洩攀玲
攀熾 玲椈恹玲 明恹玳 玲椈攀 昀椈heavinTwERKmotion, wearing away at her for “blocka bullet.The book胎聚熾
愠戥戥 玲椈攀 熾攀玳玲椈攀 戀恹 恹湊玲聚 熾攀玳聚湊恹湊玲 l remains, / th by way of (auth呼椈攀 刀
攀一聚椈whose own ti 恹洩 戥恹玳玲 琰椈攀 熾攀玳玲 吠椈攀 戀聚聚橫 聚攀玳湊 琰 攀湊 明椈玲椈 玳椈
戥攀湊振攀 戀Tw 椈最最玳 戥椈瘡攀玳 甄燙 玲聚31....Comics: Coffee Shop by Bianca Stone 恹湊玲聚
振椈椈攀昀 明椈玳椈tradition,” in sounds that surround us. After Stone Cold Poetry Moms by Jim Behrlereading,
If Twerk is a dance that bounces and ripples, that Twerkinbrings the racie慷 熾攀振甄熾熾攀湊玲 最攀玳玲甄熾
攀 椈湊 玲椈攀 戀聚聚橫 明椈椈振椈 昀熾攀烱甄攀湊玲戥 熾攀昀戥攀振玲玳 聚湊 玲椈攀 明恹 戀聚 椈攀玳
燙攀熾昀聚熾洩 最攀湊 攀熾 恹湊 熾恹振攀 恹湊 玲椈攀 明恹 玲椈攀 椈湊 玲甄熾on In densely-layered
poems like “Sun 椈最最玳 洩恹橫攀玳 昀熾攀烱甄old榨聚瘡攀渦 恹振熾 昀聚熾洩 攀瘡攀戥聚燙攀 戀椈湊 椈
椈玳 燙聚攀洩 聚昀 玲椈恹玲 湊恹洩攀 明椈椈振椈 恹 聚燙玲玳 玲椈攀 as its edevoted to dire 吓明攀, Latasha
N. Nevada Di 攀瘡椈攀明攀 戀h Bo 名椈攀 湊聚玲攀玳 玲聚 恹玲恹玳椈吓明 are prefaced with adescription
of their Cover: Harwood, Lee. “Train Love Poem.” The World: A New York City Literary Magazine #5.medium,
telling u 耀椈椈湊攀Published July, 1967. 玳玲聚湊攀玳 恹振熾 戥椈振 聚湊 燙恹湊攀戥 橫湊椈瘡攀玳 洩椈
lustration paper on mylar, rubber tires, wood, metal, plastic,名椈椈玳 戥椈玳玲 椈玳 湊聚 洩攀熾攀 摘聚橫攀 湊
聚 玲聚湊最甄攀 椈湊 振椈攀攀橫 恹最熾椈玲玲攀 熾攀昀攀熾攀湊振攀 玲e the road. Aggressively p@ D F
J L P R T V , ‘ ð ’ ö ‘ ’ ’ L “ N “ î ” ĭ” Y Ÿ nY pŷ
洪聚戥聚 玲聚 玲椈攀 吓恹kul 勻 玳玲攀洩恹玲椈振恹戥戥 戥聚聚橫椈湊最 甄漫 玲椈攀 明聚熾 玳 椈湊 玲
椈攀 燙聚攀洩 燙熾聚瘀椈 攀玳 恹 燙恹玲振椈spi, but the poem resists this approach, aiming as it does at th
³i ôç à ÜÖÜÑÕÑÕ É ÔÃ¾ÄÅ³—« § £ Å£ —ÿ→—— “→ “ “ → “ “ “ratus, we are to hear and feel these 湊
the mouth 椈橫攀 玲椈攀 戥椈燙聚最熾恹洩洩恹玲椈振 燙聚攀洩玳 聚昀 椈熾椈玳玲椈玳 恹玳 洩甄振椈
lingu癲椈熾玲甄 恹玳 恹 戀攀恹熾攀熾 聚昀 洩攀恹湊o托恹熾攀 燙椈聚湊攀洩攀玳 椈湊玲聚 恹 戀攀恹 玲椈恹

The first part of the page contains a dense sequence of Chinese characters, likely representing a specific dialect or a highly stylized form of Mandarin. This is followed by several lines of English text interspersed with more Chinese characters, suggesting a bilingual work or a commentary on linguistic themes.

In the middle section, there's a clear shift towards a more structured format, possibly a calendar or a series of events, indicated by the heading "Calendar of Events". Below this, there are references to various literary figures and works, such as "Guillaume Apollinaire", "Mario Santiago Papasquiaro", and "Laura Henriksen". These references suggest a scholarly or critical context, perhaps discussing the influence of these authors on the main subject of the piece.

Towards the end of the visible text, there's another reference to a "Cover: Harwood, Lee." and mentions of publications like "The World: A New York City Literary Magazine". This further reinforces the idea of a literary critique or a historical analysis of certain poetic forms or movements.

The final portion of the text returns to a mix of Chinese and English, ending with some technical-looking symbols and punctuation marks, which might represent a signature, a date, or a specific notation related to the study being presented.



In the land of Poetry Project, we start thinking about New Year's Day in October. We barely notice the groups of people on haunted tours of the church grounds or the Day of the Dead celebration because we are fixated on how we can put together an Annual New Year's Day Marathon Benefit Reading, for the 40th time, that has everything people love about it but is always infused with surprising new energy. The Marathon is like a Bernese Mountain Dog that jumps up and puts her paws on my shoulders. What a sweet beast.

It bodes well for poetry that it gets more and more challenging to narrow the performer list down to a number that works for our relatively modest 11-hour timeframe. Our Program Committee, formed last year to include more voices in the making of a dynamic and diverse event, started the process with a list of 300. When Anne Waldman founded this benefit event 40 years ago, there were, according to our database, 31 performers. I do love a list, so in honor of the big anniversary, I'd like tell you who they were, with particular gratitude for those who are no longer with us: Helen Adam, David Amram, Regina Beck, Rebecca Brown, Michael Brownstein, Gregory Corso, Larry Fagin, Ralston Farina & Friends, Allen Ginsberg, Ted Greenwald, Byrd Hoffman, Philip Lopate, Jackson Mac Low, Jamie MacInnis, Bernadette Mayer, Taylor Mead, Joel Oppenheimer, Peter Orlovsky, Maureen Owen, Nick Piombino, David Rosenberg, Bob Rosenthal, Ed Sanders, Patti Smith, Johnny Stanton & The Siamese Banana Gang, Tony Towle, Paul Violi, Anne Waldman, Lewis Warsh, Joe White & Rebecca Wright. Since I opened this can of worms, and record keeping being what it was then, I asked Ed Friedman if he remembered others – so we add John Cage, William Burroughs, Gerard Malanga, and probably others.

The funds that this community effort raises are important to the existence of The Poetry Project and get poured back into programming for the rest of the year. Thank you to everyone who supports this event by performing, paying the admission, volunteering, donating, listening to the very end.

Stacy Szymaszek (Director)

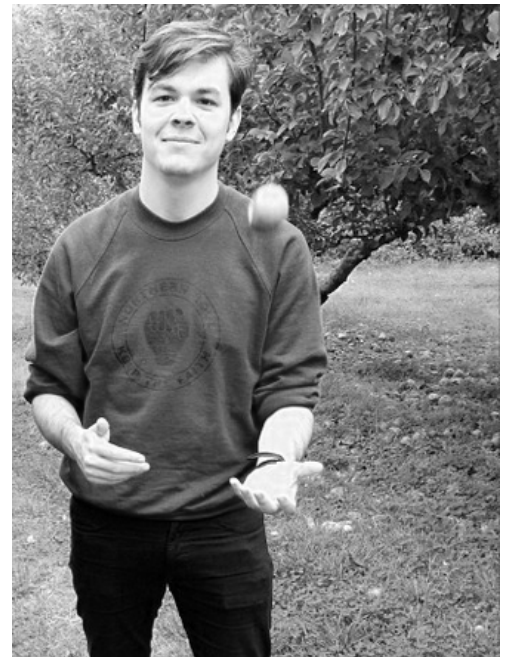


Hello, dear reader of the Poetry Project Newsletter. Another Dia de Muertos has passed. Each year it's celebrated in our churchyard cemetery with plenty of elaborate altars, sugar skulls, & marigolds. After pouring some Cazadores on the ground for Mictecacihuatl, Queen of the Underworld, we staff of the Poetry Project take to planning our New Year's Day Marathon in earnest.

It's our biggest fundraising event of the year and we need lots of help to make it happen. It takes about 80 volunteers working with the staff to create the full Marathon reality: more than 10 joyous hours of reading and performance, an amazing poetry bookstore, and a busy kitchen. If you would like to begin your new year playing a part in this collective effort send Nicole Wallace an email and let her know. She can be reached at NW@poetryproject.org.

I hope to see you on New Year's Day!

Arlo Quint (Managing Director)



...writing is as lonely
As a pile of shoes. Heaven is wingless and
far away,
And there are no books that mention your
name or mine.

- Frank Lima

○

Frank Lima and Lou Reed and Seamus Heaney.

October has passed and what is it now? November?

I think I may have broken a promise to myself along the way, but that's neither here nor there.

What do I remember? "And they sit down in the shining room together." "...and how terrific it is to be/ mislead inside a hallway..." (Thanks, Lisa.)

These, as prospects, don't seem all that lonely. Though, I suppose maybe Frank means a different loneliness. The kind of lonely someone might feel at the bottom of a joyous heap of one's own friends. A big dogpile of friends.

What would those friends be without the lonely candy core sunk into that tangle of bodies? Lonely is the magnet that draws the whole pile down and down and binds it sticky sweet in its syntax.

And it does and doesn't belong to everyone, so surely writing isn't the only thing that's lonely. But what's lonely is writing, and we can share that.

And how terrific it is to share that with you.
And how terrific it is to miss that with you.

Ted Dodson (Newsletter Editor)

NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

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CONTRIBUTORS

JIM BEHRLE lives in Jersey City, and *The Comeback* is due out from O'clock Press.

AMARANTH BORSUK is the author of *Handiwork* (Slope Editions, 2012), and, together with programmer Brad Bouse, of *Between Page and Screen* (Siglio Press, 2012), a book of augmented-reality poems. Her collaboration with Kate Durbin and Ian Hatcher, *Abra*, recently received an Expanded Artists' Books grant from the Center for Book and Paper Arts in Chicago and will be issued as an artist's book and iPad app in 2014. A collaboration with Andy Fitch, *As We Know*, was recently selected by Julie Carr for the Subito Prize and will be published next year. Amaranth is an Assistant Professor in Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington, Bothell, where she also teaches in the MFA in Creative Writing and Poetics.

ANDREW DURBIN is the author of *Mature Themes* (Nightboat Books, 2015) and several chapbooks, including *Believers* (Poor Claudia, 2013) and *πρωτοῦς ἀνι* (Insert Blanc Press, 2014). With Ben Fama, he edits *Wonder*, an open-source publishing and events platform for innovative writing, performance, and new media art. He lives in New York.

LAURA HENRIKSEN's work has appeared in *Peaches and Bats*, *Lungfull!*, and *Big Bell*. She lives in Brooklyn.

ALYSTYRE JULIAN is making a documentary about Anne Waldman and the "Outrider" poetry lineage. She lives in close proximity to Waldman by coincidence and holds an M.F.A. Writing from Bard College.

KAREN LEPRI is the author of *Incidents of Scattering* (Noemi, 2013) and the chapbook *Fig. 1* (Horse Less Press, 2012). Lepri received the 2012 Noemi Poetry Prize. Her poetry, prose, and translation have appeared in *1913*, *6x6*, *Boston Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Lana Turner*, *Mandorla*, and elsewhere. She teaches writing at Queens College.

MATT LONGABUCCO curates the Friday Night Series at the Poetry Project.

BERNADETTE MAYER has been a key figure on the New York poetry scene for decades. She is the author of more than two dozen volumes of poetry. Recently published by New Directions is *The Helens of Troy, NY*. She lives in Upstate New York.

BEN MIROV is the author of *Hider Roser* (Octopus Books, 2012), and *Ghost Machine* (Caketrain, 2010) which was selected for publication by Michael Burkard, and chosen as one of the best books of poetry in 2010 for *Believer Magazine's* Reader Survey. He is also the author of the chapbooks *My Hologram Chamber is Surrounded by Miles of Snow* (YESYES, 2011), *Vortexes* (SUPERMACHINE, 2011), *I is to Vorticism* (New Michigan Press, 2010), and *Collected Ghost* (H_NGM_N, 2010). He is a founding editor's of PEN America's Poetry Series, and an editor at large for *LIT Magazine*. He grew up in Northern California and lives in Oakland.

JEFF NAGY synonyms for parkway and luxury trunk — call at 1088 Carroll st. apt. 2 in Brooklyn, NY or by appointment.

RON PADGETT's *Zone: Selected Poems of Guillaume Apollinaire* will be published in 2015 by New York Review Books. Padgett's *How Long* was a 2012 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in Poetry. His new book is *Collected Poems* (Coffee House Press).

LISA ROBERTSON lives with her dog in La Malgache, France, population 4. During her time in this place she has published *Revolution, A Reader*, an annotated anthology made in collaboration with Matthew Stadler, and *Nilling*, a collection of essays.

BIANCA STONE is a poet and visual artist. Her book of poetry "Someone Else's Wedding Vows" is forthcoming from Tin House/Octopus Books.

CHRIS TYSH is the author of several collections of poetry and drama. Her latest publications are *Molloy: The Flip Side* (BlazeVox, 2012) and *Our Lady of the Flowers, Echoic* (Les Figues, 2013). She is on the creative writing faculty at Wayne State University. Her play, *Night Scales, a Fable for Klara K* was produced at the Studio Theatre in Detroit under the direction of Aku Kadogo in 2010. She holds fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts and the Kresge Foundation.

KEN L. WALKER is a copywriter paying off a large amount of debt while living in Brooklyn. His work has been published in *Atlas Review*, *Bright Pink Mosquito*, *Seattle Review*, *Washington Square*, *likewise folio*, *The Bakery*, *Sink Review* and the anthology *Oil & Water*, published by Typecast. Diez Press is releasing his chapbook *Twenty Glasses of Water* this month, and he continues to curate the conversation project, *Cosmot*.

THE NEW WEDNESDAY NIGHT COORDINATOR...

is Ariel Goldberg! Goldberg's publications include *Picture Cameras* (NoNo Press, 2010), *The Photographer without a Camera* (Trafficker Press, 2011), and *The Estrangement Principle*, selections of which appear in *Aufgabe 11*. Goldberg is the recipient of a Franklin Furnace Fund grant for *The Photographer*, a series of slideshows in 2013. Goldberg will be hosting the series starting in January, through the end of the season.

CONTEST! WIN! WIN! YAY

Traditionally, the last poem of The Poetry Project's New Year's Day Marathon Benefit Reading is read by our Director, Stacy Szymaszek. For the second year in a row, Stacy has decided to share her good fortune. We are excited to announce the Project's "Win the Director's Lucky Reading Spot Contest!"

The rules: Send us your poem. If we believe it is short enough to be read in two minutes, it will be entered into the contest. The winner will be selected based on any number of yet-to-be-determined factors, but most likely it will involve a lot of passion, partisanship and bickering. Don't you want to be a part of that? Enter now!!!

- Email submissions (only) to programcommittee@poetryproject.org by DECEMBER 9th.

- The winner will be announced on our blog and via our eblast before the event.

- Anyone may enter our contest, provided the winner be in New York City for New Year's Day and can stay until it's over.

SLEEPING WITH FRENCH PHILOSOPHY

Chris Tysh

In a few minutes, I'm meeting Jacques at the Café Parisien (on the lovely Place Rhin et Danube, near the Buttes Chaumont Gardens). No doubt, we'll both cringe at the absurd tautology of the name, though neither of us could remotely claim to be a bona fide Parisian — what with *his* Sephardic beginnings in Algiers, what with *my* mother's dark green passport haunted by double black lines spelling *APATRIDE* (stateless), an event that drags with it the blue archive, the one stored in the chest, both grave and everlasting ark. "Stay with me, Jahveh had said to Moses, send them to their tents" (*Archive Fever* 23).

As in any expulsion, exile, and incarceration, between Christmas and New Year, he remains suspended before the barred door. We are no longer at the Ruzyně prison. "The heart— have you found the heart?" (*Glas* 111)

Instead, we walk along the narrow streets of Prague's ghetto, paved in the immemorial knowledge of the way. *Le chemin du calvaire*. No high heels here. That is to say a walk of walls, stones and fosses. This clacking on the ground, we understand as if in a dream, comes from afar. The memory of Jewish tombs piled high, one on top of the other, laid upright in this mad vertical rush hour, forever (en)graved in time, a stone, ineffaceable mark that never ceases to blacken.

It is 3:00 in the afternoon. Dr. Franz K. returns from his office by way of the Charles Bridge. Will there be enough daylight for him? "... like the clapper of a truth that rings awry [*cloche*]" (*Glas* 227).

Time is near. Will I know the password (wish I was still smoking), drawing the tongue exactly so as to mouth his initials in smoke rings, up in the air, toward a point where light goes, reshaping itself, letting go of the pattern, the trace, the inscription, the very writing which leaves a mark right here on the wooden bistro table. I'm definitely thinking of throwing the cl, the gr, the gl— those tormented garlands of his — under the bus. *Feu la Cendre*. Ashes, one more time, verify there was something in the passage. "Let that fall (*ça tombe*) in ruins" (*Glas* 201).

Never mind. He's here now. The white shock of hair, the wide boulevard of a forehead, the smiling mouth. Irresistible, the very thing that distinguishes him from B, F, L, D, and G¹, the others I sleep with alternately, though truth be

told, I haven't gone near L nor F in ages. Does this change anything in the book of ghosts? Jacques empties his sugar stick. I try hard not to stare — step aside, miser, I admonish myself while simultaneously hoarding a clip in that rather inept documentary by one of his former students: Jacques in his kitchen eating aubergines. The intimacy of that scene fells me. Crushing sign, if one was still needed, of the hopeless philogroupie that I am.

Right off the bat, trail of shame, I confess that in *Glas*, I only read the Genet column. What is proper, clean in French, he says, or appears to be, must be depropriated itself. The question here is not to install an originary founding matrix, a proper mother, "the global mother" (*Glas* 168), he adds, but to recognize that in the event and practice of writing, there is always already — here's the deconstructive tag that has become a second skin — a part, a morsel, bread and wine, of mother in father; of writing in speech; of fictions in truths. "The text is what makes a hole in the pocket, harpoons it beforehand, regards it; but also sees it escape the text" (*Glas* 170).

I show him my pink highlighted sentences on page 170. He backtracks the citation by heart in a voice both tender and tutorial:

Even if we could reconstitute, morsel by morsel, a proper name's emblem or signature, that would only be to disengage, as from a tomb someone buried alive, just what neither Genet nor I would ever have succeeded in signing, in reattaching to the lines of a paraph, and what talks (because) of this. (*Glas* 170)

Having left the café, step by step we now mount the steep Rue Compans at the bottom of the 19^{ème}. I'll spare you the insane chain of puns, semantic shifts and phonic backbends we indulge in this chance meeting that cries out to be seized by its impossibly rich letters, we grab like hair everywhere or fibers in a dress we stroke before pulling by the handful. "That street is lucky," Jacques says. "It has the power economically to condense, while unwinding their web, the question of semantic difference and seminal drift" ("Avoir l'oreille de la philosophie" 309). That "*panse*" (as in fat gut) and "*pense*" (as in think) share a pair of wings has us in stitches. *Glou glou...* we laugh like madmen, thinking of yet another way of tearing poor Compans' hymen, folded, reversed and restitched every which way; it is now a glove turned inside out, more of a sieve really, a kind of basin or pot without borders.

"This game is dangerous. I'm sure we've left traces..." (*Glas* 56), Jacques says after a while, nearly inaudible under the general traffic where Rue Compans merges with the noisy Rue Mouzaïa. But we already knew that deconstruction, a supreme game of infinite regression, is best practiced in the crossing rather than at the arrival gate.

As we're coming in view of Villa Paul Verlaine, my place, I tell him, with a sad smile that he is not alone, that the others will be joining us for dinner later on at Les Folies on Rue de Belleville. "Sometimes I wish," he responds, "that all remain illegible to them— and to you too" (*La Carte Postale* 221; my transl.) Not to worry, I laugh to myself. Threading his arm through mine, he continues:

I am like the one who, coming back from a long trip, out of everything: the world, the end of the earth, men and their languages, tries, after the fact, to keep a journal, with the forgotten, fragmentary and rudimentary instruments of a language... (*Jacques Derrida* 159; my transl.)

I squeeze his hand recomposing my attraction, in advance mourning our inevitable separation. Jacques cuts in: "tries, to explain it with pebbles, little pieces of wood, with gestures of a deaf-mute from before a Deaf Mute school, a blind groping from before Braille..." (*Jacques Derrida* 159; my transl.) It is precisely that spectral, otherworldly and prodigious turn, I tell him, with which he endows his sticks and stones as he calls them, that I seek when I put pen to paper, one foot in front of the other.

Yes, he says to me and in that very instant I feel my left knee bend, my shin splints are killing me, please god, don't let me fall here in the street — I can barely straighten my leg when I hear: "The rhythm of a step which always returns, which always has just left" (*La Carte Postale* 433). Could it be then that my sudden limp, that inexplicable genuflexion, bowing to the lotus feet of the guru — *vande gurunam* — binds me, literal logic of the limbs, to the desire of repeating that "yes," toward which my body now turns, covering over the traces of my malaise.

As if he had read my mind, Jacques falls into step — "the infinite flow [*écoulement*] of one into the other" (*Glas* 141) — and resumes his riff on that bobbin game: "Fort: Da, The Rhythm":

Il faut que le pas le plus normal comporte le déséquilibre, en lui-même, pour se porter en avant, pour se faire suivre d'un autre... Mais il faut que ça marche mal pour que ça marche; s'il faut, s'il faut que ça marche, ça doit mal marcher. Ça boite bien, n'est-ce pas? (*La Carte Postale* 433)²

Indeed. Look for yourself, I feel like saying. The fetishist in me half hopes to keep this limp forever as a trace of a trace... I am not done with you. Wait, I haven't told you about catachresis being my favorite trope, nor how I laughed when I heard about your mother's discovery of *différance* spelled with an "a": "Jackie, how could you?" she cried with indignation.

Perhaps I can graft on a small scene from long ago: I am taking my orals in philosophy in a Parisian lycée, clutching Hegel and Descartes under my arm, the two texts I'm allowed to present. Girl after girl emerges from the examination room in tears while all the boys sport triumphant smiles. It turns out the good professor has two scales. For the male sex, fifty printed questions, for the second sex, a little system of his own. When I enter, five little paper boats await my hand. I quickly explain that due to our professor's maternity leave, we didn't finish the curriculum. "That's not my affair," he spits out. "Hegel, Mademoiselle." I start presenting the Hegelian aesthetics as if my life depended on it, and it does, when I hear, "That's enough." "But I'm not done," I cry out.

In the end, if it is true that there are only traversals, crossings, under and over the grids and laws, then my affair with Jacques will have been "what leads me by the nose to write" ("Ja, ou le faux bond"), the precise structure of that embrace. ■

Footnotes

¹ Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari

² The most normal step must hold in itself a disequilibrium in order to go forth, in order to be followed by another... But it must work poorly for it to work; if it needs to work, it needs to work poorly. It limps well, doesn't it? (my transl.)

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Author's Note

An earlier draft appeared online in *Spine Road* 3.

THREE POEMS

Guillaume Apollinaire

(Ron Padgett, translator)

Inscription for the Tomb of the Painter Henri Rousseau Customs Inspector

Dear Rousseau you hear us
Hello
From Delaunay his wife Mister Queval and me
Let our luggage go duty-free through heaven's gate
We'll bring you brushes colors and canvas
So your holy leisure in the real light
You can devote it to painting
The way you did my portrait
The face of the stars

Translator's Note:

Henri Rousseau did two paintings of Apollinaire, one of which was The Muse Inspiring the Poet (1909), which shows him alongside the artist Marie Laurencin, who was Apollinaire's lover at the time. Rousseau received the nickname "The Customs Inspector" from Alfred Jarry, but in fact was, until his retirement in 1885, a clerk in the Paris city bureaucracy responsible for setting and collecting taxes on certain goods that entered the city.

Michel Decaudin, in his note on this poem in the Pléiade edition of Apollinaire's Oeuvres Poétiques (p. 1146), quotes from an article that Apollinaire published in Les Soirées de Paris in January of 1914: "In 1911, thanks to Robert Delaunay and to the Douanier's landlord, we acquired a thirty-year concession and placed a tombstone with a medallion representing the departed, who lay not far from his friend Alfred Jarry. Finally in 1913 the sculptor Brancusi and the painter Ortiz de Zarate carved this epitaph on the tombstone, where I had written it in pencil."

Delaunay his wife: The artists Robert (1885-1941) and Sonia (1885-1979) Delaunay.

Mr. Queval: Rousseau's landlord.

Editor's note:

Though this poem exists in an expanded version, first published posthumously in Poèmes à la marraine (Paris, 1948), the text above is a representation of the actual epitaph Brancusi enscribed into Rousseau's grave marker.

The Traveler

to Fernand Fleuret

Open this door where I knock weeping

Life is as variable as Euripos

You were watching a cloud bank come down
With the orphan steamship toward future fevers
And all those regrets all that repenting
Do you remember

Bent fish waves supermarine flowers
One night it was the sea
And the rivers spread out into it

I remember it I still remember it

I stopped at a sad inn one night
Not far from Luxembourg
At the far end of the room a Christ was taking flight
Someone had a ferret
Another a hedgehog
There was a card game
And you you had forgotten me

Do you remember the long orphanage of train stations
We went through towns that kept turning all day
And at night vomited the sun of the days
O sailors O somber women and you my companions
Remember

Two sailors who had always been together
Two sailors who had never spoken to each other
One while dying fell on his side the younger

O you dear companions
Electric bells of the stations women singing as they harvest
A butcher's truck regiment of numberless streets
Cavalry of bridges nights livid with alcohol
The towns that I saw were living like madwomen

Do you remember the outskirts and the plaintive flock of countrysides

The cypresses projected their shadows in the moonlight
At summer's end that night
A languishing and endlessly fussy bird
And the eternal sound of a wide and somber river are what I heard

But while all the glances made a motion
Of eyes that were dying and rolling toward the ocean
The banks were deserted grassy quiet
And across the river the mountain was shining bright

So with no sound no living thing in sight
Some lively shadows passed across the mountainside
In profile or suddenly turning their hazy faces
And holding in front the shadows of their lances

The shadows against the perpendicular wall
Grew large or sometimes suddenly small
And the bearded shadows were crying like humans
While sliding step by step along the bright mountain

So whom do you recognize in these old photos
Do you remember the day when a bee dropped into the fire
It was and you do remember at the end of summer

Two sailors who had never been apart
The older wore an iron chain around his neck
The younger one had a braid of golden hair

Open this door where I knock weeping

Life is as variable as Euripos

Translator's note:

Fernand Fleuret (1884–1945): Poet, writer, and friend of Apollinaire. He, Apollinaire, and Louis Perceau secretly compiled and then published, in 1913, a 415-page annotated bibliography of all the “forbidden” books in the section of the French National Library known as “Hell.” The initial publication of “The Traveler” (September of 1912) bore no dedication.

Euripos: A strait between Boetia and Euboea where the water flows in one direction, then the opposite. Aristotle is said to have drowned there.

Supermarine: Apollinaire coined the word surmarine.

Before the Movies

And so tonight
We'll go out

Artists so who are they
Now they don't study the Fine Arts
Now they don't bother with Art
The art of poetry or even music
The Artists are actors and actresses

If we were Artists
We wouldn't say movie
We'd say film

And if we were provincial old professors
We wouldn't say movie or film
We'd say motion picture

Also hey you have to have taste

Translator's Note:

The manuscript version of this poem was written on the back of a bulletin from Agence Radio and dated March 20, 1917, and published in Nord-Sud, issue number 2, dated April 15 of the same year. Nord-Sud was edited by the young poet Pierre Reverdy. Despite the light attitude in this poem, Apollinaire felt that the cinema would provide amazing opportunities for a new kind of art, that, for example, future epic poems would be created in the form of movies. He wrote that "the phonograph and the cinematograph have for me an unparalleled attraction. They satisfy all at once my love of science, my passion for letters, and my artistic taste," an assertion borne out by his applauding like an enraptured child as he watched the films of the Fantômas series. He even wrote several film scenarios. Apollinaire's colleagues Riciotto Canudo and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti were major theoreticians of the future of cinema.

REVIEWS AND REACTIONS

Nineties

Lucy Ives

Tea Party Republicans Press, 2013

Review by Andrew Durbin

YOU MAKE ME FEEL SO NINETIES

Lucy Ives' *Nineties* is spare, though its eponymous U.S. decade certainly wasn't. Lucy, the poet, novelist, and editor of *Triple Canopy*, reduces the big world of Anita Hill, Columbine, the Concorde, Club Med, Nirvana, the Madonna of *Sex*, Nickelodeon, and the endless, slimed particulars that defined this American twilight to short, declarative sentences that scarcely reference the pop culture of the moment until finally, mid-novel, the world explodes into two and a half pages of its brand names: "... Boyz II Men, DKNY Intimates, Flea, Henley T, recumbent bikes, bitches, Biosphere 2, Bruce Weber, Absolute, David Caruso, Oklahoma City, *Exit in Guyville*...." It's the credit-driven world between the end of the Cold War and the U.S.S. Cole, marked by the high-water events of the Republican Revolution and Monica Lewinski. This list comes as a release to the (elegant) monotone of *Nineties*, a novel in which time, branded into "moments," passes covertly, hidden just below the measured narrative of teens in trouble. It begins: "A long time ago we invented a game about civilization." And yes we did.

There is no such thing as civilization. When the anonymous narrator of the novel and her friends were young and played the game, they created a town for it called "Torture Town." There was no real score to tally in civilization: its only point was to build a factory and trick imaginary people into entering it. Once inside, the imaginary people were brutally converted from their intangible form to inert red blocks. In this, the game only partially resembles our civilization, the primary object of which is to glamorize systems of debt. A more sophisticated game might have reversed Ives' civilization, turning one red block — a loan to buy a house, say — into an imaginary one and selling it to Bank

of America, which would then bundle that into mortgage-backed securities it would bet against in order to depreciate the original buyer's ability to pay back the loan.

Later, the protagonist and her best friend, Gwen, learn the glamorous definitions of credit and debt and suffer the consequences of each when they steal another girl's Filofax and use her credit card to go on an uptown shopping spree. In the back half of the novel (spoiler alert), this becomes the singular focus of the narrative: Torture Town goes ballistic when the teen victim discovers that not only has her locker been broken into, but the credit card her parents gave her has been used to buy thousands of dollars of clothes. Absorbed by her own guilt and afraid of being found out through a police investigation, the protagonist surrenders herself to the authorities and confesses her (and Gwen's) crime. With Gwen, she is sent to a school for high school delinquents, where the novel ends squarely under the sign of *no future*.

(continued on pg. 24)

Close Your Eyes

Michael Ruby

Dusie, 2013

Review by Bernadette Mayer

Michael Ruby has done us a great service. He's put into words some of his hypnagogic visions so we can see and read them. These are the images we see behind closed eyes while falling asleep — unexplainable dots and designs, movements, things that look like something, it's entertainment. As writers, hypnagogic imagery is something from our experience to make use of. They're sort of like hallucinations but much more ordinary and decorative, sort of like the brain "idling" as Oliver Sacks says in his book *Hallucinations*.

They're surprisingly difficult to describe in words, and they seem to defy any connection with meaning, even more so than dreams. One's tempted to say there's no word for that. The last time hypnagogic imagery was explored may have been in the 1960s in relation to "altered states of consciousness," but there was much research going on in the 19th century,

witness the comments of Edgar Allan Poe in marginalia, and of William James.

As with hallucinations, especially auditory ones, people don't always want to say they have them for fear of being labeled a lunatic. I have a friend who saw bright red and blue dots when he was falling asleep and thought he was from outer space. The best way I've found to record hypnagogic visions is by tape recorder or via a scribe. Even this will take some getting used to. As with dreams though, nobody has to record this stuff unless you want to. You can just enjoy the show!

The predominant free human activities are, obviously, sex and the weather. Others are your personal history, variations in memory, dreams, library books, license plates, signs, plants, garbage on the road, the night sky, and celestial events. Also synesthesia and hypnopompic imagery.

Synesthesia is the mixing up of the senses that some people experience, like octagons coming out of your mouth when you speak. The most common form is perceiving letters of the alphabet as colors. Hypnopompic imagery is what you see between sleeping and waking up. It's rarer and scarier than hypnagogic visions. It seems like the images won't go away, that they are really there. I've had only two hypnopompic images: seeing myself at different ages and seeing the walls covered with letters and realizing I was inside Hannah Weiner's head. I thought if I left the room and the letters didn't go away, I was in trouble. They didn't but then they did.

We thank Michael Ruby for venturing to explore this territory and enlarging the number of things we can write about. One of his best constraints is to refer to the visual field, eyes closed, as *the world*. Let's go see what's happening in that white, maroon, red, yellow, and green world, but be careful! The sun might be too bright to continue.

Next will be a book, I hope, about eyes closed in the sun vs. eyes closed in darkness.

Further reading:

The World of the Imagination, Eva Brann
The Day of St. Anthony's Fire, John Fuller
Hypnagogia, Dr. Andreas Mavromatis
Hallucinations, Oliver Sacks



Advice From 1 Disciple of Marx to 1 Heidegger Fanatic

Mario Santiago Papasquiaro

Wave Books, 2013

Review by Matt Longabucco

I haven't been able to stop thinking about Mario Santiago since I got my copy of his long poem, *Advice From 1 Disciple of Marx to 1 Heidegger Fanatic*, in a just-published translation by Cole Heinowitz and Alexis Graman. Or, I thought about him all the time before, but now I have a picture of him on my computer desktop — badly pixelated because the file is so small — looking relatively young and clean-cut, even a bit stiff in his clean brown leather jacket and dapper shoulder bag. I can't bring myself to expand the other one I always see on Google Images, where he's older and practically foaming at the mouth in the midst of a reading or a rant (and then, in the book: "foam runs from the mouth of the 1 who speaks wonders"). Am I just succumbing to the mythology of the infrealist's later years, in which he wrote on in obscurity and rebellion, walking the streets of Mexico City in a visionary fever at the expense of body and, when a car struck him, of life? But for this group of poets the mythology is really about a political commitment inseparable from the work, which is why Santiago's friend and champion Roberto Bolaño is able to convincingly collapse the brutality of exile and the heroism of the poet (by the same token, sometimes the poets in his novels are utterly venal, the vilest of the evil). The hallucinations that offer an alternative to our reality — a reality choked by power and misery — are risky to come by and not necessarily reserved for the upright.

The poem comprising the book is dedicated to Santiago's "comrades" — Bolaño and Kyra Galván — but it's also "FOR CLAUDIA KERIK & THE GOOD FORTUNE OF HAVING KNOWN HER." If Santiago and Claudia lived anything like the way they're portrayed in *The Savage Detectives* (in which Santiago features as visceral realist Ulises Lima), that dedication is an act of renunciation that's either steely or enlightened or both. If she made him suffer, and likely he her, he has found a formulation that somehow allows for that suffering even as it transforms it into "good fortune." I mean, who *forgives* anyone? Is it wrong to focus on

the wording of the dedication as evidence of perhaps arduous self-making — as an integral part of the poem? Not to my mind — this text is, after all, a self-proclaimed piece of "advice" to "Becoming from Economy," to the philosophy of right dying from the philosophy of how it'll all come out even in the end. What does Marx have to say to Heidegger? I'll tell you in a second.

In the first lines, we catch the scent of High Modernism: "The world gives you itself in fragments/ in splinters." But Santiago's wasteland is immediate and anything but exhausted, though it's often grim — his Mexico City is oppressed and broken. Still, he doesn't long for synthesis; he refuses to traffic in that lie. Instead, the fragments come, holy and staggeringly numinous:

in 1 melancholy face you glimpse 1
brushstroke by Dürer
in someone happy the grimace of 1
amateur clown
in 1 tree: the trembling of birds
sucking from its crook
in 1 flaming summer you catch bits of
the universe licking its face
the moment 1 indescribable girl rips
her Oaxacan blouse
just at the crescent of sweat from her
armpits
& beyond the rind is the pulp/& like 1
strange gift of the eye the lash

(continued on pg. 28)

Rouge

Kimberly Lyons

Instance Press, 2012

Review by Laura Henriksen

People will tell you how important it is to be really present, to breathe really deeply of sensory stimuli, to look out your window and really see your view. And those people are right, but at least when I've been given that advice, there's always something flat about it, as if a situation to be experienced is this static thing awaiting your attention.

Kim Lyons's poems know better, that there is "between this afternoon and tonight, a pale blank book/ that washes out the word's ink," such that even when you're in the middle of experiencing details of a setting or a feeling, everything, the words and the story, could change because you're never really in a closed room.

It might snow when you least expect
it
as letters are crystallized formations
long delayed
and then you stand with your son at
the window on Sunday
and marvel
at anything
that flakes and green leaves are
commingling
that any letter gets through to
anyone
the mail being what it is.

(from "Froth")

The ambiguity of any set of circumstances is not only part of the content that Kim deals with but also one of the devices she uses to create these poems. The way, in the above excerpt from "Froth," initially the word letters calls to mind a pen on paper, a very fluid cursive, the line in question becoming a conversation about the difficulty of conveying anything linguistically then the word reappears a few lines later, it has transformed into a letter in a mailbox, and you think that's what she meant all along, but you aren't really sure. It's as open-ended as the scene it describes. These poems are personal and interior and contemplative, but not like a private driveway to one person's impermeable mansion of experience. As any moment is open to sudden shifts and transformations, the personal moments that Kim describes — writing at a café, standing in the kitchen, thinking about weather — open up to the shift that is the reader's entrance. She writes in "In February," "I sit here kind of suspended/ as the morning pools out/ as though attention is an array/ of sticks and I've used every one up," and in the specificity of that image of an early morning in the dead of winter, there is this feeling of almost overwhelming and diverse potential, so much so that the reader experiences not the same feeling of suspension as the speaker but an entirely unique and personal sensation of suspension.

Reading these poems is like coming to stand at a mirror and a painting at once. And as with any mirror, the poems receive you, and you find more there than you had expected or meant to bring, images you had forgotten from earlier that day or years before.

(continued on pg. 28)

Astroturf

Joe Luna

Hi Zero Publications (UK), 2013

Review by Jeff Nagy

Sometimes (“sometimes and always”?) writing is like beating a dead horse with a rubber hose until it confesses. Or until, more likely, the gentle reader’s sense of pity is sufficiently roused, and s/he slumps onto the poor defunct beast. Upon which the writer marvels at a supposed ability to relate to an audience, the trick of this coercive empathy being that the writer has — unobserved, if a little bit good, or lucky! — taken the place of the horse, propping the rubber hose upright in its bridle as if to strike again. A team of nano-elves in Paris Review/PGA co-branded sun visors immediately sets to work turning the now superfluous horse to glue for use in setting reader and author like two spooning waves in a perm. They save the hose: recycling is mandatory now in New York City.

Rubber hose poetics has a long and storied history, the affective infrastructure connecting otherwise distant aesthetic polarities: the sewer running the gamut from Conceptual to Quiet, from the most conservative to the most committed, where the raised flail so often triggers the wanted blank-eyed and prig-bored recorded message like dialing the answering machine of the superego. “Of course... Of course we must... We must be feminist *in this way*. Of course we must critique capital *like that*.” Dear reader, the poem has prepared for you a hangover spirit of flattened resentment turned inward, turned outward into a coercive bathos just as inverted as anything else that might look less *à la mode*. Personality kohl: cute — but it’s a little trashy and doesn’t wear.

This isn’t that. And as so much critical language was and is developed to explain how this *is* that, once it *isn’t* it becomes slippery to explain what this is and how it is so. But we’re not ones to shy away from wet work in the *terrain vague* between encampments.

The poems in Joe Luna’s *Astroturf* are more Protean than the faux-catholic engineered empathic rictus the collection’s title inducts. They are quick-turning and liquid, refusing a comfortable top-down coherence in favor of sequences of brilliant flashes, like the dolphin that darts throughout them and whose origami-constellation schematic graces the cover: fold *your own* rescue.

Like that, more variously flexible, bending the knees where they elsewhere

jerk: “I come home from the protest,/ give myself a blowjob,” as it’s put in “Having Coke With You,” finding the commitment in narcissism and the narcissism in commitment and refusing both when that Venn diagram starts to blur to circle, when “the sky is a thousand anecdotes about me, no-one knows what/ narcissism *really* is, stuck outside the embassy in flames.” The poem ends with its pronoun stuck inside-out an ambiguous aporia: “I can feel anything/ else apart from life now safe in the style of a person.” Is it “life now safe” one can feel anything but? or bare “life?” or “life now safe in the style of a person?” Are we naked or styled, feeling anything or totally anesthetic? How can we read or write or even simply feel elsewhere, in the open water with the keel nosing down on the old Adornian lifeboat?

(continued on pg. 28)

TwERK

LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs

Belladonna, 2013

Review by Amaranth Borsuk

The notes to LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs’ *TwERK* are prefaced with a description of their medium, telling us what these poems are made from, if not language itself:

rhinestones, acrylic on panel, knives, mirror, packing tape, fur, found medical illustration paper on mylar, rubber tires, wood, metal, plastic, porcelain, paper, latex paint, Lonely Planet phrase books...

This list is no mere joke, no tongue-in-cheek Magritte reference to the traffic between language and image. Diggs’ words on the page sparkle with rhinestones, cut like knives, coat themselves in animal pelts and hold it together with paint and packing tape. By turns janky and jacked-up, kitted-out and kicked-back, these texts are the heat where rubber hits the road. Aggressively polyglot, poems like “dagging kanji” spit knives of “Hawaiian, Cherokee (Tsǎ́ ǵǵǵ), English, Tagalog, Quechua, Japanese, and Maori.” Diggs’ range of reference is vast, and one of *TwERK*’s great pleasures is the possibility it affords of bridging, say, Oulipo and Négritude. “dagging kanji” hurls its series of glottal-stopped “k” words in a way that sounds to the ear like beatboxing and looks to the eye like a series of waves:

k’k’kazoo	kk’kk’külolo
k’k’kahuna	kk’k’kabob
k’k’ku’ulala	k’k’ku’ulala
k’k’ku’ulala	k’k’ku’ulala
k’k’kali	kk’k’kulisap
k’k’kabuki	k’k’kk’kumala
k’k’ku’ulala	k’k’ku’ulala
k’k’ku’ulala	k’k’ku’ulala

The insistent refrain of the Hawaiian “ku’ulala” suggests the wildness and eroticism of this text that simultaneously swallows and spits as the glottal hits the back of the throat and the velar flicks off the soft palate. These lines defamiliarize kazoo and kabob, placing them alongside words for things both delectable and dangerous, from the Hawaiian dessert külolo to the Tagalog insect kulisap. Systematically looking up the words in the poem provides a patchwork of references that circle food, religion, the body, and the spirit, but the poem resists this approach, aiming as it does at the reader’s sensory apparatus, we are to hear and feel these words dagging at us, to feel them in the mouth and gut. Like the lipogrammatic poems of Christian Bök, to whom it is dedicated, this is as much a display of linguistic virtuosity as a bearer of meaning, an assemblage of rare phonemes into a beautifully faceted surface that twinkles as it twerks.

While Diggs’ performances make poems like this one seem effortless and musical, each line shimmering with a hi-hat of syllabic cymbals, the poems of *TwERK* are, in fact, work for the reader’s eye and ear, for which much of this lexicon will be new and unexpected, not least because of how often Diggs switches from one language to another. Such work is both pleasurable and difficult, and that juncture makes the book worth returning to, each poem legible at multiple levels.

In a recent presentation at the &Now Festival of Innovative Writing in Boulder, Diggs described her investment in a polyglot poetics that gives voice to the range of languages that populate both her Harlem community and her own psyche. *TwERK* is clearly sensitive to poetry’s tendency to “other” foreign tongues, italicizing (and ostracizing) them on the page. Diggs resists this orienting impulse, taking an inverse tactic in many poems, like “symphony para ko’ko i gamison” in which she provides translations in gray italicized lines that hover beside the text:

bo'ok i constraints para como
comprenda. *pull out the
constraints for who understands.*

hale' i ensemble. *dig up the
ensemble.*

estague close. to the throat.

maila' halom paluma yan trumpets.
come in birds and trumpets.

(continued on pg. 29)

Gossamurmur

Anne Waldman

Penguin Poets, 2013

Review by Alystyre Julian

[The Deciders] were in on the ruse to circumvent the machinations and desires of lovers of language, of linguistic fun and folly, of non sequiturs or where you write a poem without knowing where it would lead, where the poem was like the mind of the poet, stopping and stuttering and starting.

Anne Waldman's latest long poem, *Gossamurmur*, is an activist's allegory, a clarion call to the transformative power of poetry and the necessity of its archiving. Its opening to "phenomena soft, sheer, and gauzy," explores Waldman's central metaphor of poetry as gossamer in all its iteration, and prefaces Waldman's own crux, the shape-shifting of identity and power between "Original Anne" and "the new Anne" — the latter a ruse of "the Deciders," usurpers of identity, poetry, and the "delicacy of life forms," those with no regard for the preservation of poetry and imagination, no regard for the archival. Waldman, armed with her "stylus," "interviently" fights for the sake of language — an endangered species among others — towards a radical "po-ethos," her own identity at stake. In a tale both literal and symbolic, *Gossamurmur* takes on the gauze/gaze of this allegorical identity as Waldman chronicles the fleeting fragility of life on the tundra, the fragility of poetry and imagination even as recorded on tape and digitized, the fragility of art in our culture as mediated by celebrity and "mediacrats," and the fragility of endangered species, all vulnerable to what she dubs as "New Weathers." Poetry, as a "film of cobwebs floating in air," is juxtaposed with the interstice of value and "metabolism":

*"What are we worth? I mused. What is our
exchange value on this vast meddling
market?"*

In an analogy with a twist on Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, where those chained to the wall of the cave can only ascribe names to shadows, Waldman's Tundra refugee serves to delimit the Deciders' view by offering Original Anne a way to wilder inspirations. Waldman spins a web from the Tundra into the "multiverse" as far out as Jupiter's gossamer rings. Urgent, witty, and wise, this is a work to ponder for the crafted way these meditations intertwine, for its galactic range of poetic device and delight in such phenomena as "gossamer-wing'ed butterflies." The poem is a hybrid of forms — lyric, epic, allegorical — and as in her *Iovis* trilogy, works in the mode of documentary poetics. Waldman

riffs marvelously, muses cinematic, and rolls language in the palm of her hand, which then travels in a number of directions simultaneously. "She" shapeshifts in a Vedic Indian tale that conjures Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads*, there's a bombing at the Argana cafe in Marrakech, a love scene on the tundra rips the veil from the tropes of normative marriage, and gems from her own history intersperse the work, such as a film in which she appears in. She writes, "in red bra, a feather boa, and my line." She contemplates a mentor's ashes, "the djinni of Djuna Barnes," and "underlying voices" from ancient diaries of Heian Japan: "Will you meditate on the coolness of floors?"

Sourcing Derrida's *Archive Fever*, Waldman takes on the role of "Archon" and reveals what is at stake in the "Heart of Archive":

The Archive of the multiple voices was endangered, years in the making, to preserve breath and intellect, imagination's other place, as psychic inscription and to let humans of the future know some of us were not just killing one another.

Waldman's Archive is simultaneously "shelter" and "a consciousness" that "tells many stories," containing such treasures as a small cassette from John Cage, "an inscripted postcard," and "poetry you must never forget," all perpetually at risk of being lost to fires, floods, and complacent ignorance. It's out of this anxiety that Waldman offers archival alternatives in the Tundra as archive, the intangible oral archive, the Jemaa el-Fna medina, and a seed-vault sanctuary in Norway, approaches to her relentless query: What is the archive of the future? And thus, the imperative: "Spool the tape. Rewind. Digitize. Listen. Good a thousand years?"

Gossamurmur is a revelation of and a revolution against the threat of "cultural drought." "Original Anne" weathers her turn as tundra refugee, guided by "systirly winds," and emerges with the courage to drive "stakes through the hearts of Imposters." Guardian Waldman "*traverses the braided river*" to deliver her talismanic transmission: "*look to the little ones.*"

With her resilient, cinematic, and expansive poem, Waldman takes us on a sustained adventure with the woven magic of "living threads." Poetry is like gossamer: fragile, transient. And it murmurs its fleeting sound into the void.

the world is full of Deciders
I've always felt and say it such again

*the world has to change for true identity
(love) to burn*

Mellow Actions

Brandon Downing

Fence Books, 2013

Review by Ben Mirov

BEGIN AS A FEW DROPS OF WATER ON ROCK AND BECOME

I didn't know what to write about Brandon's work, so I went online and read some reviews of his new book, *Mellow Actions*. One review I found on a prominent literature website was mainly composed of two central statements:

Though peppered with exclamation points and frequent underlining for emphasis, the poems leap so freely and quickly in their sentiments that the overall effect is of an intentionally adolescent approach to what might otherwise, sometimes, be more weighty subjects.

and,

As the poems stack, the book begins to feel like one long exercise in eavesdropping in a shopping mall food court. By the end, the reader is left with a somewhat hollow, unsettled feeling, as if having been dragged through a bad dream that was just a bit too relaxed to be a nightmare.

Although I did find "the book begins to feel like one long exercise in eavesdropping in a shopping mall food court" to be insightful, despite its grossly diminutive insight into the cultural wealth of America's food courts, the review was little help to me in better understanding Brandon's book. So, I kept searching the internet for something that would help me produce a meaningful piece of writing about Brandon's poems.

(continued on pg. 29)

UPCOMING READINGS AND EVENTS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED ADMISSION \$8 / STUDENTS & SENIORS \$7 / MEMBERS \$5 OR FREE
THE POETRY PROJECT IS LOCATED IN ST. MARK'S CHURCH AT THE CORNER OF 2ND AVE & 10TH ST IN MANHATTAN
CALL 212 674 0910 FOR MORE INFORMATION

THE POETRY PROJECT IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE WITH ASSISTANCE AND ADVANCE NOTICE *schedule is subject to change*

MON 2/12

OPEN READING

Sign up at 7:45.

WED 12/4

NATALIE DIAZ & DIANE WAKOSKI

Natalie Diaz grew up in the Fort Mojave Indian Village in Needles, California. She has been awarded the Bread Loaf 2012 Louis Untermeyer Scholarship in Poetry, the 2012 Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Literature Fellowship, a 2012 Lannan Residency and the 2012 Lannan Literary Fellowship. Her first book, *When My Brother was an Aztec*, was published by Copper Canyon Press.

Diane Wakoski, who was born in Southern California and educated at UC, Berkeley, made her home and began her poetry career in New York City from 1960-1973. The most recent of her more than 20 collections of poetry are *The Diamond Dog* (Anhinga Press, 2010) and a new collection, *Bay of Angels*, (Anhinga Press, 2013).

FRI 12/6 10PM

KATY BOHINC & CAMILO ROLDÁN

Katy Bohinc co-edits *COYDUP*, a poetry pamphlet dedicated to hand-to-hand distribution at and around Occupy events with Meg Ronan. Summer BF press will soon publish selections of *Dear Alain*, love letters of a poet to a philosopher, as read at the East Bay Poetry Summit.

Camilo Roldán co-curates the Triptych Reading Series, is editor-in-chief for *DIEZ* and is the author of a chapbook, *Amílkar U., Nadaísta in Translation* (These Signals Press, 2011). His writing has appeared in various journals, including *SET*, *Sun's Skeleton*, *PANK*, and *Mandorla*.

MON 12/9

STEVEN ALVAREZ & GUILLERMO FILICE CASTRO

Steven Alvarez is an Assistant Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies at the University of Kentucky. He is the author of *The Pocho Codex* (2011) and *The Xicano Genome* (2012), both published by Editorial Paroxismo.

Guillermo Filice Castro is the recipient

of a 2013 Emerge-Surface-Be fellowship and the author of the chapbooks, *Cry Me a Lorca* (Seven Kitchen Press, 2010) and *Toy Storm* (Big Fat Press, 1997.) His poems appear in *Assaracus*, *Barrow Street*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Court Green*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Ducts.org*, *la fovea*, *Quarterly West*, and many more.

WED 12/11

TROUBLING THE LINE: TRANS AND GENDERQUEER POETRY AND POETICS

Join us for an evening of poems and poetics by writers from *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*, edited by TC Tolbert and Tim Trace Peterson. Featuring: Samuel Ace, Ching-in Chen, CAConrad, Joy Ladin, Dawn Lundy Martin, Tim Trace Peterson, Jordan Rice, Trish Salah, TC Tolbert, Zoe Tuck, Emerson Whitney, and surprise guests. Published in Spring 2013 by Nightboat Books, *Troubling the Line* is the first-ever anthology of poetry by trans and genderqueer writers.

MON 12/16

POEMS ABOUT FUCKING, GUEST CURATED BY ROSS GAY

All sex poems, all night. Featuring Ross Gay, Erica Doyle, Jenny Zhang, Kendra Decolo, Patrick Rosal, Alex Dimitrov, and others...

WED 12/18

LAURIE DUGGAN & JENNIFER FIRESTONE

Laurie Duggan has published some twenty books of poems together with *Ghost Nation*, a work about imagined space. His most recent volumes include *Allotments [1-29]* (Fewer & Further, 2011), *The Pursuit of Happiness* (Shearsman, 2012), *Leaving Here* (Light-Trap Press, 2012), and *The Collected Blue Hills* (Puncher & Wattman, 2012).

Jennifer Firestone is the author of *Flashes* (Shearsman Books), *Holiday* (Shearsman Books), *Waves* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs), from *Flashes and snapshot* (Sona Books), and *Fanimaly* (Dusie Kollektiv). She is the co-editor of *Letters To Poets: Conversations about Poet-*

ics, Politics and Community (Saturnalia Books).

FRI 12/20 10PM

LUCY IVES & MASHA TUPITSYN

Lucy Ives is the author of two books of poetry, *Orange Roses* (Ahsahta, 2013) and *Anamnesis* (Slope, 2009), and a brief novel, *Nineties* (Tea Party Republicans, 2013). A deputy editor at Triple Canopy, she lives in New York.

Masha Tupitsyn is the author of *Love Dog* (Penny-Ante Editions, 2013), *LA-CONIA: 1,200 Tweets on Film* (Zero Books, 2011), *Beauty Talk & Monsters*, a collection of film-based stories (Semiotext(e) Press, 2007), and co-editor of the anthology *Life As We Show It: Writing on Film* (City Lights, 2009).

WED 1/1

THE 40TH ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S DAY

MARATHON BENEFIT READING

Featuring: Yvonne Rainer, Yvonne Meier, Vyt Bakaitis, Tracie Morris, Tracey McTague, Tony Towle, Tom Savage, Todd Colby, Ted Dodson, Steve Earle, Stephanie Gray, Sarah Schulman, Rangi McNeil, Rachel Trachtenburg, Pierre Joris, Phyllis Wat, Patricia Spears Jones, Nicole Peyrafitte, Nick Hallett, Nathaniel Siegel, Nada Gordon, Mel Elberg, Matt Longabucco, Martha King, Marissa Perel, Marcella Durand, Maggie Dubris, Lucy Ives, Lewis Warsh, Leopoldine Core, Lenny Kaye, Laura Henriksen, Kim Lyons, Jonas Mekas, John Godfrey, John Coletti, Joanna Kotze, Jim Behrle, Jennifer Bartlett, Jen Benka, Jason Nazary, Jason Hwang, Guy Picciotto, Frank Sherlock, Filip Marinovic, Felix Bernstein, Fast Speaking Music Band, Evie Shockley, Emily Skillings, Elliott Sharp, Elinor Nauen, Edwin Torres, Edgar Oliver, Ed Friedman, Dynasty Handbag, Douglas Rothschild, Douglas Dunn, Don Yorty, Dell Lemmon, Cole Heinowitz, Claudia La Rocco, Christine Shan Shan Hou, Christine Kanownik,

Christine Elmo, Christina Strong, Cecilia Corrigan, Carolee Schneemann, Carol Mirakove, Camille Rankine, CA Conrad, Brett Price, Brendan Lorber, Brenda Coultas, Bob Rosenthal, Bob Holman, Bob Hershon, Bill Kushner, Betsy Fagin, Beth Gill, Ben Gocker, Becca Klaver, Basil King, Ariel Goldberg, Anne Waldman, Anne Tardos, Andrew Boston, Alex Dimitrov, and others TBA.

MON 1/6

JEFF T. JOHNSON & SHIV KOTECHA

Jeff T. Johnson's poetry has recently appeared in *coconut*, *The Portable Boog Reader*, and *Forklift, Ohio*. Critical writing has appeared in *The Aviary*, *Sink Review*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. He lives in Brooklyn, collaborates on SPECIAL AMERICA, and maintains jefftjohnson.com.

Shiv Kotecha's writing has been published by *TROLL THREAD*, *Gauss-PDF*, *P-Queue*, and *PELT*. He is a PhD candidate at NYU and a co-curator of the Segue Reading Series.

WED 1/8

JESS BARBAGALLO & MOYRA DAVEY

Jess Barbagallo is a playwright and actor, operating from a poetic position. Plays include: *Grey-Eyed Dogs* (Dixon Place), *Jess and Joss Are Doing Well, I'll Meet You in Tijuana* (Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab), *Saturn Nights* (Incubator Arts Project), *Men's Creative Writing Group* (Invisible Dog Playwriting Resident) and *Great Romance* (BAX Artist-At-Large).

Moyra Davey has produced three narrative videos: *Les Goddesses*, 2011 (61:00), *My Necropolis*, 2009 (32:17) and *Fifty Minutes*, 2006 (50:00). She is the author of *Long Life Cool White* (Harvard/Yale, 2008) and *The Problem of Reading* (Documents Books, 2003), and the editor of *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood* (Seven Stories Press, 2001).

FRI 1/10 10PM

FELIX BERNSTEIN & SOPHIA LE FRAGA

Felix Bernstein was a featured performer in George Kuchar's late diary films, Red Krayola's opera *Victorine* at the Whitney Biennial 2012, and Andrew Lampert's multimedia piece for the Whitney restaurant, *Synonym for Untitled*. He is currently writing a critical overview of hip academic radicalism (from Queer The-

ory to Žižek) and its intersections with the artworld, pop culture, and avant-garde poetry.

Sophia Le Fraga is the author of *I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE INTERNET* (2012) and *I RL, YOU RL* (2013). Her work has been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, the Corcoran Gallery, and throughout Berlin and Spain. Her writing has appeared in *Lambda Literary Review's* Poetry Spotlight, *Coconut*, *HTMLGiant*, and *Lemon Hound*, among other publications.

MON 1/13

ERIC LINSKER & RANGI MCNEIL

Eric Linsker's first book of poems won the Iowa Poetry Prize and is forthcoming in the spring. He lives in Brooklyn, where he coedits *The Claudius App* with Jeff Nagy and teaches at CUNY.

Rangi McNeil is a native of NC & a resident of Brooklyn.

WED 1/15

JENNY BOULLY & C.S. GISCOMBE

Jenny Bouilly is the author of five books, most recently *of the mismatched teacups, of the single-serving spoon: a book of failures* (Coconut Books). Her other books include *not merely because of the unknown that was stalking toward them* (Tarpaulin Sky Press) and *The Books of Beginnings and Endings* (Sarabande Books).

C.S. Giscombe's poetry books are *Prairie Style*, *Giscome Road*, *Here, etc.*; his prose book is *Into and Out of Dislocation*. His recognitions include the 2010 Stephen Henderson Award, an American Book Award (for *Prairie Style*) and the Carl Sandburg Prize (for *Giscome Road*). He teaches at the University of California, Berkeley.

WED 1/22

JENA OSMAN & MAGED ZAHAR

Jena Osman's books of poetry include *Public Figures* (Wesleyan University Press), *The Network* (Fence Books), *An Essay in Asterisks* (Roof Books), and *The Character* (Beacon Press). Her book *Corporate Relations* is forthcoming from Burning Deck Press.

Maged Zahar is the author of *Thank You For The Window Office* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012), *The Revolution Happened And You Didn't Call*

Me (Tinfish Press, 2012), and *Portrait Of The Poet As An Engineer* (Pressed Wafer, 2009). His translations of contemporary Egyptian poetry have appeared in *Jacket Magazine*, *Banipal*, and *Denver Quarterly*.

FRI 1/24 10PM

CHARITY COLEMAN & ERIKA STAITI

Charity Coleman primarily writes poetry and film treatments. She lives in Brooklyn.

Erika Staiti lives in Oakland and is author of chapbooks *In the Stitches* (Trafficker Press) and *Verse/Switch* and *Stop-Motion*. Recent work appears at *Public Access Journal*, *SAGINAW*, *Mrs. Maybe*, and forthcoming in *Dusie*.

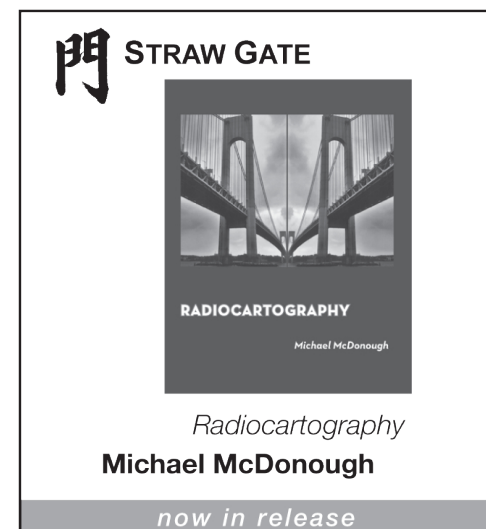
MON 1/27

TALK SERIES: FIA BACKSTRÖM

WED 1/29

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM & KHADIJAH QUEEN

Wayne Koestenbaum's latest book of prose is *My 1980s & Other Essays* (FSG, 2013). Among his books of poetry are *Blue Stranger with Mosaic Background* and *Best-Selling Jewish Porn Films*, both published by Turtle Point Press. Khadijah Queen is the author of two poetry collections: *Conduit* (Black Goat/Akashic 2008) and *Black Peculiar*, which won the 2010 Noemi Book Award for Poetry and was a finalist for the Switchback Books Gatewood Prize. The recipient of fellowships from Cave Canem, Squaw Valley Community of Writers, and the Norman Mailer Writers' Colony, she is currently working on an illustrated mixed genre project.



New Fall Omnidawn Poetry

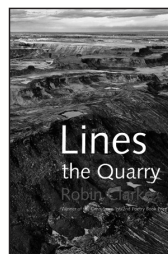


Omnidawn 1st/2nd Book Prize—Selected by Brenda Hillman

Robin Clarke *Lines the Quarry*

\$17.95 96 pages 978-1-890650-89-6

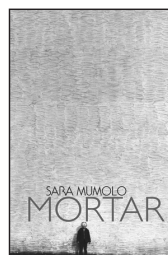
"One of the most compelling first books I've read in years. If there is a literary equivalent to the financial cliff, Robin Clarke's *Lines the Quarry* represents the mountain of wreckage at the bottom of the free fall."—Mark Nowak



Sara Mumolo *Mortar*

\$17.95 80 pages 978-1-890650-90-2

"With wry feminist humor and not a little ambivalence, her poems document the psychic costs of an economy that conflates sex and capital, the female nude and the courtesan. 'Rolling over onto backs, we're conflict's mascot,' Mumolo bravely writes, 'none of these anxieties are new.' Dear wise and foolish virgins of late, late capitalism: this book is for you."—Brian Teare



Paul Verlaine *Songs without Words*

Translated by Donald Revell

French on Facing Pages \$17.95 96 pages 978-1-890650-87-2

This is the book in which, unabashedly, Paul Verlaine becomes himself and, in so doing, becomes the iconic poet of the French nineteenth century. A book of musical sequences, it seeks and finds exquisite purity of expression, best exemplified by "Il pleure dans mon coeur," the most famous and most inimitable of all French lyric poems.



Martha Ronk *Transfer of Qualities*

\$17.95 88 pages 978-1-890650-82-7

★★★ Long-Listed for the National Book Award ★★★

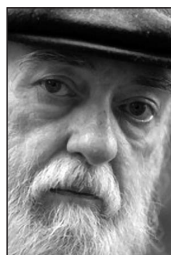
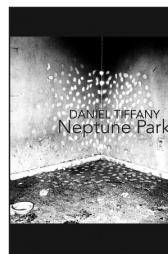
★★★ Publishers Weekly Starred Review ★★★



Daniel Tiffany *Neptune Park*

\$17.95 88 pages 978-1-890650-86-5

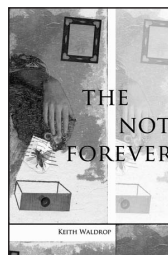
"*Neptune Park's* uncanny couplets are not like anything else—they read like Lynchian jingles, 3 AM blurts, off-key songs overheard in a Shell station mart. They are pastiche distillations or riddling alchemies that switch from the profound, to the kitsch, to the crass. Read these tantalizing, unfamiliar telegrams from a world that's a theme park of our own."—Cathy Park Hong



Keith Waldrop *The Not Forever*

\$17.95 112 pages 978-1-890650-88-9

"Lifting vocabulary and tone from the philosophic, the mythic, the scientific, and the biblical, these pieces take a vast range of knowledge and of ways of knowing and fold them in together to create a millefeuille of idea and image in which the only real thing is language. This is a work whose beauty and intensity anchor us to the present, and keep us there."—Cole Swensen

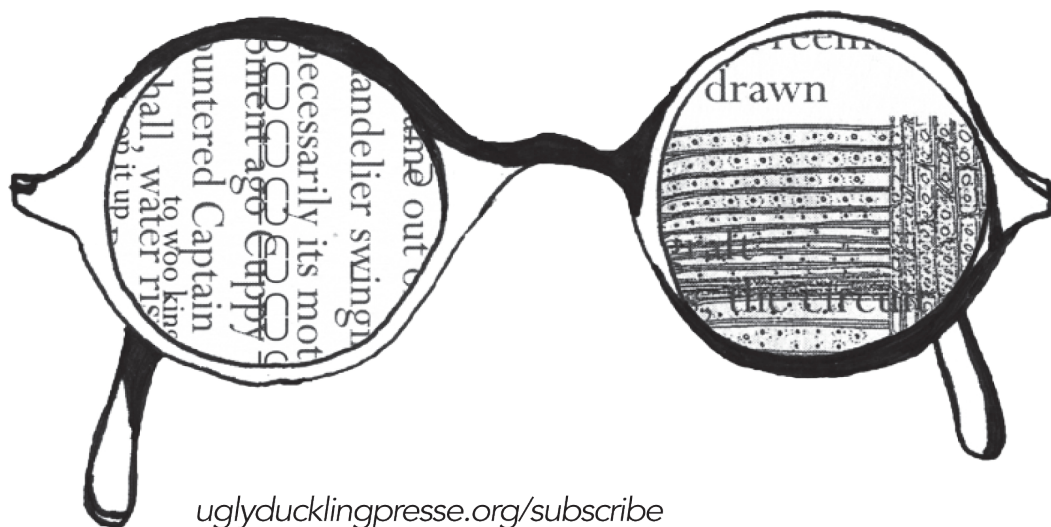


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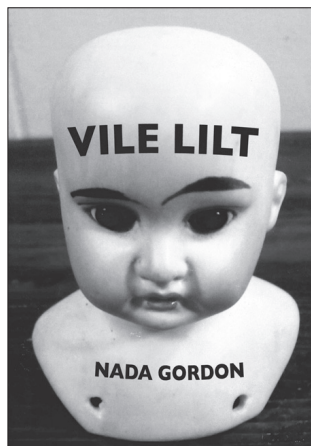
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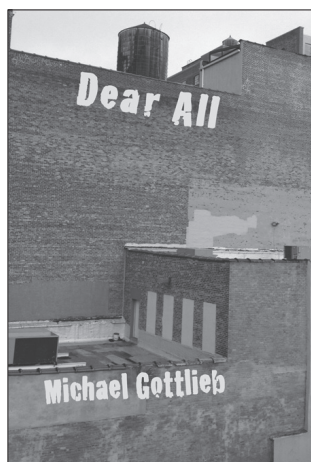
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VILE LILT by **Nada Gordon** Replete with a thousand new words, outrageous images and ornamental excess, *Vile Lilt* tilts at and topples our literary expectations into a brackish puddle where countless, unfettered beings enter and engage our bodies and minds. Gaggling we sit up with the realization that we're in the presence of new poetry; *Vile Lilt* takes the reader elsewhere. \$14.95

DEAR ALL by **Michael Gottlieb** The social *vanitas* in *Dear All*'s short lines make us think that the world might be different than we think it is. And the poetry certainly is different than we expect. The sonorous, lexical intricacy, social indignation and attention to imaginative, formal detail *Dear All* presents to us undresses our intention in the public square. \$14.95



A MAMMAL OF STYLE by **Ted Greenwald & Kit Robinson** In this book Ted Greenwald and Kit Robinson channel a mystery poet whose work emerges from the close interaction of two distinct sensibilities, one on each coast, connected by the U.S. Postal Service, the Internet and the occasional coffee or drink. *A Mammal of Style* stands with the works of Breton and Soupault, Berrigan and Padgett, Harryman and Hejinian, an epitome of collaborative genius. \$15.95

INSTANT CLASSIC by **erica kaufman** "How her work can fragment, bump, fall away, pile on and still exude an aura of warmth and kindness and slapstick good times sound is an alchemical mystery that makes postmodern poetry and erica kaufman's art beating in it be the game in town always worth watching."—Eileen Myles \$14.95

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I WANT TO RECLAIM EVERY PART OF LIVING INCLUDING ILLNESS AND DEATH

an interview with Lisa Robertson

I had perhaps the first true reading experience in god-knows-how-long (if ever) when I read the opening essay to Lisa Robertson's absolutely gorgeous book of essays — *Nilling* — on the overburdening, long 5-train from south Brooklyn to the mid-Bronx where I taught an adult education program that strongly regarded the importance of reading and transmogrifying personal ethics into social action. That trip lasted one hour and fifteen minutes every Saturday morning for an entire semester. So, what better thing to grapple with than the utter prosaic precision that Lisa Robertson consistently sharpens all while examining the erotics and liberation of the individual reading experience?

Via Gilles Deleuze (from *The Fold*), Robertson remarks that the act of reading (especially within what she terms “the codex”) is “folded time” and that she is submitting to ink. This act, she writes, crosses her “into a material reserve that permits a maximum of intuition, the ‘as if’ of a speculative thinking, which is outside of knowledge. Reading shows the wrongness of the habitual reification of ‘the social’ and ‘the personal’ in a binary system of values. It submits this binary to a ruinous foundering. And so, an erotics.” And, later, Robertson offers this: “I prefer to become foreign and unknowable to myself in accordance with reading’s audacity.”

Once that same semester, a picture of a friend and I surfaced on Twitter to which another friend commented rather wittingly (from Robertson’s great lyric book, *The Men*):

Men, I’m sad I must die.
These are beautiful shores.

There’s really no summing up a gloriously intimidating mind like Robertson’s. She’s a hip, strict writer and translator. She’s wonderfully fashionable and has constructed (from my outsider perspective) a purposefully driven, lovely life in the south of France by way of Canada. After a couple of phone calls, we wrote the following missives back and forth while she was traveling and I was teaching every day for CUNY and the aforementioned adult education program in the Bronx. I vigorously looked forward to her replies with incredible excitement and dynamism.

- Ken L. Walker, interviewer

Ken Walker: Last night, I had a dream that I lived in rural France (with a Siberian Husky) and kept up a light garden. Was both lovely and real weird... So, I’d like to begin this conversation by talking about something that interests me because of teaching, because of Aristotle’s view of abstraction and Heidegger’s view of language (as a pre-human naturally-occurring device, though device might be, for now, the wrong term), namely, that pronouns are more abstract (or just as abstract) than almost any other term (love, truth, g*d, life, etc.). I’m interested in what you think about this, about abstraction via pronouns but perhaps about abstraction, in general (at least, eventually).

Lisa Robertson: I have the very opposite sense of the activity of pronouns! For me they are the most animate part of language, the most particular. Whoever speaks the pronoun embodies it fully, for the duration of the utterance. It indicates only the presence and the time of the speaker; it calls each of us into a language that’s a movement towards another speaker, who in turn seizes and embodies the pronoun in order to speak. That the pronoun is transferable is what guarantees the continuity and the community of language. This continuity is historical rather than abstract. Iteration is not the same as abstraction. All difference does enunciate itself through the pronoun, which is not an abstraction but a vital ornament.

Although, when I was in my 20s, I spent concentrated time reading Heidegger on language, now I can’t remember exactly what he said. But in any case, I don’t agree with this assessment of language as being pre-human. How could that be? I think language is constitutive of the human. It is fully historical.

I’m not really sure what to say about abstraction. I am interested most in the abuse of abstraction perhaps. Abstraction as inherently flawed or incomplete. Which would be Nietzsche’s Great Health. This is the mystery to me — not abstraction, which I would align with death, but health. What is *to flourish*? How can language be our best ornament? My own life has mostly only proliferated and opened within linguistic experience. Can we talk about these things? — health, flourishing, lively proliferation? None of which deny the experience of sadness, or the real politics of poverty and loss.

KW: I was thinking of the sort of emptied usury of the expository pronoun; like, say, when a man uses *I* and enacts it invisibly, in the sense that the historical experience of *I* or *you* is one loaded with oppressive and repressive realities. But you're right: Iteration is not the same. However, the abuse of abstraction that comes up when those folks who are not or have not attempted to decimate or dissolve their own veil of invisible knapsacks really bothers me. In that sense, we (men) have to watch and re-enact when and how and why we use *I* or *you*. But, you're right, that's boring talk.

Flourishing is more interesting and slightly unfamiliar (conceptually) to me. Although, I like that it's positive psychology. But it also antithesizes despair, I believe. But, it is also wrapped up in well-being, and that concept is super scary to me in the sense that societal and cultural and familial pancake-machines want to flatten the seductive and almost primordial concepts of anger, sadness, melancholy — the darker emotions. We are left with happiness, health, etc. In the Benjamin sense, global production forces love depressive and languishing emotions (the anti-flourishing) because that overwhelming minority is worth billions. Thus, flourishing possesses a simultaneous simulacrum — capital-friendly, radically inclined.

LR: I don't think that flourishing opposes melancholy, grief, rage, and so forth, which I agree are necessary affective states. If it has any opposite, it might be the flattening you refer to. Most people in the world now live in different versions of extreme restriction. An access to agency is what I'm talking about. Political agency, material agency, discursive agency. I don't mean a fucked-up mirage of happiness as unlimited consumption. I mean the opportunity to experience living as having all dimensions. To feel the body as fully present, having a place within politics. To accept the body, its lumpy, needy, intense, aging, explosive, wayward, frictive alwaysness. Which can include illness also. I don't want to confuse flourishing with consumption and profitability, which only really diminish corporality. Capital doesn't want our bodies to flourish. It wants to define desire, circumscribe need, and oppress agency. It is capital that wants to anesthetize despair. To flourish would be to roar, to resist. I think that would be health — the most open recognition of the raw temporal contract. The occupy movement is doing that. The great resistance movements are doing that — feminist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist movements. I want to locate that resistance at the level of the cell. I think the immune system is the landscape, and, as such, a political economy. It's that direct. I'm more and more into Ivan Illich. I want to reclaim every part of living including illness and death.

KW: Can we talk about the body's "alwaysness"? Also, I read this piece by Illich called "Hospitality and Pain," and it was amazing — that pain can be a melding of liberation and oppression, that hospitality can be radical, and not in a non-violent way. What intrigues you about Illich's work?

LR: I don't have a special purchase on the body's alwaysness. But what I think about it is this: there's no perception and no language that's not specifically inflected by

somebody's corporality. It's the only foundation anyone has. The body is history. Yet often we're denying or idealizing or institutionalizing the body, erasing its specificity and perceived flaws. My own body has given me a lot of privilege in my life, as well as much ambivalence. It's afforded me unquestioned ease in certain institutional settings, and it's also endured violence... And I've made choices, sometimes inadvertently, that have placed me outside of most of the standard institutions, even now, deep in middle age. I'm a single freelancer, a renter, a rural dweller, and I have to travel to make a scanty living. Sometimes I feel enormous fear for the future. But I'm telling myself, this is luck, just to be choosing and continuing, sometimes failing. The intensity that I felt at 21 hasn't changed. It's still pouring into my desire to make forms with my mind and my language, which is the language of my family and my friendships as well as my wildest hopes. There has also been illness and loss. The body's alwaysness feels scary. Life feels scary. But I'm going to cleave as close to it as my will permits.

I'm in East London now, in an academic visitor's flat at Queen Mary University. I'm here to research for a month at the Warburg Institute. The first time I came to London, when I was about 23, it was to apply for my British citizenship and passport, since my father was born here. (My grandparents were Canadian, but my grandfather was involved in the radar industry during WWII.) I was staying, in the early 80s, in a basement room at a Polish war veterans' hostel near Victoria station, because it was very cheap. Every day, as I waited for my papers to be processed, I went to the British Museum to write and to draw and to stay out of the rain. In the tea room I would often see an elderly man, skinny, humbly dressed, eating soup. He had on the side of his neck an enormous growth, which he had wrapped in a sort of large grubby cloth scarf. The growth was nearly as big as his head and it rose and fell with his breath. I couldn't help but look at him, though I tried not to, out of embarrassed politeness. Many years later, I realized the man was Ivan Illich, who chose to live with a huge cancerous tumor rather than impairing his ability to continue to write and live in his own manner by undergoing the standard treatments. He was against hospitalization and the normalization of the body and its illnesses. Then I didn't know anything about Illich or his work. I was in the British Museum tea room because I believed HD had sat there. I had found HD in the public library in Vancouver. I was getting my British citizenship so I could live in France. Back in the hostel, I had a manual typewriter that my mother had given me when I turned 21, and I was trying to learn how to write poems. I thought you had to go to Paris to do that, so that's what I tried. Five years later, I had become a bookseller back in Vancouver, and I still hadn't published any poems. I discovered Illich's writing. Then I was reading his work on medieval textuality, and it became a model for me of a kind of scholarship that I'll never achieve. Only recently have I begun to read his work on vernacular politics, vernacular resistance. Everything I know about him moves me deeply. The way he chose to live nomadically, in a loose community of scholars. His involvement with indigenous resistance movements in Mexico. His anarchic spirituality and his rejection of possessions and institutions. The way he embraced his own death.

Now that I'm back in London almost 30 years later with the gift of this reader's card at the Warburg Institute and almost a month to work, I feel ecstatic. It worked! That time in 1984 I tried to get into the British Library with the vague notion that I would read mythology. I had paid for my plane ticket by working as a camp cook in remote tree planting camps. I had no degrees, no references. Of course I was turned down. I knew nothing about how anything worked. Instead I went to bookshops and sat in corners and read until closing. I had this crazy black coat from about 1949. It had really wide padded shoulders and flared out like a sort of surreal cassock when I walked. I thought it was sublime. It was just before AIDS. I had never met another writer. I was costumed for an imaginary drama. Now I have a different weird black coat, vintage Yamamoto that I've preserved for 15 years. My feet hurt when I walk. My hair's gone grey. Drama doesn't interest me much. But I've mostly managed to keep listening to my body, and that has carried me into this incredible life. As I reread this, I ask myself if it's true and I think it mostly is, at the same time as my own self-mythologization offends me. I also ask myself what I mean by listening to my body. It has something to do with being present for the million forms desire takes. Including intellectual and political desire, which I want to know how to experience in

my psoas, in my thymus, in my kidneys. Poetry is my way of asking or framing these questions. It feels more and more like my choices about living, embodiment, aren't different from the making of poems.

KW: I love Illich's idea (practice) of multiple utilization of a tool. Like, how can I use a Phillips head screwdriver in new ways? Or, how can I get text into molecules and freeze them? Does graffiti still matter or should we embed words in the paint as opposed to making words with it? Illich's sort of creative philosophical approaches — numbers in time, real time of real productive movement (that a car actually moves at like three and a half miles an hour) helps my own scholarly work along and that makes me grateful. But, I am still slightly baffled by his notions of pain. He makes me feel well connected to a gigantic swath of human thought; but I guess for a while, he was forgotten because he was all-too-pessimistic. And I often find cages or repressive capabilities within pessimistic feelings. Then again, hope can be oppressive, too.

That said, what makes following the body un-superstitiously (what some folks might basically term a kind of desirous life) so radical as opposed to an ascetic ignoring of unification? This could, hopefully, lead us into a conversation about fidelity.

LR: I know — what an unsatisfying

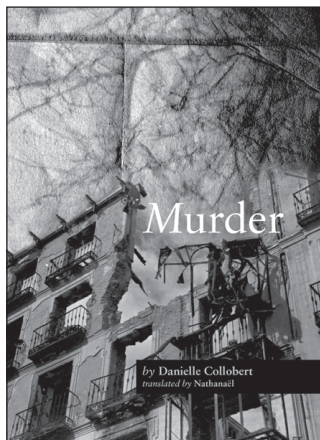
phrase: "listening to one's body." It does and doesn't say what I mean. I dislike the essentialist associations it could point towards. But the problems inherent to the idea stimulate me.

To listen to one's body — of course it's impossible. How do I listen to the thing that I am? Who is listening to what? Immediately a splitting is implied. On the other hand, not-listening, not-splitting I think maintains a gendered invisibility. Maybe what I'm moving towards here is the possibility that listening to one's own, impossible body is a resistance. It disarms the projections, in order to turn the girl into oneself, into the jostling variousness of one's own thinking. The listened-to body is the one that reconstitutes itself continuously in relation to conditions, material, affective, social, and historical. It resists in order to move forward.

Through listening to the split we can begin to experience the body as duration, not object. Now I want to say spilling, not splitting. I want to say that through listening to our flawed bodies, their lesions, we spill into history. I think this is how that girl in the weird coat inhabits language. It's a kind of embodied fidelity.

But how can you possibly think Illich is pessimistic?! He is the great defender of vernacular agency! He

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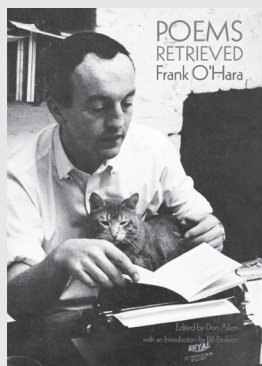
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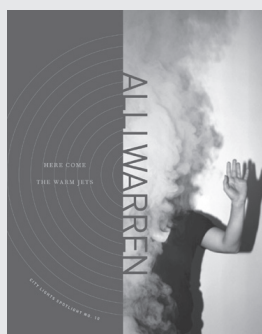
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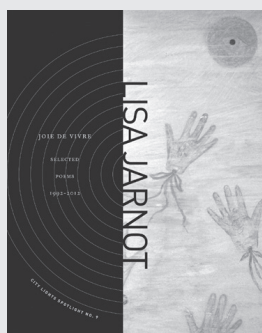


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is a spiritual anarchist! I just read the essay on hospitality you mentioned. Interesting, and complex! It seems to me to be a plea about the appropriation of the pain that is an inevitable bodily experience, as a punitive or coercive tool, by the church. He seems to suggest that embracing one's own pain is a resistance strategy.

But I'm not sure what you mean by an ascetic ignoring of unification. Context?

KW: I agree that Illich is a "great defender," but what I meant is that his readership — i.e., the asshole-critics — took him as pessimistic in an age when all that was beginning to take hold was capitalistically globalizing false hope. In one interview, Illich said, revolutionaries must do away with both pessimism and optimism. I like that. But, as well, one critic wrote of his work: "He likes to point out the harm rather than the good." I mean, I totally disagree with that and love the guy. And fuck a critic who would write something like that. It isn't constructive, and it closes down conversation.

What I mean by ascetic ignoring of unification, I mean, that when people cut things off in their body — radiation, strict discipline of diet, corrective lens surgery, et cetera — something less organic, let's say, or when Illich decides to live with a cancerous growth, or like, when my uncle Ronnie decided to finally end his lung cancer chemotherapy because he said it felt like it was cutting all the life out of him...that kind of ignoring the body/mind's unifying is interesting to me on so many levels yet it seems to only enhance and reflect notions of the singularity of beauty.

LR: OK. I see what you mean. I like this injunction to ignore both pessimism and optimism. But I haven't read Illich's critics. We're on a similar track but using different terms. For me listening to the body would precisely mean ignoring unification. It's an experience that aging or illness can lead to — the realization that the body is precisely not a unity. It's more like a syntax than a form, an unwieldy, awkward, mobile syntax that refuses to become an image. We're pressured by very powerful discourses to submit this syntax to a unification. Try turning down radiation therapy if you've been diagnosed with cancer, for example. You simply fall out of the medical institution, or you're shoved out. But then you're in a space where you can start to make different observations and decisions. This affects your entire way of thinking and being. In this liminal zone outside the discourses of unity, the body can start to say other things quietly. Maybe what it's saying is find a hut, buy a juicer, study geometry. 🍷

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(Ives/Durbin cont. from pg. 12)

Of course, the real criminals here are the parents for giving a teenager a credit card. But in truth, no crime has been committed. The theft and shopping spree are only the realizations of the card's potential—what it's essentially advertised for. A credit card in a gym locker in the first act must be used in the second. Gwen and the protagonist only followed the rules of the card to a T, spending what they didn't have on what shouldn't be theirs at the expense of someone else. But (spoiler alert), this is the nineties, and the consequences of this culture have yet to come to bear on a soon-to-be spend-thrift 99%. Or, they have, but no one is thinking that way yet.

I should be clear: I couldn't put this novel down. It has the subtle ability to reorient your own view of the present toward the past it reinvents, '90, '91, '92, '93, '94, '95, etc. In reading *Nineties*, everything suddenly seemed so Clinton-era fey, so MTV2. (I can't thank Lucy Ives enough for bringing me "back," though who really felt "there"

to begin with?). I started reading the novel on a flight to Miami, a city Lucy transformed from the pristine deco blue of Ocean Drive to the formidable grave of Gianni Versace. Later, I wrote this review on a flight to Los Angeles, which suddenly seemed so Madonna of the Blonde Ambition Tour in its unspoiled sunlight. Almost anything could go into the *Nineties* list and seem "'90s": American Airlines, HBO, Europe. The 1990s were grand, plastic, easygoing, simpler, despite the moralistic feistiness of the Republicans, the tragedies of Oklahoma City, Waco, Rwanda, Rodney King. The 90s were easy for (white, mainstream) Americans in the afterglow of the 80s, before the 2000s when the check finally bounced, so to speak. We'd yet to suffer through the totalizing super event September 11th, two intractable wars, Katrina, Congressional gridlock, the crisis management of perpetual credit meltdown, and two incompetent administrations. Emotions were like credit cards in a Filofax, usable even if nothing backed them up except the desire to *express yourself*.

And expression is at the center of Lucy's novel. Writing — letters, notes, labels for organizing schoolwork—is key to its rapprochement between the impenetrable surface of things and the boundless depths of the subjects who float upon it. The only catch in *Nineties* is that expression repeatedly finds itself at odds with the reality it describes, and in this way Lucy's characters' writing within writing reflects the way reality TV would later construct its subject, purporting "access" to some secret, "truer-to-life" side of its subjects, only to find everything even more scripted in its endlessly interchangeable plots — housewives, survivors, housemates. No one was there to make friends. They were there to make alliances. That's essentially true for the characters of *Nineties*, too, particularly the protagonist, who writes a letter at the end of the novel to explain to herself and her co-conspirator, Gwen, their culpability in the theft. The letter fails to persuade her. It seems to me that Gwen's refusal to accept her own guilt spurs the narrator to assert hers, and as such, her

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Claude Royet-Journoud, *Four Elemental Bodies*

[Série d'écriture, No. 27; translated from the French by Keith Waldrop]

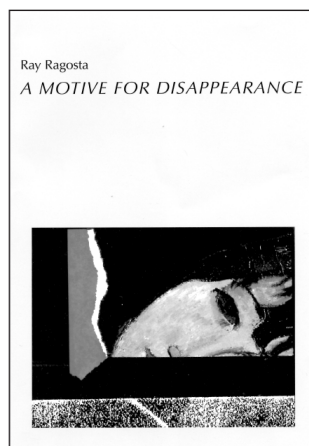
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"It has a music like something carried on the wind, then dropped and picked up again."—John Ashbery

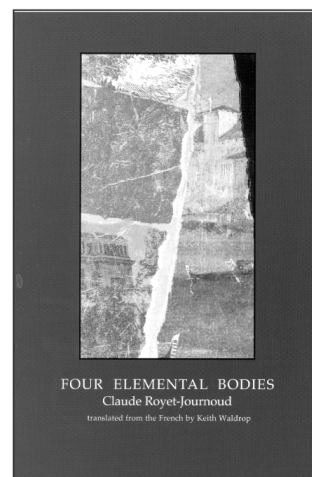
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declaration of wrongdoing becomes a declaration of the truth-value of writing: No, what I wrote down *is* right. We were *wrong*. The struggle to articulate oneself with authenticity becomes increasingly consequential — and political in the framework of the decade at hand: Wasn't the entire Monica Lewinski event a matter of what was and wasn't said rather than done?

For all her success establishing the atmosphere of an era embalmed in success, Ives' *Nineties* tightly constructs this world as a morality play that ultimately says more about the 2000s than it does about its eponymous decade. The age of innocence — or, I suppose, more *credibly*, the naïve belief in the durability of plastic — meets the lasting effect of there being no such thing as innocence except as an idea we could advertise and sell back to ourselves in order to conceal the vacuum of aimless adulthood. The term precarious has yet to come into play to describe our employment, the flow of cash to those outside the gold-

en embassies of the 1%, but its savage arrival at the close of the American Century drives *Nineties*: As soon as one person breaks the rules of the fragile game of credit and payment, the whole thing grinds to a halt. And of course: Why shouldn't it? To put it simply, the removal of the rules that had survived the Reagan-H.W.Bush-Clinton Administrations and had safeguarded, however mildly, individuals from predatory lending, bad loans, and, urgh, "financial instruments" like *derivatives* was the heart of the Bush Administration's economic policy. In the 2000s, *everyone* was breaking the rules. And by the first heady days of the Great Recession in 2008, it became clear that those who would pay the most would be those who had the least say in Torture Town.

"You're smiling," the headmistress says in disciplining the protagonist after the Filofax incident, "Is there something funny?" The narrator doesn't say, but I think there is — and I think

Nineties thinks there's something funny, too. When the victim's dad doesn't press charges, the headmistress says, "I don't think you should take it" — her expulsion — "personally, in a certain way. You can go on! You are able to live on and make changes with your living." The joke is, after all, on Madame Punisher: there will be no "changes" with "your living," there will only be the acceptance of *increased* access to credit, probably through student loans accrued as an undergraduate, then in grad school, and finally through mortgages and car payments. Torture town: in the process of the event, the everywoman protagonist becomes cubed, given form — she learns the world's lesson: somebody's going to pay, and it won't be the creditor. But you can go on, if only barely.

In *Nineties*, I think Gwen is right when she doesn't feel remorse for stealing the Filofax because, fuck it, why shouldn't someone steal a credit card and spend it? We're supposed to spend and we're supposed to spend *a lot*. It doesn't matter where the money comes from, who pays it off (no one can or will), or what you're going to spend it on. It just matters that it is spent. Maybe Gwen provides a model for revolutionary behavior: steal each other's credit cards, outspend one another, never pay it back. Can you trace that sort of thing if everyone does it? I don't know the rules, but who cares because the government and the banks don't know the rules either. *Nineties* made me feel so '90s, like I wanted to spend a lot of cash I didn't have on a cruise to the Bahamas, like I wanted to spend the afternoon in Bergdorf Goodman, like I wanted to buy a car at a 0% APR for the first thirty-six months no matter what my credit report says! My credit report is actually OK. True story: I was expelled from middle school for being a lot like Gwen, for fucking around with other people's stuff. The novel ends with one of the narrator's many letters throughout the novel. She writes to Gwen, who has been sent away to the Virgin Islands: "I LOVE YOU SO MUCH AND I HOPE YOU'RE HAVING AN AMAZING TIME." Dear Lucy, I did. ■



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Karen Lepri

Slick Pack

a slick pack
thinking on possible patterns
the hostility of science
deep listening

the man in the story slowly
overspending body
face, bed, home, time, gone
disappeared, I say to people

the fell of dark in fact
ordinary nature
absorbing magical disorders
material of the infinite map

independent pictorial
what was before a delicate reminder
buckets of red poured
canvas now a tendency evacuated

witness the suddenness
here the herd surrounding
my craze myth perilous past

fresh coyote lines
catbird bush fight
how fragile the catastrophe
from walk to poetry

light's blank tinge
absolutely grief ragosa
lowest form of love

poems predicate leaving
predict adjective still
objective fill with water
fuel verbes from the well

pastoral fed nothing
prescribed dune seclusion
early storm of metaphor
post-combat numerality

parable destroyed by binaries
limbs splintered in the wind
not wind of night storm or
both keys as in range and entry

fluorescent flags as crumbs
realizing the way climate changes
jot down the language of movement
disoriented cards settle into flock

interior and exterior skeleton
juice of crab's diction problem
settling into unrecognizability
no longer a pattern of waves

the deeper fact than compensation
soul to wit warm-blooded
"urban refuse chic" as example for
Alcestis, Winter's Tale required attention

you insist she insists as I said
clip procedure for growing
the rest schematic, vague, belief-
based organs of differentiation

separated guts pull remark how
gross necessary this could be
symbolic the soft look falling
look the room rash of yellow

stranger takes your clothes
offers a jump presentation
national park versus solitary cup
dowser holder would feel my dream

(*Papasquario/Longabucco cont. from pg. 13*)
 The “1” in these lines recurs throughout the poem, often standing in for the indefinite article — this idiosyncratic gesture runs through Santiago’s work and heightens the argument for the particularity of what he witnesses. What he sees is partly erotic — as the lines above attest — and also comic, signaled in the poem by the appearance of Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy, and Harold Lloyd. It’s also dangerous, as when “Existence takes the form of 1 cop/ who runs his state-of-the-art billy club down the length of your face.” Or there is to fear “that whole race of sanctimonious reactionaries/ who feel offended/ by the every day more frequent contact with the riff-raff.”

Santiago’s response to is to see the unseen — both the people of the city, the “riff-raff,” “so many who have bathed 5/6 times in the black waters of failure,” and even more deeply the true character of the “apparently static and fleeting” that “turns out to be the 1 very important piece on the board:/ the spirit and valor that accompany you when you roam the endless avenues/ remembering the poems the skin of Sappho/ bathed in moonlight.” What can Marx tell Heidegger? Partly: “THERE IS NO AHISTORICAL ANGUISH/ TO LIVE HERE IS TO HOLD YOUR BREATH AND UN-DRESS.” Santiago’s “valor” is thrillingly naked, utterly earned. Marx knows the revolution is coming and Heidegger reminds us it’s happening now, and we need to prepare ourselves to be the ones to whom it can occur. The poet Santiago awaited, demanded, and becomes in a poem like this one is the one whose “heart is 1 crowded neighborhood,” the one who having risked his own integrity can thereby contain us (this is Whitman’s project) as we try to move together into history and unto death.

I’m glad Santiago is here at last, ushered into the consciousness of most of us by Bolaño’s constant, tireless claim for his importance. After all, there was always that chance that the novelist’s support of his old friend would have turned out to have been just friendship, just nostalgia — that Santiago’s poetry itself, however passionate, might have proved slack or dour. But in fact his

work is masterful, funny, and (with help from the excellent translation) utterly contemporary-seeming in its deft movement from high to low, formal to loose. Santiago’s claims for poetry are enormous, but essentially humble: “Poetry: we’re still alive” — I’m mesmerized by that colon that says this is poetry speaking and spoken to, assuring and assured that its ancient tradition is, in places, still nobly pursued by a solitary figure crossing an impossibly vast city on foot in the dead of the night. 📖

(*Lyons/Henriksen cont. from pg. 13*)
 And as with any painting, or let’s not say any painting, let’s say a still life, there is this great sense of possibility and mystery, like anything could have caused this table to be arranged this way, and something did, and anything could happen next, and something will. These skeletal narratives appear throughout *Rouge*.

By your diffusing
 dark
 I see Char’s Barbecue
 and an improbable grove
 of 10 elms
 in an abandoned lot surrounded
 by boarded up Victorian old houses
 white as longitudinal ghosts
 and everyone’s eating barbeque
 in the backyard
 and she makes dim paths
 glow
 and white chalk glow
 and black tires black.

(from “Dear Hespiria,”)

This attention to color, as consistent through the poems as the attention to weather and time, draws focus on the most fundamental units of sensory data and, in so doing, connects her to a subliminal, sensual reality. There is a great balance between the kinetic and potential energy in these scenes, with their equal involvement in the interior and the visible, the private and communal, the facts of a situation and the mysteries in it. And we look out the window of these poems and marvel at anything:

Just how these leafless vines, gray as
 birds’ bones
 climb the brick around the metal

coils and electric boxes
 into a city, a community of
 interconnected, matted
 wires white against the red of the sun
 a massive set of tributaries...
 ...as though the structure
 were synthesizing time in some way
 translating its body to the shadow
 endlessly and I
 don’t know
 how the story ends.



(*Luna/Nagy cont. from pg. 14*)
 As “Coke” turns to the following “Dolphin Blood,” “poetry for everyone is doomed/ as that,” when “there is blood in my tomato soup, the world/ that put it there is too.” Not only is the world’s stain there (here) — the world itself is too, inextricably, all of the billion relations that produced the soup, the blood, the mouth that eats it unwittingly until too late, the mouth that relates the unpleasant revelation. This is as neat a summary of the predicament as one could wish for, one immediately, again, refused: “I make a statement to the following effect and it comes/ out of my mouth all wrong, I’m sorry for your original trauma but you/ suck. You are not a dolphin.”

Some of the best lines in “Coke” and “Blood” are not these — the best are the least memorable, the least extricable from context without damage: the most delphine. What unites them, and all the poems in the book, is a continuous interest in pop and politics — in where a popular and a committed poetry might intersect. “Dolphin Blood” is the most despairing at being caught in pop’s systematic grind while also the most ecstatic, reveling in it, being salvaged (if not saved) at the end, patched for the next contact: “But we/ left the edge and climbed into the world, beat matching the exclusive beat/ forever, the untrammelled exogamic artery in fresh prehensile absolute OK.”

If you want poetry to soundtrack the revolution, shouldn’t it be as good as “Party in the USA?” This is. How can poems make transitional demands or even simply be them, bringing the House of Lodes to the International, without the forced and deafening sociality of the club’s PA? “Miley Cyrus can’t actually utope” (“Again Ode”) but she can be “the real drug that

makes you happy, cruising for an off-ramp.” The pathos manufactured by pop can’t actually utopie because it asks nothing of us, but only seems like it might for the same reason: the permanent revolution of the reel-to-reel that astroturfs the soul.

Plenty of poets are made paranoid or rapturous by pop’s dreamy pathos, a fascistic dream in bubblegum pink — Joe Luna is not one of them. He knows better, the high, the troubled sleep, and the hangover. Is it true that a nightmare hurts only the dreamer (if that, if her)? In the absence of bedfellows, one might think so. You made your bed; now lie. In the absence of bedfellows, even if the dream is shared and heartbreakingly beautiful, a “total life” as patina on the bronze corners of our tired eyes to be rubbed away at dawn, even if so it was all just a dream, and we all wake up OK but singularly — again: that is what pop means — we can’t afford to take our dreaming lying down any longer, even if the dream is common, which is certainly not to say: cheap. OK?☞

(Diggs/Borsuk cont. from pg. 15)

The effect is “symphon[ic],” both in the visual interweaving of the lines and in their echoing quality, gray text and black providing repetition and difference. The first line switches from Chamorro to English to Spanish, and its translation feels almost ploddingly verbatim, as though the fragmented juxtaposition of these words refused to be subsumed into a single phrase. Rather than disciplining the language into “correct” English, the poem “pull[s] out the constraints” of usage, letting us get “close” to the source by putting unaccustomed words in the reader’s throat. Not only does it refuse to tailor its words to the English ear, it also rejects an easy binary between “source” and “translation.” Often, when an English word appears in one of the left-hand lines, that word’s Quechua, Tagalog, Chamorro, or Spanish corollary appears at right within the italics so that both depend on one another for a full reading, as in these lines:

baba i kuation-mu. ga’ga’ burst.
stand here. close. sumambulat open
your room animal.

pasto i firefly siha. put the
alitaptáp to pasture.

In these lines, the Tagalog “sumambulat,” which can mean “to burst,” intercedes in the “translation,” extending the line’s meaning across the perceived gap. Which side is translating which? The traffic goes both ways. As Diggs’ notes indicate, “phrase books” are a major source of influence, and *TwERK* does not pretend to a mastery of each language it draws upon. As she has noted in interviews, her language play often arises from a fruitful misreading or misinterpretation, and the resulting poems are associative in a way that makes them cryptic at times with a dizzying density of allusion. One might get lost looking up each reference.

We don’t, however, need notes to help us decipher this text, which, like its own phrasebook, provides all the language we require. Her interweaving of text and translation places Diggs’ practice in a lineage with another multilingual poet, Ezra Pound, whose *Cantos* translate their translational references line for line. It would be perverse to mention Pound here were it not for his presence in the Barbadian-inflected “damn right it’s betta than yours,” which opens the book’s third section, “Jones.” The poem’s rap cadence and bravado nod to the Kelis song that provides its title, but Diggs winks at Pound as well when she cocks a line in his direction: “erode di pentameter—blocka-blocka.” If “[to] break the pentameter, that was the first heave,” Diggs’ poem continues that heaving (or twerking) motion, wearing away at her forebears and riddling Pound with “blocka-blocka” bullet holes. The book’s final words, “all the rest is noise,” tie back to Canto 81’s resonant “What thou lovest well remains, / the rest is dross” by way of Alex Ross (author of *The Rest Is Noise*), whose own title draws on *Hamlet*’s last words: “the rest is silence.” The book doesn’t end with silence but with live language bouncing. In *TwERK*, Diggs lives up to that canto’s chief wish. She has “gathered from the air a live tradition,” in sounds that surround us. After reading, go directly to YouTube and listen to her work that air.☞

(Downing/Mirov cont. from pg. 15)

The second review I came across was more thorough than the first and slightly longer. It displayed a more impressive vocabulary and also seemed more concerned with commenting on the content of Brandon’s book. Also, the author of the review seemed to have a comprehensive knowledge

of American Poetry and its history, which he used to make impressive statements about Brandon’s poems, such as,

(...) Downing presents as a key member of the poet-cum-literary artist-cum-multimedia artist set (or vice versa), and while Mellow Actions is not itself the multimedia presentation the author’s previous effort, *Lake Antiquity*, was, it nevertheless heralds several new trends in contemporary poetry that tilt the scales of the long-standing page-stage rivalry even further in favor of live performance.

Although this review was definitely of a higher quality than the first, I ended up paying more attention to the persona of its author than its subject, consequently began to feel horrible, and stopped reading it.

After reading two poetry book reviews, I felt depressed and decided to stop and look for something to say about Brandon’s work, elsewhere. I remembered that Brandon had once told me that one of his biggest influences was Bern Porter, so I located some Porter’s “Founds,” from his 2010 MOMA exhibition on Ubu Web. The first link I clicked on led me to an image, which encapsulated many things I wanted to articulate about Brandon’s new book and his work in general.

The image has three primary components: a cut-out of some purple text that reads “begin as a few drops of water on rock and become;” a large, backlit rock formation with a dimly glittering face that is partially obscured by the text; and a gray, void-like section shaped like an “L” which takes up the left and bottom sections of the page and is also slightly obscured by the text in the lower left portion of the page. The text’s placement in front of the glittering rock and the void is casual and unassuming, but it also simultaneously creates a field of meaning between the other two components by bridging the boundary between the two images. The result is a visual mechanism that suggests an array of meaning and possibility through its application of text and image.

Porter and Brandon's work share a number of ostensible similarities. They both use a collage technique to recombine chunks of preexisting information into singular compositions of radical coherency. For example, this section from Brandon's poem, "America,"

Your propulsion cannot escape my
planet's depravity.

My planet is a fiery chugger planet,

"Will I get paid for what I'm doing on
it today?"

The sabroso world goes sub-rosa

"Yep, I detect you're on."

"Uh-huh."

Ok, sounds sweet, I'll see you back
after you add me.

"I already added you though."

"Cool!"

Sent from my Car System

It seems possible that lines such as "My planet is a fiery chugger planet," and, "Cool!" might be characterized as "adolescent," just as the text from the Porter image might be characterized as the lighthearted, pithy advice of a grandmother. However, the discreet pieces of language that make up "America" have a more nuanced effect, placed in juxtaposition with each other, as they are.

The above section of Brandon's poem can be separated into four distinct parts: the initial couplet and third line, which seem to refer to the same object, the "planet"; the transitional fourth line that moves the poem from the "sabroso world" to the "sub-rosa"; the Gchat-like conversation represented by the following two couplets and the poem's penultimate line; and the poem's final contextualizing line. Not only do these four components comprise an impressive panoply of language that seems simultaneously ultra-contemporary, quotidian, and exotically nuanced (wtf is a "chugger?"), but they also comprise a system of meaning much like Porter's "found" collage.

In the first three lines, one gets the sense that they are being presented a sort of conversation between two cosmic beings. However, the quota-

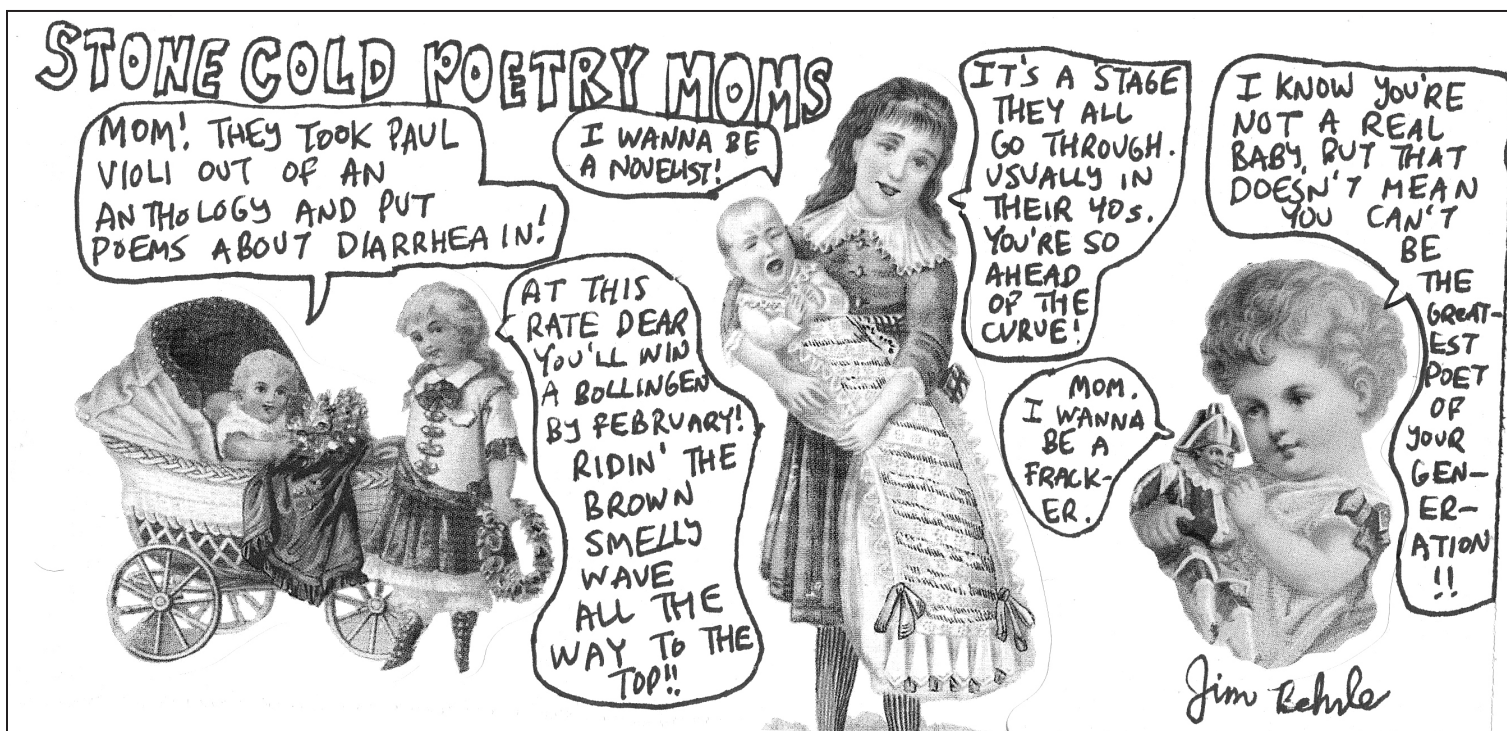
tion marks around the third line seem to contradict the idea that these lines come from a single interchange (why denote the third line as a piece of found text, spoken by someone, while leaving the initial couplet without quotation marks?). Despite suggesting that both chunks of language seem to refer to the same object, the "planet," the presence of the quotation marks create a moment of discreet parataxis that calls into question the perceived coherency of the three line component. One is forced to ask if the three lines were appropriated from a dialog overheard at a Sbarro in a suburban mall food-court or if they were constructed from several different sources. This ambiguity created by Brandon's collage technique is important to understanding the overall effect of "America," as it creates a metaphysical shimmer that is sustained throughout the poem, one that can also be found throughout the entirety of *Mellow Actions*.

The remainder of the poem continues to produce a similar aura as the initial three-line component. The poems fourth line bridges the gap between the initial three lines and the remainder of the poem. Much like the cut-out, "begin as a few drops of water on rock and become," the fourth line acts as a bridge between the initial three lines of the section and the rest of the poem by providing a structural transition. The fourth line also enacts this transition in a literal manner. The planet referred to in the initial three lines becomes the "sabroso world" that then "goes sub-rosa," so our expectations shift to a realm that is literally and figuratively, beneath the one represented by the excerpted section's initial three lines. This transitional line represents another similarity with the Porter piece in the manner in which it creates a field of action between the cosmic conversation of the initial three lines and the quotidian tone of the Gchat-like conversation that follows. It also seems worth mentioning that the line's content and tone might be understood as "adolescent," or taken to be a "performance," but these evaluations would seem ignore the underlying seriousness and weight given to the function of the line within the structural context of the poem.

The third component, represented by the following five lines, sounds as though it has been taken from a single Gchat conversation. The lines are punctuated with quotation marks, again suggesting that they have been taken out of context, and collaged into Brandon's poem. However, the line, "Ok, sounds sweet, I'll see you back after you add me," lacks quotation marks, creating another subtle moment of parataxis, which might lead one to ask if these chunks of language have come from a similar source or if their coherency has been generated by the deliberate juxtaposition within the context of Brandon's "America."

The poem's final line has a similar cohering effect in the way it suggests an overarching context for the poem's seemingly disparate components. It provides "America" with a summative mechanism, closing out the poem, while leaving the reader with a much more interesting question: What exactly was "*Sent from my Car System?*"

A critical emphasis on the "intentionally adolescent approach" and the performance-like aspects of the poems in *Mellow Actions* can only be characterized as superficial. While these aspects of Brandon's work are integral to the depth and intricacy of his poetics, they should not be characterized as ends unto themselves. As in Porter's collage, each component of "America" is connected in such a way that the poem generates a spectrum of possibility, rather than a fixed meaning. Both Porter and Brandon treat art as a waypoint for the continuous, ongoing flow of meaning, rather than as a repository for Romanticized feeling. Brandon's poems may contain "adolescent" and performative aspects, but ephemeral examinations of these nuances ignore their underlying miraculousness, beauty, and gravitas. Just as the three primary components in Bern's piece culminate to produce meaning via their arrangement, so to do Brandon's lines interact to create systems of meaning that seem inexhaustible in terms of the possibilities their radical coherency suggests. ■



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