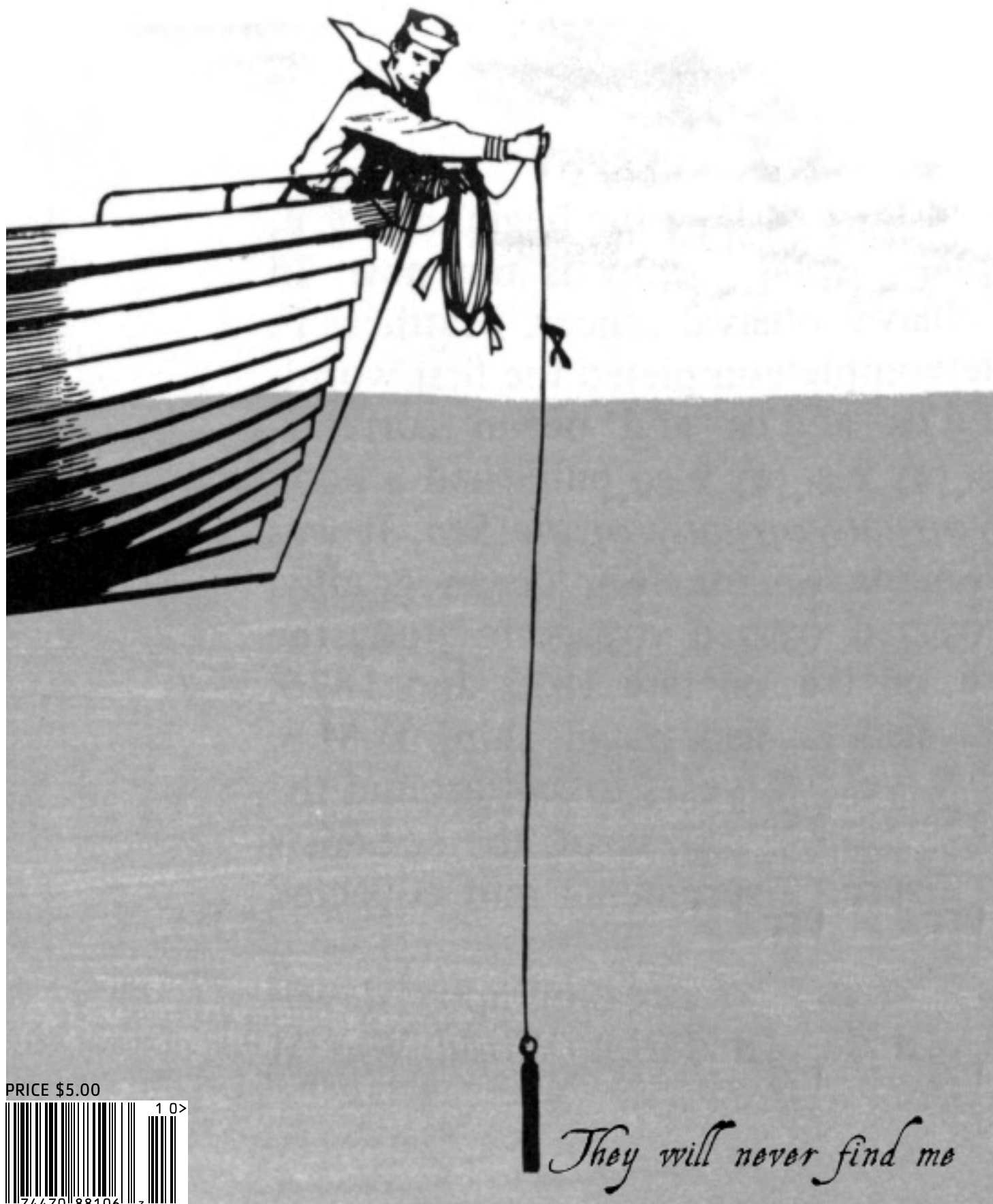


THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

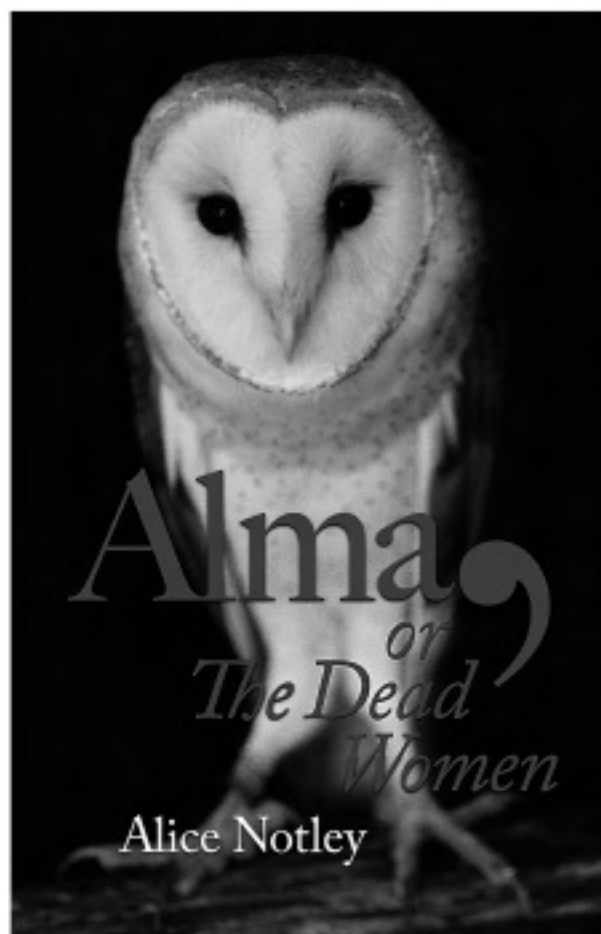
#208 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2006



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They will never find me



Alma, or The Dead Women

Alice Notley

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—Brian Kim Stefans, *The Boston Review*

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#208 OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2006

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Waldorf: Well, the show is moving very quickly tonight.

Statler: Oh, yes, someone must have told them that it's harder to hit a moving target.

— The Muppet Show 1976

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WWW.COOPERS-LANDING.BLOGSPOT.COM

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

We here don't think Earth is a fucking planet either, but if you spent the day cleaning out the church basement in anticipation of no preservation you'd be a happy figlet too (!) But negotiating the next lease extension is a 2007 thing, so there's no need for modern residential design to get in the way of eye-to-the-pie historicizing for the sake of glamorous obscurity. I was writing an article about the death of the family in Manhattan the other day and realized I could just as easily be kicking myself in the head for not speaking clearly, like Rumsfeld and the Norton and a gazillion op-ed columnists, so here's the rub: before the next war we need to fill our coffers so as to make sure the good word gets heard while anyone and their buds get mowed down for a common fantasy. If anyone out there has recently been rejected and didn't like the note, we'll rewrite it for just over a hundred million. That's the going rate, and we're market-slaves if only for the gratitude. Ah, summer – there is no doubt you will be as faithful as you.....but then I hear the phone ringeth, and someone wants to know when the first open mic will take place....another season gets under way! Who will survive? And what will be left of them?

With solidarity's dread,
Anselm Berrigan

OUR BUTTS IN THE BELFRY

Welcome to Newsletter #208 and the 41st season of poetry at the Poetry Project.

We enjoyed our 6 week hiatus and have regained the radiance and stamina we need to bring you the next 85 events or so. Anselm, Corrine and I really like each other and are pleased to be sitting in close quarters, together again. Outside, Peter Stuyvesant's head is being polished, the gravestones are being hosed, I'm not sure what the status of the sinkhole is, but it's taped off. The piano is finally gone. I don't think our neighbors appreciated the early morning psychotic crescendos. I just tried to look out the window but the "books received" boxes occluded my view. Oh yes, we are looking for new interns to fashion in our likeness.

Last year in this column I introduced a lot of new staff people, including myself, but this year we are bidding farewell and many thanks to the series coordinators Renee Gladman, Regie Cabico and Cori Copp. I was moved by each of their curatorial visions and it was my good fortune to have worked with them. Regie and Cori's assignments were up, and Renee accepted a position at Brown. Congratulations Renee!

This news may be anticlimactic, but we've decided that just doing everything ourselves is a guaranteed way of avoiding any future sense of abandonment. I'll be curating Monday Nights, Corrine will be curating Friday Nights and Anselm will remain our linchpin curating Wednesday Nights. I'll be hosting some talks as part of Monday Nights, but the official Talk Series will return next year with a new curator. We can't recall if programming has ever been all in-house before, but we are looking forward to the uber teamwork this year will entail. And, when materials aren't ready by the deadline I have an array of tactics never before available, from dirty looks to holding someone's daily banana hostage. We hope you feel anywhere between satisfied and elated by the readings and events announced in the centerfold, horizontally designed, once again, by courageous Newsletter Editor Brendan Lorber.

—Stacy Szymaszek

IF THE PLANET IS THERE, THERE WILL BE A NEW YEAR

And there will be a New Year's Day Marathon, again, too. Again, too. Again, too. And all this note is saying is this: we brought in some new blood to New Year's last year, and the year before that and the year before that. Did you notice? Well, it doesn't matter. We'll do it again, such as we can – meaning some who were invited to read last year will not be. Volunteers? And some who were not invited last year will be invited back. Cycles and shit. And if NYrs is all yer into as far as what gets put on here, woe unto you o ye arghification of shattered attention. Begone.

POET NEEDS HER Z'S

I am a poet, Bernadette Mayer, in need of an electric typewriter. Not a big one, as it won't fit on my desk. I can't write on computers & the "z" on my current machine doesn't work. You can contact me at psgood@hotmail.com. Thanks so much.

STILL CHEAPER THAN AN MFA

Our workshop registration fee has been \$300 since the later 90's, but the time has come for us to increase it, just a bit, to \$350. This still entitles you to take all the workshops offered for two seasons and includes a \$125 "sustaining" membership. This fall the workshop leaders will be Marcella Durand, Larry Fagin, Kristin Prevellet and Gary Sullivan. Information about their classes can be located on page 15.

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL IS YOU

The New Orleans Parish Public Library is extremely grateful for the overwhelming donation of used books since Katrina. But now, having run out of space for used books to sell for cash, they would love to skip ahead to the cash part. They have just reopened the first of their destroyed branches & sure could use some help. Their site, www.nutrias.org can give you the lowdown.

If you are interested in other forms of helping New Orleans get some feet to get back on, check out ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. They seem to understand how the disaster connects to the big picture & how you can help with both in pretty straightforward ways. www.acorn.org

THAT ZINCING FEELING

Jim Behrle will be the captain of the Zinc Talk-Reading Series as it continues its mission to seek out strange new life and new civilizations. Please redirect all your climby obsequiousness & thinly veiled venom towards the new host. He thinks it's only for a year, but we have it on good authority that former curator of the series has already vanished, never to be heard from again.

FROM THE EDITOR: THE NEW FOSSILS

"If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair." — C.S. Lewis

Before the asteroid, dinosaurs comprised a tiny fraction of life on earth, but they used most of the resources. They were ideal consumers. After September 11, 65,000,000BC, they responded with nervous skyward glances & radical antagonism disguised as necessity. With the exception of a few proto-birds, none of them could figure out how to adapt — and once they died, they became our species' perfect resource. ExxonMobil, not too wealthy to be ironic, is the proud sponsor of The Museum of Natural History's Hall of Fossils.* But according to British Petroleum & the US Geological Service, we've only got about 40 years of liquid dinosaur left.

Here's where you come in. Rolling with the war profiteers & staffed by overseas slaves,

even poets have almost enough to be somewhat comfortable. Aside from the tacit advocacy of a bad scene in every one of our possessions, things are pretty sweet. But as they go downhill, who among us will angle for the jive role of well-loved MFA-wielding author of Important Books, the amusing leader of our Poetics of Comfort? Who will dazzlingly blot out unpalatable realities with poems charmingly blue-faced & finite, distrustful of our president (but not all presidents) or of Halliburton (but not all companies)? Who will be the poet laureate, curating the mutual assured distractions of our bleak next national chapter, clamoring to be reviewed?

Consumption, once a serious disease, has become the apogee of all culture. To that end, our economy used to demand no more than two brief invasions a year, but now the gloves are off forever. The industrial revolution let us hustle our slaves out of sight to other countries, but globalism is bringing them back. The WTO's 2006 guest-worker program allows corporations to ship people

here to work for less than minimum wage. Think how much cheaper our home-spun cotton shirts will be. & hovering overhead, the climate is already too far gone to right itself — even if the oil ran out today.

Poets of 2046 — & everyone will be a poet then — will tell stories around the warm cave fire. Stories of 'ere the shit went down, when some writers forsook measly books in favor of commandeered calling centers; others performed uncolonized work before surveillance cameras while others, amorous & valiant, seduced even the most stalwart wardens of samsara. Stories of renegade broadcasters moored in international waters who stripped all nations of their anchors. Stories of hard working sentinels in wild threesomes with economists & anthropologists on factory floors. Stories of those who developed a new language out of the racket of this faltering, harried engine — a language perhaps you already speak.

—Brendan Lorber

*Dinosaur Irony #2: ExxonMobils's president's name? Rex Tillerson... Rex T? *I mean, come on!*

FROM THE PAST

33 YEARS AGO

John Ashbery just got a job at Brooklyn College, but is taking a year's leave of absence. That's Moxie.

32 YEARS AGO

George Schneeman broke three fingers on his left hand and fractured his right elbow in a bicycle accident.

Larry Fagin tore every (other) muscle fibre in his right calf while frolicking in the surf at Southampton.

Clark Coolidge came down with a severe sore throat and had to cancel his reading at San Francisco's Intersection.

Pitcher Scipio Spinks is nursing a groin injury.

AROUND 20 YEARS AGO

Pat Nolan & Steven LaVoie have announced the formation of the Black Bart Poetry Society whose \$8.20 membership costs will, among other privileges, set you up with *Life of Crime*, their more or less monthly newsletter which: "will feature gleanings from the fringe, notes from the wooley West by poets & critics who want to flog rumors, preconceptions, prejudice & out & out lies. It will welcome tirades, especially directed at ideas which have outlived their usefulness, toward reactionaries who've forgotten whence they came & archaic expectations of the status quo...Since bad taste predominates, taste is obviously out of the question." Send orders, letters, books, news etc to either the Temperate Regional Office, 1405 Mariposa St. SF CA 94107 or the Coniferous Regional Office, PO Box 798 Monte Rio CA 95462; checks made out to either of the co-arbiters.

10 YEARS AGO

In San Fran people say outrageous things because no one will hit them, it's bad etiquette. Poets we lose today: Katy "You can live in a hypothetical world of evil & still be good" Lederer, to Iowa, & Anslem "Heaven is a truck" Berrigan to native NYC (look for him). Readings for them & out-of-towners occur at my house: 530 Page Street #2, SF, CA 94117. If you're passing through drop a line. —Edmund Berrigan

9 YEARS AGO

POET ANNOUNCES END TO CANDIDACY FOR REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

The poet Sparrow, who formally announced his bid for the Republican presidential nomination on Thursday, June 27, dropped out of the race on July 14. The following is a transcript of his concession speech:

I Admit Defeat

I am now ending my campaign for the Republican nomination for President. The primary voters have unanimously rejected Revolutionary Socialism, in the form of me. They have made the wrong decision; now they must live with it. I want to thank my campaign manager, Hal Siowitz, who begged me to run for four years and to whose entreaties I eventually succumbed; Violet and Sylvia, my wife and child, who stood by me during the grueling 18 days of campaign; and Charles Paikert, whose genius idea it was for me to pursue the Republican nomination. Also, I would like to thank the heroes of my Childhood: Mickey Mantle, Pete Seeger, Harold and The Purple Crayon, The Four Tops, Jay and The Americans, The Beach Boys, Albert Schweitzer, Helen Keller, The Flash, Superman, Green Lantern. I have tried to emulate them all in my campaign: to sing, to dance, to show compassion for the poor, to run at lightning speed. Of course I have failed, but I have achieved something greater: the laughter and love of 121 people (the combined audience of my two speeches). This nation is not doomed; "doomed" is an outlook. Our empire will fall, I hope, and it may be smashed to pieces. But if we have faith in the 9 gods—Sora, Helmd, Raxi, Shood, Tarzeen, Joss, Vabuni, Am, Henno— we will survive. I am not joking. These gods exist. They will save us.

WORLD NEWS

EXPANDED COVERAGE FROM OUR CRACK TEAM OF INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS.

"TRUTH IS BEAUTIFUL, WITHOUT DOUBT; BUT SO ARE LIES." — RALPH WALDO EMERSON



RODRIGO TOSCANO IN FRANKFURT, GERMANY

In a DJ lounge, in Mainz, Germany, I scramble to figure out what—in any way, might touch a chord—explore a common node of history—trace a new sensation—between the 40 or so people present. Had I written those pieces with this occasion in mind? *Sort of*. But not enough.

The day before, atop an observation platform of an entertainment complex in Frankfurt, the “Römer” below, which contains the handful of buildings not fire-bombed during the war, is a Venice Beach-like pedestrian mall, packed with pretzel stands. Colossal sausage grills suspended by chains over burning logs anchor the beer-fueled crowds who’s roaring rises straight to the moon.

To the south is the 56-story Commerzbank Tower, famous for its high-visibility work-spaces, something quite dissimilar to the former WTC towers’ stay-on-task window slitting (which were similar to the San Diego City Center Penitentiary, where I played holiday cheer accordion as a child). The Tower looks like an emerald crystal, very jaggedly and unevenly tapering toward the tip. That is, the tower’s peak doesn’t look *snap-on*, like the Empire State pike, but more like the result of a high precision cutting instrument. *Schön*.

The observation deck is a freezing cold place to warm to one’s lame epiphanies. At any rate, the platform doubles as a pub for lost tourists and local *streber* (that is, “geeks,” not quite fitting into the more site-specific floors, for example, the I’ve-got-an-“ethnic German”-boyfriend-or-girlfriend-who’s-chill-enough-to-hang-with-

us-Turks-hookahs-and-all discothèque, 8th floor). Nevertheless, I was duly encouraged by *Köstriker Schwartz Bier* to agglomerate things—into an agglomeration. *Prost!*

At street level, an ATM lit up a scene which I was not prepared for in any way. Four tiny figures, but large enough for me to discern manners of dress, relative age, and most pointedly, range of bodily motion. Some sort of tussle between two women wearing Muslim headscarves. And suddenly, the harrowing screech of a child. I try to focus hard on what’s unfolding. And thanks to the concerted reenactment of the initial occurrence between the four people *by* the four people, I manage to piece together a time-sequence, though I was (and remain) without an interpretive (cultural-linguistic) frame.

One tyke had bumped in the other, which caused his mother to lunge at the other woman. Both kids were now crying. The women tightly clung to their children while weaving at each other, though there was no actual contact between them. The howls soon drowned out the revelers at the Römer, and froze many a heart like mine I’m sure. I waited for some kind of “authority” to show up. None did. Instead, passerby after passerby, played out their respective social roles, like clockwork. University students stopped to lurk, and after judging the incident to be non-violent, scaddaddled. Bourgie folk veered 20 meters north by northeast, on cue. The eerie consistency of it all eventually dragged me into the scene—in the role of the “gazer” (from above no less!) After all the evening’s lonesome and rather dubious ruminations, it felt like I’d entered into a secret legislative chamber of Global-Metro Frankfurt.

One passerby differed from the rest. Off-shift men & women train station workers would walk straight up to the group, wave their

arms, not rudely, but somewhat imploringly, motioning east west south and north—and toward the children, for a few minutes, then eventually move on; one after the next, unsqueamish, deliberate, face to face.

Had I written those poems—that I in fact *did* read in Mainz the day after—with this specific occasion in mind? *Super sort of not*. And yet, *super sort of*—is what I’m after.

Rodrigo Toscano is a writer of poems, poetic dialogues, masques, and anti-masques. Originally from Borderlands of California, he is now an eight-year-old Brooklyn.

JESSICA FIORINI IN BARCELONA, SPAIN

When I entered Gaudi’s incomplete masterpiece, La Sagrada Familia, I immediately stopped believing in God and started believing in architects. The devout may find such talk blasphemous but hear me out. Put in simple terms, if there is or was a god, you could say that all that was created was a giant system of set matrixes in which certain tensions, artistic inclinations, personality, etc. are entered to produce a complex and unfolding equation. An architect creates a system that relies on tensions, counter pressure and an outrageous sense of where one belongs. Gaudi utilizes the most complete observable system available to model his cathedral by — the graceful and sometimes asymmetrical flourish of the natural world.

On the outside, the spires are cotton flowers and the supports are great oak tree trunks. The pathways curve around and double up on themselves in tidal motion. Inside the staircases are halved conch shells and because the roof is only partially complete, birds fly in and get lost among stone sparrows in leafy bowers. I’m not saying that it looks based on trees or flowers, I mean it feels as if Gaudi found these things among the Catalan countryside, dug them from earthy tombs and transported it all to this site. Everything is touched with haphazard precision. The stone birds look more alive than the pigeons trying to impress their unmoving brides. The cool lapis lazuli and gold four point flowers carved into the ceiling curve to kiss the underwater abstractions of huge stained glass windows. There is no line between inside and out.

Of course there is the obligatory Trinity and crucifix but it’s almost secondary to the divine universe of minutiae. It just doesn’t feel like church to me and I’ve had tons of experience in the Roman Catholic rigamoroo. I did not leave the site with a renewed sense of faith and got the distinct impression that this cathedral is a defiant piece that says, “Hey. I’m a mere mortal and look what I can do. No divinity necessary.”

Perhaps the most endearing aspect of La Sagrada Familia is its half done roof. It lets in light, the seasons, crapping birds and a Mediterranean breeze that entreats you to stay and reflect on the systems that everyone is upholding. And not in a “oh the pitiful starving masses can be saved by me” but more of “Jeez this thing is huge. I think I can also accomplish something great one day.”

The project to build La Sagrada Familia has been chugging for fifty years and I believe it will continue for at least another fifty.

Especially since I was there on a Tuesday morning and there was only one worker there...and I think he was on lunch break. Maybe they should do what the Italians have done and just hire the Dutch to finish it.

Jessica Fiorini been riding the viscous NyQuil seas.

CORRINE FITZPATRICK IN AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS JOUHET, FRANCE LONDON, ENGLAND

(Holiday) Somewhere amidst my first black eye and my first gay wedding I read through a borrowed selection of recent Canadian poetry: Book Thug editor Jay Millar’s *False Maps for Other Creatures* (Nightwood Editions, 2005); Mark Truscott’s *Said Like Reeds or Things* (Coach House Press 2004); Margaret Christakos’ *Retreat Diary* (Book Thug, 2004); Stephen Collis’ *Anarchive* (New Star, 2005); Nathalie Stephens’ *Je Nathanael* (Book Thug, 2006). There was no unifying theme to these books other than *Canadian* and *Poetry* and the fact that each was really an enjoyable read. I’d like to plan a little caravan of New Yorkers interested in making the 505-mile trip to Toronto with me. Any takers?

I was given a copy of *Denise Riley: Selected Poems* (Reality Street Editions, 2000). Reading her work within the mental frame of reading the increasingly incomprehensible world news a few times a day made a lot of sense. From her poem *Laibach Lyrik: Slovenia, 1991*:

I’m not these, never could be, am by accident of place
and birth protected, yet exactly as / this nation-sheltered
onlooker, must try to think. The room splits into clumps
and fights...

And from the longer poem *A Shortened Set*, also originally published in the book *Mop Mop Georgette* (RSE, 1993):

An ice blue calm, violently sustained, / has got to know
a thing about this nation /and our being in it. How do I
act then, properly / without a sticky modesty / in the
crammed-fullness of the place / too dense for story-
threads to pierce? / I’m quiet. I’m at the end of all opinion.
/ should I not know where clearness lies. / Time
has run short and I need company / to crack my separate
stupidity. I’d thought / to ask around, what’s lyric
poetry? / Its bee noise starts before I can...

When in Amsterdam, go to bookshops. There are too many good ones to name them all, but notable among the lot is Bookie Wookie, a small store specializing in handmade and small-run artists books. A plethora of links and resources for English-writing writers in the Netherlands can be found at wordisinhere.com. Wordisinhere is an “international collective of writers” located in Amsterdam that is behind the annual journal *Versal*.

Traveling is terrific, poetry is everywhere.

Corrine Fitzpatrick likes to travel.

WORLD NEWS

LOURDES VÁZQUEZ IN

GRANADA, NICARAGUA

Have you seen tourists interested in a poetry festival? I was invited to participate in the II International Poetry Festival in Granada, Nicaragua, an amazing event that brought together an estimated 200 poets from 34 countries. Poets from South Asia to South America, Greenland to the Caribbean. In Granada! Surrounded by an immense lake and various volcanoes. One of the most beautiful colonial cities of Central America. From the 6th to the 11th of February, the festival included readings in plazas, auditoriums and parks, in front of churches and in the streets. Part of the festival involved a Carnival day with schools of traditional music, dancers and big puppets, as well as poets performing in several spots as the procession passed. There was also an opportunity to participate in readings in several towns close to Granada. All activities open and free to the public. Probably that was one of the reasons that we saw tourists in all events or tourists asking the poets when was the next event.

This year the Festival coincided with the 150th anniversary of the destruction wrought by the filibuster William Walker when he burned the city leaving behind only a sign: "Here was Granada." One hundred fifty years later, in honor of the people who fought back the invasion, festival participants posted a new sign: "Here is Granada!" The festival also coincided with the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nicaraguan poet José Coronel Urtecho. An homage to Claribel Alegría, the Salvadorian poet, was also part of the festivities.

Truly a poetry banquet!

Lourdes Vázquez is a poet and fiction writer. Among her latest books is her novel Sin ti no soy yo (Puertos, 2005) and a video collaboration with Adal Maldonado, Meche en noche de doble luna.

SEAN COLE IN

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

I'm sure I'm the least qualified person to report on Boston poetry. I haven't been to a reading here in months. I should blame myself. Instead, I choose to blame the slow exodus of younger poets from this city, at least eight in the last five years or so, most of whom have landed in New York. One, whom I'm only allowed to mention "obliquely, in passing," was a tireless organizer of weekly readings that regularly corralled a lot of us together. He was a social glue of sorts, at least for me. He was bonding, pungent.

Three of the others were series curators here as well, including my best friend Aaron Kiely who was among the first to leave. He moved to New York "for a girl, but 80 percent for the poetry scene" (which of course offers an incredible volume of readings that Boston doesn't). He says it's funny watching the others arrive from Boston. "They all have a starving look when they first get

here," Aaron says, "like they've been starved, or haven't been given head in a long time and know it's right around the corner."

But a lot is still happening in Boston. Our great glue/patriarch Bill Corbett continues to curate readings at MIT and run *Pressed Wafer*, which has released some two-dozen books. Daniel Bouchard runs a reading series and edits the excellent magazine *The Poker*. Jack Kimball's *Faux Press* publishes stunning digital books, along with a few blood-and-hammer editions. Bootstrap Productions is in town now, running readings. John Mulrooney and Michael Carr have a monthly series at the Plough and Stars in Cambridge. And yet, somehow, the energy here seems more dispersed than it was, less centralized. Again, though, that may just be my perception, from remove.

"Things come and go," says Michael Franco, a poet in Somerville, MA, who ran the storied *Word of Mouth* reading series here for about ten years, starting in 1987, "All of a sudden, five people come and say 'I'm leavin', I'm movin', I'm doin' this, I'm doin' that.' And you would just feel all the energy drift away and then it would start again. Somebody would pop up."

I asked if he thought there was something that defined Boston poetry – which is a stupid question in its vague generalness. But gave the most beautiful answer. Here's a digest version:

"I think there is a remarkable and veracious push to individualism, at the same time maintaining an openness to incoming material. We have people that are organizing hospitalities and inclusions of people, like Bill or me or Joe (Torra) or whoever." (This is as opposed to the "Master Poet" model, Michael says.) "And there's an immense generosity, ultimately, that is across the board here – that will allow you to come in, float around and end up sitting at somebody's table for dinner. And all those dinners and all those readings and all those silly, wonderful moments that we've all had together – that's our poetry. That's our contemporary poetry."

Sean Cole is a sporadic poet and regular contributor to public radio's Marketplace, among other programs.

DGLSSN.RTTHSJCHLD IN

ALBANY, NEW YORK

August 5/6 The light
 reflected off
on the side of the new coat of paint
 Father Hugo's house
of Nicole & Pierre's bathes the side & yard
 house
of "Mid-Winter's Day" in the light

The Report from Albany begins with a poem. A report from Manahatta would not. This is not to say that Albany is better than Manahatta—you might not even have liked the poem—[or you may disagree with my variation on Williams's 'variable foot'] but it is to highlight an important difference between poetry in Manahatta & Albany. In the Big City the personality rules. You can go to almost any poetry venue & it's all about who's reading & what they can do for you.

From Slam™ to Dysfunctional Language Usage™; from Spoken Word™ to PerfPoem™ to Literati™: it's Some One poet, whose

work hasn't changed in over 20 years, poo-pooing work that isn't 'new'* {Note 1: This really happened!} or Some Other poet, whose performances include 'characters' grubbing money from sd. poet, asking for the check (so they could leave)—at the break.* {Note 2: So did this!} & the kosher chicken of The City's Open Mikes's slowly draining of blood as the readers leave, taking their bit of audience with them.* {Note 3: Shylock is granted a pound of flesh, but not one drop of blood. Would that be some vague anti-Semitic notion regarding a 'kosher' pound of flesh?}

In Albany, the scene is dominated by open mics. [As I've mentioned before, they occur at regular intervals—on pre-prescribed days—but that's not my point.] No one leaves early—it's just not done. When a new person shows up, everyone asks if they are going to read. Even if you come a little late—they'll add your name to the list. If you have nothing to read, they tell you to come next time & to be sure to have something prepared. If you have some poems, everyone stays to hear you. After the reading, people come over & talk to you about the poems you've read.

It seems simple. People write poems & they want to be heard. But here, they understand that poetry—more than the other arts—is a conversation; & as such, one needs not only a space in which to hear, but also a space in which to be heard.

DglssN.Rtthsjchld began his life as a little fish, & has since become kip-pered herring.

SPARROW IN THE CATSKILLS

Recently, I received this message from noted Saugerties poet Mikhail Horowitz:

Author Author,

I have decided to become a publicist for businesses that are inexplicably having trouble attracting customers. As my first client, I've taken on a Manhattan firm that contracts to supply food for weddings, banquets, and other occasions: Sloan-Catering.

Disabled was I ere I saw Delba's id,
Mikhail

[Notice that he signs off with a palindrome (a word, phrase, or drunken imprecation which reads the same backwards and forwards)!]

I spoke to Gil Plantinga, who photographs poets in the Hudson Valley. He is compiling a book, tentatively entitled *Chapbook*. Gil consults with photographer Ben Lifson; I began by discussing



Who is to decide which is a grimmer sight: withered hearts or empty skulls?

him.

Q: Your mentor approves of these poetry photographs?

Plantinga: Well, Ben's interested in any kind of pictures. Actually, studying photography with Ben, we don't talk about photographers much. We talk a lot more about painting. Ben is interested in: "How do things look in a picture?" A picture is an illusion; it is not its subject. It's a "new fact," as Gary Winogrand would say.

Q: And there's a tradition of depicting poets. When I was eight, my parents took me to the Metropolitan Museum to

stand in line for an hour to see Rembrandt's "Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer." This canvas was a big sensation — the most expensive painting in history (\$2.3 million), at the time.

Plantinga: Yes. Rembrandt is... It's funny you should bring him up, because his paintings are chiaroscuro; there's light penetrating all this darkness. And he's shooting from the dark into the light. Or, if it was a camera, he would be shooting. (I hate that word "shooting." I don't like "taking pictures;" I like "making pictures.") But that's what I get to work with, because these poetry readings, most of the venues, the coffeehouses, The Colony Cafe [in Woodstock]... it's pitch dark in there! There's light on the poet, but it's really, really dark.

You know, I don't want to use flash. I'm not trying to add light. I'm interested mostly in the light that's there. So I have to think about the way Rembrandt, specifically, painted figures with minimal light. He always paints them from the shadow side of the face. There's this little triangle of light on their cheek. And when you see that little triangle show up, that's one time to push the button! [Laughs.] But it's always better shooting from the shadow side.

Q: And there's a metaphor of the poet, who's in light, enlightening the congregated watchers, in darkness...

Plantinga: If I could get the light off the poet's face illuminating the audience — if I could get that all in one frame — that would be the ideal, you know?

To see Gil's photographs, go to <http://www.gilplant.com/poets/>

Sparrow is currently studying the early solo work of Pete Seeger.

EDMUND BERRIGAN IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

What to do when you're melting in the noon day sun, glowing in the sun while being peaceably calm? South Slope has no sun at any rate, Manhattan's got the market cornered and you can only find it for sale near the local drug store, shining out of a peddler's hand like a out-of-state carton of Newports. Sure they'll get you

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cancer, but what doesn't these days? I'm a leo myself, rolling well in the August heat. Though if you're looking for me I'm not there, I went out, and I forgot my phone so don't bother calling.

I did manage in my travels to cross paths with a used bookstore on 12th and 7th. Is that really where it was? Thought it was an Italian restaurant but there were two of them, so my pal and I checked them both out. The sauce was good, the gnocchi was sad, and they must have offered a dessert menu three times before we got a random and unwanted slice of cantaloupe. Better than a random slice of antelope I suppose, and also in my perusings I spied *Other: British and Irish poetry since 1970*. I'd seen it before it, so I saw it again.

Here we quote randomly: "O crap, wait, most of this is unquotable, and I'd hate to do injustice to the United Kingdom, my wrecking ball home. Well, ignore the previous quote mark and we'll try again: "No, it still isn't happening, just can't do it. Maybe the trouble with modern poetry is that it just ain't quotable. Or maybe I'm an idiot, but that's all the more reason to have something to quote. Okay, here are some random quotes: "In the past two decades, British and Irish poetry have undergone a silent revolution." Well, that seems kind of silly, especially since I went to a reading or two in England in 1990. Though as I recall, no one really applauded or did anything, but the reading was outloud, so we can leave the sweeping dramatizations inside the quote marks surrounding the blurbs.

This whole poetry thing, though, has been a bit lost to me lately. I got into it when I was a kid and it was fun, just another way to tell some jokes. Then I developed a personal agenda, which I'm not gonna go into, but let's just say that suddenly I had to find something out about someone, and that was the best outlet available to me. Then I wanted to become a poetry genius, but everyone else was already smarter and older, or so it seemed. Now? I don't know what I want from poetry so much as what I'm sick of: the academic intellectual in a social vacuum; the despondent protester without solution; the merchant collector of dead poets blood; the student shouter of the authoritative mundane.

It reminds me of a headline I read today: "Dog destroys Elvis' Teddy Bear at Museum." I'm gonna go get a soda now.

Edmund Berrigan is an unheeded advisor to the feline.

CA CONRAD IN

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia poet Ashraf Osam has been deeply, painfully affected by the Israeli bombing of Lebanon, where most of his family lives. Ashraf has been dealing with his pain and concern very publicly on his blog ARCH MEMORY: <http://ArchMemory.blogspot.com>. Please help send Ashraf your much needed support in this time of crisis. As he writes on Arch Memory, "My mother said, / They still looked beautiful / while they were pick-

ing them up / in pieces, / the children." Give the Love you can! NEEDED: LOVE!

The I FEEL TRACTOR string beans Cathleen Miller and I grew in honor of Edmund Berrigan's terrific new CD were delicious one night raw with beer, another night in a curry sauce, another morning on a string bean peanut butter pickle chip sandwich YUMMMMMMY! Watching beans bloom and grow in city smog is cheery, KNOW IT GROW, knows it grows, and then a swift current of time breaks over the fence. By summertime next year our beautiful poet's community garden will be a luxury condominium. Try breaking THAT news to the grasshopper on your knee! FUCK! Anyone with sound advice on how to keep the rich from invading and destroying your Loving home please contact me ASAP at CAConrad13@aol.com.

Beautiful things happening would include Frank Sherlock's mind blowing new chapbook, SPRING DIET OF FLOWERS AT NIGHT, with its gorgeous Jon Allen cover art! For copies go to <http://FrankSherlock.blogspot.com>. Frank debuted his new chap recently at a night-long event at the Highwire Gallery. Also reading was Will Esposito and Jessica Smith with many others. The curator Mike Land gave all the proceeds to Project H.O.M.E., a Philadelphia-based organization dedicated to ending homelessness in the city of brotherly Love. As the poster on the Philadelphia Arts Bank says: A CITY OF LUXURY CONDOMINIUMS AND SOUP KITCHENS. Mike's generosity is a lesson for all of us! Oh, and it was the LAST event to ever take place at the Highwire Gallery, as it too is being knocked down to make way for "progress."

The Philadelphia PEW Fellowships in the Arts were finalized early this summer. Poets awarded this year are Bob Perelman, Jena Osman, Lamont Steptoe, Nava EtShalom, and Elaine Terranova. Congratulations to all the winning poets of 2006! PEW Fellowships are 50,000 dollars, and as you can imagine this purchases some much needed time for poets at critical times in their writing lives. Past Philadelphia PEW Fellows include Mytili Jagannathan, Ron Silliman, Molly Russakoff, Linh Dinh, Rachel blau DuPlessis and others. (www.PEWarts.org)

So much going on, including a new poetry series CHAPTER AND VERSE, which debuted with poets Ryan Eckes and Sarah Dowling. To keep an eye on these and other things involving poetry and poets of Philly, go to <http://PhillySound.blogspot.com>

CAConrad's book DEVIANT PROPULSION was recently published by Soft Skull Press. To take a peek go to <http://CAConrad.blogspot.com>

TOM ORANGE IN

WASHINGTON DC

With the departure of Mark Wallace and Lorraine Graham for more gainful employment in Southern California this past year, DC suffered a palpable personal loss. Mark was here for some 10 or 12 years supporting the poetry scene through his writing, publishing, curating, teaching and mentoring, while Lorraine has been one of the brightest new lights to emerge here in the past six years. In their wake we shuffled around the curatorial duties at the

Ruthless Grip and in your ear reading series before it turned out that the Washington Printmakers Gallery was going to significantly up the costs of doing Ruthless Grip business there. So we closed up shop on that series for a few months while Kaplan Harris and Mel Nichols (a longtime GMU/DC poet newly back on the scene) shopped around for another Saturday night reading venue, ultimately renewing a partnership with Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center in Silver Spring, MD, which creates all kinds of exciting possibilities for collaborations in poetry, book arts, papermaking, broadsides and other graphic and plastic arts. (Plus the Quarryhouse Tavern is the perfect neighborhood post-reading haunt!)

My curating duties at the Sunday afternoon in your ear reading series at the DC Arts Center had some great joys too but have also concluded: after six years I've decided to put my energies elsewhere and so have left the series in the very capable hands of my most recent collaborators, Cathy Eisenhower and Adam Good. I really enjoyed getting to meet Catherine Daly in January and hosting her at DCAC.

The other big accomplishments for the year were 1) the generous revamping of the entire dcpoetry.com website by Ryan Walker, including audio of past readings and full-text of rare print pubs, and 2) co-organizing the big MLA group readings with Rod Smith, in which many of our out-of-town friends got to share their work with us and also see how lucky we are to have such a terrific bunch of poets here.

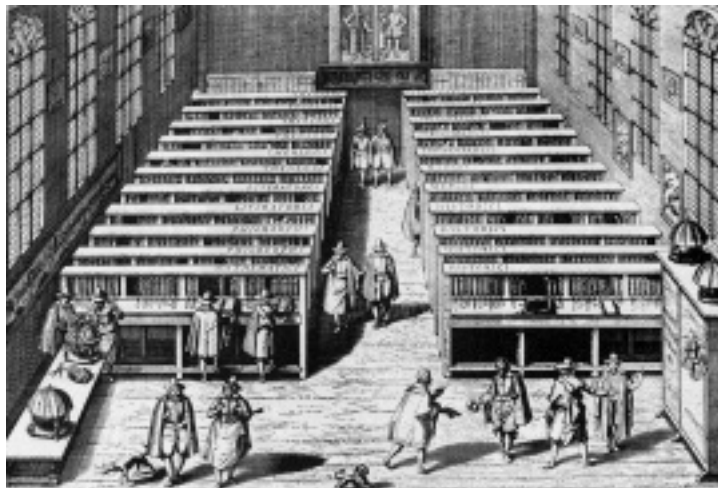
Tom Orange is a poet.

JOYELLE MCSWEENEY IN SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

South Bend: Building a 21st Century City! Alimentos, bebidas destapadas y el uso de productos derivados del tabaco no permitido en biblioteca **Buckets for Sale! Only 1.50 please pay cashier** Custom Teeth by "J" in rear < < < *Touch of Class* YES WE'RE OPEN 574-968-7210. National College Football Hall of Fame Enshrinement Festival, August 11-12, Downtown South Bend.

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A Union For Every Carpenter in the Land Community Soup Kitchen Porch Sale Handicap Access to County-City Building and Courthouses Located at the West Doors of County-City Building



You'll have to eat each other
like spiders in a teapot.

These Doors Locked EVERY Afternoon These Restrooms Locked Ask Your Doctor for Key **South Bend Dept. of Historic Preservation and Adult Probation** DO NOT: take home or wrap in towel or jacket; DO: if possible watch bird until help arrives.

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Hoosier LOTTO St. Joseph's County Right to Life United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America Labor Omnia Vincit Dainty Maid Bake Shoppe Irish Kebabs Rags on the Run Overtime Fashion Berthena's Cultural Books Just

Say... Cheesecake "Summer" Sale Law Offices of Tony Zirkle Indiana Army National Guard Fightin' Irish Battalion Or, It's Not Easy to Color River Green Frank's Place, FRI. Karaoke and \$1 Dom This is a **SMOKING** establishment Strict Dress Code Enforced.

Ambassadors of Christ Erected 1888 Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie #435 FOR SALE: The Grace Building Annual Corn Roast F.O.P. Roast Corn and Sausage July 28, 2006 Door is ALARMED at all times Park N' Lock-\$1.75 All Day Parking These Premises Protected By These Premises Condemned By NO TRESPASSING NO EXCEPTIONS Secure Our Borders Great Lakes.

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Joyelle McSweeney, author of two books of poetry from Fence and one baroque noir novella forthcoming from Tarpaulin Sky Press, has recently joined the MFA faculty at Notre Dame.

FARID MATUK IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

AN OPEN LETTER TO CECILIA BUSTAMANTE

Dear Cecilia Bustamante,

I should find you, you're a great poet living in Austin, said my cousin, Cecilia is from Peru, she said.

Cecilia, you wrote:

Mother
you are so pale...

I translate this here, the online text translated by one James Maloney and I ask, Who is this pig? I won't take his language.

Cecilia, another website tells me you are an anti-imperialist poet.

You know what, though? - Fuck Vallejo. I put that Indio in my ass as a suppository and I got sicker.

When you and I meet and trade smiles, give of our attention, gen-

WORLD NEWS

erosity, and intellect to one another in the interview for *the Poetry Project Newsletter* we will have made commerce of so much beside the limp dick in my shorts and whatever you carry in your purse.

We will say to them Cecilia, we will say, Dear New York's Poetry Project Newsletter poets, dear poets of America's city, we write to you from America's Chevy commercial.

Cecilia you live on Enfield Rd.

Brooks is only 21 and he makes his summer with us, learns to bind books. He is the son of Kent Johnson. He was once, in half measure, just a sperm sleeping in the coils of Kent's balls. I won't suppose as to the egg.

Cecilia in two days we will get high again off the Algerian hash given freely by R, a parts dealer supplying the oil industry's machinery. We will float Bee Creek all swallows in the evening, green herons, turtles, dead fish, bow fishermen and their spotlights by night. Did you ever? Cecilia you must.

Hey C, I think I know something about you: Pantyhose every day. Curlers and pearls. A cocktail, Doctor Atahualpa? Cocktail, Engineer Sacsayhuaman? When the German translator comes to Lima you will hire a car and show him the museum of gold featuring gold.

Cecilia, did you ever meet my mother – a Peruvian whore in the estimation of some of men in my family? If you are raped by a married man and he forces you to have an abortion ... ?

Who made the Pisco Sour first Cecilia, us or Chile? Who put the raw egg in it?

Cecilia, we've been reading *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side* and learning to feel really good about saddle stitching and Xerox machines.

Ted Berrigan hit me hard this summer and I love him so much. Dale has been reading Hume, Hoa has been teaching Eileen Myles, Susan has been reading *Specimen Days*, Scott has been reading Ann Boyer.

I'm 32 now and I don't believe my life should be less chronicled than Christ's, generate less misery, spill less blood, befall fewer people with less impossible injunctions thereby creating fewer conditions for sexual aggression against children. Do you?

Cecilia, could you please stop redeeming things in your poems. All this fallen shit already fell, man.

They made me read Chinua Achebe in college, but now they make me teach Chinua Achebe if I am to have a job Cecilia, it's an absolute fucking madhouse this Masterpieces-of-World-Literature life.

Shit, C, I'm doing this so I can stand naked in your field, available to the wending grasp of your dependencies Cecilia, you are old and tomorrow more so, allow me to care for your papers and write about you for those of them in America's City and I will be known as your squire and I will be asked to edit your collected poems, forthcoming from the University of California Press.

Don't for a fucking minute think that you have made a life for yourself shaped by choices and their consequences, don't believe you have become a citizen of the world, a denizen of letters in conversation with Mallarmé. Cecilia, you're just an old Peruvian woman and I am the woman poet who will rescue you.

Farid Matuk is still waiting for Ms. Bustamante to return his emails.

DAVID PAVELICH IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

He got the turkey club, I got the turkey provolone. When Peter O'Leary showed up for lunch, he was grinning and wearing a blue T-shirt. He carried a bag from the local bookstore. We sat on the patio of the restaurant under a slightly tipsy umbrella.

"What's in the bag?" In the bag were two gifts for his father: *Selected Poems: 1931-2004* by Czeslaw Milosz (Ecco, 2006) and a book about Islam. Peter has the innate ability to recommend books without necessarily meaning to. When I answered a question by saying that I hadn't read Paul Metcalf, he replied that "his work is a revelation."

Peter has just seen the release of his second volume of poems, *Depth Theology* (University of Georgia, 2006). The book combines religion and psychoanalysis with a bit of the daily life to create an altogether "theopathic" style. "I take depth theology... to be a religious knowledge of the unconscious," notes Peter at the book's end. When I asked him to inscribe my copy, he used my blue Bic to scrawl a quote from Robert Duncan: "When I speak of a theology, it is a poetics." The inscription, then, serves as a tiny preface.

Earlier this spring, on April 20, my wife and I had the wisdom to attend Peter's reading at Powells North. The Powells reading series (<http://powellsnorth.blogspot.com>) was celebrating its one year anniversary that evening by hosting Peter and his close friend, poet and translator John Tipton. We perched ourselves on chairs squeezed between tables of liquidated books (I was hugging books on design), and the event opened with Powells regulars reading their favorite poems. Introducing the headliners, Dan Beachy-Quick read a poem by Marianne Moore, commenting on the attention to craft that these poets shared.

Both John and Peter read with good humor and ease. For his part, John recited choruses and monologues from his recently completed translation of Sophocles's *Ajax*, and when he read a particularly free interpretation, he admitted to still enjoying "the occasional syntactic pretzel." Peter bounced around in *Depth Theology*. His voice and his gestures stressed the impossible vocabulary found in these poems, from "cumulonimbus" to "psalterium", from "thru-rifer" to "lacustrine" (all of which my spell-check rejects). Peter's delivery certainly helped to clarify the most crucial parts of these poems for me, and made such lyric moments somehow clearly appropriate to our time. "For all the wreckage out there, / a tow truck hopefully comes."

But ultimately this gathering was about a dear friendship between two poets. Peter performed a newer poem, "Baptismal Phosphorescences", one about a "dream of power" and disorientation, which is dedicated to John. In it, Peter refers to his friend as a mentor: "John, you are a flyer, telling me something, a con-

fession / of fuzz, in wonderment.” Listening, we found that friendship persists, even in this dream’s confusion. “John, I / can accept everyone’s presence / in this dream but yours.”

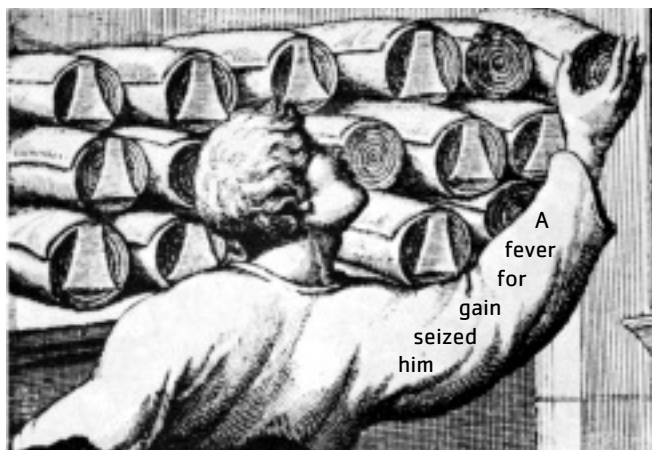
David Pavelich publishes Answer Tag chapbooks and broadsides in limited editions.

CELESTE DAVIS IN BOULDER, COLORADO

The Naropa University Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics Summer Writing Program under the Artistic Direction of Anne Waldman and Administrative wizardry of Lisa Birman brought together myriad writers from Joan Retallack and her urgent sense of “the Poethical Wager” to Harryette Mullen and her concern over how “the authoress is lost” “in her mind which can only be called imprecise,” to Mark McMorris talking about “ah noh musik dat” and speech in the discourse of nationalism. The summer concluded with Amiri Baraka and Sonia Sanchez creating agency for political cultural action. Amiri told his workshop they had to be unceasingly “passionate about words, investigate roots, origins and buy etymological dictionaries.” This summer’s theme was “Rival Government,” as in “writers/artists ARE the rival government.” As the “new” extension of the “old” war in the Middle East began, some locals went to a demonstration in Denver with “Stop Israel” signs, side by side with a Lebanese Women’s group, Green activists and Code Pink.

With over 200 students to coordinate and more than 14 events daily, the entire community – students, staff and faculty – interlaced phonemes, gestures and *logopoeia*. A guerilla theatre performance took to the street following one colloquium, while faculty/student performances mounted the stage and magnetized the audience other nights. Kristen Prevallet, looking like Vajrayogini (fierce red-skinned Buddhist dakini), guzzled oil (molasses) in a piece that was partially an homage to Karen Finley, who also graced the stage that fiery night, reading from her George Bush/Martha Stewart chronicles. Another evening, Anne Waldman donned an Abu Ghraib hood and walked the aisles to her son Ambrose Bye’s powerful music for “Thy Of No Dire Greenhouse Effect.”

The SWP broke into 4 themed weeks: 1) Ecology of Mind and Planet/Poetics 2) Critical Edge/Dialectics/A Poetics of Prose 3) The Continent and Abroad 4) Media & Performance & Collaboration. Lewis MacAdams, performance-activist chronicled the decades long struggle to bring back the LA River and, with students, instigated a ceremonial corn-planting session. Richard Tuttle lectured on “The Violence in Art” concluding that there’s more violence in art than in life, and Alan Gilbert presented a multi-media lecture “The Grotesque.” Inclusion and recognition of diverse voices became an ongoing theme. An entire week was taught by Lila Zemborain in her native Spanish.



A
fever
for
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seized
him

Grappling with language and definition, much discourse investigated the nuances of poetry, prose and drama. Fiona Templeton held her own against Baraka’s queries on “content” after she presented a documentation of ordinary folks recounting their dreams all over Paris. Is categorization just a nonviolent means of agreeing with a capitalist, commodified society, or does it really provide a means for scrutinizing the written word? To offer his take on the idea of fact and

poetry, Peter Quartermain lectured on “Poetic Fact” and Zhang Er offered her perspective on translation in a dual language reading with Eleni Sikelianos.

In homage to our great co-founder, the dedicated Audio Archive folk helped organized an Allen Ginsberg tribute, with documentary film clips and photographs. The full house did a choral reading of *Howl* with Ron Silliman, Akilah Oliver, Steven Taylor, Randy Roark and Joe Richey onstage and our own ringmistress AW guiding the syllables.

Celeste Davis is a poet.

JULIE REID IN PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA

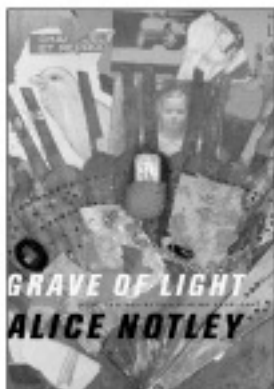
It hasn’t been this hot in Petaluma since 1972. Gone are the morning and evening fogbanks that usually cradle our summer days like cool pairs of parentheses. There is no longer anything between Petaluma and the sun except perhaps a giant errant child and his magnifying glass. None of us know exactly what to do with ourselves. We’ve spent so many hours in the dark cool crevices of the Boulevard Cinemas that there are no movies left to see. We’ve wandered aimlessly for days in air-conditioned stores and used up all our money. We’ve driven out of town in every direction for miles but it is the same temperature everywhere. The Ace Hardware burned to the ground last week, and this week it was Goodwill. All the firemen have to say is that the heat has made it more difficult to respond “on the double.” It’s hard to blame them, knowing the feeling. Heck, we can hardly even finish our sentences. No one remembers or even cares what he or she was about to say. It’s too hot to fight or get along, or to even attempt to restore the order once it’s lapsed. Where we are going, I do not know. I also have no idea what I’m doing in this handbasket.

Julie Reid likes it hot, but not this hot.

CHRISTOPHER LUNA IN PORTLAND, OREGON

Poetland was a remarkable event – 80 poets in 8 venues in as many hours – organized by Dan Raphael, a mainstay of the local scene for years. The April event also kicked off Wordstock, Portland’s annual big-name lit-fest. There were so many readings

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Alice Notley Grave of Light

New and Selected Poems, 1970–2005

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WORLD NEWS

that it was impossible to see them all. Readers included Turiya Astry, Arlo Voorhees, Brittany Baldwin, Sage Cohen, Cat Tyc, Jason Mashak, Joyce McMahon, Chatterbox, Walt Curtis, Carlos Reyes, and Chris Cottrell.

At Looking Glass Books, host Doug Spangle shared "Sylvia Said," a haunting piece about a woman who is randomly attacked at a bus stop:

"You never know what's coming,"

Sylvia said, "until your blood flows."

I nodded once without really knowing.

"You're innocent,"

Sylvia said,

"until the knife goes in."

Sean Patrick Hill's "Inland Among Stones," a moving six-part poem about a trip to Ireland, was dedicated to his father, a 59-year-old soldier nearing retirement and currently serving at the Baghdad airport: "There is a prayer / they say here, finding the first / gentian of the season: *May we be / alive this time next year.*"

At Powell's Books, Tom Blood recited funny, abstract poems accompanied by fascinating (choreographed?) hand movements that sometimes resemble the pop-and-lock, although this may be because he's from Iowa. Blood frequently interrupts himself to free-associate. His poems don't have endings; they simply stop.

I hosted a reading at Borders Books' downtown location. Kelly Lenox Allan read from her translations of Slovenian poets. Jeff Edlin bribed the audience by passing around a Choco-Love bar, and reading the Thomas Moore poem on the inside of the wrapper. Jeff, whose poetry promises to "squeeze fresh vernacular from between Merriam-Webster's thighs," also read a hilarious poem about being man enough to buy tampons for one's girlfriend.

Portland defies my New York chauvinism; not only had I discovered that the city has a poetry reading every night, but I had been embraced by a friendly and supportive poetry community. (I meet a lot of New Yorkers out here; unlike me, most of them are here because they want to be.) Dan Raphael asked me to invite a few poets from my monthly open mike at Ice Cream Renaissance in nearby Vancouver, Washington. Vancouver is a sleepy town that reminds me of Long Island, where so little happens that my son and I call it "Ghost Town." Readers included the always compelling David Nelson; retired biology teacher Jim Martin; and Ken Palmer, whose contemplative poems contain surprising turns of phrase such as "retinal palimpsest."

At Tugboat Brewing Company, Dan Raphael read a poem based on a NATO report that Malta spends the least amount of money on coronary health care to an adoring and increasingly drunk crowd. It included one of the best lines I've heard recently: "the difference between a candle and the sun is all you need to know about math & physics."

The positive energy created by this inspiring day of poetry will sustain me for some time; if Portland is lucky, it will become an annual event.

Christopher Luna is trying to make the best of being stuck in Ghost Town, USA.

WRITING WORKSHOPS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

EXPERIMENTAL WRITING WORKSHOP – LARRY FAGIN
TUESDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN OCTOBER 10TH

"Why do we see certain kinds of writing as "experimental?" What makes this writing different than conventional writing? This workshop is open to writers of poetry and prose, who are willing to examine traditional methods and styles, and to question the assumptions that make up the concept of "self-expression." In what ways do a line, a stanza, a sentence, or a paragraph perform strangeness or surprise? What is the crucial difference between earnestness and sincerity? We will use two key ideas as tools of inquiry. One is sprezzatura, a 14th century Italian term that translates loosely as "making something look effortless." The other is Fingerspitzengefühl, variously translated as "sensitive touch" or "intuition." Every writer has habitual strategies, which they tend to repeat. How can one abandon, if only temporarily, these habits, and explore other possibilities? What have you got to lose? Authors referenced include Whitman, Apollinaire, Cendrars, Stein, Khlebnikoff, Pessoa, Dos Passos, Jane Bowles, Pound, Williams, Moore, Riding, Olson, Creeley, Spicer, children's writing and found writing." Larry Fagin edits *Adventures in Poetry* books and *Sal Mimeo* magazine, teaches at The New School, and writes in the afternoon.

TRANSLATE THIS! – MARCELLA DURAND
THURSDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN OCTOBER 12TH

"Translation is a highly charged and highly problematic way to apprehend the "foreign/other." We translate the emotional, physical and spoken worlds about us, rendering them into our own realms of the (in)comprehensible. We'll discuss ethical, political, economic and practical issues of translating various languages, both inter- and intra-national. We'll also talk about translating natural and unnatural happenings, objects, patterns and chaos. We'll translate visual and aural experiences. Sometimes we'll leave things untranslated and utterly mysterious. Readings include Francis Ponge, Nicole Brossard, Teresa Hak Jyung Cha, Tina Darragh, Paula Claire, and others." Marcella Durand is the author of *The Anatomy of Oil*, *Western Capital Rhapsodies*, *City of Ports* and *Lapsus Linguae*. She has translated French writers, including Jean-Michel Espitalier and Michèle Métail, as well as geological formations, corporate-speak, and construction sites into pseudo-"American" tongues.

SATIRE AS CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT – GARY SULLIVAN
FRIDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN OCTOBER 13TH

"Satire insists on a level of cultural engagement not always required by other approaches to creative expression. We will read, listen to, and watch satirical work from around the world and across millennia—from ancient Greece to contemporary Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, with many points in between. Global examples will be our temporary touchstones as we hone our own cultural engagement in our poetry. Participants don't need to be funny, just observant." Gary Sullivan is the author of *How to Proceed in the Arts*, *Swoon* (with Nada Gordon), and two issues of the comic book series, *Elsewhere*.

APPLIED POETICS – KRISTIN PREVALLET
SATURDAYS AT 12PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN OCTOBER 14TH

"Bringing together the curriculum programs of The Poetry Project and the Bowery Poetry Club, this workshop in applied poetics will present a meandering survey of contemporary praxis in both page and stage traditions: the focus will be on poets who write about their own process and through this act create the discourse called "poetics." Emphasis will be on reading (most of it done in class); much of the discussion will take place through shared writing. This reading/writing continuum will synthesize into your own poetic statement and / or performance -- and hopefully will work to clarifying your writing practice." Kristin Prevallet is the author of *Shadow Evidence Intelligence* (Factory School, 2006). She is a co-founder of Study Abroad on the Bowery: A Certificate Program in Applied Poetics at the Bowery Poetry Club. She lives in Brooklyn.

The workshop fee is \$350, which includes a one-year sustaining Poetry Project membership (\$125 – see back page for more info) and tuition for any and all fall and spring classes. Reservations are required due to limited class space, and payment must be received in advance. Caps on class sizes, if in effect, will be determined by workshop leaders. Please send payment and reservations to: The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 131 E. 10th St., NY, NY 10003. For more information, or to pay by credit card, please call (212)674-09010 or e-mail info@poetryproject.com.

EVENTS AT THE POE

*Observe, dear child, that we shall have
collected a few little stains on our conscience...*



SEPTEMBER

MONDAY 9/25

PATRICIA SPEARS JONES & DARA WEIR

Patricia Spears Jones' new collection of poems, *Femme du Monde*, was published this past spring by Tia Chucha Press. Jones has been involved in the downtown poetry and theater scenes in NYC since the mid-1970s, working in particular with The Poetry Project and Mabou Mines. Dara Weir's tenth collection, *Remnants of Hannah*, will be published in September by Wave Books. In 2005 Verse Press (now Wave Books) published her book length poem *Reverse Rapture*. She directs the MFA program for poets and writers at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

WEDNESDAY 9/27

VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ & QUINCY TROUPE

Victor Hernández Cruz was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in New York City in the 50's and 60's where he started writing and was part of the Lower East Side's fertile artistic community. He currently makes his home between his native Puerto Rico and Morocco. His latest book of poems is *The Mountain in the Sea* published by Coffee House Press. Quincy Troupe's eighth book of poems, *The Architecture of Language*, will be published by Coffee House Press this fall. In addition to chronicling his friendship with Miles Davis in *Miles and Me*, Troupe has recently published children's books on Magic Johnson and Stevie Wonder.

OCTOBER

MONDAY 10/2

OPEN READING

[SIGN-UP 7:45 PM, READING 8 PM]

WEDNESDAY 10/4

MEI-MEI BERSSENBRUGGE & ANNA MOSCHOVAKIS

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge was born in Beijing and lives in New Mexico. She is the author of nine volumes of poetry, including *Nest*, *The Four Year Old Girl*, *Empathy*, and most recently *I Love Artists: New and Selected Poems*. Anna Moschovakis is the author of *I Have Not Been Able to Get Through to Everyone* (Turtle Point Press, 2006) and two chapbooks, *The Blue Book* and *Dependence Day Parade*. Her new translation of *The Engagement* by Georges Simenon is forthcoming from New York Review Books. She is an editor at Ugly Duckling Presse.

MONDAY 10/9

JON PAUL FIORENTINO &
PAUL FOSTER JOHNSON

Jon Paul Fiorentino is the author of *The Theory of the Loser Class* and *Hello Serotonin*, both published by Coach House Books. He also wrote a book of comedic fiction called *Asthmatica*. He lives in Montreal where he teaches writing at Concordia University and is the Managing Editor of *Matrix* magazine. Paul Foster Johnson's first collection of poems, *Refrains/Unworkings*, will be published in Spring 2007 by Apostrophe Books. *Quadriga*, a chapbook of his collaborations with E. Tracy Grinnell, was recently released by g-o-n-g press. Currently serving as an editor at Litmus Press, he curated the Experiments and Disorders reading series at Dixon Place from 2003 to 2006.

WEDNESDAY 10/11

MICHAEL FRIEDMAN &
CHRIS KRAUS

Michael Friedman has edited the journal *Shiny* since 1986. His first novel, *Martian Dawn*, is just out from Turtle Point. Several poems from his last book, *Species*, were included in the anthology *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present*. Blowing apart the boundary line between experimental narrative and staid autobiography, Chris Kraus is the author of three novels, *I Love Dick*, *Aliens* and *Anorexia*, and the recently released *Torpor*. Kraus serves as the editor of the Native Agents Series of the Semiotext(e) imprint, and has written numerous essays on poetics, theory, and art.

FRIDAY 10/13

DIRTY MOVIES LATE AT NIGHT:
MIKE HAUSER, MAUREEN THORSON
& THE TRUSTY KNIFE

[10:30 PM]

Rust Buckle and various simpaticos from disparate America celebrate the release of a new chapbook by Mike Hauser. Mike Hauser lives in Milwaukee where he publishes the magazine *Dodo Bird*. His previous chapbook is *Dirty Movies Late at Night*. Maureen Thorson is the author of two chapbooks, *Novelty Act* and the forthcoming *Mayport*. She lives in D.C. and runs Big Game Books, the tiniest press in the world. Zack Pieper & The Trusty Knife are a band of basement / bathroom / garage / attic songsters from Milwaukee who will be presenting their low-tech folk-rot album *Sad Contraptions Unrehearsed*. Dustin Williamson edits the *Rust Buckle* magazine and chapbook series. He is the co-creator of this event and used to live in Milwaukee. B.Y.O.D.M..

MONDAY 10/16

MARITIME ODE

Stein said "If fishes were wishes the ocean would be all of our desire." Films that star the ocean by Stephanie Barber (*shipfilm*), Matt McCormick (*Going to the Ocean*) & David Gatten prefaced by a choral reading of Fernando Pessoa's poem "Martime Ode" by Stephanie Barber, Marcella Durand, David Gatten, Murat Nemet-Nejat & Shanxing Wang. For bios of all participants see www.poetryproject.com.

WEDNESDAY 10/18

JOHN S. HALL & AARON KIELY

As a solo recording artist, and as lyricist and lead vocalist of King Missile ("Detachable Penis," "Sensitive Artist," "America Kicks Ass"), John S. Hall has recorded three CDs for Atlantic Records and eight independent CDs. Soft Skull Press has published a book of his poetry, *Jesus Was Way Cool*, as well as his new book, *Daily Negations*. Aaron Kiely's *The Best of My Love* was published by Ugly Duckling Presse in 2005. He has work coming out in the Buffalo journal P-QUEUE, and edits *Torch Magazine*.

MONDAY 10/23

CLIFF FYMAN & KRISTIN PREVALLET

Two recent poetry readings Cliff Fyman gave have been published under the titles *Nylon Sunlight* and *Fever*. His work poem is included in Gary Lenhart's, *The Stamp of Class: Reflections on Poetry & Social Class*. He's a member of the PP, The Art Students League, The Carlebach Shul, and Zen Peacemakers. Kristin Prevallet is a poet, essayist, and translator whose most recent book is *Shadow Evidence Intelligence*. She is co-editor with Jerrold Shiroma of MaterialWord.com, an internet site for Word & Image Studies. A book length literary essay, *I, Elegy*, is forthcoming from Essay Press in 2007.

WEDNESDAY 10/25

A READING FOR 0 TO 9: THE COMPLETE
MAGAZINE 1967-1969 FEATURING VITO
ACCONCI & BERNADETTE MAYER

Published from 1967 to 1969 in seven limited mimeographed editions, *0 to 9* was edited by artist Vito Acconci and poet Bernadette Mayer. Seeking to explore the relationship between language and the page, Mayer and Acconci brought together the pioneers of 1960s experimental poetry and conceptual art. The complete run of 0 to 9 is being reprinted by Ugly Duckling Presse this fall. Vito Acconci is an internationally acclaimed artist and writer, and has worked extensively through video, performance, photography and, recently, architecture and design. Bernadette Mayer is the author of numerous books including *Scarlet Tanager* and, forthcoming, *The Poetry State Forest*.

POETRY PROJECT

FRIDAY 10/27
NATHANIEL MACKEY
[7:00 PM]

Nathaniel Mackey is the author of four books of poetry, the most recent of which is *Splay Anthem*. Mackey is also author of an ongoing prose composition, *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*, of which three volumes have been published. He edits the literary magazine *Hambone* and co-edited (with Art Lange) the anthology *Moment's Notice: Jazz in Poetry and Prose*. He is also the author of two books of criticism; the most recent is *Paracritical Hinge: Essays, Talks, Notes, Interviews*.

MONDAY 10/30
HASSEN & LAUREN RUSSELL

Hassen writes poetry and fiction and lives in the Philadelphia area. Her poems can be found in *Frequency* audio journal, *Nedge* and *Skanky Possum*. Her chapbooks include *Sky Journal: From Land and Sky Journal: From Sea* as well as *Salem* from Belladonna*. You can find links and PDFs at hassens.blogspot.com. **Lauren Russell** grew up in Los Angeles. In 2002, she moved to New York in pursuit of a creative community and efficient public transportation. Her work has been published in *The Recluse* and is forthcoming in *Van Gogh's Ear*.

NOVEMBER

WEDNESDAY 11/1
A CELEBRATION OF ALLEN GINSBERG

A reading of Allen Ginsberg's work across his life, in part to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Howl*, in part to celebrate the publication of Bill Morgan's new biography *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg*, and, largely, to hear the work. Readers and performers will include Ed Sanders, Anne Waldman, Edwin Torres, Lee Ranaldo, Simon Pettet, Eileen Myles, Steven Taylor, Bill Morgan and more.

FRIDAY 11/3
THE TINY PRESSES SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH
CO-CURATED WITH RYAN MURPHY
[10:30 PM]

A nighttime junction of tiny presses. Join us for readings and most likely more in enthused acknowledgment of the toil and dedication poured into these very small presses. Detailed details forthcoming. **Ryan Murphy** is the author of *Down with the Ship* from Otis Books/Seismicity Editions, as well as the chapbooks, *The Gales* (Pound for Pound), *Ocean Park* (A Rest Press) and *On Violet Street* (The Aldrich Museum of Art and Design).

MONDAY 11/6
OPEN READING
[SIGN-UP 7:45 PM, READING 8 PM]

WEDNESDAY 11/8
TIM DAVIS & STACY DORIS

Tim Davis is an artist and poet living in Manhattan and Tivoli, New York, and teaching photography at Bard College. He is the author of four books of photographs, *My Life In Politics*, *Illluminations*, *Permanent Collection*, and *Lots*. He is also the author of two books of poems, *American Whatever*, and *Dailies*. **Stacy Doris'** books written in English include *Knot*, *Conference Paramour* and *Kildare*. She has co-edited three collections of French poetry translated by American poets, among them, with Chet Wiener, Christophe Tarkos: *Ma Langue est Poétique—Selected Work*. She is an assistant professor of Creative Writing at San Francisco State University.

THURSDAY 11/9
MADELINE GINS AND ARAKAWA:
ARCHITECTURE AGAINST DEATH
[4:00 PM; FREE ADMISSION]

Arakawa is an architect and artist, and **Madeline Gins** is a poet and novelist. Their books include *Architectural Body* (Alabama, 2002) and the forthcoming *Making Dying Illegal* (Roof). Their work has been exhibited internationally at major museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Tokyo's Museum of Contemporary Art. This panel will revisit Arakawa and Gins' ongoing exploration of the role of architecture in reassessing human embodiment and the problematic capacity for human beings to engage enactively in a continuing evolutionary spiral with a global sensorium. Co-sponsored by the Dactyl Foundation and The Society for Literature and Science.

SATURDAY 11/11
THE WORK OF LESLIE SCALAPINO [1:00 PM]

A celebration and inquiry into the work of prominent contemporary experimental Bay Area writer and publisher Leslie Scalapino. Six poets will each present a short talk on aspects of Scalapino's work, followed by a question/answer session. Poets will include Brenda Iijima, who will host the discussion, Alan Davies, Laura Elrick, Jennifer Scappettone, Rod Smith and Rodrigo Toscano. Scalapino's most recent books are *Orchid Jetsam*, *Dahlia's Iris* and *Zither & Autobiography*.

MONDAY 11/13
PALM PRESS READING WITH DANA TEEN LOMAX,
CHRISTIAN PEET, JANE SPRAGUE,
WENDY S. WALTERS & MATVEI YANKELEVICH

A fete for recent and new Palm Press titles! **Dana Teen Lomax's** new Palm Press book is called *Currenty*. She coedited *Letters To Poets: Conversations about Poetics, Politics, and Community*. **Christian Peet** teaches at Brooklyn College and Hunter College, and is the publisher and editor of Tarpaulin Sky. His Palm Press book is called *The Nines*. **Jane Sprague** is the author of the chapbooks *break / fast, monster: a bestiary*, *The Port of Los Angeles*, *fuck your pastoral and Entropic Liberties* (with Jonathan Skinner). She lives in Los Angeles and is the editor of Palm Press (www.palmpress.org). **Wendy S. Walters** is Assistant Professor of English at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her Palm Press book is called *Birds of Los Angeles*. **Matvei Yankelevich** is the editor of the Eastern European Poets Series at Ugly Duckling Presse. His Palm Press book is called *The Present Work*.

WEDNESDAY 11/15
ALBERT MOBILIO & BARRY SCHWABSKY

Albert Mobilio is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award and the National Book Critics Circle award for reviewing. Books of poetry include *Bendable Siege*, *The Geographics*, and *Me with Animal Towering*. He teaches at the New School and is the fiction editor at *Bookforum*. **Barry Schwabsky** is an American poet living in London. His *Opera: Poems 1981-2002* is published by Meritage Press. As an art critic he is the author of *The Widening Circle: Consequences of Modernism in Contemporary Art*, *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting* and many contributions to books, exhibition catalogues, and magazines, among them *Artforum*, for which he is co-editor of international reviews.



INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH
IMPERSONAL STRUCTURES: JILL MAGID [10:30 PM]

Storytelling is becoming more prevalent in the work of **Jill Magid**, a visual artist who engages the disciplining systems in current society to exploit the latent possibilities of their services. Tonight Magid will present sections of her works in progress, relating her intimate encounters with secret service agents and NYC policemen. Magid received a M.S. in Visual Studies from M.I.T. and was a resident at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. Upcoming shows include *Naked Life* at MOCA Taipei and CASM Barcelona. She is a visiting artist at Cooper Union and a lecturer at University of Pennsylvania. www.jillmagid.net

MONDAY 11/20
SHANNON KETCH & JULIEN POIRIER

Shannon Ketch is the author of such self published chapbooks as *You Are Disgruntled You Do Not Want To Bee Hive*, *Being University* and also the author of *City Sonnets* (Situations) with drawings by Rich O' Russa. He haunts the musical groups The Bunwinkies, Sephiroth's Knot & Jow Jow the Death Knell Rung. **Julien Poirier** is an editor at Ugly Duckling Presse. His job is to keep it from turning into a Swan. He teaches poetry and phonics/literacy in NYC public schools through LEAP (Learning Through an Expanded Arts Program). He has two new chapbooks: *Key Doors* and *Absurd Good News*.

MONDAY 11/27
E. TRACY GRINNELL & TYRONE WILLIAMS

E. Tracy Grinnell is the author of the chapbook *Harmonics, Music or Forgetting, Of the Frame* (a Duration Press ebook), *Some Clear Souvenir*, and *Quadriga*, a collaborative work with Paul Foster Johnson. She lives in New York and edits Litmus Press and the journal *Aufgabe*. **Tyrone Williams** teaches literature and theory at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. His book, *c.c.*, was published by Krupskaya Books in 2002. *AAB* and *Futures, Elections*, are recent book publications. His work has appeared in recent issues of *Kiosk* and *Chicago Review* as well as in the anthology *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present*.

WEDNESDAY 11/29
A READING FOR FRANK O'HARA'S
80TH BIRTHDAY

A celebration and reading of the work of the brilliant and widely influential poet Frank O'Hara (1926-1966; author of *Lunch Poems*, *Meditations in an Emergency*, and *Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*) for the purposes of honoring his 80th birthday and hearing the poems. Readers will include Bill Berkson, Tony Towle, CA Conrad, Eileen Myles, Anne Waldman, Taylor Mead, Maureen O'Hara, Patricia Spears Jones, Olivier Brossard, Bob Holman, John Yau, Kimberly Lyons, Lytle Shaw, and a number more. Co-sponsored by Poet's House and the Museum of Modern Art.

ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

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A CONVERSATION WITH VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ & QUINCY TROUPE ON THIS TORTURED BUT BEAUTIFUL PLANET

Quincy Troupe & Victor Hernandez Cruz recently corresponded via email, exploring their origins as poets, the currents driving their methodologies & the effects of geographic & cultural location on their writing. Victor emailed from hot, humid & rainy Puerto Rico, sometimes at home & sometimes in a cyber cafe amid the Spanish-constructed buildings of old San Juan. Quincy was in his Harlem study "looking out of my window on the seventh floor. I am looking south, toward Puerto Rico, where you live, peering out over the top of trees in Central Park, and I can see the Empire State building and other structures in mid town Manhattan. From below, the sounds of 116th Street and 7th Avenue rise up and fascinate my ears with the sounds of car horns, music, the intricate rhythms of Senegalese Wolof, French, Spanish and African American speech. It is a fascinating jumbalaya, and is something I try to marry in some of my poems."

Date: Sun, 16 Jul 2006 2:46pm
From: Quincy Troupe
To: Victor Hernandez Cruz
Subject: On the island

Victor,

Brendan Lorber, the editor of *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, wants us to exchange questions with each other about anything our minds take us to. I would like to start out talking about poetry and music and see where we go from there. Since time is very important I will ask the first question, and give my answer to that question and then you can answer that question and pose one of your own. My first question is: what started you writing poetry, who were the first poets you were drawn to, what musicians and what was your view of how poetic language could serve you? My answer follows.

I started writing poetry in my early 20's, in the early 1960's, and have always felt I had a lot of catching up to do: I still feel that way. I started writing poetry after I suffered a traumatic knee injury that ended my promising basketball career: I was living in Metz, France, playing on an Army basketball team and a French one. I was always a voracious reader and while I was recovering from my knee injury I read some poems by Arthur Rimbaud, the French poet, that caught my attention. I already knew about Langston Hughes, Edgar Allen Poe, and Emily Dickenson and a few other American poets I read when I was younger, but none of them made any impact on me at the time because I wasn't into poetry. Rimbaud caught my attention for some reason. But the first poet who I really loved was Pablo Neruda, the great Chilean poet, after I read his poem, "Only Death." That poem just floored me and I started trying to write poetry seriously after that. I also loved music at the time, especially Miles Davis, and other so-called jazz musicians, so music had a profound impact on me and my poetry. I wanted my poetry also to be musical, flexible, fluent, magical, mysterious like great music is, and I wanted it to be image based, and full of surprises running through the way the language was fashioned, and the manner in which images were woven throughout the texts. But in order to do all of this I first had to learn to write well and that took a long time.

Date: Thu, 20 Jul 2006 4:38pm
From: Victor Hernandez Cruz
To: Quincy Troupe
Subject: Answer/Question

Quincy,

So good to hear about your exciting beginnings in poetry. As for me, I think poetry started writing me before I knew what was happening, it was a language possession, it included an early love of books which I took out of the library and hid in my coat from the guys on the corner. I also remember poetry recited by family members which came from the tobacconist workshop experience which we knew before coming to New York. I was in New York as a young lad between the Lower East Side and Spanish Harlem I went to school in Harlem and had a lot of criss crossing with Afro American culture, I mixed early Eddie Palmieri with Wilson Pickett and the street duwop with bokero music from the trios of Latin America.

My poems I think are always historical research, I write with and against and uncovering history, making connections of my mestizo soul. I write in English and Spanish, live outside the continental USA in Puerto Rico or Morocco. My poems are full of Christian and Islamic imagery, the sounds of Arabic and Spanish lean against my English words.

My question to you is, since you know the Caribbean, how do you see the writing from this area in relationship to North American writing?

Date: Thu, 20 Jul 2006 6:18pm
From: Quincy Troupe
Subject: Re: Answer/Question

Victor,

Great hearing from you.

When I'm in the Caribbean I'm much more aware of natural elements like wind, sea, trees, flowers and the way nature interacts every moment with human activity. I began to become aware of

this profound interaction when I lived in California for the second time, while I was living in La Jolla and teaching at the University of California, San Diego. The first time I lived in California, in Los Angeles, during a nine year period from 1962 to 1971, I was too immature to pay attention to nature, and too tied to an urban lifestyle to care or even think it was important, although I did write a poem titled "Poem For Friends," which was published first in *New Directions* 22, edited by the late James Laughlin, and recently in *Transcircularities*, my selected poems, which was published in 2002 by Coffee House Press. In this poem I tried to address some of the environmental problems I saw around me and that the world finds itself in today, like pollution, over fishing, over building, and the greed of human beings trying to exploit and possibly destroy many essential things on earth to make money. But looking back I don't think I was mature enough about the subject to write a really deep poem. Today, if I wrote that poem I think I would do a better job. I have been going to the Caribbean since 1980, first to Haiti, where I went for almost 20 years, and recently to Guadeloupe, where I have been going regularly for 3 years since I retired from teaching. In Guadeloupe I live out in the countryside and wake up every day surrounded by the astonishing wonders and beauty of nature. Also, I've grown older, and hopefully more mature. Today I pay closer attention to all the wondrous things that surround me. So this new observation finds its way into many of my new poems in *The Architecture of Language*, and I hope this is a good thing.

I would like to ask you how you approach language and image? First I will answer.

I try to construct the language I fashion in some of my poems - especially the longer ones - in the manner a musician, a composer, approaches a composition or a musical score. I hear the rhythm in my head as I find my way through the poem. When I first started writing poems I trained myself to write my lines in iambics or hexameters. Because the way my poetic lines came to me - then and still now - are usually in long

rather than short breaths: Creeley's lines came to him in shorter breaths, as do many of Baraka's lines. Mine are closer to the way Neruda, or Whitman, or Ginsberg wrote the breath of the line, which is longer. But

I have forever an accent on both sides of my linguistic fence. But from this intersection I feel enriched.

as I learned more about poetics I began to transpose solos of Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and later Jimi Hendrix and James Brown beats into the music of my poetic lines. In this way I could structure improvisational modes into the language I was beginning to utilize. A good example of this approach is in my poem "Words that Build Bridges into a New Tongue," which is published in *Transcircularities*, and in "Switchin in the Kitchen" in my new book, *The Architecture of Language*. In both these poems I try to structure elements of surprise and improvisational modes into the structure and flow of the language. I also try to construct images in the same way, drawing many of them from a bizarre mix of the urban and natural world. I know it's strange, but the world is strange today, and I want my poetry to mirror and reflect the weirdness we find ourselves living in.

Date: Wed, 26 Jul 2006 4:41pm
From: Victor Hernandez Cruz
Subject: Re: Answer/Question

It's hot and moist right now and the sky is electric in the Caribbean. Quincy you know that when I feel and think language it is a dual process of two languages. My first language of speaking and listening was Spanish.

When my family migrated to New York I was five and intact in Caribbean Spanish. On top of my Spanish phonetics I had to put the language I learned to read and write in. It was a Spanish sound which didn't go on to Spanish grammar but entered English grammar. I have forever an accent on both sides of my linguistic fence.

But from this intersection I feel enriched. I belong to the Spanish tradition of Spain and Latin America. My dreams are mestizos and I testify to human cultures that are not present but are within my intuitions. It is what I see and feel. Spanish language gives me strong images and textures as does the Caribbean world which is mountain and sea and breezes and insects. Writing for me is thus translation and, like you have mentioned, learning from musicians. I do the same with Caribbean rhythms.

Migration was like a rapture and this precise layering of personalities gives an awkward turn and twist to my writing in that sense that it isn't precise sometimes not even clear, calls the reader to bring out intuition and imagination more than rational.

It's sometime that my now happens by itself
It is the way the world fell down upon my self.

Date: Wed, 26 Jul 2006 7:50pm
From: Quincy Troupe
To: Victor Hernandez Cruz
Subject: Re: Answer /Question

Victor,

What is your question for me?

Quincy

Date: Fri, 28 Jul 2006 8:11pm
From: Victor Hernandez Cruz
Subject: Re: Answer/Question

Quincy

My concern and my question is about something deeper within the writing process and the precise nature of your techniques and methods.

For instance I need to read in order to write. I need to read literature, history, mythology, religion and spirituality as also I see my voyages as a form of reading and study and this is absolutely necessary for me to write.

I am also a writer who started in the mid-sixties with a Smith Corona manual and I published my first book on the extinct mimeograph machine. I still create with

pencil on pad as an initial organization. I can then go on to word processor computer where the screen gives me a bird's eye view of the text. But I always need that original flow from my hands, from the muscle.

I have occasionally done things to music. I remember, Quincy, that we on occasions collaborated with music but I still remain primarily a poet of text using music and painting and anthropology as a feeding filter towards writing.

I cannot sing or act so what is known as performance art is something I have sniffed at from the margins.

I tend to write early morning or late night. That is a geographical imposition as mid day in the Caribbean is hot and humid. Moisture making it difficult to write. My periods of concentration could last up to two hours when a sort of exhaustion and anxiety sets in. I could work prose religiously day to day.

Well these are some random thoughts. I was wondering how you dealt with these issue of inspiration and physicality that writing is.

Victor Hernandez Cruz

Date: Sat, 29 Jul 2006 11:15pm
From: Quincy Troupe
Subject: Re: Answer/Question

Victor,

Thank you for the question and answer, I have enjoyed this exchange immensely.

I too am always looking these days for the deepest, most spiritual place within myself to write from, to locate many of my recent poems in an almost religious space, that is informed by mythology, history and the reality of the moment.

I feel like Miles Davis felt – that none of us are ahead of our time, but that most people live in the past, are behind time, and that a few of us live and create in the moment, in the present here and now. He felt he was that way, and I feel that's where I live and try to locate my writing.

I also see my writing as a kind of voyage, one which carries me many times from the present and the known into the unknown, which is an exhilarating experience but one that can also be frightening and carry risks. But I also believe that meaningful art has to always involve itself with risk.

I use to write almost exclusively at night, mainly after midnight when everything was quiet. Now I find myself writing most during the early morning, when the day is breaking and first light is spreading its mystery, magic and energy. I love writing now in my little house in Montebello, Guadeloupe, because I live out in the country there, am surrounded by the natural

I used to begin writing many of my poems with a political idea... But now... I let the poem itself dictate to me where it wants to go.

sounds of nature, and have no television or no ringing telephone to interrupt the flow of my thoughts. I also work from pen and paper (first from a small notebook I always carry, and next to a legal sized lined long pad of paper) before entering the poem into my computer, which is usually the 4th or 5th draft.

I am always revising my poems, usually 15 or 16 times. But sometimes I overdo it, as I almost did with the title poem of my new book, *The Architecture of Language*, which was first titled, *The Architecture of Speech*. I first started writing this poem in 1988 and ruined it by constantly revising it until it was an unreadable mess. I hated it, so I left it alone. Then, in 2003, after I retired from teaching, I was in Guadeloupe looking over some of the poems I had saved in my computer but had abandoned I came across it again. I saw immediately what was wrong with it and began the process of rewriting it. The poem flowed naturally from that moment and evolved into what is today. I changed the title after talking with my friend, Jan Castro, because the word lan-

guage has a deeper meaning for me than does speech. Today I am happy with the poem, although it is longer than it initially was.

I also do not consider myself a performance poet, but one who loves working with texts, though I do love reading my poems and performing them with musical groups or dancers. I don't look negatively at poets who work exclusively in the performance mode, I personally love working with the poem on the page.

The last thing I want to say is that I used to begin writing many of my poems with a political idea in my mind, and on occasion I still do. But now,

for the most part, I let the poem itself dictate to me where it wants to go, and I just go with the flow. Of course I have strong political and moral beliefs and those beliefs definitely inform my consciousness and the thrust of my work. But I like to think of my poems as being most times in an improvisational mode, collages, in the same way that many painters work, intuitive, in the moment, freely associating with whatever comes into my mind and its creative processes and impulses.

The world is constantly changing around us while some things - poverty, racism, war, religious madness, ignorance, xenophobia, human beings' relentless pursuit of power, money and control over others - remain the same.

But I find myself always creatively wanting to be in the flow of change, which for me at least is a form of freedom, and freedom is where I always want to be, and indeed must be - even if it means giving up my life - if I am to feel fulfilled living on this tortured, but beautiful planet.

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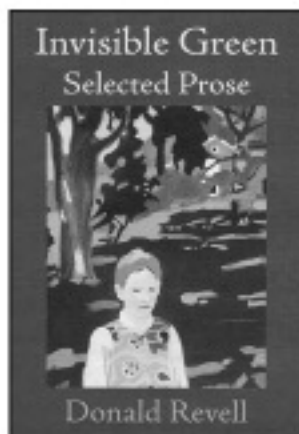


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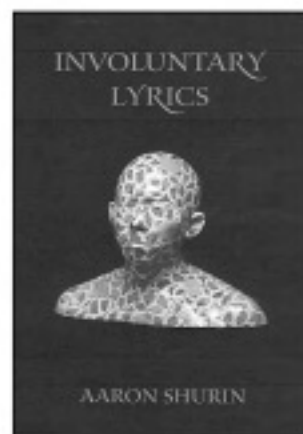
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BOOK REVIEWS

JULIANA SPAHR
*THIS CONNECTION
OF EVERYONE WITH LUNGS*
University of California / 2005

This Connection of Everyone with Lungs is comprised of two long poems, respectively titled “Poem Written after September 11, 2001” and “Poem Written from November 20, 2002, to March 27, 2003.” The denotative simplicity of a title such as “Poem Written...” immediately signals what I take as an intention to explore poetry’s *positive* capability—that is, effecting change through what Spahr has called “resorting data,” following closely the terror, banality, and “creeping normalcy” of a country going to war. But such a project also provokes questions: Can poetry be a direct agent of change and remain “poetry?” Can the lyric contain the problems and questions we have at a precise moment (such as on November 30, 2002)? Will such a poem be a chronicle or an artwork (I resist putting the latter word in quotation marks...)?

“Poem Written after September 11, 2001,” quickly establishes in 13 lines the biological existence of the body in communal space along the way to developing its central trope of “everyone with lungs” breathing together. The first time I heard Spahr read the poem, I was in largish room crowded with poets. As the poem expanded through intimate, immediate space to progressively larger spaces, the physical reaction of the audience became palpable. Why? Because the poem directly produced awareness of communal air through accumulative words. Anaphoric poetry has been called aggressive in its purposeful repetition. But these days, only aggressive repetition seems to cut through our prosperity-fueled fog. When water flows plentifully through a tap gratis, one can only apprehend water scarcity in the most abstract way. When Spahr read of breathing through building, neighborhood, nation, troposphere, and stratosphere to an audience who were all breathing the same stuffy air, the poem’s expanding structure brought it home—the pollu-

tion, the scarcity, the toxins, the bacteria and, most horrifyingly, in the nailer end of the poem, bits of other people mixed with “minute silicon particles from pulverized glass and concrete” as spewed out by the events on September 11, 2001. No news article browsed through over morning coffee would have made the problems of the atmosphere as personally urgent as this poem.

“Poem Written from November 20, 2002, to March 27, 2003” addresses the same questions in a slightly different way. How can the lyric compare to the news in making incomprehensible events comprehensible? Again, this is an investigation into poetry’s *positive* capability—using language and poetic structure as tools to unmask the obscured and coded impulses and intentions behind politics. Poetry—and moreover poetry willing to re-sort data, figures, acronyms, and language—can question the manipulation and, unlike Keats, Spahr quite “irritably reaches” after fact and reason in a world that has become full of baffling events. Says Spahr in a note preceding the poem, “I had to think about what I was connected with, and what I was complicit with, as I lived off the fat of the military-industrial complex on a small island. I had to think about my intimacy with things I would rather not be intimate with even as (because?) I was very far away from all those things geographically. This feeling made lyric—with its attention to connection, with its dwelling on the beloved and on the afar—suddenly somewhat poignant, somewhat apt, even somewhat more useful than I usually find it.”

To accomplish this lyric investigation, Spahr, in a Steinian gesture, reworks a cog of language that is perhaps the most implicit in placing individuals within a patriarchal, hierarchical system: the pronoun. In the first part of the book, she replaces the communal “we”—a word that after September 11, 2001, became an overloaded marker of unskeptical nationalism and a mechanism useful for moving us towards war—with “everyone with lungs.” Thus rather than

being a two-letter erasure of individuality, pacificism, and dissent, “we” become linked together in awareness, freed to perceive and to question once again.

In “Poem Written from November 20, 2002, to March 27, 2003,” the timespan during which the United States prepared itself for its “pre-emptive” war with Iraq, Spahr moves through all of the events that demand poetic investigation—events such as (to take a small sampler drawn at random) Cardinal Etchegaray visiting Saddam Hussein, the Sri Lankan Navy sinking a Tamil Tiger ship, the death of Rachel Corrie, as well as David Letterman’s shingles and a new one-hundred-billion-dollar theater for Celine’s show at Caesar’s Palace. She itemizes the names of military airplanes next to the numbers of people protesting the war, and splices celebrity news items next to ultra-serious international incidents. Throughout, she speaks to a pluralized “beloveds” and “yous,” alternately sharing and listing the news from the mainland, contrasting how simultaneously we are alone and separate yet interdependent. Any “we” found in this poem is neither communal majority nor binary coupling—“I speak of how I cannot understand our insistence on separations and how these separations have nothing and everything to do with the moments when we feel joined and separated from each others”—but rather is intensely, longingly affectionate. While the love and desire of “we” for “yours” at first is a counterpoint to the encroaching, senseless march to war, by the end of the poem, the war impulse has invaded even this most intimate of relations:

When I reach for yours waists, I
reach for bombers, cargo, heli-
copters, and special operations.

When I wrap around yours bodies,
I wrap around the *USS Abraham
Lincoln*, unmanned aerial vehicles,
and surveillance.

When I rest my head upon yours
breasts, I rest upon the *USS Kitty*

BOOK REVIEWS

*Hawk and the USS Harry S. Truman
and the USS Theodore Roosevelt.*

As with air, war has become communal. It is now part of us irrevocably, physically, intimately every day. We breathe it in each day with breakfast and sleep with it at night. It has become *normal*. But by investigating the alternative powers of the lyric in effecting positive change, Spahr achieves some major inoculation. This literally breathtaking artwork/chronicle gives me hope that the concept of “normalcy” could once again have something to do with peace.

Marcella Durand is the author of The Anatomy of Oil (Belladonna Books).*

PAOLO JAVIER 60 LV BO(E)MBS O Books / 2005

Paolo Javier is a brazen polyglot. In *60 lv bo(e)mbs* he solders English to Tagalog, and Tagalog to Spanish with a manic acetylene torch. And while his bo(e)mbs live in English, they are also ciphers into an American, mongrel, poetry—a dialect-identity. And what is Javier’s dialect-identity? Paolo Javier is not a Philipino-American; he is a Phillipino poet educated and acculturated in America, but supremely wary of America’s track-record with Colonialism, “It’s me Alma bilingual heretic” (#24). Therefore, in the preface-legend of the book, “*My Corzine Somber*,” Javier will “*agree to venomous mass dual citizenship libations*” but only if he can “*vent against the lynching horde*.”

Javier’s bo(e)mbs are as much a manifestation of disjointed modernity, “Memory con-

tinues luster Australia’s mass graves” (#35), as they are recapitulations in the key of the disenfranchised, “Haitian dawn immigrant ban amid profoundest angels” (#35). In that respect they are more Spanish and Asian (lush and yet somehow sparse: “Oh Grandiose Why Fecund”) than American; they are more political perhaps than the American poetry palette can withstand. In these bo(e)mbs Javier posits the experimental panache of Vallejo’s *Trilce*, the siphoned duende and ornery pidgin of Braithwaite’s *Middle Passages*, and the tart irreverences of Jose Garcia Villa, author of *The Anchored Angel*. But the pedigree of *60 lv* is more complicated than: hyphen-American intermingling tongues and aesthetics; Javier shuffles certain lines and phrases so the work reaches mantra and approximates incantation, “In my cell a corpse & skull there is communal nudity.”

Javier writes from the voicebox of many characters: Trysteaser (a play on tryst easier/tryst teaser), Villa (the Philippino poet), Alma (the Spanish for soul), however, there is no real narrative and most of the characters simply become sonic components in the gulash of the ensuing poem. Some of the poems, “A Tournament Unforgotten, #24, English Is An Occupation,” really live up to the fecund claim Javier makes, “*I can ascribe lust to verses*” and some get lost in the lingual minefield, “The Gazette, Bilang Blanket Ko, #28.” But if you speak more than one language you understand that each language in your head has a different brain. Likewise, think of these poems as acts of translation that are successful failures—a ping-pong-mediation between the brain of the source language and the brain of the projected language. It is only natural that some of these lingual algorithms of English, Tagalog, and Spanish get lost in the translation.

If you grow up bilingual you will always feel rent in two: linguistically and culturally. That’s the breaks; but, what you gain is the knowledge that language can be treacherous if you give it license. I guess the most important question Javier’s book unearths is whose imperialism is it anyways? Is it my imperialism? Is it yours? Is it ours (including the victims of the imperialism that now live within our borders)? In this country, political poetry is thought of as didactic, mawkish, and—ultimately—a dogma powerpoint presentation. Sure, we’ll read Mahmood Darwish and Nazim Hikmet but we reserve the right not to like it, like it. “That’s not an aesthetic, that’s a confessional yarn about the cryptic blattitude of prison blah with Marxist bullplop thrown in for good measure.” We’ll rant and dismiss, outright, the premises and registers of a book of political poetry based on the fact that the poet is being smarmy or pushy, a conviction used-car salesman. It’s not that we don’t have political poetry in this country, we just treat it as an offshoot—no—a faction, of the real thing.

Yago Cura is the author of Rubberroom by Hinchas de Poesia Press. He teaches English Language Arts to 11th graders in the Bronx.

BRENDA HILLMAN PIECES OF AIR IN THE EPIC Wesleyan University Press / 2005

Pieces of Air in the Epic is the seventh book of poetry by Brenda Hillman, a recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim fellowship and NEA grant. The second book in her tertology of the four elements, *Pieces of Air in the Epic* explores the concept of air. *Cascadia*, her previous book, covered the element of earth.

In an interview with Jenn Tynes in *Octopus Magazine*, Brenda Hillman discusses her ideas about the epic: “The sense that epic time, time in epic, has to do with warfare, is obvious if you’ve spent any time at all with Homer and Virgil. I’ve also had the notion that punching holes in time, in ‘about,’ is part of the job of the artist...” The “air” Hillman introduces with these holes “provides a space for cultural healing.” The ruptures are in the scope and subject of the epic—both ATM’s and cell phones intrude into her poems and puncture the distant, timeless “epic” tone.

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In *Pieces of Air in the Epic*, the distant epic past and everyday present are blended, not seamlessly, but with a measured chaos. In *Air in the Epic*, she writes “A flicker passes by: air / let out of a Corvette tire.) // Side stories leaked into the epic, / told by its lover, the world.” Everyday “corvette” time is combined with epic time, as represented by “its lover, the world.” This poem not only explores leaks in the epic, it presents that leakage in visual form by unusual spacing – two parallel columns, one packed full, one mostly empty.

Echo 858, a meditation on a painting, explores breaking apart epic form and thought, trying “to see the gargoyle / pushing / from the back of the painting” – those events that only occur in the peripheral vision of the warlords, presidents and spin masters.

Several of Hillman’s *Nine Untitled Epyllions* (mini-epics) are printed with white text on black, which makes the poems seem a photographic negative of the typical epic. This sequence of poems is dedicated to the victims of the war in Iraq and is Hillman’s

most focused attack on the present administration’s attempt to make itself seem epic and heroic.

The first Epyllion begins with: “Something about breathing/The air inside a war” and continues on to describe suffocation by propaganda: “Decent amounts of free forevers”. “Freedom” is the catchphrase of the American bureaucrats scrambling to justify the war in Iraq, who also claim “Horizons emphatically lifted in them.”

Hillman’s poetry constantly corrects that propaganda. As she describes in her interview with Jenn Tynes, the American flag has not only become a barcode, but is also a product of slave labor in Vietnam.

Is Hillman successful in adding air to the epic? In most cases, yes. She does fascinating things with language and the space of the text. She plays with words in a way that make you blink and pull back, although her trick of using unusual adjectives as nouns becomes less surprising after a few repetitions. She puns frequently and with great purpose and invention. Her uses of “seam/seem” are unending.

BOOK REVIEWS

The collection lags in only few places. One poem, *Your Fate*, which repeatedly mentions a need for tech support (a plea for God, perhaps) falls flat and seems out of place, and a sequence of poems near the end, beginning with *An Oddness* and ending with *Epoch of Dust*, is repetitive and not as fresh as the rest of Hillman’s work. But on the whole the book functions with marvelous strangeness. It bears repeated readings, and with re-reading, each poem acquires more depth and resonance. This is not poetry that ever tires or bores you. There’s enough here to keep you busy for years. Hillman does not explode the epic, she takes out the seams and refits it to a new kind of body.

Christine Hamm has published two chapbooks, The Salt Daughter, and The Animal Husband, and has a book-length project, The Transparent Dinner, coming out in Fall ‘06 from Mayapple Press. For more about her, go to <http://chamm.blogspot.com>.



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BOOK REVIEWS

ALICE NOTLEY
COMING AFTER:
ESSAYS ON POETRY
University of Michigan / 2005

Though also a "readable book of criticism," as its back cover notes, *Coming After: Essays on Poetry* is more an insistent, clear-eyed and idiomatic space—a serious compilation of essays apprehending the poetry/life divide. Notley questions rapidly: "I'm not sure there's a final moment, so what does one take from poem to poem? Can one live in between poems? Is any one poem all of it? Is it good enough? Could I rest in just one and not leave?" Obviously it's mind-reading of a kind, a provocation—forget mere expansion on personality or fair introduction.

Two important questions lie behind the project of compiling essays all written 5-10 years ago. As for the poets featured here: why has not such good work been written about enough? Notley addresses this, but later blends the pertinence by asking: "Where is the first world?" Her questions travel beyond each poet's doings into his or her relationship with personal practice, public persona, and the purpose of making something. Her interrogations are absorbing, yet intense enough that a reader might only visualize a rock on a plain or whatever such beginning. I recall Nerval's "Everything is sentient!" and maybe could write from there.

Notley writes in the preface to the book that she wanted to serve "*in each instance* according to what was required, that is, to see what was there without a predetermined terminology or logic getting in the way." The essays aim to unfreeze voice, musicality, self, epic, and measure from the poems. Her awe for O'Hara sets the book in motion: "And one must leave one's favorites sometimes and contemplate the 'latitude' of the stars." Her essay on *A Certain Slant of Sunlight* illuminates Ted Berrigan's thinking as he approached his own death (and end of poetry-writing) in 1983. The essay also refutes any idea of his intention in *The Sonnets* as being to reject the "Psychological I." Notley's prose too is inspired by these poets. Writing of

Kenward Elmslie, her tone is whimsical, as his work is "lit in any of the varieties of stage lightings."

The essay on Steve Carey is a standout, and worth the whole book alone: not journaling memory as at first glance but asking *of the world*. This is a case in which Notley approves of herself being monumental. Later, she'll say she does not like "acting"; this purely intends to get as close to the truth as possible.

We are more directly reminded to interrogate our own processes in the "Topics" section. "Am I thinking at all, or am I producing masses of 'style' containing a few 'hits,' just creating a sort of verbal environment?" she writes in the essay "Thinking in Poetry." One of Notley's most highlighted matters here is that of voice: "There is no way not to impose yourself as an author on your material." Ironically enough, in quoting Ron Padgett's poem, "Voice," Notley believes Padgett has found his own: "Or perhaps they / were referring to his newspaper / *The Village Voice*? He's trying / to find his *Voice*." Notley describes her own voice in these essays as "unapologetic" or "self-aggrandizing." But it is just this friendly, frank informality (and I mean "friendly" as if all our writing were to live so unpreciously) that will lead a reader to understand what's at stake.

The topics call into light both the framing of the book (her prose being at the service of her points) as well as an inevitable dismissal of voice by those whose focus is non-vocal poetry, or any which defers articulable experience. Voice can be seen as a quality trivial to poets working to refurbish notions of meaning-making. Yet Notley defines poetic voice as a "unity, with individual distinction;" voice as something inherent to any poem, coming directly from the body.

To import the concept also begs of the project of writing and reading to say what the poem is now, in its time. A plainer discussion of poetics "depends on, as metrics does, a constant renewal as the occasion of speaking is renewed..." Speaking should be renewed often. We can trust ourselves to do this? My eyes water at the idea of it. Fundamentally, the energy is being transferred—living to writer to audience and

assorted refractions. But we need clarity of purpose; that connectivity, albeit huge, is not quite enough. Notley writes: "In the face of what must be said, does it matter if one says 'I' or not, if one tells a story or not, if one uses certain forms or not? Say what must be said."

Corina Copp is most recently the author of Play Air (Belladonna Books, 2005).*

SIMON PETTET
MORE WINNOWNED FRAGMENTS
 Talisman / 2005

One thing, one thing, You should do, you should do, Is read each poem, is read each poem, Twice out loud, twice out loud, Like Simon does, like Simon does. Even if you've never had the pleasure of hearing Simon Pettet read his marvelous poems, here's something to marble-top your imagination. Chop on, chop on, chop ON, on it! "HAVE LOVE WILL WRITE FANTASTIC POEMS!" is Simon's sign along this metaphysical highway. Can you dream him with him? One of the most careful poets, CAREFUL enough to dare promise winnowed and dearly free of rubbish these poems, "I am forbidden to stand naked in consequence." Here's how to cope with cross-examinations and the sweat of extinction! And, brothers and sisters, Simon says WITH LOVE, "I am appalled by the darkening of the sky / I watch my love / It is always my love that I watch". You have been handed the fruit of the stalk with the shit pulled away and blown to the dirt, can you take it? You can take it. See? Taste? "Since the moon is, we all know, a form of cheese," we are fortunate to be here, on this planet, at the same time Simon Pettet makes a sandwich of some of the best we'll ever eat. This is not just a book to read and put on a shelf. This is one you read then follow with a very long letter of gratitude. The thank you. And thank you. Then try making love while someone reads out loud, or read the love while making out loud the trying. It's all about trying which is all about living. "some are the tricks / of their fathers and mothers / others not," it's great fucking poetry, dare me to be wrong!

CAConrad's book DEVIANT PROPULSION was recently published by Soft Skull Press. To take a peek go to <http://CAConrad.blogspot.com>

BOOK REVIEWS

PATRICIA SPEARS JONES
FEMME DU MONDE
 Tia Chucha Press / 2006

In our post-everything generation the maxim—the medium is the message—has advanced to axiom, however it is sometimes true that a message is so right-on that it renders the medium invisible. In Patricia Spears Jones' poetry the message is the message, particularly her new all-over-the-map collection, *Femme du Monde*.

Poetry is one of the earliest techniques developed to carry a message, a mnemonic device intended to contain the knowledge of pre-literate communities like the story of Odysseus' long journey back to Ithaca. In the 600 years since Gutenberg invented moveable type, saving mankind the trouble of remembering Christian history, many inexpensive devices from the book to the Blackberry have been developed to contain information thus allowing poetry to explore more complicated modes of expression from Keats' Negative Capability to automatic writing to modernism's mantra "Poetry should not mean, but be" to L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E's disruption of canonical assumptions of meaning.

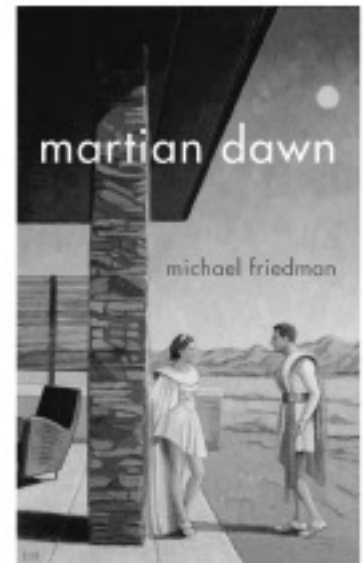
Poetry's greatest attributes are speed and brevity. A great poem accomplishes with the fraction of ink and paper what the world's great novels take barrels and reams to achieve. In "Days of Awe," Patricia Spears Jones cuts to the chase, "I feel as if my life were held together by wishful thinking / and crazy glue. Somehow it works. / Somehow all our lives work." The poem supports her intro by describing fear, nature, superstition, "and while the pondering abides, / each of us has time to act one way or the other."

The medium is the message especially in corporate controlled mass media, as in advertising advertises advertising. "With telephone and TV it is not so much the message as the sender that is sent," noted Marshall McLuhan. Poetry is the message in two contrary instances both rooted in ruling class ideology. One, when it mimics the interests of corporate controlled media, most readily, poetry that ignores the context in which it is written, especially work rooted

martian dawn

A NOVEL

BY MICHAEL FRIEDMAN



TURTLE POINT PRESS

"Reading *Martian Dawn* is like watching an ultracool comedy of the future where familiar movie types develop into idyllic interplanetary characters in order to make yet more movies. It's as though *Star Trek*, *Pretty Woman*, and *There's Something About Mary* had been sublimated in an unlikely fusion that is both comforting and hilarious."
 —Harry Mathews

"*Martian Dawn* is not only one of the funniest novels to come out of American poetry, it's one of the most entertaining books you'll read this year."
 —Jordan Davis, *The Constant Critic*

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BOOK REVIEWS

in the theories of New Criticism. Secondly, when it challenges corporate controlled media by engaging readers' participation in the creation of a poem's meaning, notably L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing.

Poetry has the power to antidote the deception of mass media by sending messages ignored by it. Precisely what Patricia Spears Jones, an Ellingtonian Sophisticated Lady, does throughout *Femme du Monde*. Jones dispenses wisdom as she contemplates subjects ranging from cinema to the complicated relationships between elderly men and young women to hot encounters in the backseats of yellow cabs to the many lives lost to the sophisticated dangers of getting high and laid.

Patricia Spears Jones' poems successfully dissolve the medium by taking her cues from Jazz, the most important American contribution to the arts. Her poems employ literary equivalents to blue notes, syncopa-

tion, swing, call and response, polyrhythms, and improvisation. Jones' poems often begin with a concrete first line, for example "Diamanda Galas screams sings" or simply "Sunset," then wend through a vast yet compressed landscape of conflicts and desires exploring the regions "between the Black side and the white" of gender, identity, and mortality.

While reading Patricia Spears Jones' work I forget that it's poetry, I do not even care that it is. Instead I am intent on reading her version of modern America, captivated by her ability to tell it like it is yet still swing. For an aural comparison to Jones' work listen to the quintessential femme du monde, Billie Holliday. Hear her deftly weave messages critical to ruling class ideology, especially when singing the starkly entrancing *Strange Fruit*. Do you care if it's Jazz, just music to get down to?

Greg Fuchs is an artist living in New York City, his work documents the interaction between institutions, land, and people.

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Elizabeth Robinson
UNDER THAT SILKY ROOF

The poems of Robinson's new collection are concerned with the interplay of domestic life — its companionship, its fecundity, its losses — and manifestations of the abstract or, as she puts it, with "the brick floor from which the/kingdom of God extends/or could extend." As Beth Anderson has noted, the God in Robinson's work is as elusive as Abbess's pronouns that raise more questions than they answer. But the "interplay with manifestations of the abstract is what her poems address, expose, and refuse to back away from."

"Robinson has reinvented the 'uses of enchantment'." —Ann Lauterbach

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[Sene d'Eclair, No. 19; translated from the French by Cole Swensen]

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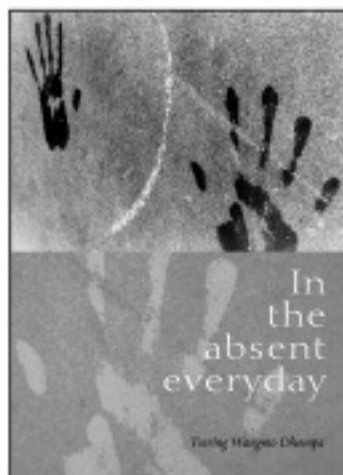
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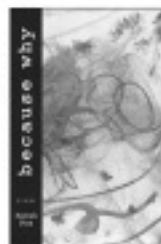
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