

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2012

THE POETRY PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

#230

JEAN-JACQUES
LECERCLE
ON MARXISM
& POETRY

FILIP MARINOVICH
ON THE
PEOPLE'S
LIBRARY

POETRY
BY ERÍN
MOURE

ART,
REVIEWS,
HOROSCOPES
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The Poetry Project Newsletter

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On the Cover: Justin Lieberman, *Tom Baker* (detail), SLR cameras and taxidermied crabs, 41" x 19" x 19".

Above: Justin Lieberman, *The Black Assistant, the White Assistant and the Watchful Superior* (from the series *Valet of the Infinite*), oil on canvas, 16" x 20".



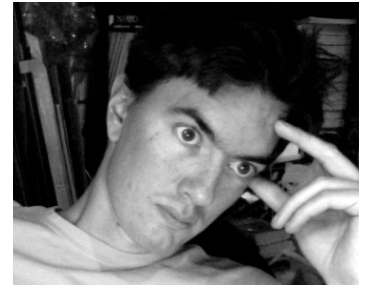
From the Director

The New Year's Day Marathon Reading always makes a dramatic impression on me. It's physically demanding and emotionally fraying, yet sitting on the balcony in the quiet Sanctuary the next day, I am filled with anticipation of the next one. We love bringing in each year with our homespun poetry tradition. Thank you to everyone who took a moment to tell us what you loved about the day, or shared an idea that might help us run a tighter ship in the future. I was crazy about all the dancers this year. It's totally empty and dark down there right now, but I keep seeing Aki Sasamoto beat down a large cardboard box.

We thought maybe there would be a drop in attendance because the 1st fell on a Sunday, but you came in droves. Wow! Between admission and food and book sales we raised just under \$20,000! This benefit has been the linchpin of our fundraising efforts since Anne Waldman started it 38 years ago. Your support of the event, your love of the performers, your trust in us to bring you the best experience we can, ensures our ability to present a robust lineup of 80+ readings each year.

There is no adequate expression of my gratitude for the 75 volunteers who took so much weight off our shoulders. We simply wouldn't get very far without dozens of people going above and beyond what can reasonably be asked! Arlo names the names of our 2012 team in his letter. As always, we recommend patronizing the restaurants and bakeries that donate their food to us. I know I'm a better citizen because I eat more pierogies at Veselka. Happy New Year!

Stacy Szymaszek



From the Program Coordinator

The 38th Annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading was a terrific event. There were more than 150 performers and well over 1,000 audience members. This annual benefit event is always our biggest of the year and too much for our office staff to handle without a lot of help. This year these wonderful people donated their time and effort to make it happen: Abigail Weg, Adeena Karasick, Ama Birch, Amanda Deutch, Ariel Bornstein, Atticus Fierman, Barry Denny, Bill Kushner, Bob Rosenthal, Brandon Downing, Brenda Coultas, Brett Price, Caitlin Wheeler, Chana Porter, Christa Quint, Cori Copp, Corrine Fitzpatrick, Daniel Kent, Debora Ott, Denise LaCongo, Derek Kroessler, Desi Fields, Diana Rickard, Dixie Appel, Don Yorty, Donna Brook, Dorothy Friedman August, Dorothea Lasky, Douglas Rothschild, Dustin Williamson, Edmund Berrigan, Elinor Nauen, Elsa Asher, Emily XYZ, Erica Kaufman, Erica Wessmann, Evan Kennedy, Evelyn Reilly, Filip Marinovich, Geoff Mottram, Geoffrey Olsen, Jack Murray, Jamie Townsend, Jane Friedman, Jeff Grunthaner, Jeff Perkins, Jeremy Hoevenaar, Jess Fiorini, Jim Behrle, Joanna Fuhrman, Joe Elliot, John Coletti, Jordyn Pfalzgraf, Josef Kaplan, Julia Santoli, Kari Hensley, Kathleen Connell, Kathleen Miller, KB Jones, Ken Walker, Kim Lyons, Lauren Raheja, Lauren Russell, Leah Umansky, Lisa Ozag, Lydia Cortes, Lynne Desilva-Johnson, Marc Nasdor, Marcella Durand & Ismael, Margaret Carson, Mariana Ruiz Firmat, Megan Ewing, Nada Gordon, Nathaniel Siegel, Nicole Peyrafitte, Rachel Berry, Rachel Levitsky, Safia Karasick Southey, Simone White, Stephanie Gray, Stephanie Jo Elstro, Ted Dodson, Tom Savage, Will Edmiston, Wing Sang and probably others whom I've missed.

Food and services were donated by these local businesses and friends: Amy's Bread, Bob Rosenthal and Don Yorty, Buttercup Bake Shop, Christa Quint, Gillian McCain, The Grey Dog, Magnolia Bakery, Mariana Ruiz Firmat, Nicole Peyrafitte, Porto Rico Importing Co., S'MAC, Two Boots and Veselka. We also sold plenty of books donated by these presses and friends: Belladonna*, BlazeVox, Burning Deck, Coffee House Press, Ed Friedman, Granary Books, Hanging Loose Press, Katie Schneeman, Litmus Press, Pressed Wafer, Roof Books, Susan Mills, Ugly Duckling Presse, United Artists, Wave Books and City Lights.

Thank you all for making this event possible.

Arlo Quint



From the Editor

Happy Year of the Dragon! This Fire Dragon could not be more psyched for the year to come.

I have been a fan of Justin Lieberman's art ever since I saw his 2007 show at Zach Feuer Gallery. The art was oozing with badass persona, but there was sensitivity and seriousness beneath its edgy humor. I was struck by this simultaneous provocation and appeal; it was plain to see that there was really something at stake. You should check out *Justin Lieberman: Hopi Basket Weaving* (not quite a catalog of the 2007 show, more of an artist's book) to see this and other earlier work.

Last month, Justin generously invited me to his Greenpoint studio to show me new paintings and sculptures that were headed for an upcoming solo exhibition in Paris. The pieces in progress included a wheeled tower of scavenged items including an alarm, lights and a radio, and a smaller sculpture consisting of old, somewhat smashed-up cameras and taxidermied crabs covered in hardened goo. The show will also include a series of 36 paintings (corresponding to the number of pictures in a roll of film) of the everyday conditions in the studio. There is a contrast between the fun and fungible assembly of the sculpture and the drudgery and uniformity of the paintings' documentation (carried out with the aid of assistants).

I am tempted to say that Justin is a poet's artist, but with respect to these pieces it is more that the work comments on artistic practice in a way that translates, especially at a time when conceptual writing and the internet have changed how we think about literary work and authorship, and in turn about poetry itself.

Paul Foster Johnson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNE PORTER (1911–2011)

Poet Anne Porter passed away at her home in October, just weeks before her 100TH birthday. Porter's first collection of poetry, *An Altogether Different Language* (Zoland Books, 1994), was published when she was 83, and was a finalist for the National Book Award. Her other volume of poetry is *Living Things: Collected Poems* (Zoland/Steerforth, 2006). Porter was married to the painter Fairfield Porter until his death in 1975, and, along with their children, is the subject of many of his finest portraits.

In #210 of this publication Ange Mlinko wrote, "I can't think of a purer poet in American letters," and noted that she discovered her faith and gifts for verse while she was very young. In *Publishers Weekly*, David Shapiro wrote that "Porter writes what might best be called plainsong: short, unadorned works that, like gospel or folk music, cut directly to the ambiguous heart of things."

*A forest hermit painted this
They say at night his face
Lit up the snow*

(from "The Icon")

Rest in peace, Anne Porter.

KENNETHKOCH.ORG

We just heard from Ron Padgett that there is now a website devoted to Kenneth Koch, featuring a biographical essay, a bibliography, photos of Kenneth, recordings of his readings of poems and plays, and two video clips.

Marxism and Poetry

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

1.

Of Marxist and Communist poets, from Aragon to Neruda and Hikmet, there have been plenty. Not so Marxist accounts of poetry, as Marxist theorists of literature have either disparaged poetry (too monological, in the language of Mikhail Bakhtin) or ignored it (in the language of Georg Lukács, the novel is the privileged site of the reflection, indirect or not, of the state of class struggle). There is, however, at least one exception: in 1945, George Thomson, historian of archaic Greece and of the first philosophers, gave a lecture entitled “Marxism and Poetry.”¹ His account of poetry was based on his more general development of the Marxist myth of the origin of language (sometimes known as the “yo-he-ho” theory of the origin of language), which goes back to Engels and states that language and communal work are co-originary. Thomson’s development of this account follows this route: work is a communal activity that involves physical motion of a rhythmic type; such movements are accompanied with vocal production, at first instinctual, but which eventually turns into chanting; communal work also involves cooperation and therefore a form of communication. Hence a double origin of language: the rhythmic chanting gives rise to the language of poetry, while the need for communication gives rise to ordinary language. Which means that poetry is as old as common speech and yet different from it. Which also means that it is part of the common endowment of all humankind, in other words that it is of the people, not a marginal and elitist minority practice. (Thomson sought real poetry among the remnants of the Irish peasantry.) The lecture ends on the inevitable decline of individualistic written bourgeois poetry, which painfully survives the exhaustion of the progressive function of the bourgeoisie and on the triumphant progress of the people’s poetry in the people’s socialist republics: the oldest Kyrgyz bard not only spouts thousands of verses in praise of Lenin and Stalin, but is a member of the Supreme Soviet of his Republic.

I must confess a form of nostalgic tenderness for this outdated account. Not only do I believe that the Marxist myth of the origin of language is the most convincing of such myths (and they are of some philosophical importance, an aid to speculation and the construction of philosophies of language, even if they have no scientific relevance), but I like the idea of the equal importance and age of poetical and everyday language (a debatable position, in that it separates two types of language). My problem, therefore, is to reassess such position in the light of later developments in the field of Marxist philosophies of language.

2.

Since I have constructed such a philosophy,² I shall attempt to assess the impact its main theses have on a Marxist account of poetry (let us suppose for a moment that such a thing is possible and desirable). My Marxist philosophy of language is constructed around six theses, a *main thesis* (language is a form of *praxis*), four *positive theses* (language is historical, social, material and political) and a *concluding thesis* (language is the site of subjectivation through interpellation). It is clear that, in giving such an account of language, I am leaving both mainstream linguistics (for instance, Saussurean dichotomies of *langue* vs. *parole*, synchrony vs. diachrony) and the mainstream philosophy of language (whether of an analytic cast or in the form of Habermas’ general pragmatics). My contention is that such a philosophy of language entails more interesting consequences for the reading and practice of poetry than its rivals.

3.

The main thesis, which states that language is a form of *praxis*, embodies the central intuition of the Marxist myth of the origin of language: language was born of communal work, not as a tool, an instrument for the expression of ideas, but as a social and fundamentally political activity, involving not so much individual subjects as social interaction. In other words, in the language of Aristotle, language is *praxis* because it is not *poiesis*. The etymological “poet” is a tool-wielding artisan who transforms raw material into a finished product, whereas *praxis* takes its agent to the political debates of the *agora*. The consequences of this for an account of poetry are obvious: the poet as craftsman, the poem as well-wrought urn, are simply the wrong metaphors. The poem is not an *opus*, the result of a process of fabrication, but a form of action, an intervention in a historical and cultural conjuncture. Or again, it is not a result at all but a process, and not a process of transformation but rather a form of becoming. The field of reference for the activity of poetry is politics, not production (this goes against a form of Marxist *doxa*, which likes to interpret art according to the category of production). The question is: what form does this political action (that poetry is) take? The four positive theses may enable us to answer.

4.

The thesis “language is historical” implies that synchronic *langue* is not the best way to account for the workings of language: far from being captured by the linguistic equivalent of what the French language, in an apt metaphor, calls a photograph (*un instantané*), language must be treated in its state of

constant variation, a continuous process, not a fixed result, albeit temporary. In this, language resembles the social totality, as described by Althusser: a structure of articulated instances (economic, political, juridical, etc.), with independent temporalities and therefore unequal development (the superstructure is always belated in relation to the base). As a result of which a social formation is made up of the articulated constituents of the dominant mode of production, each with its own rhythm of development, but also of survivals of exhausted modes of production, and of the anticipation of future modes of production, only present in their emergent form, as harbingers of things to come. A typical capitalist social formation will have elements in various stages of capitalist development, survivals of feudalism and intimations of a socialist future. A (natural) language may, or even must, be described in a similar manner, under the concept not of *langue* but of *linguistic formation*: this formation will consist of sedimented strands of past states of the language, of anticipation of emergent forms of language, and of the various layers of the current form of the language (phonetics, syntax, semantics, etc.) each with its own rhythm of development. For a Marxist, literature, the art of language, is that form of language that captures the three times of language: it preserves the traditions of ancient forms of language (for instance in its attachment to literary genres), it captures the cutting edge of current language, in its inherent mutability, and it is aware, in a kind of artistic wager, of the future of the language, which casts its anticipatory shadow on current usage. Poetry, from this point of view, has a strategic part to play. Its political task is not, as is the case with the novel, to give a true account of the state of the class struggle, albeit in a deformed and indirect way (Balzac, a reactionary monarchist, nevertheless gives us a true picture of the triumph of the bourgeoisie, which he despises). Its brief is to concentrate not on the politics of the class struggle but on the politics of linguistic *agon*: to stage linguistic struggles (as the three strands of traditional, current and anticipatory language clash) and to intervene in them. Its task is to inscribe within the poetic text the temporal struggles that keep language alive.

5.

That language is social is not merely a platitude. The thesis distinguishes between two types of philosophy of language. The first, let us call it mainstream, is characterized by the methodological individualism of liberal thought. (There are no social facts or events, only the combination of multitudes of choices made by rational individual agents—or, in the immortal words of Ms. Thatcher, “society does not exist.”) In the case of language, one of the forms it takes is Chomsky’s substitution of the Saussurean dichotomy of *langue* and *parole* (a social or collectivist dichotomy: the system of *langue* is anterior and exterior to the individual speaker) with his own dichotomy of competence and performance. The problem is that competence is inscribed in the mind/brain of the individual speaker: it is universal, being species-specific (humans speak, chimps don’t), but neither social nor historical. Which entails rather heavy metaphysical consequences: language is essentially innate, and learning

plays a strictly limited part as, in an important sense, the elements of language, down to the minutest details, are always-already acquired; and natural or national languages do not exist in a relevant linguistic sense (their empirical existence is an epiphenomenon): a few parameters more in the mind/brain, and we move from German to English or Japanese. The problem of course is that, unless we are prepared to subscribe to that outdated metaphysics (which goes back to the 18TH-century idiom of the faculties of the mind), we must admit that language is the one field where methodological individualism is a signal failure: a rule of grammar is not the result of the combination of multiplicities of individual linguistic decisions by rational individual speakers. The speaker does speak language in order to express herself, but only insofar as she is spoken by language, that is by the constraints that language imposes on her. And this entails consequences for an account of poetry. Poetry is the type of language in which the dialectic of “I speak language, yet it is language that speaks”—in other words, the inevitable negotiation between the constraints of the language and the expressive freedom of the speaker—is not only entirely conscious but the very object of the exercise. As a result, far from being the entirely original production of a gifted individual speaker, the poem focuses on the collective constraints of language (which it makes entirely explicit—call this meter, rhythm, generic form or what you like), and on the possibility of breaking them in order, once again, to allow the language the poet writes in to be a living language. The poet, therefore, is characterized by her style, insofar as style is constitutively ambiguous between the social or collective (the style of a group, a school, a period) and the individual (the idiosyncratic and inimitable—or only too imitable in parody—style of a single author). This paradox of style is the poetic version of the paradox entailed by the social nature of a language always appropriated by individual speakers.

6.

That language is material is a commonplace, not least for the practitioner of poetry, who knows that the poem always involves a body (the body of the poet as well as the body of the reader, who is always the co-speaker of the poem, as in certain theories of language the addressee is called the co-enunciator of the utterance). This is why George Thomson sought current poetry among the Irish peasantry, as poetry for him was constitutively linked to music and chanting. This proposition, however, is the result of a philosophical decision. For instance, in the philosophical *agon* between Badiou and Deleuze,³ it tallies with Deleuze’s account of art, as concerned with affects and percepts, not concepts, but not with Badiou’s, according to whom poetry produces truths for philosophy to work on, which leads him, when he reads a Mallarmé sonnet, to produce a prose summary of the text in order not to miss the coherence of the thought the poem expresses. So a Marxist account of poetry will be concerned with poetry as a politics of bodily affects, not as the expression of thought, or rather with the expression of a thought insofar as it is inextricably mixed with bodily affect.

7.

All this may be summed up in the last positive thesis, that poetry, like language, is political. This, a direct consequence of my main thesis, has been my guiding thread, as I believe it was also Thomson's, albeit in a different form. For it is clear that the function of poetry, a form of language which is of the people and therefore inherently political, is not to produce verses in praise of Lenin, or even directly to intervene in the class struggle, even on the right side. Its task is, in the quasi-Marxist language of Deleuze and Guattari,⁴ to minorize a major or standard language: the poet speaks her own tongue as if it were a foreign language (Deleuze is fond of this *topos*, which originates in Proust), she introduces the rolling and pitching that destabilizes her language (this allowing the three times of language to be inscribed in the text), she stammers language⁵ by introducing the small agrammaticalities that blur gram-

mar and foster meaning. The politics of poetry is the politics of minorization; conversely, there is no poetics without such politics, or, to adapt a famous slogan of May 68, the poetical is political.

8.

The concluding thesis of my Marxist philosophy of language states that language is the site of subjectivation through interpellation. In saying this, I am a late follower of Althusser's theory of ideology, whose function is to interpellate individuals into subjects, in both senses of the term, as subjects of consciousness, responsibility and action, and as subjected to political authority, the subjects of the Prince. I take it (this is my contribution to the theory) that in formulating this theory, Althusser is describing the workings of language, which creates speakers through its enabling constraints, that is, which speaks its speakers in order to allow them to speak their own language. I have described this

as the dialectics of interpellation (of the speaker by language) and counter-interpellation (of her language by the speaker). Again, the function of poetry, as the form of language that focuses on language, is to inscribe such dialectics in the text, a dialectics that is both present and made transparent, that is forgotten, in everyday language. This is where poetry is always lyrical, not in that it registers the outpourings of a supersensitive soul, but in that it retraces, with due irony, the process whereby each of us becomes a subject, that is, a speaker.

9.

Poetry as *praxis*, that is, as the reflexive practice of the politics of language, as the inscription in language not only of bodily affect but of the process of subjectivation that produces the speaker as subject, as the inscription in the poem of the three times of language, as the site of the counter-interpellation of the language that interpellates the poet, as political intervention that minorizes the standard language and thereby keeps it alive: that is not such a bad program for poetry.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Nanterre in Paris. His latest book is Badiou and Deleuze Read Literature (Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

NOTES:

1. George Thomson. *Marxism and Poetry*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975.
2. Jean-Jacques Lecercle. *A Marxist Philosophy of Language*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009.
3. See Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Badiou and Deleuze Read Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
4. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (trans. Dana Polan), *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
5. These metaphors come from Deleuze's account of style. See his *Essays Critical and Clinical* (trans. Daniel W. Smith), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

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O Bon

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—Etel Adnan

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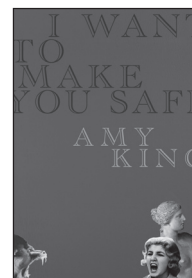
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—Rae Armantrout

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from *The Unmemntioable* Erín Moure

Halieutica

I am a thinking (conscious) thing, that is, a
being who doubts
I am certain that I am a thinking thing
in a manner or way of thinking
For when I think that a stone is a substance
although I conceive that I am a thinking and non-extended thing
merely in respect of our mode of thinking
since I am merely a thinking thing
since I am a thinking thing and possess in myself an idea of god
it is likewise a thinking being
in so far as I am a thinking being
I think it proper to remain here for some time in contemplation—

E.S.
București

§

The other disrupts the *I think*. Thus breaks with intentionality. Knowing
any thing requires this breaking—a movement toward the exterior.

Is E.M. my exterior? I see her again, in the Museum café this time,
fumbling a pen and glass. In her bag, that same spoon I saw her use to
dig the earth at Great Hlibovychi, Великі Глібовичі. She buried
something there, outside herself. Space and time, anachronic. Was it
her way of making knowledge possible? To know any thing, time must
go backward.

Look at her fumbling. What is her relation to experience now?

But of course she is experience, even as she is not fully captured by what
she is thinking.

“Boreal forest and the north edge of aspen parkland.”

Why did I write this just now?

(the scythes)

Epistulae

We get enough to eat here!

I remember paragraph, paragraph,
murmur.
The parents got up in the night.
I heard the sound of a rifle.
No, it was the stove.
The wood made a sound like an explosion,
jerked upright.
It was me sleeping.
Father outside in the dark with the gun, looking into the forest.
The quiet of deer.

Wealth to you! Wealth to you in the new
land!

E.S.
Великі Глібовичі
Huallen, Alberta

§

Aspen on the steep slope south and west with balsam poplar at small creek drainages. A few stands of mature white spruce on the hilltop plateau; along drainages on the north slope, birch rise over alder-willow shrubland mixed with foothills shrubs: mountain ash and thimbleberry.

Windbreak of green ash and laurel willow on the north of the field.
Dozens of spruce at the south perimeter. It is a more moderate climate, apart from the impassable roads and wind.

Father and mother.
We had 23 crows and 3 ponies.

Due N. of Huallen, AB
(writing in the black Moleskine)
NW 14. 72. 9. W6



Erin Moure is a Canadian poet and translator based in Montreal. She has translated Nicole Brossard (with Robert Majzels) and Louise Dupré from French, Chus Pato and Rosalía de Castro from Galician, Andrés Ajens from Chilean Spanish, and Fernando Pessoa from Portuguese. Her essays, My Beloved Wager (2009), chronicle 25 years of writing practice. She performs and speaks internationally on poetry and translation. Her sixteenth book of poems, The Unmemntioable, a tumultous investigation into subjectivity and experience in western Ukraine and rural Alberta, will appear in February 2012.

Things to Do at The People's Library at Occupy Wall Street

Filip Marinovich

1. Things to Do at The People's Library at Occupy Wall Street

Transcribe ISBNs and go into a trance. Get a traveling box of coffee from Dunkin' Donuts. Get a coffee box from Financier on Wall Street and get made fun of by colleagues—I mean—comrades. Meet me in the Robin Hood money shot of Sherwood Forest. Experience inner tantra orgasm during that and write a poem while talking. Get yr wallet stolen during the second poetry assembly—you gave it up for The Cause. Take out books 3 or 5 at a time, 3 and 5 being your lucky numbers—you unsuperstitious revolutionary. Watch the cops take it away. Watch the cops take it away again. Watch the cops take the Library away 7 times before they finally tape off the Library space with yellow crime scene tape. Realize the Library is illegal now. Cry out. LEGALIZE LITERACY. Break your staff and hurl it certain fathoms deep. Curtain! Drown your book. Drown your books before the cops do. Live on the deep sea bottom. Let the fish speak through you. You fish transistor radio. A young man at a glasses shop looks at your nametag, which says "Filip Librarian." "Are you a Libra?" he asks. "No. I'm a Virgo—but a late Virgo—Virgo-Libra cusp. Virgo ripe." "Oh." I didn't ask him his sign. If I had we would have gone to bed. I am a librarian! I go to bed with nobody. I go to bed with my books on the deep sea floor. Listen to the mad young man say "IS THIS—this place—is this fascism? What is this—ZOOTY PARK?" Say "Mike Check!" "Mike Check!" "I am experiencing" "I am experiencing" "A psychic" "A psychic" "Orgasm now" "Orgasm now" "Thank you!" "Thank you!" Be recruited by Stephen Boyer to assist him in the making of *The Occupy Wall Street Poetry Anthology* (now online! in ghostly form!) where we compile all poems sent to us, the ultimate editors of compassion. I love Stephen Boyer. Let that be recorded in Heaven's unchangeable heart. At the Friday Night Poetry Assembly: Mike Check yourself and then you wreck yourself: reading poetry live in a police state while undercovers videotape you is and isn't good for your health. "...[H]ere where I traded evenly, / & even gladly / health, for sanity; here" (Ted Berrigan). SAINT MANHATTAN SCORPION SERPENT PHOENIX NOWTIME THINGS TO DO AT LIBERTY LIBRARY PARK SQUARE PLAZA NO MORE ZUCCOTTI ZOOTY TOOTHY BLISS NOWTIME BRINE THE SEA SALT IN THE NOSTRILS FLARING ABOVE THE SURF OF LIBERTY BEACH YOU CAN TRY AND CATCH US AS IF WE WERE FISH IN YOUR ORANGE NETTING BUT WE ARE THE OCEAN AND YOU ARE TOO BIG TO FAIL THE TITANIC INSIDE US.

2. The Library at Normandy

The police called their attack on Liberty Park the other night "Operation Normandy." I guess they think we are the Nazis, hahaha! The pot calling the kettle. They should've called their cowardly nighttime attack "Fort Sumter," because it was just one of the first battles of this, our continuing American Civil War. By "the other night" I mean NOVEMBER 15 CIRCA 2AM THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT "A NIGHT THAT WILL LIVE IN INFAMY" SAID OBAMA FDR BUT ONLY IN MY WET DREAM. November 16, 2011, THE PEOPLE'S LIBRARY AT LIBERTY PARK "begin again begin again" this is a test of the continuous present nerve network GOLGOTHA (scenes from a CIVIL WAR). Library after cops take out books "and before hellmouth" I would like to take a moment to thank all the status quo fanatics who held up signs like "OCCUPY A SHOWER" before the brave occupiers of Liberty Park. I remember the showers you would like us to occupy but we would prefer not to be gassed, by teargas or any other kind. Mayor Bloomberg's third-term librarian: Joseph Goebbels. Happy third term. Every book you trashed will grow three new books. You can't stop THE HYDRA LIBRARY.

"Remember Normandy" the officer leaked to the protester. Let's take this coproposition to its Logical Conclusion: We are the Nazis and they are the Allies? And Bloomberg is Patton! He WISHES! Bloomberg is Colonel Sanders of his own headless genetically engineered chicken army. An undercover cop asks you, "What are you writing? You guys are always writing." "Poems." I am particularly offended that the NYPD used "Normandy" as codename for their operation. But they performed reverse Normandy. They attacked the ocean from the beach and try now to corral and occupy the ocean. We are the poetry percent! Do I have to pay for these books? No you just take them. We work on the honor system. Last night I dreamed the end of libraries. Jumping off a cliff I knew how to swing down the pine branches and safely land. The winter was the ocean. The Library was the eyes of the park. Now blindfolded with yellow crime scene tape. I hate yellow. Mayakovsky's yellow blouse future a lie proven by suicide. Talk me out of suicide. I don't need to be I'm bluffing. No I'm not. Fuck you no fuck you let's just fuck each other for the end of the world party shoot in the dive bar on the corner. The coroner shows up with a bottle of corn. How long did it take this to ferment. Ask my tearducts. They are well versed in explanation, that is to say, mute. Where is the mute button. A rocketship does not have a mute button. That is a TV. That is mutton. The lamb is

born from the carcass the flies will lead you where you need to go. The womb is not a place for a deep sea diver take off your scuba gear and eat your liver high in protein as you are high. The Greek tents on the beach at Troy and the shopper tents in the Walmart parking lot are two different sets of tents and the tents of Occupiers are bright blue waves when I close my eyes and look for them in my third eye. Eyeball a romance novel through a Trojan horse portal. "Heads up. Remember Normandy," whispered on street corner to old lady young lady guilty bystander guy male spy. Let's take coplogic to its logical-est conclusion confusion. If they are the Allies and we are the Nazis and Liberty Park is Root Beer, mitosis is imminent. When cells divine the future furniture ring around your Martian head. If they are the Allies and we are the Nazis and the beach at Normandy is Liberty Park, the Library must be our Nazi intelligence center. You who trash books, these books will return to you, and trash you. THE NYPD CALLING THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT ATTACK ON LIBERTY PARK ENCAMPMENT OPERATION NORMANDY IS A CLASSIC POLICE STATE REWRITING OF HISTORY EVEN THE DEAD ARE NOT SAFE AND WE ARE HERE TO RESCUE THEM AND THEY ARE HERE TO HELP US AND PROTECT US:

So many spirits of the dead are here. We are encamped at the edge of a mass grave, the world trade mass grave. We are here among other things to rescue the dead from being used as war fuel, their names and memories have been sullied enough and exploited to justify permanent war. They deserve their place in our democracy and help to protect the holy people's site of Liberty Park.

3. Wolfman Librarian Standup Tragedienne

O Wind, if UC Davis comes, can Kent State be far behind? Did you hear the one about the library organized by American citizens destroyed in one night by the NYPD? (It's so quiet out there you can hear a stone's throw from here!) I always like to open with a joke you animal faces. LOLing from the chandeliers of meat for the holidays! Dear Bloomberg, I want the art I made for the Library back, and I want the Library back, so that I can laminate your resignation letter and put it in the reference section for future Martians to study the grammar of plutocrats. Colorful death scene for the Holidays: Joy to the world, the Law has come, let the rich receive their bling! I know I'm supposed to move on, but I refuse to abbreviate my mourning of the Library and Liberty Park Encampment. It's not McMourning, it's Mourning; it's not Mourning and Melancholia, it's simply Mourning. Maybe I need some Moly to get me out of my pig trance. I mean could it look any more like a graveyard now? From a Burger King window: POW CAMP: Dear Mom, please send socks, I forgot them in my drawer. Luckily I have statue eyes, so pepper spray has no effect on me. Happy Thanksgiving from all of us here at "Villa Cather." Legalize Literacy. Legalize Leisure. Legalize Library. Although Fort Sumter has been

taken, I feel confident this conflict will not last longer than a couple months at most. IT IS AN ALIEN MULTIVERSE, AND IS ARE CORRESPONDING. Bloomberg's bowling team is armed with perfume canisters that can spray Chanel No. 5 at anyone within 30 feet. I'm going Christmas shopping! Mark Lamoureux: "Everything Bloombag says and does just gets more and more odious—I'm waiting for him to go full-on Caligula one of these days and just get up there on NY1 and start banging his sister or something." Filip Marinovich: "That would be too stylish for him! He WISHES he was Caligula. As it is he is Colonel Sanders of the headless genetically engineered chicken army."

4. Occupy Wall Street PTSD (Just the High Points)

I woke with a honey locust tree in my throat. I can't countenance the sight of police covering Liberty Park with black netting. ZUCCOTTI FASCIST YELLOW VESTS of Brookfield Properties storm troopers. Yellow leaves of Liberty Park—WHAT IF MY LEAVES ARE FALLING LIKE ITS OWN! Yellow Jackets are Bees prophecy adversaries help us secretly too with Revolution—yoohoo! LIBRARY PARK PTSD What are the symptoms? The night marred the end of Library by bringing it back into illuminated focus but waking it was gone: where did you go My Beautiful Library Without Mercy? Mercy is the Library. The books of the Library were laid to rest in a mass grave called SANITATION. "Yesterday I dreamed the end of libraries." — WOLFMAN LIBRARIAN POET OF A MANIA WHOSE STAGE IS THE TOP OF THE WALL WATCH HOW YOU BLOCK THAT SCENE YOU WILL FALL ON WHAT SIDE THE NO SIDE SIDE THIS BRIGHTNESS IT DOESN'T LIE IT DOESN'T TELL THE TRUTH IT FLIES IT FLIES ABOVE THE RUBBLE PILING UP A CIGAR FOR THE ANGEL OF PERPLEXITY.

5. At Burger King on the Corner of Trinity Place and Liberty Street

Night, Tuesday, December 13, 2011. "Do you miss the protesters?" the man at the Burger King counter downstairs asks the woman selling Burger King food and drink. I don't hear her response. "A little?," he laughs. Liberty Park during the period of encampment was a boon to local businesses. But the greatest business was the Library; we charged nothing. AT THE BURGER KING AT TRINITY PLACE IT REALLY MATTERS. JOY TO THE WORLD at the corner of Trinity and Pine! The father the son the holy ghost at the Trinity Place Burger King it really matters. Joy to the worldly THINGS TO DO AT THE PEOPLE'S LIBRARY AT LIBERTY PARK: Answer a lot of voyeur questions: Why are you guys here? At Thanksgiving. Why can't you just gather at a public library? BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL BEING SHUT DOWN. Why can't you just gather at a public library? ASK ME ON SATURDAY. "I don't need any more of this shit. I really don't," the cleaning woman of Burger King says, "I really don't. Move your fuckin' ass." I'm looking at the...lights at Zuccotti...

what is this...S...Zooty Park? Sooty park? It's clean now! It sure is clean now! Why don't I go over there and play some chess. I want to sit in the space where the Library WAS and feel something. I'm going in. I would be so flattered if the state thought of me as a battlefield. I've always wanted a Waterloo on my body. Let's go! If the field has grass play bloody! Bloomberg's bowling team is armed with perfume canisters that can spray Chanel No. 5 at anyone within 30 feet. I'm going Christmas shopping! Occupy my manger. Occupy my messiah. Occupy my immaculate conception. Occupy my immaculate Cesarean. "Americans want to forget the past and start a new thing all the time, but only by going into the past can you go into the future," says Wolfman Librarian. Trojan Vibrations or a Greek Wooden Horse: which would you like more for Christmas, America? The white light is explaining the importance of the Library: a poor bare forked animal we are, and by we I mean us the free of the debtor's prison United States.

6. At the Wall which Will Be Your Last One

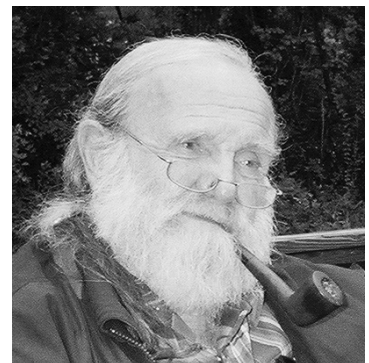
HOW DO YOU TALK ABOUT TREES IN A POEM THE TREES ARE FULL OF POLICEMEN OH GREEN YELLOW AND NOT THERE ZUCCOTTI TREES ZUCCOTTI LEAVES ALL IS IMP AND IMPERMANENCE BUT I'M NOT ENLIGHTENED ENOUGH TO BE OKAY WITH ANY OF IT IN FACT I'M DRUNK AND MY STOMACH HURTS THE STATE DISSOLVING IN MY GUT MY GUT DISSOLVED AND I LIE IN STATE AT THE CAPITOL EVEN I DR. ZHIVAGO IN THE AMERICAN FALL OF GO AT THE WALL WHICH WILL BE YOUR LAST ONE PLUTOCRACY THE UV RAYS KILL THE RICH TOO (REACHING DOWN THROUGH

THE DEREGULATED OZONE LAYERCAKE / TO WRING ANOTHER BANKER NECK AND MIDDLE CLASS NECK AND HOMELESS NECK IN ONE GESTURE JOKETIME) WELCOME TO SKIN CANCER PEELING SKIN BILLS DOLLARS DOLLARS GET YOUR THRILLS. I MADE A DOLL OF DOLLARS NOW I STICK PINS IN IT GEORGE WASHINGTON FALTERS IT'S COLD ON THE DELAWARE RIVER BOTTOM. WHERE DELAWARE. WE'RE NOT THIS PLANET ANYMORE: MASS EVICTION OF A RACE: THE HUMAN ONE. EVICTION OF A PARK IT WAS NOT BUT AN ATTACK IN A CIVIL WAR. THE YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY SPOKE THE FOX NEWS REPORTER INTO SILENCE WITH HIS BLUE UNION ARMY CAP. FORT SUMTER HAS BEEN TAKEN AS I WRITE THIS. SEND THE TIDE. SEND MCLELLAN. SEND GRANT. SHERMAN. OUR MARCH TO THE SEA BEGINS. WE ARE THE SEA. NO MARCHING. ONLY THE FIRE IN BOOTS WALKS OVER US ALL UNIMPRESSED WITH ANY REVOLUTIONARY COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY IN ANY CASE RIGHT OR LEFT. RIGHT LEFT RIGHT LEFT FIRE IN BOOTS MARCHES. MARCHES US INTO OUTER SPACE. HABITABLE SPACE IN OUTER SPACE. AN INTERNET CAFE. I HOPE SO. THIS NESCAFE TASTES SO GOOD WITH THE HUMAN FLESH IN IT. IS THAT HOMEGROWN ORGANIC HUMAN. DELICIOUS DELICIOUS. ALIENS. IT IS AN ALIEN MULTIVERSE AND IS ARE CORRESPONDING. DICHTEN = EXPANDARE. MOTTO OF A DICK. DICK TRACY THAT IS. WOLFMAN LIBRARIAN WAS HERE. WOLFMAN LIBRARIAN IS HERE. AND WHERE IS THAT? CHICKEN FAT. AND WHY? CHICKEN PIE. OCCUPY. OCCUPY—

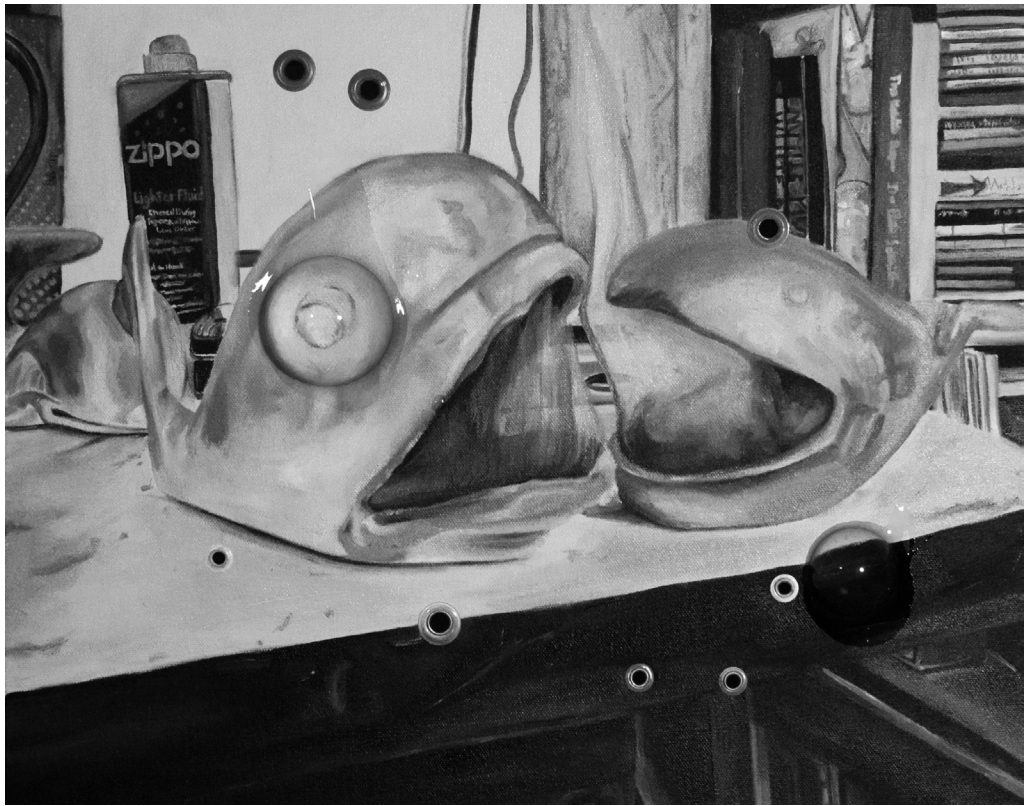
Filip Marinovich is a poet living in New York City. He is the author of Zero Readership and And If You Don't Go Crazy I'll Meet You Here Tomorrow (both from Ugly Duckling Presse), as

In Memoriam: Theodore Enslin (1925–2011)

Ted Enslin was a mentor to me for over a decade, and was instrumental in my development as a poet. His influence didn't so much manifest itself aesthetically—our work is quite different—but in his approach to balancing a life in nature and a life of the mind, Ted helped bring my vision into focus. I first visited Ted in Maine in July 2001. I spent a week living in Bloomsides, his writing cabin in the woods, a quarter-mile from his residence. That visit was strictly pedagogical; Ted had me reading John Skelton, and listening to von Dittersdorf's symphonies inspired by Ovid. We spent hours discussing forms and variations. Ted's background in composition played a paramount role in his poetry, and he felt it vitally important that poets be aware of the musicality at play in language. In the (usually annual) visits that followed, our relationship evolved from that of mentor/student to a loving friendship that transcended definable roles. Over the decade that I knew him, Ted and I maintained a vigorous correspondence. Ted was encouraging and generous in his support, but also stern enough to call out poems that were weak and needed more attention. Ted was masterful in his letter-writing, able to convey so much in such small spaces. Beyond all the advice he passed on to me, and the point of view toward which he directed me, what made the deepest impression was his insistence that one must be true to the work (Poetry with a capital "P"). Instead of fretting over who was receiving what award, or getting mired in institutional politics, Ted emphasized the importance of staying true to the work at hand. The work will always find the people it's supposed to find. Ted left us over a hundred books and chapbooks, including some of the finest long poems of the last century. His legacy will be carried by the generations of poets he nurtured and inspired. – WHIT GRIFFIN



Justin Lieberman



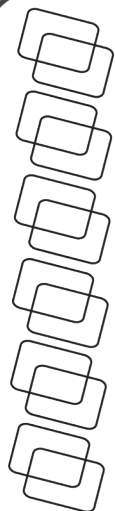




Pages 14–15: All paintings from the series *Valet of the Infinite*, oil on canvas, lenses, grommets, 16" x 20". Clockwise from upper left: *Leviathan's Flaming Kiss*, *How to Interact with the Police*, *The Studious Observer*, *The Painting Machine*.

Above Left: *The First Tower*, mixed media (needs one power outlet and transformer), 76" x 21" x 17".

Above Right: *Tom Baker*, SLR cameras and taxidermied crabs, 41" x 19" x 19".



new from
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POETRY PROJECT READING REPORTS

MONDAY 11/7/11
HARMONY HOLIDAY & JARED STANLEY

When Macgregor Card introduces a poet on any given Monday night, he realizes something new in the moment of the presentation, flourishing into a literary pre-heating and very rarely stepping on the poets' toes, as so many hosts tend to do when reading their favorite poem from the about-to-read-in-the-next-few-seconds poet's newest work. That kind of shit just pisses me—as a listener and a vocal-reader—off. But Card excels. He also has been, at least this year, outshining many other Monday night venues in that he has had some lesser-known but you-need-to-know-them poets come to read and perform at the Project. November 7 was no different—Harmony Holiday and Jared Stanley.

Jared Stanley read first, after Macgregor's introduction covered the range from "tinkling" to "rubbing the carpet" and the "important sounds of touch." Stanley's reading was crisp, well pronounced, full of Sierra-nuance and lonesome natural communing, a chimera of Sun Ra and John Muir. Spatial exploration that tended to transcend the normalized survey of what's-this-all-around-me—from fragments of the Space Shuttle Columbia to various weeds "growing up," Jared Stanley took listeners on a night-hike of Nevada nomenclature and dry field jargon and proved that the mind is nothing but an arboretum full of the possibility of meaningful "inanimate friendships," to use his words. Stanley didn't read traditionally, but instead walked straight through a range of poems (in fact, he read a Sun Ra piece) that amalgamated the ode, the journal entry and allegory. I walked away with the sense that adornment in poetry can ignite the improvement of dreams (whether waking or sleeping).

Harmony Holiday, the author of the Motherwell Prize-winning *Negro League Baseball* on Fence Books, was the second reader of the night. Holiday's poems tend to stretch out the elasticity of a room and bring in the blurred effect of ghosts, spirits and forgotten or discarded ideas. Here, she read lines like: "Dwell like a ghost," "You ran out of language" and (the best one of the night) "If you're trapped in an auction room, get out by bidding." Holiday read with a quiet tangibility, her soft voice falling like mallets on a xylophone, more with the touch of Dorothy Ashby than that of Roy Ayers. A fractional apology is basically a sound. A proportional understanding is, for the most part, a note. But Holiday and all her riffed-nervousness really shine in her song collages which I have seen her play, live, a few times now. One can pick out Ornette Coleman, specks of Nina Simone; and plenty of interview clips soared and scattered through the Sanctuary. The reading ended with the voice of Erykah Badu, in a recent interview, crisply saying "I let a song go out of my heart." This, following Harmony Holiday's bodily inclined collage prose, specifically the statement, "You are my man, you are the infinite particular."

– KEN L. WALKER

WEDNESDAY 11/9/11
TRACIE MORRIS & ELLIOTT SHARP

With percussive fret-tapping acting as a busy ground for a calm, drone-like vocal entrance, guitarist-composer Elliot Sharp and poet-vocalist Tracie Morris' joint performance began in an improvisational space that gradually resolved into an open-ended exploration of two songs written by the great Chicago bluesman Willie Dixon. Better known in recordings by Koko Taylor and Howlin' Wolf, respectively, "Which Came First, the Egg or the Ham?" and "Spoonful" combine homely imagery with a sense of great and mysterious portent, and these renditions emphasized the latter, as Morris circled back repeatedly to key refrains ("Everybody's fightin' for that spoonful") and couplets ("You may be a hater, you may be a lover / But you can bet your life, one destroys the other"). The tension and balance between lyric and sound were part of the evening's point, making it misleading to call Sharp's contribution "accompaniment," and during his solo passages, his use of extended techniques (rubbing and knocking the guitar's body, drawing out pitches with the "E-Bow," a handheld effects processor) and transcendence of song-form, linked the formally unfettered playing of early country-blues guitarists with "downtown" methodologies.

One of Sharp's current ensembles is called "Terraplane," after a 1936 Robert Johnson recording; Morris has sung on two of that band's CDs (and has worked with Sharp in other configurations) and African American music continually informs her writing. Her set-within-a-set of new poems from the forthcoming book *Rhyme Scheme*, for example, included one dense piece titled "Afro-Futurism," and another, set during the blackout of 1977, that evoked "Farrah Fawcett transistors set to James Brown's 'Hot Pants.'" So it's only to be expected that their joint performance would draw on, and extend, blues tradition. More surprising, perhaps, were their reworkings of songs we might be more inclined to think of as "pop": The Drifters' (or George Benson's?) "On Broadway," the much-recorded "Our Day Will Come," and Bob Haggart and Johnny Burke's "What's New?" Sharp and Morris handled these tunes less respectfully than Dixon's (or, later, Howlin' Wolf's "Smoke-stack Lightning"), ignoring familiar chord changes, suppressing expected rhythms and elongating or atomizing the lyrics into individual note-and-word events. (On her website, Morris offers a straightforward justification of the technique: "Some words take longer to say than others.") I may have Occupy on the brain lately (not that I'm alone), but it was easy to imagine that these songs been chosen for their unexpected resonance with the current atmosphere of economic hardship ("one thin dime won't even shine your shoes") and revolutionary hope ("our day will come...and we'll have everything.") As for the torchy jazz standard written in 1939 and sung by everyone from Frank Sinatra to Linda Rondstadt, the performance, and really the entire set, insisted on its own answer. "What's New?" *This*.

– FRANKLIN BRUNO

UPCOMING POETRY PROJECT WORKSHOPS

I Sing the Book Electric

Susan Mills

Fridays 7-9PM / Begins February 3

10 Sessions

This workshop investigates the body of the book: the internal body and the external body and all the places in between. We will work with pencil and bonefolder, with writing and folding, with drawing and sewing, and with page-turning, painting, printing, gluing, altering, cutting, inking and placing. We will consider historical and modern book structures, visual poetry, artist's books, collaborations between poets and artists, and visual art with text. Most of all, we will make books every week in class and between classes: chapbooks, artist's books, one-of-a-kind books, editions, scrolls, collaborations, boxes, booklets, accordions, concertinas and more. Please note that there is an additional \$20 material fee. A list of simple hand tools will be provided at the first class. Maximum capacity is 15.

Excavating the Present

with The Poetry Project Archive

Will Edmiston

Saturdays 12-2PM / Begins February 4

10 Sessions

We will be using primary sources from The Poetry Project onsite archive as inspiration and moments for departure into our own unique ways and means of composition. We'll look at what is being transmitted by this archival material in both content and form. What is lost and gained in that transmission will be the imaginative fuel that gives way to the writing and reading of each other's work. We'll draw on the rich archival resources housed in the depths of the church basement, such as: early editions of *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *The World*, *The Recluse* and *The Project Papers*, affiliated publications such as *Dodgems* and *Telephone*, audio from readings, video from *Public Access Poetry* and other selected archival material.

The Walk-in Desk Drawer:

Writing from the Outside In

Matvei Yankelevich

Tuesdays 7-9PM / Begins February 7

5 Sessions

How does one write from outside the prevailing culture? What is a private language? Where does it intersect with the universal language of our utopian desires? In this workshop, we'll examine a few writers in isolation (political, cultural, linguistic), writers who wrote for the desk drawer, or in the margins of culture, language or sanity. We will take cues from the gestural language of the outsider. We will commune with poetry at its outer limits as it approaches music, drawing or cypher. We will practice writing that sentences itself to infamy or obscurity. Writers discussed or lurking in the desk drawer include but are not limited to Ivan Blatny, Stéphane Mallarmé, Alexei Kruchenykh, Gabriel Pomerand, Mina Loy, Daniil Kharms, William Blake, Osip Mandelstam, Henri Michaux, Boris Poplavsky, Laura Riding, Lev Rubinstein and Alexander Vvedensky.

Oppression and Redemption Songs

Ariana Reines

Tuesdays 7-9PM / Begins March 20

5 Sessions

We are going to write poems whose origins are sites of trauma, catastrophe, loss, forsakenness, terror and sorrow. That means writing poems that may speak of enormities like war or geological catastrophe, or even a sense of nameless and mute malaise, the tiniest most inexpressible lack, the windiest most overwhelming horror—but we will do so by proceeding from our ownmost trauma zones, and we must be both specific and precise with ourselves. This does not mean that the poems we write must be lyric or romantic or even expressionistic poems; on the contrary, we will experiment rigorously with the rapture of structure and form. The rule is that we begin where it hurts. This is how poetry becomes the substance of transformation, a force whose origin's truth becomes, when we write, the motor of a power that really can defy the world—as it always has. Even if redemption, in the end, can only be a song, well, a song is a lot, and a song can do it. We can do it too.

The workshop fee is \$350, which includes a one-year Sustaining Membership and tuition for any and all spring and fall 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. If you would like to reserve a spot, please call (212) 674-0910. Visit www.poetryproject.org for full descriptions and the instructors' biographies.

JACK KEROUAC SCHOOL OF DISEMBODIED POETICS

**SUMMER WRITING PROGRAM
JULY 11- JULY 8, 2012**

WEEK 1 June 11-June 17 Archival Poetics & the War on Memory

Charles Alexander, Rebecca Brown, Brenda Coultas, E. Tracy Grinnell, HR Hegnauer, David Henderson, Lisa Jarrot, Dawn Lundy Martin, Prageeta Sharma, Eleni Sikelianos, Stacy Szymaszek & Steven Taylor

WEEK 2 June 18-June 24 Cultural Rhizomes & Intentional Communities

Sherwin Bitsui, CA Conrad, Allison Hedge Coke, Laird Hunt, Pierre Joris, Vincent Katz, Stephen Motika, Nicole Peyrafitte, Margaret Randall & Julia Seko

WEEK 3 June 25-July 1 Science, Sanity & Evolution

Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Tisa Bryant, Ambrose Bye, Julie Carr, Clark Coolidge, Samuel R. Delany, Michelle Ellsworth, Joanne Kyger, Karen Randall, Selah Saterstrom, Rodrigo Toscano & Anne Waldman

WEEK 4 July 2-July 8 Performance & Collaboration

Laurie Anderson, Amiri Baraka, Caroline Bergvall, Kenneth Goldsmith, Bhanu Kapil, Thurston Moore, Tracie Morris, Jena Osman, Claudia Rankine & Roberto Tejada



Thurston Moore & Anne Waldman

www.naropa.edu/swp
email swpr@naropa.edu

Naropa
UNIVERSITY
boulder, colorado

EVENTS at THE POETRY PROJECT

WEDNESDAY 2/1

A NIGHT WITH FLOOD EDITIONS: FANNY HOWE, DEVIN JOHNSTON & LISA JARNOI

Fanny Howe's recent collection of poetry, *Come and See*, was published in 2011. In recent years, Flood Editions has published two prose works, *Economics* and *What Did I Do Wrong?*. In 2009, she won the Ruth Lilly Lifetime Achievement Award. **Lisa Jarnoi** is the author of four collections of poetry (including *Black Dog Songs* and *Night Scenes* from Flood Editions) as well as *Robert Duncan: The Ambassador from Venus: A Biography*. **Devin Johnston** is the author of four books of poetry, the most recent of which is *Traveler* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011); and two books of prose, including *Creaturely and Other Essays* (Turtle Point, 2009). He works for Flood Editions.

MONDAY 2/6

OPEN READING (SIGN-UP AT 7:45PM)

WEDNESDAY 2/8

SUSAN HOWE & ROBERTO TEJADA

Susan Howe is author of more than a dozen books of poetry and literary criticism. Her critical study, *My Emily Dickinson*, was reissued in 2007. *That This*, a collection of work published by New Directions in 2010, recently won the Bollingen Prize.

Roberto Tejada is the author of *Mirrors for Gold* (Krupskaya, 2006), *Exposition Park* (Wesleyan, 2010) and *Full Foreground* (University of Arizona, 2012). He founded and continues to coedit (with Kristin Dykstra and Gabriel Bernal Granados) the multilingual journal of poetry and poetics in translation *Mandorla: New Writing from the Americas*.

FRIDAY 2/10, 10PM

THE HOLE, A GATHERING

Reframing the "book launch," **Thom Donovan** and Brett Price offer a night of consumption, conversation, reflection and performance around Donovan's book, *The Hole* (Displaced Press, 2012). As Donovan has written to participants about the event: "I would not like to read from the book, so much as I would use the book's appearance as an occasion for conversation around its contents, as well as an opportunity for friends, colleagues and loved ones to gather." Participants include Melissa Buzzeo, CAConrad, Rob Halpern, Brenda Iijima, Madhu Kaza, Robert Kocik, Dorothea Lasky, Andrew Levy, C. J. Martin, Eléna Rivera, Eleni Stecopoulos, Brian Whitener, Tyrone Williams and others.

MONDAY 2/13

BRIDGE COLLABORATION JOURNAL, ISSUE 1

This reading launches issue one of *Bridge*, a journal of collaborations between poets, visual artists, musicians and accountants. *Bridge* is edited by Alina Gregorian and Zachary Pace. Contributors to the first issue include Mary Austin Speaker, Jocelyn Spaar, David Shapiro, Danniel Schoonebeek, Emily Pettit, Guy Pettit, Ben Pease, Allyson Paty, Ben Mirov, Chris Martin, David Lehman, Paul Legault, Ben Kopel, Simone Kearney, Christian Hawkey, Ben Fama and Ben Estes.

WEDNESDAY 2/15

BRANDON DOWNING & AARON KUNIN

Brandon Downing is a writer and visual artist originally from California. His books of poetry include *The Shirt Weapon* (Germ Monographs, 2002) and *Dark Brandon* (Faux Press, 2005). A monograph of his literary collages from 1996–2008, *Lake Antiquity*, was released by Fence Books in late 2009. A long poem, *AT ME*, is just out from Octopus Books. **Aaron Kunin** is the author of *The Sore Throat and Other Poems* (Fence Books, 2010). His other books, also from Fence, include a poetry collection, *Folding Ruler Star* (2005), and a novel, *The Mandarin* (2008). *Grace Period*, a collection of aphorisms, sketches and fragments, is forthcoming.

FRIDAY 2/17, 10PM

THE OCCUPY WALL STREET POETRY ANTHOLOGY

This reading will celebrate *The Occupy Wall Street Poetry Anthology*, a living, breathing, all-inclusive and constantly expanding anthology in solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. Admission to the event is free and the reading will be modeled on the Friday Night Poetry Assembly readings that have taken place at Liberty Plaza for the majority of the occupation. Readers will sign up to read from the anthology or from work relevant to the OWS movement, then will be chosen by lot. For more information about the OWS Poetry Anthology, visit <http://peopleslibrary.wordpress.com/>.

MONDAY 2/20

ALAN FELSENTAL & MATTHEW KLANE

Alan Felsenthal is a graduate of the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. He is coeditor of a small press, The Song Cave. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Fence*, *The Iowa Review*, *Microfilme Magazine* and *Sea Ranch*. **Matthew Klane** is founder and coeditor of Flim Forum Press. His book is *B_____ Meditations* (Stockport Flats,

2008). Some chapbooks include: *Friend Delighting the Eloquent*, *Sorrow Songs*, *Sons and Followers*, and *Isle of Wight*. Recent or forthcoming work can be found in *Taiga*, *mutha fucka*, *Stretching Panties* and *Cant*.

WEDNESDAY 2/22

SUSAN LANDERS & RODRIGO TOSCANO

Susan Landers is the author of *15: A Poetic Engagement with the Chicago Manual of Style* (Least Weasel), *Covers* (O Books) and *248 mgs., a panic picnic* (O Books). She was the founder and coeditor of *Pom2*, a journal of poetic polylogue. Recent poems have appeared in *Try!* and on the blog *Elective Affinities*. **Rodrigo Toscano's** newest book of poetry is *Deck of Deeds* (Counterpath Press, 2012). *Collapsible Poetics Theater*, his previous book, was a 2007 National Poetry Series selection. His poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies, including *Against Expression*, *Diasporic Avant-Gardes* and *Poetic Voices without Borders*.

MONDAY 2/27

GRACE LEAVITT & JENNIFER NELSON

Gracie Leavitt's recent work can be found in the *The Brooklyn Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Lana Turner*, *LIT*, *No*, *Dear*, *Sentence*, *Sugar House Review*, *Washington Square* and other journals. Transatlantic collaborations appear in Whiskey & Fox's series "Parks and Occupation" and a chapbook is forthcoming from These Signals Press. **Jennifer Nelson** is an art historian finishing her dissertation at Yale University and the poetry editor of *Epiphany* magazine. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Volt*, *Handsome*, *Action*, *Yes*, *6x6*, *RealPoetik*, *Forget Magazine* and elsewhere.

WEDNESDAY 2/29

BARBARA HENNING & FRANCES RICHARD

Barbara Henning is the author of three novels, seven books of poetry and a series of photo-poem pamphlets. Her most recent books are a collection of poetry and prose, *Cities & Memory* (Chax Press); a novel, *Thirty Miles to Rosebud* (BlazeVox); a collection of object-sonnets, *My Autobiography* (United Artists); and a collection of interviews, *Looking Up Harryette Mullen* (Belladonna*). **Frances Richard's** second volume of poems, *The Phonemes*, is forthcoming from Les Figues Press; later in 2012, Futurepoem will release a third book titled *Anarch*. She is the author of *See Through* (Four Way Books, 2003) and the chapbooks *Anarch*. (Woodland Editions, 2008) and *Shaved Code* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs, 2008).

MONDAY 3/5
OPEN READING
(SIGN-UP AT 7:45PM)

WEDNESDAY 3/7
CHARLES ALEXANDER
& SAWAKO NAKAYASU

Charles Alexander is the founder and director of Chax Press. His books include *Hopeful Buildings* (Chax, 1990), *Arc of Light / Dark Matter* (Segue, 1992), *Near or Random Acts* (Singing Horse, 2004), *Certain Slants* (Junction, 2007) and the recently published *Pushing Water* (Cuneiform, 2011). He is a recipient of the distinguished Arizona Arts Award, and is a former director of Minnesota Center for Book Arts, of Black Mesa Press, and of the Tucson Poetry Festival. **Sawako Nakayasu** writes and translates poetry, and her recent book, *Mouth: Eats Color: Sagawa Chika Translations, Anti-Translations & Originals* does both in one work. Other recent books include *Texture Notes* and *Hurry Home Honey*, and books of translation include Ayane Kawata's *Time of Sky/Castles in the Air* and Takashi Hiraide's *For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut*, which received the Best Translated Book Award in 2009.

MONDAY 3/12, 6-9PM
14TH ANNUAL URBAN WORD NYC TEEN
POETRY SLAM PRELIMS

New York's hottest teen poets compete for a chance to represent their city at the Brave New Voices National Teen Poetry Slam. Come support the voices of the next generation as they take the stage and speak their mind. To enter, poets must be 13-19 years old and sign up at urbanwordnyc.org or show up. First come first serve. Audience members are encouraged to come early as seating is limited. Admission is \$5 for teens, \$7 for adults and free for performers.

WEDNESDAY 3/14
BRUCE COVEY & AMY KING

Amy King's recent books are *I Want to Make You Safe* (Litmus Press, 2011) and *Slaves to Do These Things* (Blazevox, 2009). King teaches English and Creative Writing at SUNY Nassau Community College, is currently preparing a book of interviews with the poet Ron Padgett, and co-edits *Esque Magazine* with Ana Božićević. **Bruce Covey's** fifth book of poetry, *Reveal*, will be published by

Bitter Cherry Books at the beginning of 2012; his next-most-recent titles are *Glass Is Really a Liquid* (No Tell Books, 2010) and *Elapsing Speedway Organism* (No Tell, 2006).

FRIDAY 3/16, 10PM
ZACHARY SCHOMBURG & FJORDS

This event will celebrate the release of **Zachary Schomburg's** third book of poems, *Fjords* (Black Ocean, 2012), and will feature a multidisciplinary, collaborative performance by Manual Cinema, Chicago Q Ensemble and Schomburg. Consisting of poetry and shadow puppetry, the performance will toe the line between live cinema and performance art.

MONDAY 3/19
KRYSTAL LANGUAGE & LINDSEY BOLDT
Krystal Languell is the author of *Call the Catastrophists* (BlazeVox). Her work has appeared in such journals as *Fairy Tale Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Esque* and others. Founder of the feminist literary magazine *Bone Bouquet*, she serves as a collaborative board member for Belladonna* Series as well as editor-in-chief at Noemi Press. **Lindsey Boldt** is a poet and itinerant culture worker in training. Her first book, *Overboard*, is forthcoming from Publication Studio in early 2012. Chapbooks include *Oh My, Hell Yes* (Summer BF Press), *Overboard: Rampage* (Berkeley Neo Baroque) and *Titties for Lindsey* (OMG Press, forthcoming).

WEDNESDAY 3/21
AMMIEL ALCALAY & DAVID HENDERSON
Ammiel Alcalay's recent books include *Islanders* (City Lights) and *"neither wit nor gold" (from then)* (Ugly Duckling). Other books include *Scrapmetal* (Factory School), *Memories of Our Future: Selected Essays* (City Lights), *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (University of Minnesota Press) and *the cairo noteboooks* (Singing Horse Press). Most recently, he is the initiator and General Editor of *Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative*, a series of student- and guest-edited archival texts emerging from the New American Poetry. **David Henderson's** books of poetry include *De Mayor of Harlem* and *Neo-California*. His two-hour radio documentary, *Bob Kaufman, Poet*, is available through the Pacifica Archive. One of the founding members of the Society of Umbra, he is the editor of the

forthcoming *Umbra Omnibus*, a collection of the magazines, anthologies, oral histories, artworks and documents of the Black Arts Movement.

MONDAY 3/26
PAUL LEGAULT & BRANDON BROWN
Paul Legault is the cofounder of Telephone Books and the author of three books of poetry: *The Madeleine Poems* (Omni Dawn, 2010), *The Other Poems* (Fence, 2011) and an English-to-English translation of the complete works of Emily Dickinson (McSweeney's, forthcoming). **Brandon Brown's** first two books, *The Persians By Aeschylus* (Displaced Press) and *The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus* (Krupskaya), were published in 2011. Poems and prose have recently appeared in *Postmodern Culture*, *Model Homes*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *Swan's Rag*, *Try!* and *Art Practical*.

WEDNESDAY 3/28
MICHAEL HELLER & KRISTIN PREVALLET
Michael Heller has published over twenty books of poetry, essays, memoir and fiction. His most recent books are *This Constellation Is a Name: Collected Poems 1965-2010* (Nightboat Books, 2012); *Beckmann Variations & Other Poems* (Shearsman, 2010); and two autobiographical works, *Earth and Cave* (Dos Madres, 2007) and *Living Root: A Memoir* (SUNY, 2001). **Kristin Prevallet** was the Fall 2011 writer-in-residence at Spalding University and teaches workshops on Trance Poetics through the Center for Mindbody Studies. She is the author of four books, including *I, Afterlife: Essay in Mourning Time* (Essay Press). She edited and introduced the critical edition of Helen Adam's work, *A Helen Adam Reader* (National Poetry Foundation).

FRIDAY 3/30, 10PM
BRIGHT PINK MOSQUITO
This event will celebrate the release of the second issue of *Bright Pink Mosquito*. Edited by Whit Griffin and Andy Hughes, *Bright Pink Mosquito* is a poetry journal that publishes generous selections of work by a range of contemporary writers. Issues of the journal will be available and readings will be given by Christopher Rizzo, Debrah Morkun, Russell Dillon, Tracey McTague, Ben Mazer, Michael Peters, Jess Mynes and others.

All events begin at 8PM unless otherwise noted. Admission: \$8 / Students & Seniors \$7 / Members \$5 or Free. The Poetry Project is located in St. Mark's Church at the corner of 2ND Avenue & 10TH Street in Manhattan. Call (212) 674-0910 for more information. The Poetry Project is wheelchair-accessible with assistance and advance notice. Schedule is subject to change.

Book Reviews

Notes from Irrelevance

Anselm Berrigan

(Wave Books, 2011)

Review by Rodney Koeneke

Notes from Irrelevance reminds me of those movie scenes where the hero has seconds to defuse a ticking bomb by touching two wires together, but isn't sure which the right ones are. The wires here are the twisting, tensile lines, like the seven-clause stunner that opens the poem; the bomb is the urgency of the poet's self-interrogation as it works its way through memory, family history, friendships, anxieties and "uncodable degrees of grief"; the movie is the studied artfulness of the rhetoric; while the hero is Anselm but also finally us, the public for whom the poem's variety of assertions, confessions and evasions are performed.

On its surface, *Notes from Irrelevance* seems like an easy climb. As "a transcription of / a stain on the soul / of the off-looker," the poem recalls Dostoevsky's anguished, appealingly underdog narrator in *Notes from Underground*. Like him, Berrigan draws in the reader as an invisible confessor to a searching, sometimes self-lacerating assessment of his life:

*I am
not inferno, no, no
matter how aptly
uncharacterized by
stranger and estranged
alike, my brooding bent
toward seeing, forcing
an issue out of perceptual
marginalia—"my life" or
more succinctly, my
humor.*

That "issue" includes bracingly open reflections on competitiveness, sobriety, desire, childhood, parenthood, work life, city life, first-named relationships (Dana, Sylvie, Ted, Eileen) and a lineage extending from "my father" to "the baby [who] sits on my thigh" needing "a chance to unfix / all she's told." If the self in writing's like tonality in music, this book is hooky with Cs, giving its readers a finely rendered set of "micro-meanings" that modulate easily from poetry to autobiography.

What excites me most in the poem is how this material interacts with another, more dissonant narrative that's as much about withholding as revealing. In one especially memorable image, the poet asks:

*Is a nude picture of
Jackie O found in
Andy Warhol's suitcase
really a bizarre item?*

A nude in a suitcase, arriving in the interrogative, seems like an apt metaphor for the poem's own wavering between exposure and erasure, disclosing and concealing. "I am constantly / hiding my torso in / front of our bloodshot / field of vision": this contradictory moment of self-assertion—"I am" joined with "constantly hiding"—rhymes with similar lines throughout the book. The same voice that confides personal anecdotes about Ted or Eileen also tells us that "I garble the / rhetorical aspects of / sensibility or silence / them altogether as / occasion implicitly demands"; that "I am not most comfortable / removing layers of myself / at no one's behest"; that "I am most / certainly engaged to a / dissolution of image, / even as I wield my own / anti-program in glossy / fashion"; and that "I will never / abandon my desire to / recede into and out of / interconnection."

Hiding, garbling, dissolving and receding are themes that cut across the confessional surface. Berrigan's special genius is to make them feel like moral imperatives, worked deep into the poem's formal fabric. My favorite moment in *Notes* creates its effect by stoically evading its own punchline, trusting the reader to dive in ear-first and find it:

*The other day
I was imagining the
Marquis de Sade,
pronouncing the Sade
part with additional
invisible letters: an h
after the s and an r
after the a. There would
also be pronunciation
of the e as if it were a
long a: the Marquis de
Sade, yes, I was only*

*thinking about the Sade
part: he himself means
nothing more than
opportunity, as all the
horrible pop songs that
haunt my chintzier memory
play all around me.*

I come up from this passage a little haunted, too—by the unspoken "Shar-day," by the "r" hidden in Sade, and by the traces of the poet's own associative leaps in transforming Marquis to chanteuse.

Similar moments occur across the book, the function of a varied and intricate syntax that can move from bumper sticker-sized koans—"Not 'true.' Happening." "I will / not grovel ethically before / just what is"—to the *fin-de-siècle* panache of "One may / be so dispossessed as to / emit the frailest of leers / at these mood-lit / passersby." "Signs of virtuosity," writes Berrigan, "are no impediment to the punk," but there's more to the display than flexing chops. "So the task," we're told,

*is to find a new way
to speak, to tell of being,
tell being to fuck off and
come back with a steelier
measure of lack, a kinder
spirit for company,
distance, pain, fortitude
in the empathetic grist
rephrasing caught rides
half the time, or so a
speaker badly sung
with snarling hook
intones.*

Get that—or fall off it and get back on again—and you've got the poem's measure. Or better, the measure it gives the reader through the process of reading it: speaking as being, speaker as singing, deflection as ethic and style as the trick to still the bomb.

Rodney Koeneke is the author of *Musee Mechanique*, *Rouge State*, and a chapbook, *Rules for Drinking Forties*. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

***In the Presence of Absence*
Mahmoud Darwish
(Trans. Sinan Antoon)
(Archipelago Books, 2011)
Review by Michael Allan**

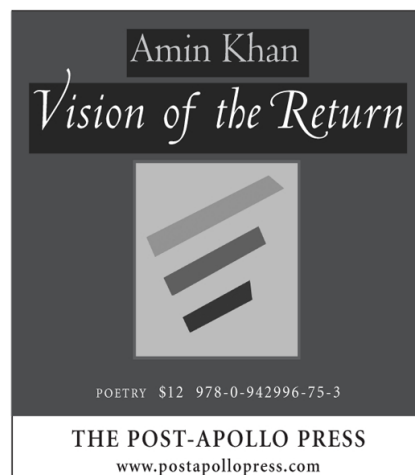
Appearing in 2006, just two years before his death, Mahmoud Darwish's *In the Presence of Absence* emerges at the threshold of prose and poetry, offering at times memoir, lyrical meditation and self-eulogy. But to understand the book solely within the framework of Darwish's life is to miss its rich appeal to ethical, literary, political and philosophical registers. All at once, Darwish evokes contrasts between the literal and the figural, the metaphoric and the embodied, the life, the nation and the poet, and Sinan Antoon's remarkable translation enables the historical and philosophical resonance to come alive in English. "It is challenging to translocate this celebration to another language," Antoon writes in his introduction, "but it had to be done. It is one of the most beautiful books I have read in Arabic." *In the Presence of Absence* speaks with the intimacy of a whispered conversation between friends, the poet and his reader, but the power of Darwish's words position his work as a literary monument, at the convergence of life and death, with an eye to the poetic afterlife of language.

The book is one of three extended prose poems written by Darwish and now available in English. The scholar Ibrahim Muhawi translated both *Memory for Forgetfulness/Dhakirah li al-nisyan* (University of California Press, 2005/1982) and more recently, *Journal of an Ordinary Grief/Yawmiyyat al-huzn al-'adi* (Archipelago, 2009/1973), and Antoon's translation completes the trilogy. In each of these three works, Darwish's words address you, the reader, with delicate care as a fellow traveler on a journey through a world of language. At the same time, his words ring with world-historical importance and are cast against the backdrop of specific events: Beirut in 1982, Palestine after the 1967 war, and the specter of the poet's death. Across the Arab world, Mahmoud Darwish's name bespeaks an almost metonymic relation to the Palestinian people and to the power of language, memory, exile and poetry. And yet, for all of the explicit situations in his writings (echoes of Deir Yassin, Beirut, Tunis, Haifa and Damascus, and allusions to the contours of the Arabic language and the meter of clas-

sical Arabic odes), there is an incredible richness that saturates the pages, bleeds beyond the particularity of the Arabic language, and extends Darwish's audience across the globe.

Separated into twenty sections, *In the Presence of Absence* defies simple classification and weaves into its pages a range of materials: citations of classical Arabic poets, segments composed in classical poetic meter, and poetic prose reflecting on memory, love and longing. The book is at times lyrical in its mode of address and at times more dominantly narrative. In certain passages, Darwish reflects on the intersection of the world and words: "White letters on a blackboard inspire the awe of dawn in the countryside. Like water poured slowly into a jar that never fills, you absorbed the incomplete form and its sound together by torturing the throat and subjugating it to the power of signs and the mouth to what the eyes take in." And at other moments, he poses questions: "I asked you: What does this mean? You said to me: Meaning might need another time to ripen in the earth's salt. It might need another poet free of the Trojans and Greeks, a poet who gazes into an abyss from above without falling in, and the abyss becomes a lake." The depth, scope and resonance of Darwish's words come alive thanks to Antoon's graceful translation. This accomplishment promises that Darwish will continue to live beyond his death, his words flourishing in the imaginations of English-language readers.

Michael Allan is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Oregon.



***One Sleeps the Other Doesn't*
Jacqueline Waters
(Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011)
Review by Alice Whitwham**

In *One Sleeps the Other Doesn't*, Jacqueline Waters examines the "feelings of one person" as they are "modified by the presence of others" to explore the way that acting and understanding herself as a member of a public, the politically self-organized social world, can render the subject falsified, inauthentic, even unreal. To what extent do the visual and verbal surfaces of mass media prefabricate motivation? How can the commonplaces informing public speech empty the present moment of its immediacy and uniqueness and turn it into something generic? Does a meta-literary attention to the processes of its own production allow poetic language to resist implication in culture's commodifying practices? These are questions that drive Waters' collection of serial poems, which are as complex, meticulous and demanding as they are deftly musical, and refreshing in that they took their time—published ten years after Waters' first full-length title, *A Minute without Danger*.

Opening the collection with the long poem, "Phil-," more journalistic and notational than the abstract approach of later sequences, Waters uses jump cuts and juxtaposition to invoke the inscription of commodity culture's slick, disposable surfaces within the architecture of social space. The poet encounters objects in her environment as a series of fragments, surface textures and enclosed views, encounters emphasized, through Waters' arrangement of space, as sharply localized occurrences in time, organized less by a



logic of causality than of pure transition. The quick dissolve between scenes is immediately evident in the poem's opening:

As a movie it asks
we look at a grave
read a headstone, notice a man
tending to the overturned earth
atop an adjacent plot
not
calculate the tightness of the shot
ask if the filmer had a permit, or if
Woodstock, Illinois
was used again
as a stand-in for Punxsutawney: later cold
is told
by close-up:
picnic plate
eking out icicles

Through the example of watching a movie, Waters diagnoses the subject's responses to the parts and pieces of her surroundings in order to make visible her automaton-like responses to them. The childishly risible rhymes ("atop," "plot," "not," "shot"; "close" sliding off "cold" and "told"), the wit with which Waters reveals the fungibility of location (Woodstock/Punxsutawney), and the ironically distancing effect of a sensation's representation as visual "close-up," imply an insistence on bringing some kind of intrinsic content to such content-less, formal encounters.

One way in which Waters examines how culture furnishes the link between the subject and the social is by looking at how it uses its products—magazines, the pop song, the television drama, the perpetually accessible domain of the internet—to structure emotion, proffering facile "strains of undifferentiated sentiment" in consumable patterns that manipulate the subject into identifying her own feelings with an apparently simpler, more coherent version of them: "Not that I feel that way / but that it appeals to me / to what / to feel that way." In this manufacture and circulation of emotion, culture proposes an affective landscape for fomenting social relations: "you are like us remember / you like us," a phenomenon which, so ubiquitous as to have become almost transparent, causes all kinds of misrecognitions as to what the subject's motivations actually are. Nowhere do the psychically ruinous effects of such productions prove themselves more manifest than in their verbal form, as cliché:

love
is a feeling and I LOVE YOU
Its expression, but I LOVE YOU
Begets an I LOVE YOU back, or it falters
As it its harbor
Fails to find. I LOVE YOU
Is what I trade you, a thing
And I try not
To drive down the value
Of a thing

If the poet learns to understand herself through reflective exchanges with the corporate universals and "personalities" of mass media, here the ease with which the ready-made cliché offers itself as feeling's expression enters in to cancel feeling out. Within the impersonal, rapaciously competitive realm of the marketplace, love's articulation must possess cliché's "currency power" or it fails to signify, replacing any contact the poet might make with the immediacy and intensity of experience by implicating her only in a performance of that contact for an imagined audience.

Even poems, in this environment, are in danger of becoming subject to the same laws they examine, of reflecting just "what they behold." A section in "Hello Due to Confusion: A Guard: II:" begins with the faux-naïve, "Would you like to hear a poem it's called Protecto?," which is followed by the response: "Dear man / and or lady, I have tried to guard your poem but now you and / I exchange looks the way normal people exchange money: man and lady / you and I can't both be guards."

What happens now, what's left to be protected, when the effort to use poems for the purpose turns the writing of poetry into only another kind of production, another manufacturing after formula?

Yet Waters' meta-literary awareness here creates as it underscores the structural depth and dimensionality she seeks to guard. By attending to her attentions, by reflecting on her reflections, Waters enacts in her poems an experience of mediacy in such a way as to create a strange kind of presence, but one which keeps the possibilities of both poetry and self open, virtual. And such possibility and potentiality is dazzlingly demonstrated throughout, with Waters' turning intelligence allowing her to occupy in quick succession disjunctive states of pretend innocence ("Who

is / they? They are the / same they always are"), skepticism, distraction and paranoia, to move with graceful and mysterious agility between conceptual and lyrical registers, and to construct a sense of narrative out of the gaps and ellipses at the edges of lines to reveal something of the interplay of under and over currents in language and society. Such versatility not only allows Waters to remain acutely sensitive to the gradients of her own feeling against surfaces that would flatten them into indifference ("you have to care!"), but also enables her to dwell among her contradictions without any violent will toward resolution: "a sensitivity / to tiny differences, no stronger than / one state of mind passing into another / miming the resolution of my affairs / though my affairs are just my questions." *One Sleeps the Other Doesn't* is a brilliant, exhilarating book.

Alice Whitwham is the communications director of 192 Books and lives in Brooklyn.

SLOT Jill Magi (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011) Review by Kendra Sullivan

SLOT (def.): a small slit for inserting a coin or depositing mail. These double insertions underscore the relationship between money and the meanings communicated to the general public by an officially sanctioned, secular institution such as "the museum, the memorial"; such as "a store, stock, arcade/exhibit, slot—." *SLOT*: a way to arrange and reduce histories into single-thread narratives. A way to identify, label, archive, place out of sight in plain view.

The word "marble" appears so many times it materializes: "A marble floor tile shifts / and in its loosened state I slip down into a basement." What do you do when you fall below the landscape? If you're Jill Magi, you model a book of poetry after a museum, a collection of imagery, conjecture, analysis. You invite a polyphonic curatorial team to unbuild what you're building in order to keep the nascent structure from omitting unknowns. You invite personal trauma, poetry, philosophy, photography, ethnographic transcriptions, folk songs and travel guides to live alongside one another in your long poem.

"I cabinet, I barricade, I curate." In *SLOT*, Magi conjures an alternative museum site to warehouse unassimilable acts of "everyday violence." In their resistance to being muted and coded, these histories command, "Learn me, do remember me."

In a common trope of literatures of growth and exploration, guides lead poets beyond their previous conceptions of the real. In *SLOT*, Magi might follow a guide or take an audio tour to further explore the built environment as an architectural stand-in for history and its transformation through time. Passing from gallery to gift shop to memory, "spirals and atriums" accelerate or delay the experience of time, depending on their design. "Later, the gradually winding and ramped hallway gently shows us how to go." *How* to go, not *where* to go. The *where* has been prearranged by museum professionals.

The artist Fred Wilson is in the book, rearranging presentations, reminding the reader that "[t]his situation in the world is not particularly worse than other moments. It just depends on who you are. It helps to diffuse the anxiety now that you're in this continuum." The sculptures of Rachel Whiteread are also present. Magi lists their titles to provide the reader with a sense of empty space ("Untitled (library)"; "Untitled (basement)"; "Untitled (One Hundred Spaces)"). Simultaneously, songs, "sacred acts," and selections from Jerome Rothenberg's *Technicians of the Sacred* connect the reader to an expanded self.

"J," a close "other" often addressed in *SLOT*, speaks and responds to telegraph-length mis-sives, as in "Dear J., / meet me at the mansion unbuilt." I'm reminded of Robert Smithson's stay at the Hotel Palenque in Mexico, where he and Nancy Holt reworked their theory of growth and entropy expanding in a continuum. New suites were built to accommodate travelers, but "some rooms should not be inhabited." Because they are non-rooms, rooms in ruin, discursive sites, "and open wide," dual architectures of expansion and development, reduction and disintegration, they promote looking, seeing, not sleeping. Ruins, rooms: two often-repeated half-rhymes. "So as to remember the ruin / leave a space in the new house undone."

As though destroying and maintaining are part of the same process of historicization, art workers, groundskeepers and guides are implicated in tragic cartographies. At the Berlin Holocaust Memorial, "The project is delayed when the

company commissioned to make an anti-graffiti coating for the stones is found to have also produced gas for Nazi extermination camps." And later, "The state will provide for the destruction of some sites. The state builds and destroys."

The last four pages of *SLOT* employ the verb *to touch* 11 times, in the past tense. On September 11, "everything within the knit of the city / touched down by wooden planks, sleet, unloading." Two planes suspend a city in unimaginable, "everyday violence." She asks, "[I]s everyone touched down by disaster, iron, translation on display"? Is "disaster a revealer"?

As someone "touched" by the World Trade Center attacks, I found myself swerving again and again away from Magi's discussion of the memorialization of that day. "Because I flee consolation"? No, I think not. I think the project of the monument—to create critical distance from, while pretending to address directly, difficult realities—doesn't work. *SLOT* is not a monument. "Please, no more memorials."

What is that day, now? A disaster? A tragedy? A museum? A public park? A memorial? A rupture? In what? Eating lunch, the speaker watches a ferry crossing the river with the remnants of the towers, to dispose of them. A "[c]ell. False door. A monument / feeling—"?

If the purpose of a monument is to contain a confrontation with untoward reality, then yes, by all means, no more monuments. No more names engraved on walls, or wells, or water fountains. No more representations of cascades of tears that can contain the grief of the bereaved so that they can cast it off and carry on. But please, more books like *SLOT*, talking about how to talk about the acts of forgetting and remembering that we have entrusted to museums to conduct for us, their audience.

Kendra Sullivan is a poet, painter, curator and boat-maker living in Brooklyn.

Alpha Donut: The Complete Shorter Works of Matvei Yankelevich
Matvei Yankelevich
 (United Artists, 2012)
 Review by Karla Kelsey

Frank O'Hara ends his "Ode: Salute to the French Negro Poets" with the couplet: "the only truth is face to face, the poem whose words become your mouth / and dying in black

and white we fight for what we love, not are." These lines one-up O'Hara's own "Personism," which famously likens poems to telephone calls. Personism has the poem exist, *à la* phone communiqué, *between* two people. "Ode" has the words of a poem *become* a mouth, blurring word (tool, thing) into mouth (flesh, human capacity for speech).

Matvei Yankelevich's latest, *Alpha Donut*, vacillates in this territory between the poem as object that attempts travel between two people—and the poem as an entity that jumps from page to mouth in an act that blots out the distinction between the world of the telling and the world of the told. Take the book's complete title, which indicates, of course, the name and contents of the book but also, if Yankelevich's acknowledgments are to be trusted, an actual coffee shop named Alpha Donuts on Queens Boulevard in Sunnyside, where someone named Ellie Ga has been generous with the coffee. While the poems are not overtly set in the donut shop, the book's ambling-about-town sensibility locates us in a New York City setting and the book's speaker inhabits the language of the text as one inhabits space. One of the poems reads, in its entirety, "I'M THE MONDAY POET / OF THE ALPHA DONUT!" and Yankelevich tempts us to equate his "I" with himself while at the same time thwarting direct identification with statements such as, "In 1932 I had special-made boots / and a cup of coffee tailored to my size."

Alpha Donut's first poem, from a cycle called "Bar Poems" interspersed throughout the book, operates via this blur of text and world:

This notebook closes early.

Business is bad.

*I'm at the Tavern.
 Where are you?*

Notebook as notebook. Notebook as bar closing early. Poem as poem. Poem as note, as communiqué sent to you. "Sent to *me*?", the reader is invited to ask, partaking, much to her delight, in this serious play. Poems addressed or dedicated to friends and poets (Osip Mandelstam, Daniil Kharms, Henri Michaux and Li Po, to name a few) further press on this theme of communication, presenting texts that read as both poem and message at the same time.

Additionally, many of the poems are ars poetica, a blurry genre that plies the boundary between the language *in which* one tells and the language *of which* one tells. In “Buttons,” for example, we read: “This text is written on buttons / so tightly sewn / to each other that no one / can read it.” Further, “Not even imaginary / characters can read / the text... Boris can’t / read it even if I / asked him to.” For readers familiar with Yankelevich’s first book, *Boris by the Sea*, this intertextual reference charms, unlocking a secret passage between texts.

While *Alpha Donut* is billed as a “selected shorter works” and includes poems from two series as well as individual pieces, the book reads powerfully as a whole and derives much of its impact through ordering. For example, page 33 of the book includes both the end of “How to Use a Library” and the beginning of “[Untitled].” The first, an instructional prose poem, wryly teaches us how to smuggle beer into the library (“Wrap the beer in sweaty plastic”). Finishing the poem, I smile at the disaffected tone of the speaker, his afternoon whiled away, a little drunk. Less than an inch away the prose poem “[Untitled]” begins: “I was sitting in a Soviet prison, my passport and my future taken from me, just before I could complete a mission of sabotage.” My smile fades, lips pursed I move back and forth from text to gap to text. It is via such juxtapositions that Yankelevich transforms his poems from objects that exist between him and his reader to texts that enfold readers in the fraught fabric of contemporary cultural space.

Karla Kelsey is author of two books, *Knowledge, Forms, the Aviary and Iteration Nets*. She edits and reviews for the *Constant Critic*.

Poems

Yvonne Rainer

(*Badlands Unlimited*, 2011)

Review by Brenda Iijima

Yvonne Rainer’s *Poems* are casual and direct, and they focus on the attitudes (personal, social) of the body in space. The poems are micro-performances that call attention to how the body amplifies the mood and mode of the moment. Rainer is candid and witty in inscribing the somatics of the here/there

and here/here: not necessarily glorious moments in time, but rather unadorned, banal instantaneousness as it fluctuates and opens up space. We don’t really have adequate words for these liminal happenings, as events usually take the attention. By “event” I mean something that takes place that has more stability, seems notable, more calculable, perhaps referring to exteriority (I think of Joan Jonas’ statement, “I am my own audience”), personal happenings where the self is active witness to its own subjectivity and this fact of being active witness is a courageous act of dispelling loneliness, out-of-body sensations or some existential feeling that can clot space. It is utterly weird and normal all at once—pockets of time where the body becomes estranged from itself and needs to recalibrate its sense of harmony, even if some elements are off. “Trio A” reads:

*The whole apparatus
its discrete minds
not impending
the forward momentum
of practice
of object*

A series of interlocking relations become familiar through their projection in space, i.e. writing: to finally decipher some meaning in the inexplicable by dislodging the “empirical reach.” Accumulated valences stored in the body memory shift and cause inexplicable feelings. This is what registers in Rainer’s work. A list of themes embedded in this text would include problems of interpretation, dissipation of minor symptoms, manipulation of materials, human capacity understood as particular concerns, tactile sensation, neglected foci, resistant activity, divided ideas regarding the diagnosis, meanings that appear in daily life that are imposed, the clothing of humanity (does it fit?). To be reminded that we are constantly being socialized in various communities of meaning, or rebelling against the pressure that socialization exerts. Many of these poems deconstruct how power legitimizes, reproduces and reinforces itself socially.

At times the primordially simple (elemental) butts up against a complex contemporary feeling. There is a great sequence in “Socrates January 27, 1999” where Rainer is talking about that morning’s breakfast but the double entendre concerning eggs ups the ante:

*Waiting again
single poached etc.
He’s the one who changed the date
one irascibility
assuages another
he arrives
older
larger
more important*

Beings are accretions of events, modulations made up of experiential data (“integral actuality,” in the words of Giorgio Agamben) that steer us through social ecologies, and these social ecologies absorb all bodily resonance, so that culture is like air, the total surround: “There may still be room to breathe in this devouring town // Keep moving.” These words inflect something very physical that is also psychological: the body as grounding presence that also reaches out, receives and intermingles. There is amazing intimacy in these poems. Rainer includes several photographs that are personally referential or generative to her work. In one image, a detail of an etching from 1971, onlookers gawk at a rhinoceros in a pen, in the middle of what looks to be a town square. There is also a photo of Rainer and Ilona Halberstadt arm-in-arm in a London kitchen with what appear to be pots on their heads.

The collection spans from the late 90s to the present. We read how Rainer has moved about as a dancer and civilian. “I designed my life / in art / nearing 65”—a bold statement of feminist intent, as she compares herself to Joe, who “designed a house / in the country / on 5 acres.” She inverts bravado into something else, perhaps understated witty resilience. The expressiveness of the whole body comes through—the person comes through.

This summer I read Rainer’s fabulous autobiography *Feelings Are Facts*, and felt an incredible identification and recognition with her statements. The conception of the body she presents is so freeing in its messy, direct bareness. What she manages so powerfully is to get over feelings of embarrassment. She makes this process legible. This is hugely helpful and inspiring. Rainer refuses to hold any embarrassment, body embarrassment. *Poems* is a complement to that book.

Brenda Iijima’s latest book of poetry is *If Not Metamorphic* (Ahsahta Press, 2010).

The Feeling Is Actual
Paolo Javier
(Marsh Hawk Press, 2011)
Review by Alan Clinton

My first encounter with Paolo Javier's new book came when he forwarded me the galley to the poem "Batman That One" in 2009, shortly before its publication in *Aufgabe*. My response to him was that the poem "captures the speed of batmen on multiple vectors (that of filmwatching and cinephilia, that of disguise/race/conspiracy, that of paranoid criticism). What a way to squeeze out ideologies in a way that would be so boring if written as a film review or critical essay." The poem, and much of *The Feeling Is Actual*, is a shot over the bow at cultural studies, although given Javier's generally amicable demeanor, it's probably more like the shot of a toy dart gun, ammo dipped in paint, shot at the large glass of transparent criticism everywhere. Somewhere along the line, cultural criticism and political poetry became boring. (I'm not sure when, and I'm not saying there haven't been notable exceptions, but generally speaking.) While one could perhaps give academics a pass on boredom, what excuse do poets have? We should say of poetry as Brecht said of the theater: "From the first, it has been the theater's business to entertain people, as it has also all of the other arts. It is this business which always gives it its particular dignity; it needs no other passport than fun, but this it has got to have."

Perhaps we shouldn't give academics a pass, for Javier's poetic modes are strange blends of lyric exploration, culture and media criticism, and anthropology. The piece entitled "Monty & Turtle," for instance, alternates between hilarious paratactical hijinks and sustained meditations on the directorial and cinematographic styles of Wong Kar-wai and Christopher Doyle, respectively. One wonders how many academics would survive if they were required to make us *feel* as well as think, and how many fewer would survive if they were required to lay down some rhymes every now and again between their prosaic analyses. Javier does both, so why can't we?

The book's virtue is that it actually shows us how we can do both. You too can write books "like" *The Feeling Is Actual*, and I know from talking with Javier about his life, his pedagogy, and his work as Poet Laureate of Queens, among other things, that he would be thrilled

if you did. Ethical and theoretical questions aside, Javier loves what he does, and one who loves something wants others to love it too. It begins and ends with love, just as *The Feeling Is Actual* begins and ends with love poems that will alternately make you sing and cry "Feeling Is Actual" because the feeling is actual. To be sure, the discussion of *Happy Together* begins at the same place: "For one, I love how the film's synaptic rhythms enact / the discarded feelings of its characters // How its style and love story weren't intellectualized into being, // 00:00:28...or even planned."

The compulsory heterosexuality of poetry here becomes pansexual, as the speaker loves a film about gay lovers because it teaches him about his own love (which, of whatever orientation, is always an "other" love), his own unplanned feelings: "When people ask how did we meet, I tell / the truth... / swept away by the sudden gale of your / 00:01:25...laugh." He loves the film for that; he loves the film because in loving it he is more attentive to aesthetic strategies: "00:01:46... In improvisatory filmmaking [and poetry], solutions always present themselves / at the very last minute."

Indeed, the minute markers in this poem remind us, as do the acknowledgments at the end of the book, that many of the works in *The Feeling Is Actual* were originally conceived as performances rather than as poems to be placed in a book. Thanks to the minute markers and other cues, if someone wanted to perform "Monty & Turtle" he might have some idea as to how to do it. The book also includes production notes to "FYEO" and "Wolfgang Amadeus Bigfoot." The production notes add to the feelings we actually feel while reading and watching the pieces—"watching" because of the book's poetic images as well as drawings, comic book excerpts, photos or different fonts.

In a world where everyone can talk about social injustice, racism and media conditions, Javier performs them. Activism, social justice, ethics and joy begin not when we know (which is easy) but when we feel (which we've forgotten). This is the "particular dignity" of Javier's book that is most resonating with me now.

Alan Clinton is the author of four books in four different genres, and currently lectures at Santa Clara University in Silicon Valley.

Against Professional Secrets
César Vallejo
(Trans. Joseph Mulligan)
(Roof Books, 2011)
Review by Christine Kanownik

It has been almost ninety years since César Vallejo wrote *Against Professional Secrets* as a Peruvian expatriate living in Paris. The year before, in 1922, *Trilce*, his brilliant and revolutionary book of poetry, was published and then entirely ignored for the remainder of his lifetime. Since his death, it has rightfully been given a spot among the great modernist masterworks such as *Ulysses* and *The Cantos*. *Against Professional Secrets* is different. It is a shorter, more manageable book of prose. Vallejo witnessed first-hand the injustice of corrupt governments and had lost many people that he loved. He was both a prisoner and an exile, thwarted constantly in his modest attempts at happiness throughout most of his life. In 1923, he was excited yet bewildered by Europe and becoming slowly acquainted with socialist theories.

Ten years later, as a full initiate of Marxism, he wrote: "On the day when the misery of the unemployed has worsened and spread, when the government and employers have been exposed for their definitive impotence to remediate the problem...the masses clawing at the pastries of the rich will then be terrible, apocalyptic." That this statement could have been written today about our current social and economic environment is both obvious and depressing.

The main concerns of *Against Professional Secrets* include the individual's relationship with its ruling body and the struggle between capitalist systems and socialist ideals. And though a few of his shorter pieces may seem reductive ("Once capitalism has died and Socialism taken over man...will seek the free and universal triumph of life"), there are no perfect gods in Vallejo's religion. There are no heroes (except maybe Charles Baudelaire), only disappointments. The government representatives are corrupt and self-serving. The people being governed are violent and ignorant. Humanity's savior dies alone while the masses adore a beautiful false prophet.

Against Professional Secrets is an odd book, a "Book of Thought" rather than poetry or fiction. The first portion is comprised of prose pieces under a page long that explore an

argument, a paradoxical musing, or a brief, opaque narrative. Some of the pieces are only a sentence or two long. In the second part of the book, the form explodes. Instead of rather straightforward pieces, there are more bizarre language experiments. Vallejo's thoughts fire more rapidly and with more emotional accuracy and inventiveness. Even the arrangement of the text on the page is more urgent, more necessary. I almost want the book to open on page 35, when the marvelously ungainly and sublime prose poem "Negations of Negations" begins. There are longer thoughts and brief phrases divided into a sort of diary. The tone is often deadpan, blunt and prophetic at the same time:

*The sun is frozen.
The fire at the earth's core is frozen.
The father, meridian, and the son, parallel,
are frozen.
The father, meridian, and the son, parallel,
are frozen.
History's two deviations are frozen.
My minor act of man is frozen.
My sexual oscillation is frozen.*

From there, the book continues on this provocative trajectory. The stories are longer, more unusual and less didactic. A man completely loses his name to another man, objects and furniture breathe life when people leave the room, and the son of Mary reads Marx and is despised and pitied by his family. In "Masterful Demonstration of Public Health" the narrator has an experience so powerful that he finds it absolutely impossible to communicate it in words and goes on an investigative and serendipitous journey through several languages to create a "fickle polyglot lingo."

I do have some issues with Joseph Mulligan's translation. Often I was struck, especially in the shorter pieces in the beginning, by the awkwardness of some of the language. Even the book's title, which refers to client-practitioner confidentiality, does not translate properly. This is a bilingual edition, and while most of the translations seemed straightforward enough, there were a few startling moments when I realized that Mulligan had omitted entire lines or sentences. Since there is no explanation for this in the introduction or translator's notes, I was left merely to wonder at his choices.

This book may not stand up against Vallejo's other accomplishments. It is inconsistent in

quality and tone; however, consistency is not a necessary condition for greatness. *Against Professional Secrets* is a flawed book, but it is absolutely worth reading.

Christine Kanownik is one of the founding editors of Augury Books and lives in Brooklyn.

Chomp Away **Drew Gardner** **(Combo Books, 2011)** **Review by Vladislav Davidzon**

The myriad critical questions raised by the reception of the Google-powered Flarf movement and the ensuing debates on its merits over the last half-decade pivot on whether it is a legitimate, anti-art avant-garde in the high modernist tradition. The obvious question is whether we should take something so deeply unserious seriously? Is it an affront to the composition of the lyrical poem? And if not poets, who will carry the standard of Luddite technophobia? Perhaps Flarf is nothing more radical than the latest guise of collage? Might it be the reification and reflection of the systematic violence of the wounded imperial hegemon in late decline? The only possible reaction to the absurdities of the age of terrorism? If postmodernism truly is the cultural logic of late capitalism, is Flarf then really just a reflection of the detritus of a diseased consumer society? And if that's true, are not contemporary poets themselves merely the sub-detritus?

A productive way to assess Flarf's influence is to set aside the big questions and to observe the imprint it has left on the work of individual poets over the *longue durée*. Of the members of the Flarfist confederation/collective/constellation, Drew Gardner is perhaps the most theoretically oriented. In his latest book, *Chomp Away*, he responds to the critical maelstrom with a meta-question in his poem, "Why Do I Hate Flarf So Much?" (The answer, good citizen: "Because it is against everything good this country once espoused," and "because of the awful conflict it places the law-abiding or police-fearing poets under.")

The stylistic jump between Gardner's first, pre-Flarf book, *Sugar Pill* (2002), and his second, *Petroleum Hat* (2005), (featuring the deservedly beloved "Chicks Dig War," a post-nihilist anthem for our age of cloyingly

drab neurological determinism) is undeniably and strikingly radical. The guiding principle of the first book was the subdued accretion of a coolly technical maximalism by an enraged protest poet with a sideline in the prophecy of ecological apocalypticism: "Hipsters choke you with corporate carcinogens / The genocidal heapings of sacred thoughts sell off thumping animals / Using gas to make the photons start and stop again / The cyborg with a crucial insight." Admittedly, the seed of the transfiguration can be seen in lines such as "opposed to the Easter bunny / fuzzy IMF bailout / interwoven with a kind of auto-cryptozoology." To read the books in quick succession is to read two different, or differently bleak, poets.

Yet there has indeed been a nuanced evolution from Gardner's previous book to this current one. The staccato mania, the lengthening and tightening of meter, is the magical ingredient, the psychedelic spice which sent him over the edge. The sound of his poetic voice is soporific and professorial, an explicatory unspooling of structural insights and grammars that flows seamlessly, calmly and believably as he tells you that your eyes are made completely out of chocolate snakes inside purple elephants. The tone calls to mind an assistant professor of political sociology who, in the middle of an exam, lets loose a rant about the "cultural societies, like defecating bears / [who] break down the exchange of peace." Perhaps despite himself, he continues to be a programmatic protest poet even when what he is writing is batshit crazy.

Chomp Away moves in the direction of narrative, however disjointed, which serves well Gardner's natural flair for telling tales. Often he will meander fairly far on the strength of an excellent title. In fact, some of Gardner's best work is in his poems' titles; witness "It Gets Very Quiet When You Kill Your Boss," "Prince Charles, Intently Observing the Behavior of a Hedgehog," "A Dachshund Wakes Up and Emerges from Its Own Fucked-Up Past," "Don't Use This to Prove that Truncated Regression Is Not a Difficult Model Choice Problem," or the entirely understandable "I Stabbed Myself in the Hand with a Fork." Every one of these intimates an epic weirdo-lyric fantasia in miniature. In fact, I sincerely hope that Gardner's next book will be composed entirely of titles. The sequel to "Chicks Dig War," "Guys Like Terrorism," has a beguiling title as well, but like most eagerly expected

sequels, it is a formal and conceptual disappointment almost all of the way through.

As is well known, poetic epochs and their posterior critical periodizations pass through cyclical periods of ornamentation and colloquialization, and Flarf constitutes one possible endgame for that process. Asked for a coherent statement of his guiding principles, Gardner offers that “[o]ne of the main things about my poetry is that it’s foregrounding vernacular–demotic as an inevitable consequence of embracing language as it’s actually used on the web.” As a thought experiment one should try to substitute “in ordinary life” for “the web” and see if one can imagine W. H. Auden uttering the same phrase (not incidental, it is as a phrasemaker rather than as a craftsman of epigrams that Gardner excels). One’s answer to that question will determine on which side of the Flarfist ideological wars one stands, and whether all this need be noted and absorbed by literary and “cultural society,” or is merely a matter for the “defecating bears.”

Vladislav Davidzon holds degrees in Comparative Literature and Intellectual History from Hunter College and the CUNY Baccalaureate Program, and currently resides in Paris.

Waifs and Strays
Micah Ballard
(City Lights, 2011)
Review by Justin Sherwood

Micah Ballard’s *Waifs and Strays* is the stuff of legend. His second full-length collection after *Parish Krewes* (Bootstrap Press, 2009) begins and ends with a gesture at elsewhere and its in-betweens. The book opens with “Hazy Now,” in which Ballard observes, “strange / how we fail remember / a determined will // to match the flame.” Bending no more than the moth in Hart Crane’s premier poem “Legend,” Ballard takes up Crane’s bleeding *eidolon* and transports him to San Francisco in the new century, where he wanders among “young pharaohs on Fillmore” and “African Blondes.” In the ultimate poem, “Key to the Map on the Following Page,” we follow the poet to “exit thru a trap door” and into a world where “other cares encrypt the mind,”

but by then our minds are fully encrypted by the knowledge of Ballard’s haunts and hauntings, and are transformed.

If Christopher Nealon is right that Crane was more interested in interstices than nodes, then Ballard has chosen his companion well. What lies between Ballard’s bookending legends is a Baedeker to the sights and sounds of another realm, “the banter between heres.” Ballard is attuned to that other world, and he slips back and forth between there and here, carrying souvenirs from the interstices that refocus the past and enliven our present. For Ballard, corporeality is a liminal state between better, fuller existences. These poems account for his travels, illuminating his experience through shadows he casts for us on the walls.

Waifs and Strays is comprised of short, terse lyrics that carve tracks along the page with shifting indentations, as well as blocks of prose poetry that rove the width of the page, all balanced to establish Ballard’s bona fides as a guide with a lot to tell and little time. His ampersands, compressed “thrus,” and contractions give his utterances a breathless authority that allows for lines like “I wish a crowded bus stop” to transcend wishful thinking and serve instead as performative commands. “I wish,” for Ballard, is not a long-ing but a conjuring. His magic isn’t in sleight of hand but in encyclopedic knowledge and real, lived experience of the city he perambulates. Like his predecessor Allen Ginsberg, Ballard’s walking tours include both the Bay Area’s landmarks and the ghosts who haunt them, revealing themselves only to those attuned to their presence.

Elegy is one way Ballard pays tribute to the departed, as in his astonishing short poem “A Few Miles Off,” which echoes Frank O’Hara’s “The Day Lady Died” but cannot offer the name of the newly deceased. “I remembered his face in Aardvark / something about NWA but not about them,” “I didn’t even know him / & I don’t even know his work.” The poem leans like a gravestone whose carvings are erased by weather and time, commemorating a death without attribution. Ballard collects such stones, and arranges them for us here so that we remember that we’re surrounded by the forgotten, and that their loss is our failure. In the book’s two extended sequences, “Bet-

tina Coffin” and “The Wind and More,” Ballard explores the interstitial with his relentless quest for precision: “Beneath the boughs / there is a song / Unheard, underneath the ground.” Not satisfied by simply pressing his ear to the ground, Ballard digs into the earth to uncover what he already knows is there: music, voices, traces of existence waiting to be unearthed and sung. Ballard is always conscious of the interplay between production and reception: “what ushers in / brings out.” Always the dual gesture in this collection, a response to every call.

There’s art too, beginning with David Meltzer’s collage that adorns the cover, a yellowed assemblage of layered, fragmented bodies. Ballard is consistently attentive to the visual culture that imbues the world of his poems. His approach is often painterly, as when he dashes a poem with “A brush touch of powder / A brush touch of defeat.” The poet admits in “Irish Radio,” “[I know] how much attention / I’d get if I stopped doing portraits / Maybe do something more abstract,” but he presses on with his portraiture, presenting us with figures who fade out of time faster than he can preserve them. His delicate hand records not only the figures but the fissures that appear as they dematerialize. Ballard teaches us that it isn’t only language whose meaning is conveyed through shadows and traces, but bodies too, and worlds.

In “Width of a Circle,” the finest prose poem of the collection, Ballard imagines us “to be led in the dark, as it were, with only the flashing of this broken lighter. And to find one’s way, unknowingly, through the next wall, or down to the next hall.” So much of the experience of *Waifs and Strays* is like this. Ballard’s lighter flickers as he raises it to show us the writing, sometimes drawing, on the wall, and we’re left with not only knowledge of a hidden world, but with Ballard’s own deep impressions of it. The poet knows he can only take us so far, but no matter: “Whatever the case, someone will be waiting, if not, then it’s your turn.”

Justin Sherwood is an MFA candidate at The New School, where he is completing a thesis on queer relationality in the haibun of John Ashbery, James Merrill and Eve Sedgwick.

Poet Astrology by Denver Dufay



Aries (March 21 – April 19)

You know how in *All that Heaven Allows* (1955, dir. Douglas Sirk), Cary Scott (Jane Wyman) falls for Ron Kirby (Rock Hudson) and then her kids give her hell because even though Ron is a *total* gentleman, he's working class and can't provide the kind of financial excess that their father had provided? You know how she feels, Aries! You can't help whom you love, and you're sick and tired of friends and relatives offering their (unasked for) opinions about your object choice. Now's the time to call on that natural sense of self-splendor. If you know anything, you know that you're better than your *kids*. So don't let them give you shit. You didn't spend all that time cleaning up their mess so they could give you lip about your love life. **Aries poets:** Benjamin Friedlander, Jean Day, Bruce Andrews

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Horrible Bosses (2011, dir. Seth Gordon) tells the tale of three buddies who each have a horrible boss, albeit horrible in different ways. From the power-hungry psycho asshole (played by Kevin Spacey) to the cokehead ne'er-do-well owner's son (Colin Farrell) to the sexually harassing dentist (Jennifer Aniston), these three have to problem-solve and strategize about how to overcome their respective antagonists. You've got some workplace challenges coming too, Taurus. Try to take a deep breath and maybe do some self-affirmation exercises each morning before going into the office. You don't have to kill your boss. You just have to kill that sense of desperation and self-loathing that makes your gorge rise when you leave your house. If you don't have a "job" *per se* (laid off, doing child care or trust funded), go ahead and try the deep breath and self-affirmation exercises. Can't hurt. **Taurus poets:** Vanessa Place, Maria Damon, Yedda Morrison

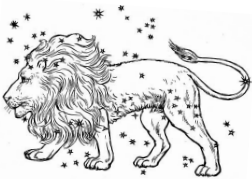
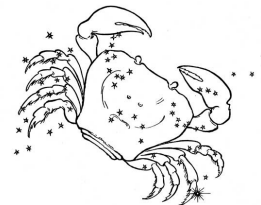


Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

It's hard for everyone to make certain decisions. *Grad school or day job?*, *Oatmeal or bagel?*, *Go to the reading or get hair done?*, etc. Well, nobody has a harder time with the big and little decisions than you, Gemini, vacillating as you do between attractive options. You feel all the time like George Clooney in *The Descendants* (2011, dir. Alexander Payne), who has to decide whether or not to sell the land that his colonial ancestors gobbled up in Hawaii in the 19th century. Everybody in the whole state is interested in what he decides. So take that to heart. At least your choice of breakfast food or love object isn't going to fundamentally alter the economic atmosphere of an entire state. Go with your gut. Or your stomach. No, definitely go with your gut. Unless... **Gemini poets:** Lindsey Boldt, Roberto Harrison, Jennifer Scappettone

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

Oops. You really shit the bed this time, Cancer, and this time it is just your fault. You bullied but forgot to coddle, you plotted but never cuddled, you scuttlebutted but didn't settle up after. You're human after all, underneath all those layers of unbelievable homeliness. It's like Alice Cooper's brief scene in *Wayne's World* (1992, dir. Penelope Spheeris) where everybody thinks he's going to be an idiot but he turns out to be really articulate and smart. That's you and your humanity, deep down things. But much like Wayne in *Wayne's World*, you've gone off the deep end and this time the only way to save your intimate relationships is to sacrifice in the name of repair. You know all too well the barb of grudgery, vengeful Cancer. Don't let it linger. **Cancer poets:** Tisa Bryant, Anna Vitale, Pierre Joris



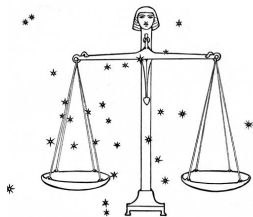
Leo (July 23 – August 22)

Let 'em laugh. They should know better, though. You're not afraid to speak your mind, Leo. Any room full of people to you is a miniature jungle over which you are clearly the queen. And yet, at some points this season you're going to find yourself saying things that earn immediate public ridicule. Think of that scene in *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* (1985, dir. Tim Burton) in which, after taking a tour of the Alamo, Pee Wee (Paul Reubens) asks if they can see the basement. All those otherwise mild-mannered, friendly Midwestern tourists break into peals of laughter. But that didn't stop Pee Wee and that shouldn't stop you. Your roar in the end will be mightier than theirs—and revenge, as you know, is a dish best served *leonine*. Go get 'em. **Leo poets:** Corrine Fitzpatrick, Amy King, Buck Downs

Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

You partied *a lot* over the holidays, Virgo. You impressively managed to quell your typical obsessiveness and let loose for once. It seemed like almost every night you had a bottle or bong in your hand. Frankly, we appreciated seeing you relax a little bit. But now it's time to rein it in. See, you thought you were like Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) in the beginning of *North by Northwest* (1959, dir. Alfred Hitchcock), but it turns out you're more like Thornhill *after* the criminals pour him that roofed drink and plunk him in a car. All of that mercurial mania you try to keep deep inside has started to leak out when you're tipsy. We all like Artaud's writing, but you don't want to introduce him to your niece. You're a sublime tidier—now it's not the bathroom but your *life* you need to clean up. **Virgo poets:** Karen Weiser, John Beer, Brandon Downing



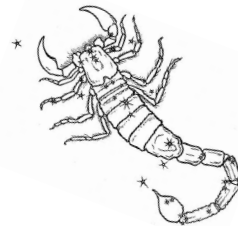


Libra (September 23 – October 22)

Libras are famous for righteous political rage, and you've been right there on the front lines with them for months now. You can smell the gas leaking out of the nightmare we call neoliberalism and you're not going to stop fighting until the whole fucking thing falls. But don't forget, Libra, that you're at your best in collaboration with water. You need a McCartney to your Lennon. A Jones to your Strummer. Nobody questions your fierceness, but find a Pisces, Cancer or Scorpio co-conspirator and take the edge off just a little bit. You're sort of like William Wallace (Mel Gibson) in *Braveheart* (1995, dir. Mel Gibson.) But don't follow his example and abandon intimacy entirely for the revolution. You know he ends up being publicly disemboweled, right? **Libra poets:** Anna Moschovakis, Barrett Watten, Kasey Mohammed

Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

Is there a worse feeling than the poem just out of your reach? The floating rhythm unanchored to morphemes, the morphemes that just won't aspire to sublime tones? This won't be your issue, Scorpio. In fact, you won't be able to write anything that isn't a smorgasbord of *bon mots*, all both metrically nuanced and simply, uncannily beautiful. Enjoy this while it lasts. This is the brief window of this year in which you're going to feel like Chazz Michael Michaels (Will Ferrell) and Jimmy MacElroy (Jon Heder) at the end of *Blades of Glory* (2007, dir. Josh Gordon and Will Speck.) You're going to be icy, exquisite, a mess of sex and blades. Enjoy it, Scorpio! **Scorpio poets:** Jonathan Skinner, Alli Warren, David Brazil

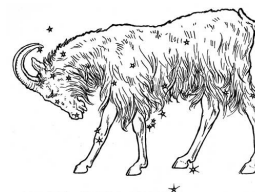


Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

You're going to be sorely tempted to take the easy road this time. You've been stuck in the same conceptual rut for months, rehashing the same themes in your art, rewriting the same book over and over. You want to change it up, try something fresh and experimental. So you read different books, go see different films, regrettably make out with X after too much Pinot Grigio. We've all been there, Sagittarius! Your charm is so pervasive that even *you* sometimes get charmed and forget that art is hard. It's complicated, but be strong and try to find some focus. Be like Rocky (Sylvester Stallone) in *Rocky* (1976, dir. John G. Avildsen), *Rocky 2* (1979, dir. Sylvester Stallone), and the rest of the *Rocky* films. It's time to find the eye of the tiger and defeat your most difficult antagonist: the Sagittarius in the mirror. **Sagittarius poets:** Rachel Zolf, Maureen Thorson, Kristin Prevallet

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Sometimes when the doorbell rings, you look out and see Mormons. But sometimes there's a crowd of people with an oversized check made out to you with a long string of zeroes. You've been engrossed in finishing your new American epic, but this time, Capricorn, answer the door! Because you're about to get *paid*. What's more? This is going to be some consequence-free-ass money. It's not going to be like *Basquiat* (1996, dir. Julian Schnabel), which tells the tragic story of an artist who self-destructs after acquiescing to the spectacular world of visual art capital exchange. It's not even going to be like *Brewster's Millions* (1985, dir. Walter Hill), where someone receives a sudden influx of treasure only to find out that there's an awful catch. Take the money. And take a week off from that epic to smell the champagne. You've earned it. **Capricorn poets:** Cynthia Sailers, Dana Ward, CAConrad



Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)

What is consciousness? That's what you're constantly thinking to yourself. But who is it that thinks the thought? Is that consciousness? Is consciousness conscious of itself as consciousness? Is "it" "you" or are "you" "it?" What do you mean by "what" and what do you mean by "is?" Who's asking what, or who? These are the kind of labyrinthine questions you concern yourself with, Aquarius. When others describe you as flaky, wandering, errant, aloof, they're just betraying the fact that they don't know what goes on inside you. Which is nothing less than complex meditations on the most difficult questions concerning human experience. It's a little like how people think about Will Hunting (Matt Damon) in *Good Will Hunting* (1997, dir. Gus Van Sant). They take one look at him cleaning up a classroom and all they can think is that he's a townie prole. They don't have any idea that he's a *genius*. **Aquarius poets:** Jen Hofer, Sawako Nakayasu, Rob Halpern

Pisces (February 19 – March 21)

You're the wise person of the Zodiac, Pisces. As the last sign in the Zodiac, you preserve traces of all previous ones. No doubt your life becomes the management of one very complicated party: inside you is the wrath of the Leo, the narcissism of the Aries, the tears of the Cancer, the righteous rage of the Libra. Sometimes you navigate this like a fish in water, but sometimes you get caught on the hook. Now is one of those critical times in which it could go either way. Take a day off, pop a Klonopin, go to the baths and lie around in waters of various temperature. You want to devote all your contemplative energy to recognizing what is true in you, and when you discover it, *act!* Some might say you're having a midlife crisis like Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) in *American Beauty* (1999, dir. Sam Mendes). But you're not trying to seduce your kid's friends or buy weed from the neighbor. Authenticity bursts like a rejuvenated orchid inside of you. Let it ride, Pisces. **Pisces poets:** Lauren Levin, Jeffrey Jullich, Suzanne Stein



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