

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

#210 FEBRUARY - MARCH 2007



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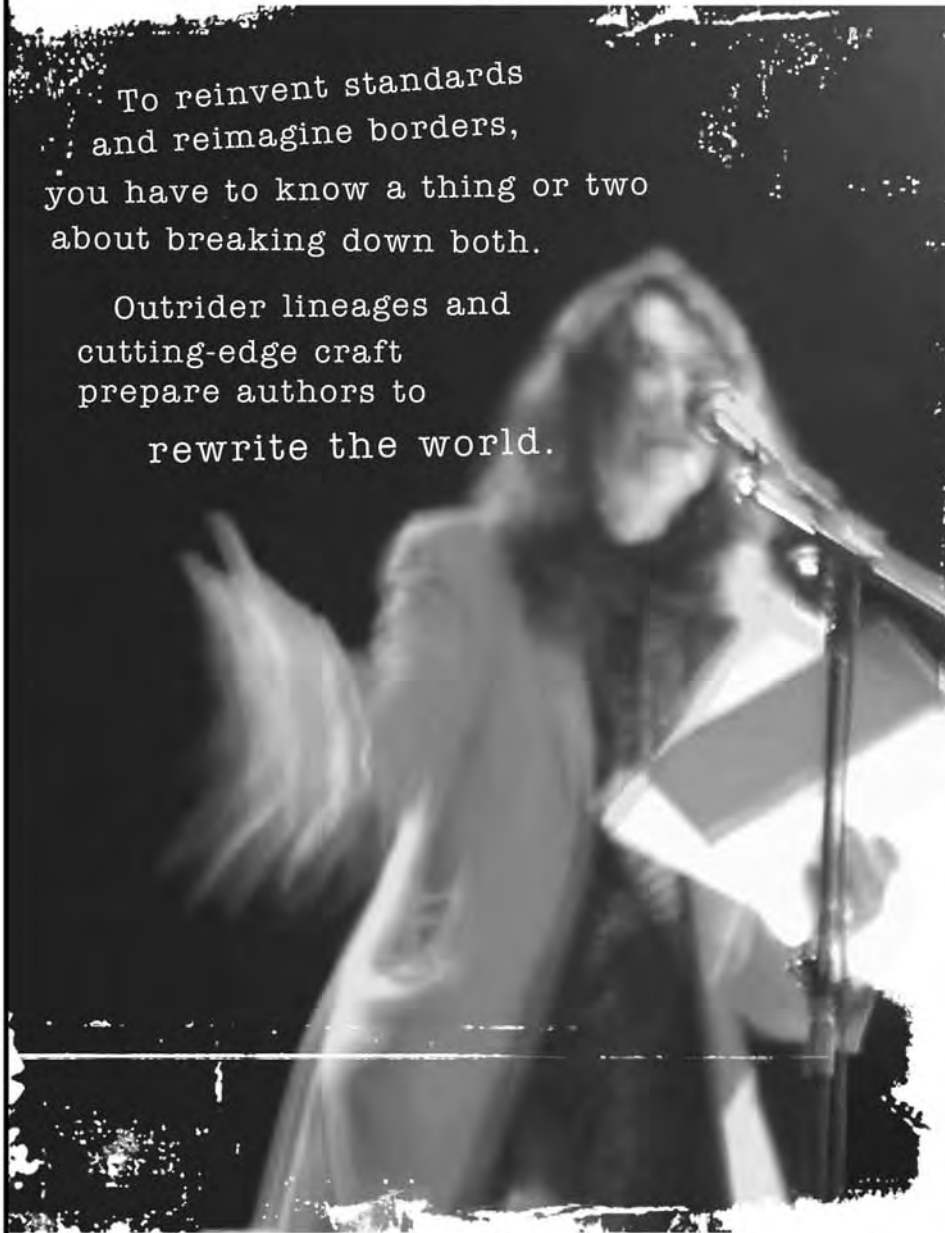
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#210 FEBRUARY - MARCH 2007

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Brendan Lorber

IN THIS EPISODE...

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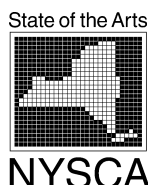
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I FEEL IT CLOSING IN.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

PROJECT SEEKING NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Readers,

June 30 of this year will be my last day as Artistic Director of the Poetry Project. At that point I will have been on the job four years, and while it remains an honor to hold this job – it is, by far, the best job I've ever had – the time is right for me to take off and for someone else to serve as Artistic Director. The Poetry Project is in good shape, and the next director should be able to transition into the job with a solid support system in place and hit the ground running. For what it's worth, I'm leaving by my own choice, on very good terms with the Project, and with no other job or position elsewhere in the works. It's been a solid pleasure to work with and for the Project's greater community – which I suspect is much larger than most folks realize – and I'm deeply grateful for the support and help so many people have provided these past several years. Upon being hired by the Project's Board of Directors I was asked to work for three years and I anticipated working a fourth year at the Board's pleasure if things went well.

The Poetry Project is going to conduct a search for a new Artistic Director over the course of the next few months. The best-case scenario for the Project is one that involves a healthy number of poets with strong qualifications applying for the position.

The job is demanding, but also very rewarding, particularly if you enjoy working with a wide variety of poets and artists while creating opportunities for them to develop their work and present it to discerning audiences. It should go without saying that you must be a poet in order to apply, and you'll want to have 1) a strong appreciation for what the Poetry Project and its community have accomplished over the past four-plus decades, and 2) a deep commitment to furthering the best of what's been done here – and that includes engaging & supporting new work and new voices. Before applying, you should be certain that you are open to and interested in many poetics, as the job will put you in direct contact with the work of several hundred poets per year (I've easily learned more about contemporary poetry over the past three-and-a-half years than during the previous ten). There is room to develop and expand on what the Project has accomplished, but it is important to keep in mind that the Poetry Project has been an extremely productive and successful organization since its inception in 1966, and is neither seeking nor requires a major overhaul.

As Artistic Director, your responsibilities will include planning artistic programs and

events, co-editing publications, managing the office and personnel, raising funds from a number of different sources, and overseeing financial planning, public relations, community building, and Board development. You will not have to be good at all of these things right away, and there will be plenty of capable people available to help you along the way. But anyone interested in applying must bear in mind that the artistic side of the job is not mutually exclusive of the administrative side, and you will spend much more of your time attending to the administrative side of things than you might initially expect. That said, the administrative duties can be (I'm serious) challenging and rewarding – and ultimately they make it possible for the events, readings, workshops and publications to happen at all.

If you think you would be a good Artistic Director of the Poetry Project, send us an e-mail or snail mail letter requesting a description of the job and the application procedure. These will be fully available by February 1st, and **the deadline for applications will be March 2nd**. The description and procedure will also be available at poetryproject.com after February 1.

Please direct all inquiries regarding the Artistic Directorship to the attention of *The Search Committee*.

Yours,
Anselm Berrigan

PS - What follows is a job description plus a brief description of the organization. Even if you're not thinking about applying, you might find the info below to be interesting on its own terms vis-à-vis what the Poetry Project is and how it functions.

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT: ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The Artistic Director generally manages and supervises the operations and programs of the Poetry Project. S/he ensures that (a) the overall quality and diversity of programming is consistent with the Poetry Project's history and mission and (b) that the organization conducts its affairs in a professional and timely manner. Areas of responsibility include, but are not limited to, programming, personnel, budget and finance, fundraising, and public relations. While accountable for the entire operation, the Artistic Director may delegate the work in these areas as is deemed by the Board of Directors to be practical and financially viable. Descriptions of the aforementioned responsibilities follow:

Programming: The Artistic Director oversees the planning and development of the

Poetry Project's artistic program, which includes live literary events, writing workshops, publications, website, archives, and any other forms of literary presentation and preservation the organization undertakes.

Personnel: The Artistic Director, in consultation with the Board of Directors, hires the administrative staff, artistic staff, auxiliary staff, and independent contractors. Once new staff is hired, the Artistic Director is responsible for their orientation, training, and ongoing supervision. Traditionally the Artistic Director has served as (1) a coordinator and host for some of the Poetry Project's programming (notably the Wednesday Night Reading Series) and (2) editor of a Project publication, but these roles are not mandatory as long as qualified personnel can be found and funds exist for their hiring.

Budget and Finance: The Artistic Director, in consultation with the Board of Directors, plans the Poetry Project's annual operating budget. S/he is responsible for ensuring creditors are paid in a timely manner, that accurate financial records are kept, and that actual expenses do not exceed those proposed in the annual operating budget. The Artistic Director oversees the annual financial audit and makes sure that it is distributed to all relevant institutions and individuals. The Poetry Project pays an independent contractor to manage its financial records and employs a Certified Public Accountant to create the annual audit.

Fundraising: The Artistic Director, in consultation with the Board of Directors, initiates and coordinates the Poetry Project's fundraising efforts. These efforts include, but are not limited to, submitting grant applications to government and private funding agencies, meeting and corresponding with potential funders, cultivating paid membership and individual donors, planning and hosting benefit events, assisting the Board of Directors with its fundraising initiatives, submitting reports and payment requests to individuals and agencies, and investigating new approaches to fundraising.

Public Relations: The Poetry Project is a 41-year-old organization with a reputation for offering high-quality programs in an extensive community that is both local and international. It is important that the Poetry Project maintains good working relationships with writers and artists, audiences, arts and literary organizations, funding agencies, representatives of the press and media, and government agencies, as well as the other groups and organizations connected with St. Mark's Church. The Artistic Director works to ensure that Poetry Project's programming and mission are favorably, accurately, and frequently represented in all public arenas. The work of writing press releases, designing advertising, giving interviews, etc. may be delegated to other administrative and auxiliary staff, but the Artistic Director is

responsible for the content and appearance of these communications.

The Poetry Project, Ltd. at St. Mark's Church

Since its founding in 1966, the Poetry Project, Ltd. at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery has served as a venue for public literary events and as a resource for writers. Housed in St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, a landmark church in Manhattan's East Village, has consistently worked to achieve an integrity of programming that challenges, informs and inspires working writers, while remaining accessible to the general public. The mission of the Poetry Project is to promote, foster, and inspire the reading and writing of contemporary poetry. Through its live programming, workshops, publications, website, and special events, the Poetry Project seeks to (1) bring contemporary poetry to diverse audiences; (2) increase public recognition, awareness, and appreciation of poetry; and (3) provide a forum in which poets can exchange ideas and information. Conducted in an ambience that strikes a reasonable balance between formality and casualness, the Poetry Project's programs have been especially effective in allowing emerging poets to strengthen their skills as writers and to develop audiences for their work. For more established writers, reading, speaking or teaching at the Project provides the all-too-rare opportunity of presenting work to engaged, discerning audiences in a context informed by a thorough investigation of literary and cultural possibilities. While being committed to the highest standards of artistic excellence and to preserving vital literary traditions, the Poetry Project has always encouraged the participation of new poets with diverse styles. Each year at least one-third of the writers presenting work at the Project are doing so for the first time. The Poetry Project offers a Wednesday night reading series; a Monday night reading/performance series; a Friday late-evening events series; four weekly writing workshops; two literary periodicals; a broadcast service; a website; and audio and document archives. For more information about the Project, please visit www.poetryproject.com.

TWO THOUSAND & SEVEN (APPROX.) NEW YEAR'S THANK YOUS

Infinite thanks extended to our battalion of volunteers, without whom the marathon would have been impossible to pull off. Thank yous galore to the various individuals and local restaurants and bakeries who generously donated food. Abundant thanks to all the writers and publishers who donated books, chapbooks, journals and recordings. You all rock.

VENDORS: Amy's Bread, Buttonbox

Catering, Buttercup Bake Shop, Marjorie Stone, Café Brama, S'Mac, Kimberly Lyons, Grand Daisy Bakery, Pangea, La Palapa, Two Boots, Grey Dog, Lucien, April Koester, Life Café, De Robertis' Caffè, Mudspot Café and Nathaniel Siegel.

VOLUNTEERS: Adeena Karasick, Amy King, April Koester, Arlo Quint, Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi, Bill Kushner, Bob Rosenthal, Brenda Iijima, Brendan Lorber, CA Conrad, Carol Mirakove, Carol Mullins, Charlotte Phillips, Cliff Fyman, Diana Rickard, Dixie Appel, Don Yorty, Douglas Rothschild, Dustin Williamson, Ed Friedman, Elinor Nauen, Emily XYZ, Emil Bognar-Nasdor, Erica Kaufman, Erica Wessmann, Erika Recordon, Evan Kennedy, Evelyn Reilly, Farid Matuk, Gail Tuch, Gary Sullivan, Geoffrey Cruickshank-Hagenbuckle, Greg Fuchs, Jeffrey Perkins, Jen Benka, Jennifer Keane, Jennifer Robinson, Jenny Smith, Jeremy Gardner, Jim Behrle, Joanna Fuhrman, Joe Elliot, Joel Lewis, Jonathan Allen, Joshua Clover, Karen Weiser, Kathleen Connell, Kari Hensley, Kim Lyons, Lauren Russell, Lisa Ozag, Macgregor Card, Mara Gilbert, Marcella Durand, Marc Nasdor, Martha Blom, Martha Oatis, Maya Samat, Merry Fortune, Michael Scharf, Mitch Highfill, Mónica de la Torre, Nada Gordon, Nathaniel Siegel, Nina Karacosta, Pamela Brown, Peter Bushyeager, Rebecca Moore, Rich O'Russa, Samantha Barrow, Sandy Fitterman-Lewis, Shinara Taylor, Shu Chin Li, Stefania Marthakis, Stephanie Gray, Steve Potter, Steve Rosenthal, Susan Briante, Tania Rivero, Tom Savage, Tracey McTague, Ty Hegner and Wallis Meza.

BOOKS: Edge Books, Granary Books, Talisman House, Susan Mills, Hanging Loose, Ron Padgett, Vernon Frazer, Dennis Barone, Elizabeth Treadwell, Vehicle Editions, Penguin, Anne Waldman, Coffee House Press, Gillian McCain, Ugly Duckling Presse, Meritage Press, United Artists, Effing Press, Emily XYZ, Bruce Weber, Rebecca Moore and Lenny Kaye.

DELUSIONS OF ADEQUACY: THE FIRST POETRY ROAST

You will have a delightful evening...but this won't be it. On Tuesday February 13, Sharon Mesmer & Brendan Lorber will be the flailing victims of the First Poetry Roast. Witness the cruel dismantling of these two, the destruction of what little they haven't already ruined. Be warned: Sharon who never lets ideas interrupt the easy flow of her conversation & Brendan who has Van Gogh's ear for poetry will fight back. Time wounds all heels & this bloodletting begins sharply at 8. Tracey McTague & Jim Behrle will host. A handful of coldhearted bastards will provide the insults. We refuse to tell you where because, fuck, you yourself really ought to limit your time in public - but

lungful.org/roast will give you all the details. It won't be pretty but then again, poets aren't known for their looks.

NEW ARRIVALS

Poets Pattie McCarthy & Kevin Varrone have conspired to create the brand new Emmett James Varrone. He was unleashed upon our unsuspecting world on December 6, adding 7 pounds 13 ounces to its mass.

A further unrolling of the red carpet to Violet Sayuri Hall, who entered the world on October 3 - best wishes & congrats to parents John S. Hall and Yuriko Tada.

Congratulations also to Brenda Bordofsky & Evan Serpick who successfully begot Jack Philo Serpick on August 26. Huzzah!

And while we're at it, have we mentioned Rubio Jett Castagna-Torres? No? Well somehow Elizabeth Castagna & Edwin Torres' wee bairn has become substantially less wee, achieving his first birthday on March 18.

Based on anonymous high-level sources close to other similar projects still in development, babysitting may eclipse adjuncting as the #1 low-paying career choice for poets in 2007.

FROM THE EDITOR: HOW TO DESTROY YOUR POETRY CAREER

In the beginning "You run a small press? Me too!" "You're reading this week? Me too!" "You love Jack Spicer & Laura Riding Jackson? Me too!" & things only get more expansive from there. But then poetry reveals its secret defense against anyone unwise enough to pursue the practice for worldly ends: the inverted career arc. Poetry doesn't merely guarantee zero scratch & tiny fame - it guarantees even less as time passes. Poets are most successful in the moment before they first identify as one.

After a decade, readings drop off. A smattering of colleagues still print magazines & presses so you still get your poems "out there," but out there is an increasingly cleared field. Most people have made up their mind about you. & your own mind, once up for grabs, arrives at final conclusions about a great many people. Where you point your beard from here establishes the abiding praxis of what there is for you to reveal in the years to come.

Will you be the obsequious careerist, the jailhouse wife to Important Poets?

Will you be the pack animal among self-declared vanguardistas aroused by reputation, who spurn the old mad scientists from within the normative traditions they established, coveting their blurbs?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Will you be disillusioned, bitter, loathing everyone uniformly? Your anger the spark that through the flower drives somewhat predictable verse, irking & irked by a wrecked constituency.

Will you pretend to like everyone so they will like you, and only later, when that doesn't exactly work out, become the consummate hater's hater?

Will you perch your sense of poet-self on the quasi-poetic career of Academic or Arts Administrator – forgetting that those were the gigs of a bygone economy where poets got by fine on a class or two. How many hours a day do poet-adjuncts or poet-development-directors devote to their poems in 2007?

Will your day job become your real job as you drop away from poetry altogether? Ahhhh the smooove nectar of never again explaining your behavior to non-poet friends &, most of all, to yourself for not "writing enough."

Or will you return to your ancient identity? Increasingly aware of elusive noumena behind illusory empiricism, psyched to be known well not well-known. Merrily articulated in a dozen partnerships, willfully undone in nuanced amazement, in mysti-

fied comprehension of the marvelous. Your prehensile gaze, accelerant misterioso & new linguistic latencies unearthed beneath the action figure of every morning. That is to say, you might be a poet, in all your covert illumination.

Having gathered the telemetry of grace, wisdom and contentedness from elder poets who have picked from this menu, you too could angle for a slice of eternity at the expense of the here & now, of immortality at the cost of ever being alive. But who hasn't had a favorite poem ruined by a run in with a renowned poet's suddenly manifest douchebag nature? Some handshakes you can never wash off & it's tough to reconcile charming affable lines with unwaveringly selfish scowls. Snapped in the gnashing bear-trap of nostalgia for their own lost youth on one side & desire for a great seat in the lineup of future history, poets become paralyzed, desperate & sheer poison.

Doomed ambitious writers wander down this dark alley: I got a reading...and my wretched life didn't change. But that's okay. Then my poems were in a journal...no change. Uh oh. Then a book...shit...nothing. The last chance a poet has for the golden love to come showering down is when the book gets reviewed. But guess what? Mommy will still not love you enough. You will still never be as infinite as when you

were hovering above the bardos before you were even conceived. Prestige – less a measure of writing acumen as of the ability to put your austere shoulder to the wheel of life & all its trappings.

This is why most stewards of the Newsletter (the gatekeepers – but to what?) have such a horrible time. Fucking shit up is what poets do well, but the shit isn't one's lowly position in the system, it is the system itself. & cajoling an editor into expanded team coverage of your adventures will do little to elevate your position & nothing to address the higher stakes. You would imagine poets, having decided to practice that most marginal of arts, would embrace the liberation inherent in stealth but desperation has a funny way of outpacing wisdom. Even Dante's wraiths could wait until hell before pleading not to be forgotten. The desire for notoriety is generated from a perhaps valid sense of deservedness after years of hard work or incipient genius. But we all know the true source: you, like me, want to be loved & are afraid of death. A pledge: If you promise to stop being shitty to people who do not dance to your ego's pretty music, I will promise to keep a photo of you on my desk in perpetuity. I will tell the children about your work as a poet and a human & we will collectively remember you. Everything you have ever done. & who you did it to.

MURMUR
LAURA MULLEN

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WRITING WORKSHOPS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

THE POETRY SCHOOL OF POETRY – DOUGLAS ROTHSCHILD

TUESDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 13TH

Writing poetry is difficult; writing good poetry, more difficult still. In this workshop, we will focus on exactly what we think is good in a poem & determine how our senses of aesthetics inform our responses to this question. Working within our own aesthetic notions we will then begin to refine our writing, & help each other to write the best poems that we can. The workshop will conduct a number of actual experiments with writing that will allow us to step outside the world of id, which wants to keep all the beautiful words, & into the artistic self, which understands which pieces fit & which belong elsewhere. We will also engage the basic Poetry School of Poetry premise that the poet's first job is to learn how to edit. Dgls N.Rthscjhd has been behind the foods table at the New Years Reading more times than it is worth mentioning. He has also written a number of chapbooks, the most ground breaking entitled *The Minor Arcana*. He has taught what seem to be innumerable college writing classes, and is currently teaching at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a CUNY school.

THE VISIBLE UNSEEN: WRITING OUTSIDE BORDERS – AKILAH OLIVER

THURSDAYS at 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 15TH

Are poetry and prose virtual realities, simulations of something other, or the real thing? Where does the "I" live? How many moments exist in the moment of the line? What borders of form are crucial for us to hang on to & which boundaries are collapsible? In this workshop, we will explore the connections and tensions between the visible and the unseen world/s, not as dualities or binaries, but as complementary sites of composition. Through engagement with text (written and visual), public spaces, the imagination, dreams and Eros, participants are invited to think of writing as that which re-imagines the known and the unknown. Though this is a text based workshop, poets, prose writers, and artists from all disciplines are welcome. Readings include: Giorgio Agamben, Laura Mullen, Whitman, Anne Waldman, Derrida, & Ben Okri. Akilah Oliver is the author of *the she said dialogues: flesh memory, An Arriving Guard of Angels, Thusly Coming to Greet, a(A)gust, & The Putterer's Notebook*. She is faculty at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics Summer Writing Program at Naropa Univerity.

IMPURITY ROCKS! A POETRY LAB & WORKSHOP – JOANNA FUHRMAN

FRIDAYS AT 7 PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 16TH

The class will focus on "impure" poetry, poetry that employs a mixture of tones and styles. Special emphasis will be placed on works that combine narrative and humor with linguistic and imagistic disjunction. In-class exercises and take-home assignments will touch on issues of scale, space, sound, genre and wordplay. Time will also be devoted to reading published poems as well as in-depth discussions and critiques of student work. Joanna Fuhrman is the author of three collections of poetry, *Freud in Brooklyn, Ugh Ugh Ocean* and *Moraine*, all published by Hanging Loose Press. She has taught poetry writing at The University of Washington, The Cooper Union Saturday Outreach program and in the New York City Public Schools.

POETRY FOR THE PAGE, STAGE, AND COMPUTER SCREEN – THOMAS SAVAGE

SATURDAYS AT 12PM: 10 SESSIONS BEGIN FEBRUARY 17TH

This course is a writing workshop where students' writing is the main focus. Also used as inspiration and writing prompts will be samples of work by writers from The Beats, Black Mountain poets, The New York School (all generations), Language Poetry, Poets Theater, Pablo Neruda, and works being published today online, among other sources. Practices will include reading as well as writing assignments and, in a great Poetry Project tradition, in-class writing. Thomas Savage has written eight published books of poems including most recently *Bamiyan Poems, Brain Surgery Poems* and *Political Conditions/Physical States*. His poems have appeared in many print and online venues including *The New York Times, Hanging Loose, Rattapallax, Big Bridge, Black Box*, and reguarly on the *Wrying-L* website. He has taught poetry workshops at The Poetry Project and Tribes Gallery.

The workshop fee is \$350, which includes a one-year sustaining Poetry Project membership (\$125 – see back page for more info) and tuition for any and all fall and spring classes. This is easily the best workshop deal in the known universe. Reservations are required due to limited class space, and payment must be received in advance. Caps on class sizes will be determined by workshop leaders. Please send payment and reservations to: The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 131 E. 10th St., NY, NY 10003. For more information, or to pay by credit card, please call 212.674.0910 or e-mail info@poetryproject.com.



Photo: Marcella Harb

BRAD WILL

1970-2006

“Everyone kept telling me I should leave town or go into hiding. I was lost but something was holding me there. There was an image I couldn’t get out of my mind. A thin woman curled up fetal and broken lying in a short pool of water at the bottom of a well. I was haunted.”

– From *Fragments of a Shattered Hope*, Brad Will’s dispatch from Goiania, Brazil, February 2005.

Poet, anarchist, and Indymedia journalist, Brad Will was murdered in Oaxaca, Mexico on October 27th by paramilitaries. On that same day Professor Emilio Alonso Fabián and Esteban López Zurita were also killed by government bullets during the months long uprising of APPO, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca. Brad had gone to Mexico to report on a teachers’ strike. By the time Brad arrived in the fall, the strike had escalated into an uprising of the Oaxacan people with at least 11 dead, mostly teachers and professionals. The unrest continues as of this writing, with APPO demanding the removal of the brutal and corrupt governor of Oaxaca, Ulises Ruiz. Meanwhile the Oaxacan state attorney and prosecutor claim that members of APPO shot Brad in order to bring attention to their cause – a charge that has outraged the Will family, who are pressing for a investigation by the Mexican Federal government, the U.S. State Department and other sources.

Most of the accounts of Brad’s life list him as an anarchist, activist, Indymedia reporter, freight hopper, forest defender, squatter, and fire eater, but fail to note that Brad was first a poet. Although Brad published very little poetry, he kept journals full of poems and ballads.

I don’t know how or why, but in the early ’90s, Brad found his way to Boulder, and to Naropa, where he was an honorary student receiving transmissions from Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, Peter Lamborn Wilson, Joanne Kyger, and other faculty. He made lasting friends with students and other poets on the scene such as myself, John Wright, Jenny Smith, Eleni Sikelianos, and Tom Peters.

Brad came to the Lower East Side in 1995 and found a place in the 5th Street Squat. He was involved in Steal This Radio, a pirate radio station in the neighborhood and broadcast a live poetry show from a hidden studio where he mixed whale sounds and poetry with Bernadette Mayer or played ballads with John Wright, his close friend from Naropa days.

A year ago, Brad told me that he wanted to be taken seriously as a journalist. Brad had shot hours of footage of grassroots social justice movements in Latin America, which he planned to edit into a documentary. He was very excited when Evo Morales was elected president of Bolivia. Brad was torn between spending Christmas with his family or returning to Bolivia to witness the inauguration of Latin America’s first native president. Looking closely at photographs from Brad’s birthday party this summer, behind the glasses there is a weariness in his eyes, but also humor and gentleness. For a long time, I thought Brad was just our hero, the poet’s hero, but I found out he was everyone’s hero. Brad’s death was mourned globally in New Zealand, South America, and Europe. The European newspapers compared his fallen image to Christ’s. Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista leader, called Brad a kindred spirit, a friend of the people. In San Francisco his image was painted in a mural of anarchists.

On November 11th, hundreds came to St. Mark’s church to honor Brad by sharing memories, poetry, and song. There was dancing in the streets and a feast. A brass band led a parade from the church to community gardens. In Brad’s honor, the mourners broke the developer’s lock at Charas, a former center of East Village activism and community life, entered and yelled “Brad Will! Presente!”

At the Poetry Project, last New Year’s day, around midnight, he read an account of a police action in Brazil in which he was arrested and beaten by Brazilian police; an account, which eerily echoes his last dispatch from Oaxaca. Brad’s “The Last Dispatch,” his eyewitness account of the events that were unfolding in Oaxaca shortly before his murder, was published in November issue of *The Independent*.

As I write this, the struggle in Oaxaca goes on with more arrests, murders, and disappearances. There are things we must do for Brad. We can continue to protest against oppression in Mexico and to see that Brad’s murderers are brought to trial. To do this go to the websites friendsofbradwill.org, indymedia.org, or narconews.com. We must, as Brad would say, “Stay in trouble.”

–Brenda Coultas

Haunted

There was a woman
I am trying to forget
An image
Slender hands turning the leaves in a garden
Looking for squash
An image
Wiping dirt away from beneath her son’s eyes
An image
Gripping the door and tugging to make it forced shut
I wish I could forget
Haunted by her embrace
Her bones reverberate with the bulldozer’s growl
She is in the dark
Waiting for a reprieve
For a strange wind to change the sky
For the earth to shift and to open
Beneath the broken bricks
Beneath the twisted pieces of steel
Beneath the fragments of a dream
In the short pool of water
She is snapped between stones
Curled fetal not hiding but waiting
For the last breath of light
The last moments of sunset
To kiss her broken face and be reborn
And finally to say
Goodnight.

— Brad Will, *New Year’s Day 2006*
at the Poetry Project

KARI EDWARDS 1954-2006

Poet, artist, and gender activist kari edwards died of heart failure on December 5, 2006. She was the author of *having been blue for charity* (BlazeVox, 2006); *obedience* (Factory School, 2005); *iduna* (O Books, 2003); *a day in the life of p.* (subpress collective, 2002); *a diary of lies* (Belladonna Books, 2002); *obLIqUE paRt(itON): collaborations* (xPress(ed), 2002); and *post/(pink)* (Scarlet Press, 2000). In 2002 she won a New Langton Art's Bay Area Award in Literature. Her artwork has been exhibited in museums throughout the United States. Her three blogs, *transdada*, *transsubmuation* and *in words* are still accessible on the internet. Her book *having been blue for charity* is also available in PDF form at www.blazevox.org.

kari was indefatigable in her work and was led by a vast conception of what her work needed to entail. Poetry, sculpture, music, editing, teaching, organizing and instigating; and with *transdada* she also provided one of the best examples of blogging as a tool for social awareness and change, publicizing the violence and civil rights abuses against the global queer/gender queer community that we like to think of as being in the past, and effectively translating "violence into a form."

This range of cultural engagement is impressive enough, but for kari there were no divisions between life and work. She was, after all, a social worker, and knew how to identify the affliction and deploy an action. She knew how to be present for people and

everyone she knew was touched by her rare gift of generosity wed to a pioneering intellect. In an interview with Akilah Oliver in *Rain Taxi* online, she reminds us of something simple that is easy to forget, as there is something so seductive about "the insular."

"I never think of a community of writers. I think of a community as those that are in my circle. Some are writers, some activists, some artists, or whatever, but there seem to be shared views."

kari and her partner, Fran Blau, had recently returned to the Bay Area from a year at a visionary community in southern India. If you would like to make a donation in kari's memory, checks should be made out to: Auroville Maintenance Fund, and sent to: Financial Services, Town Hall Annex, Auroville 605101, Tamil, Nadu India (Note that it's to support "Cinema Paradiso" and that your gift is in memory of kari edwards.)

If you asked kari to sign one of her books she often scratched out the title and wrote in "NO GENDER." Two words from her that offer a lifetime of trouble for those who are so inclined to take it on. kari, you showed us a way through ever-threatening ghettoization and created a context for us to work in this century; this, another of your gifts to the future.

There will be a celebration of her life and work at the Zinc Bar here in NYC on February 25 at 7 pm.
—Stacy Szymaszek

13 YEARS AGO / 1994

I would be the first to admit to being a very un-*au courant*, an out-of-it geezer, not in style, pre-modern, a former beautiful youth whose eyebags now are in the league of Dickens or Bakunin, a poet whose bardic garb is intricately splashed with the various pigments of radicalism, and someone with a broken heart because his country has not evolved at least into a Scandinavian-style social democracy...And while I am honored to be reviewed in such a prestigious publication as *The Poetry Project Newsletter* I think the reviewer of my book, *Hymn to the Rebel Café*, has rather too quickly dismissed my poetry and my political stance, in his haste to get me out of the way. I AM out of the way. I hand him a bottle of pure European water as he sprints past. And gladly leave to anyone the entire field of hasty bardic mania, overwork, careerism, and excessive eyeballing of the fame-flame. But my poetry is definitely there – some of it fully in the field of Olson, Williams and Hesiod, and it's IN the way.

—Ed Sanders

18 YEARS AGO / 1989

How far along do you think you are in your career?

All the way. *Herbert Elbert*

Too far. *Greg Masters*

I think I'm at that point where my career is about to "take off" *Julie Erlich*
My career as a dirty rat is going along fine. It's my career as a poet that's fucked. *Bill Kushner*

I feel I no longer have to endorse products that I would not personally use or allow in my home. *Paul Violi*

About 2 blocks from home and still not sure how to get there. *Cheri Fein*

FROM THE PAST

32 YEARS AGO / 1975

Giorno Poetry Systems Institute, Inc. has invited former president Richard M. Nixon to give a poetry reading at St. Marks Church this Spring. He will be introduced by William S. Burroughs, Vice president of the Institute, who says, "Nixon is the great folk hero of this decade. He has debunked the whole concept of the Presidency, and the whole concept of authority. Like all great folk heroes, he's been subject to contempt and contumely. he has had his liver eaten out by so-called liberals. He is a great man. If Nixon were here with me right now, I would embrace him and say, 'Show biz, Richard, show biz. You're one of our own.'"

33 YEARS AGO / 1974

On a date with Yoko Ono, Allen Ginsberg took her to meet William Burroughs. The evening ended with the trio holding hands & talking about emptiness in New York City. Oh yeah?

34 YEARS AGO / 1973

People keep coming up to me and saying, "Did you hear? Philip Whalen became a Buddhist monk."

—Ron Padgett

WORLD NEWS

SIMONA SCHNEIDER IN

TANGIER, MOROCCO

In “The Great Dictator,” Charlie Chaplin (as the barber) is flying with Shultz, the pilot who keeps fainting. Somehow they have flipped upside down without either noticing and Chaplin’s pocket watch won’t stay in its pocket. Chaplin opens his canteen but the water flies straight upward, emptying toward the heavens while he stares, awe-struck by the defiance of gravity. This is how Ramadan feels.

Here we are, in the port city of Tangier, 8 miles from Spain and the Gibraltar monkeys. With most people unemployed, café life thrives. We are on the roof of the Ibn Batouta café cooking a tagine for 8 on a single burner propane stove. Every once in a while a ship’s captain blows the foghorn, which should be startling but instead contributes to the feeling of a waiting room in purgatory. Visa restrictions make Tangier a gigantic ferry on the river Acheron. Some can’t take it and go mad or overboard. In Tarifa, just across the Strait, there are graves marked “Immigrant # x” because it’s too expensive for Spain to keep sending back the bodies that wash up on their shore.

When the young king rolls through flowers bloom, fountains appear. Months later he rolls through again and if he doesn’t like a fountain it is destroyed and rebuilt.

On other evenings I go to the Fuentes café on the Petit Socco where the marble stairs are paper thin from people’s feet like drops of water. My favorite café, the Champs Elysees in the new city, is pink and shaped like a rotary with a balcony where young couples go to coo. In the center an enormous priapic chandelier hangs over a small turtle-filled pool.

All the ants were marching into their anthill. We asked some children what they thought was inside. One said, “Another world.” We asked which world was better. Another said, “Only god knows” with a big smile and laughed at his adult language.

Laïd is coming up. It’s the holiday when every family buys a sheep, sacrifices it and barbecues on the street. “Happiness with blood, it’s truly fantastic,” Omar says.

At the beginning of the school year Abdellatif’s stationery store gets as crowded as Britney Spears’ stage door. Men in the back push toward the counter waving money for the Koran. Abdellatif says this is really a ploy to get forbidden bodily contact with the opposite sex.

The red-beards radiate henna-dyed fluorescence and say, “In the name of god” or *bismillah* when they initiate anything; like when standing at the top of the stairs before descending and are also go-to men for neighborhood smoke.

Yes one French expat writer still talks about “the Moroccans.” He takes notes through a kif-filled haze he later can’t read.

Did you know the Moroccan sultan was the first to recognize the United States as a nation on December 20, 1777? If you say you are American you will be told proudly of this like it’s a pact for peace that can never be broken. Why don’t we know this?

Simona Schneider is a poet working as the assistant artistic director at the Cinémathèque de Tanger.

ROSA ALCALÁ IN

EL PASO & MARFA, TX MEXICO CITY, DF

“Empezemos por dónde se debe empezar siempre: por el centro” (Let us start where one should: in the middle), said Alberto Blanco at a presentation of Sergio Mondragón’s new book in Mexico City’s Palacio de Bellas Artes. So, we’ll start in July eating tacos de chicharrón, while Mondragón and I talk about *El Corno Emplumado*, the groundbreaking Mexican poetry journal of fluid borders and tongues that he co-edited with Margaret Randall in the 1960s, as well as the Japanese concept of “en” – a strange kinship, he explained, that strangers feel upon meeting.

Close to the grill, we work our way through three kinds of tacos and Olson’s “kinetic field,” and his attentive listening reminds me of Luis Cortés Bargallo’s account of Mondragón’s poetics, “Para observar también se tiene que entrenar” (Observation also requires training). Days later, walking through Kahlo and Trotsky’s environs, I think: “en” is only part of enacting relation, and observation only part of multi-directional exchange. This was my third week in Mexico City where, thanks to Mónica de la Torre, I became immersed in the world of Carla Faesler and Rocío Cerón, co-founders of the poetry collective Motín Poeta.

Coming from the El Paso desert, México City was a shock of green, afternoon rains, crowded markets. Everything vibrated: the “5 pesos le cuesta, 5 pesos le vale” tune of the subway seller peddling gum (or for a bit more, DVDs, previewed on a player strapped to the seller’s chest); the “No al Pinche Fraude” of post election protesters, the news of unrest in Oaxaca, so many pasts colliding with the present. But also, the fruitful conversations with writers and artists, all whom seem to have connections to Roberto Tejada: Gloria Gervitz, Myriam Moscona, Magali Lara.

So I needed an extra suitcase for all the books I was given or bought, notable among them: *Gerardo Deniz: Poems/Poemas*, translated by de la Torre, and co-published by Lost Roads and Taller Ditoria, a press co-founded by Robertó Reborá and Josué Ramírez. I spent an afternoon with Reborá in his workshop, admiring the exquisite letterpress books they produce, especially a sold out edition of Mallarmé’s *Un tiro de dados*.

Back in El Paso, now months later, all I can do, really, is start in the middle again, perhaps with the October visit by novelist and native El Pasoan John Rechy—who Robert Creeley once told me he visited here in the 1960s. Rechy read partly from his autobiography, thirty years and 800 pages in the making, and later, in my car, recited Stein: “Would he like it if Napoleon..” Perhaps language, like borders, has to be continuously pushed, crossed, undone in order to get at memory, even if memory, the portrait we hold dear, is changed or challenged in the process.

Later, at the yearly Chinati Foundation open house in Marfa, TX, Linh Dinh touched on something similar as he read from *Borderless Bodies* (Factory School, 2005). For Dinh, bodies—as they screw, shit, talk—always exceed their dermal limits; they contaminate and are contaminated by proximity to other bodies, and therefore, are both defined by and resist the limits placed on them.

In the middle of all this, shortly after my return from México, Cerón came to UT-El Paso to read and talk to us about her press, El billar de Lucrecia, as well as Agencia de poemas para toda ocasión, which hires poets to fill poetry orders for the general public. The next day, she crossed the border to Juárez for a gathering of Mexican writers.

So, perhaps, to start in the middle, one must ask, is the middle the same as the center? In any event, isn't it always moving?

Rosa Alcalá teaches in the Bilingual Creative Writing Program at UT-El Paso, and still can't believe she missed Beck's impromptu performance at the Black Market bar.

KIM DUFF IN

VANCOUVER, CANADA

The city of Vancouver, BC has one of the busiest and troubled low-income neighborhoods in North America, and it has become more contentious in the past few years as the people with money want more space and the people without money have few choices. What it comes down to is a politics of place – who belongs where and why? What I find most engaging right now is the 2010 Winter Olympics façade of Vancouver that hovers above an underbelly of the Neoliberal Gentrification Project lurking in the alleyways of the downtown east side. Admittedly, such a rich texture of spatial politics is good for the poetry business. Though *my* poetry doesn't make Vancouver a point, it is the (often sharp) point of Vancouver that sneaks in. In short, my work as a Vancouver poet leans towards the neoliberal connections of urban poetics amidst the romance of the technological. What I envision happening in Vancouver is a burgeoning cultural front that is arming itself (slowly but surely) to uncover, amongst other things, the nuances of a sociopolitically charged urban and spatial poetics.

In keeping with the city's status as an international hub of commerce and exchange, Vancouver deals in poets on a multinational scale (albeit on a smaller scale than cities like NYC or San Francisco). The Kootenay School of Writing encourages local and international poets through readings and publications in *W* magazine, and *West Coast Line* and *The Capilano Review* are two journals that attract attention for consistently producing polished and well-published together journals that break the bounds of the national in order to put together a project that asks questions rather than providing answers. All three of these journals have been integral to my own development as a published poet, and prove time and again to be invaluable to our poetic community.

Like any creative scene, there are ebbs and flows in the levels and quality of creative output. Lately, however, it seems there has been an upsurge of poetic activity (a cultural front?) that is promising. Almost every week there are book launches and readings from local and not-so-local poets and writers. In the face of the ubiquitous nay-sayers that suggest that Vancouver audiences are too laid back and too quiet (compared to Toronto or Calgary), I would suggest that a cacophonous response is not a fair measure. So what if we don't cheer and heckle during readings. Perhaps we can call it a subtle enjoyment? Being part of a poetic outcropping in Vancouver is exciting, and not overly dramatic - but for me that is where the charm is. Poets like Jeff Derksen, Steve Collis and Jordan Scott are all great Vancouver poets (and great friends) who have demonstrated time and again how to cross the borders of the national and the individual through the community of poetics. Perhaps linking up the spatial politics of the downtown east side

with a more loosely bounded poetic geography is where the value of the Vancouver poetic community lies.

Kim Duff is a practicing poet who spends her days avoiding the swarthy glare of Big Brother.

MIKE COUNTY IN

BOSTON, MA

All the concern about the present and future of the Boston poetry scene aside, November was one hell of a month for the spoken word in the area. Things haven't been this hot in Boston since Jim Behrle packed up his Hello Kitty sheets and left for NYC and VH1 glory. In fact, it seems fitting that Jim, along with one-time Boston now San Francisco poet Del Ray Cross, returned to the Hub to read from their most recent books. At times this month it may have seemed to some that there were (gasp) too many poets to choose from. A quick glance through the weekly e-mail reminders sent from the MIT desk of poet and list compiler Dan Bouchard shows a bunching together of readings that would intimidate even the most committed scenester.

Two poetry series of great consequence, both making use of early evening barrooms normally devoid of patrons, appear to be cooperating these days (within reason) to create the hardy outer shell of a revived poetry community: the Union Square Poetry Series at PA's Lounge in Somerville (curated by Derek Fenner and Dan Bouchard), and a Sunday series at the legendary Irish pub the Plough and Stars in Cambridge (curated by John Mulrooney and Michael Carr). Bar owners are happy for the business, barkeeps less so because poets as a group tend to drink Pabst Blue Ribbon and leave poor tips. You know who you are.

Fanny Howe's been all over the place lately, not only as part of the Union Square series, but also making several university stops to spread the love. Peter Gizzi and Rosemarie Waldrop also wowed the crowd in Union Square, as did Joe Eliot, Jonathan Aaron, and Sarah Fox. Over at the Plough and Stars, Ange Mlinko and the aforementioned Dan Bouchard attempted to read over the usual drunks in the back (which is actually the front of the Plough, if you've seen the place), to much success. Former Boston local turned NYC citizen turned suburban family woman Mlinko continues to turn words to gold. Bouchard, who talks a lot about not reading very often but reads like he does this every week, was to this listener at the top of his game, reading from the recent "The Filaments," inarguably his best work to date.

In addition, readings at the Out of the Blue Gallery continue to draw attention, including one in November that featured Ric Royer and the Gloucester poet James Cook. And where in the Boston metro area did Clayton Eshleman *not* read during the second week of the month? One of those places was Bill Corbett's steady and sure MIT series, which continues to bring in the big names from all over.

There's a lot missing from this list (though never from Dan's list), readings at the Blacksmith house, the Brookline Booksmith, and though I hear Boston's not a big college town, our universities continue to hold readings from poets who probably don't appreciate your hard work, poet.

All in all, a harbinger of good things to come.

Mike County is a musician and poet straight outta Boston, currently performing some kind of prog-punk or even prunk rock with the band Flat 9.

WORLD NEWS

TOM ORANGE IN

WASHINGTON DC

We began this Fall season sadly with the news of another under-acknowledged jazz great's passing, Dewey Redman (cf. beyond his recordings with Ornette Coleman his CD *The Ear of the Behearer* and Aldon Nielsen's fine poetic tribute of the same name). Also found myself at the annual GW Creative Writing Faculty Potluck, where I heard stories from Frederick Pollack about Milosz as well as the recently deceased Hungarian modernist, György Faludy. This year Adam Good and Carol Mirakove got the DCPoetry readings started off right. Adam has been on the scene now for (is it possible?) just over two years and admittedly isn't writing much poetry these days, instead thinking through information architectures and structuring processes as poesis. Though he admitted to me after the fact a concern over how to straddle the talk/reading/performance divide I thought he negotiated it quite successfully. Carol and I put our calendars together once a few years ago and figured that she left DC about two weeks before I arrived, and we've since bonded over our past non-copresences. I've always liked her work and was reminded again how much so, especially in performance. The following weekend at DCAC, Chris Toll – who's been skulking around Baltimore for years now and conveys all the kitschy, quirky neuroses of Charm City you could imagine, all with the utmost sincerity – and Daniel Gutstein, who's very much around but I've not heard read for a few years and was quite impressed. Though he typically plays himself as the more mainstream card, Dan's poems were tight and made a lot of bold cuts.

Meanwhile, blogworld was much abuzz about comments on all matters of poetic taste from Ron Silliman who continues to bestow his unique brand of distinction – to the dismay of some and the delightful booksales of others. Part of me thinks that it's only among the attention-starved ranks of us post-avants that Ron's imprimatur could count for so much, while the other part can't help wonder if he fully appreciates the power he seems to wield. Then just this week, the Wave Poetry Bus rolled through our favorite sleazy happy hour joint, The Big Hunt (careful how you pronounce that!) and brought some friends along. Of those I had not met before, Matthew Zapruder impressed most. Was great to have Cole Swenson back in town, if only briefly, and for Peter Gizzi to join the illustrious ranks of poets who have crashed on my spare futon. The following night, Lisa Robertson and James Scully at the Georgetown Lannan Series – Scully is the old leftist who recognizes the overreaches of the sixties, poststructuralism, disjunctive poetics. My heart is with him to some extent, and yet I did not feel his poems were as "adequate to the reality" as he wanted. Much more to my taste, what I see as Lisa's testing of generalizations, statements and pseudo-statements – not so much to verify their truth but whether, as she put it, their truth is something desirable.

Tom Orange is a poet.

SPARROW IN

THE CATSKILLS

I met Wavy Gravy at the Woodstock Film Festival, for the premiere of his documentary-in-progress, *Saint Misbehavin'*. (A team of clowns with carwash-type brushes gave me a "karma cleansing" on the way in.) You see, Mr. Gravy mentioned me in his autobiography, *Something Good for a Change. Random Notes on Peace thru Living*, although we never met. He referred to an article I wrote, "Garbage In Mind," in the *Whole Earth Review*, where I detail all the magazines I discover in the garbage. "I can send you my book, which contains the article," I offered Wavy, who was dressed in clown garb. "Who is your publisher?" Wavy wondered. "Soft Skull Press," I answered.

"Oh, the fontanelle*!" Mr. Gravy erupted. "That's one of my favorite words! Sometimes, new mothers bring me infants so I can place my fingers on their fontanelle. It's like touching eternity!"

Next to him, Odetta smiled cryptically.

Wavy Gravy began as a McDougal Street poet in the 1950s. Buffy Sainte-Marie, in the film, remembers sitting in the back of the Gaslight, spellbound by Wavy (then named Hugh Romney). Hugh and Bob Dylan shared a writing room. "Dylan wrote 'A Hard Rain's A'Gonna Fall' on my typewriter!" Wavy remarks, in *Saint Misbehavin'*.

Something of the Greenwich Village poet remained in Wavy, even after he co-founded the Hog Farm. (His most famous line, "What we have in mind is breakfast in bed for 400,000!" – in the movie *Woodstock* – could be from a Frank O'Hara poem.)

After the film, Wavy answered questions. "You've met so many people – Lenny Bruce, the Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd – why is that?" one man queried. "Can it all just be a coincidence?"

"Yes. A coincidence is a miracle God doesn't take credit for," Wavy explained.

"If the U.S. leaves North America, where will it go?" a guy in the back inquired (referring to Wavy's bumper sticker "U.S. Out Of North America!").

"Uranus," Wavy retorted.**

Wavy explained the origin of the Nobody For President movement. "The Zippies were running a rock for president, and I had the rock, which I left in a taxicab. So I thought, 'Why not just run Nobody?' After all, Nobody's perfect. And Nobody should have that much power!

"Actually, I don't think we need a president. The Senate could just sit around in a circle, and decide everything the way we do at the Farm – consensus minus one."

He noted that Ben and Jerry have sadly discontinued his ice cream, "but I'm apparently going to be reincarnated as a sorbet!"

"How can we get the U.S. out of Iraq?" I inquired.

"Be creative," Wavy advised. "Kick Bush's ass, but have fun doing it!"

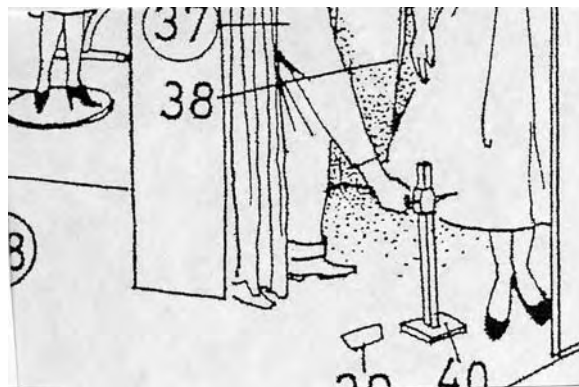
(Fun fact: B. B. King gave Wavy his name. "Wavy gravy" refers to a thick, meaty sauce.)

See www.wavygravy.org

*I see this word directly comes from the French for "fountain."

**Possibly this joke does not work on the page.

Sparrow is reading the Book of Ecclesiastes in Hebrew.



MICHAEL KELLEHER IN
BUFFALO, NY

Robert Creeley Conference vs. The Weather (October 12-14)

The weather's impressive record in this long-running grudge match stretches all the way back to the mid-nineties, when Robert Creeley, courageously fighting for Team Poetry, got stuck in a storm at Buffalo airport and failed to show at the Dia Center to read. Meantime, Creeley soldiered on, gallantly fighting until his untimely passing. Now, it was Team Creeley taking aim at the enemy. And this time it was personal. Team Creeley used two-tiered strategy, members divided by their special powers. Tier A consisted of Poets, whose special powers include logorrhea, circumlocution, and heavy breathing. Heavyweight John Ashbery was Tier captain, fighting alongside Ann Lauterbach, Robin Blaser, Rosmarie Waldrop, Charles Bernstein, Susan Howe, and Michael Gizzi. Tier B consisted of Scholars, whose special powers include theorization, "chalk-boarding," and "poker-facing." Tier B was captained by powerhouses tag-team Charles Altieri and Marjorie Perloff, who were joined in their fight by Alan Loney, Michael Davidson, Rachel Blau duPlessis, Benjamin Friedlander, Stephen Fredman and Peters Middleton and Quartermain ("the terrible two"). It was a seven-round, winner-take-all match. Below are the results:

Round 1

Rosmarie Waldrop, Robin Blaser. Team Creeley suffered a serious blow in round one, caused by the conjunction of bad weather and bad sound. Though both poets could be seen, neither could be heard. In a clever move, the Weather cracked a thunderbolt that shook the church as Blaser opened his mouth.

Winner: Weather

Round 2

Waldrop/Blaser redux, Benjamin Friedlander. Referee Steve McCaffrey, in a controversial move, awarded a do-over on a technical technicality. Ben Friedlander fired the first salvo from Tier B. All were heard, but few were there to hear them, as most were snowed in.

Winner: Draw

Round 3

Michael Gizzi, Peter Middleton, Rachel Blau du Plessis. Team Creeley did an end-around on the weather by sending out text messages all over town letting people know the match was on. Round three was fought to a full room.

Winner: Team Creeley

Round 4

Susan Howe, John Ashbery. Loud and clear. No snow fell.

Winner: Team Creeley

Round 5

Michael Davidson, Stephen Fredman, Charles Altieri. Davidson and Fredman came out swinging, and seemed to have the Weather against the ropes when a boombox shrieked and scared them half to death. They recovered somewhat, but then Altieri read some of Creeley's poems aloud, which hurt their score.

Winner: The Weather

Round 6

Alan Loney, Peter Quartermain. This heavily accented duo held up admirably in the absence of Tier captain Perloff, a no-show the entire team had expected to deal the death blow.

Winner: Draw

WORLD NEWS

Round 7

Rachel Blau duPlessis, Ann Lauterbach. It came down to the final round, and what a doozy! Charles Bernstein forfeited, claiming the weather grounded him at LaGuardia, leaving his bout to the already exhausted Rachel Blau duPlessis. A hush came over the room, everyone wondering what she would do. Suddenly, she whipped out Adorno and bashed the Weather over the head. As Weather staggered, Lauterbach, appeared, reading hard, her left hand flailing wildly and with a final woosh! she sent the storm screaming back to hell.

Winner: Team Creeley, game, set and match!

Moral: Don't fuck with Robert Creeley!

Michael Kelleher is a poet.

KEVIN CAROLLO IN

FARGO, ND

Poets do not generally choose to end up in Fargo. Like purgatory, the place exudes a sort of down-on-your-luck, not-quite-there-ness that continues to be a hard sell. The appearance of all the big box stores and chain restaurants by the mall has not in any way altered this cold, hard fact. Fargo is a place to be from, whether one ever has the courage to leave or not. Like the wooden statue of Marge from the movie *Fargo* that stares vacantly ahead on the second-floor lobby of the historic Fargo Theater, most of what we see tends to seem borrowed from a movie that isn't really about Fargo to begin with. The first coffee shop I went to when I moved here: "Babb's: a Taste of Seattle."

And yet, like purgatory, there is a singular poetry to a whatever-tier city forever slipping through the cracks between rapid corporate development and quaint, small-town visions of its frontier past. Now we have the Red Raven, a café that, in addition to great coffee and regular poetry readings and slams, both hints at the snaky Red River and a sort of Northern Gothic aesthetic that I quite like: the kind that asks, "That silo. Missile or corn?"

The poet knows the answer is "both" in a town that quietly claims the unlikely likes of novelist William Gass and poet Thomas McGrath, whose epic *Letter to an Imaginary Friend* answers Dos Passos' *USA Trilogy* in poetic form. The trick to writing about this place lies in rejecting any nuance of the pejorative label "regional"; as *Letter* asserts, "North Dakota is / Everywhere." Because Fargo is a place out there somewhere that hauntingly resembles something closer to where you are right now, I think our younger poets are moving beyond the odes to fishing, snow, and the plains, and more into the weirdness of place that defines the hollowed-out-hometown-amidst-mall-sprawl spreading everywhere in America at this moment in history. I have always appreciated the underbelly of strange that wriggles 'neath Fargo's icy surface. Perhaps that explains the fishing poems.

I'm not going to lie to you: more goes on in Minneapolis, and 260 miles is too far away to play poetic satellite. More people live in Minnesota's Twin Cities than in the entire state of North Dakota, for that matter, and so we're left to make our own scene any way we can. Three universities in Fargo-Moorhead means such things as creative writing classes, student journals, and New Rivers Press, but I'll choose a more poetic symbol to pin down the work of poetry here: a chapbook of poems recently written and work-

WORLD NEWS

shopped in the Moorhead institution Ralph's Corner Bar. Last year they tore Ralph's down. The forces of poetry are at war with the din of development, and that's why the work of McGrath and Bly still resonates with the Fargo area. We are not winning the war, but the thing about purgatory is that even death is not all bad. It's rather poetic, actually.

Kevin Carollo teaches at Minnesota State University Moorhead, and has begun writing a novel entitled Purgatory, Fargo.

MATHIAS SVALINA IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

It's a little weird to be a poet in a city like Lincoln. It often seems like everything is happening elsewhere. But things are changing. Lincoln is a poetry town. You might only know us as the setting for that Springsteen record about the serial killer but I'm telling you there is poetry in these fields. I swear it. I swear it to you.

First off, we have two new reading series in town bringing in hot young talent. Michael Dumanis' Wesleyan Reading Series, which recently hosted Robyn Schiff. She absolutely floored everyone with a dazzlingly acrobatic and breathless reading. If you get the chance you must hear her read, it will pretzel you, with extra salt. Zach Schomburg and I are in the middle of our second year curating The Clean Part Reading Series. And while it may be dull to list all of our readers from this Fall, I'm going to. We were honored to have Gabriel Gudding, Grace Bauer, Nathan Bartel, Matt Hart, Karla Kelsey, GC Waldrep, Kerri Sonnenberg and Kristi Maxwell read here in town (Aaron McCollough would have been here but some silly snowstorm impeded him).

I list them all because it takes a special kind of poet to come to Lincoln and read. It isn't like having a reading in Chicago or New York where there are a thousand other things to do and friends to see in addition to the reading. These are all poets who truly believe in the power of readings to develop communities and to spread the gospel of poetry. And each one of them has done just that; they are all so incredible in such different ways—buy me a drink some time and I'll babble on about my deep love for all of their work.

As you might know, *Octopus Magazine* is now located here in Lincoln (to the extent that an online journal can have a location) and we have now launched Octopus Books. Our first publication is a set of eight chapbooks, Octopus #8. Those are heading to the printers as I write this and will be available very soon.

What's truly exciting about doing readings and poetry-related things here is the enthusiastic support we've had, and not only from writers already invested in the literary world. Most of the people showing up for The Clean Part Readings have been locals with general interests in the arts. Thanks to our readers they've left understanding just how astonishing contemporary poetry can be. I've had people stop me around town and tell me that they had never had an interest in poetry before coming to one of our readings and that now they're hooked. It's strange. I mean, this is Lincoln, Nebraska. It was a weird and wonderful feeling to see a two-hundred seat auditorium nearly packed for The Wave Books Bus stop, to hear a crowd that size erupt in laughter and cheers. In Lincoln!

Mathias Svalina is a forthcoming poem.

FARID MATUK IN AUSTIN, TX

The first thing I want to tell you is that John Coletti came to us sometime in September carrying a resonance that echoed in his old friend and Austin local, Jeremy Dean. Dean joined Coletti on the bill for Coletti's Skanky Possum reading. Dean told us how years back Coletti had written a poem about some of their good times and that this was instructive, that one could make poems happen out of what had happened. And Jeremy, who would not or had not considered himself a poet, opened for his friend by reading some fine work he'd dusted off from years back and his newly minted poem I offer you here:

Steak and Potatoes and We Do Not Apologize

Grant me a final stone step and the swallowing shallows.

Grant me a robust buoyancy, and,
Along the other axis, quality of light.

Grant me 3 degrees Fahrenheit.

Grant me the robust buoyancy that this place is
And in my mind,
This man and signs of man:

Cracked spine awaiting by the bedside
What is finished and finishing.

(We need the traces of a camp to pitch.
We camp at the end of the road. We camp by water.)

Grant me an intact syntax on occasion
Grant me the staples
Grant me a sea-worthy mattress.

I will you a record of attention
And a bottle of something,
All that is leftover of me.

Grant me part in the decomposition
That which makes woods woods
And all things woods.

—Jeremy Dean

How cool is that?! Then Coletti read us his wonderful stuff, all this great stuff that was fun and welcoming and we were treated to a night of poems as part of a conversation held in friendship.

Also this fall, mother Effing birthed Effing Magazine #5 (ed. Alyssa Wolf) and *Anne Boyer's Good Apocalypse*.

Skanky Possum's new publication, *O Poss*, hit the streets, saying, "this is a totally spontaneous mission. Contributors will be solicited one or two days in advance of production. We have no future / plans. There is / only the / future."

Dale Smith started blogging again at possumego.blogspot.com

Scott Pierce bought a table-top letter press with which he is making the new book of your mind.

And in October we were visited by the Wave Books Poetry Bus: too brief but a lot of fun. Look for the video documentary sometime soon.

For the future:

The University of Texas journal, *Bat City Review*, is putting together an Arab and Arab-American writers issue.

Susan Briante, Chris Murray and Hoa Nguyen are busy planning the second issue of the amazing *Superflux*.

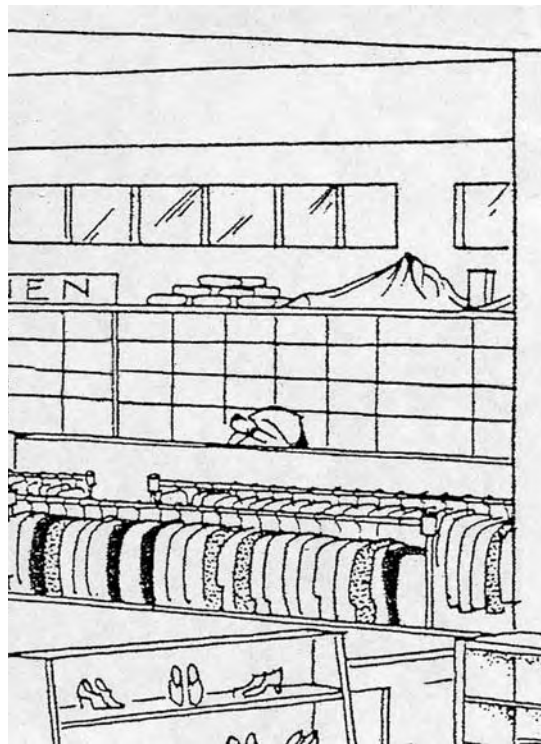
Briante's *Pioneers in the Study of Motion* is due out in March of 2007 from Ahsahta Press.

In January of 2007 I join my partner, Susan Briante, in Dallas – please come by and see us.

NOAH ELI GORDON IN
DENVER, CO

If the epic poem, which is to say the single extended form whose definition is fully delineated and available to the poet, is, as Ezra Pound called it, “the tale of the tribe,” then what, exactly, is the poet’s novel? Perhaps it’s the tribe of the tale, the gathering of story, and the movement between story and plot as orchestrated and conducted by one whose baton seems oddly to resemble that of a relay team’s. Imagine the reaction of the well-dressed audience during a particularly moving piece, with the strings suddenly swelling and sweat extending in a visible cloud around the conductor’s head, if a runner, in gym shorts and sneakers, were to enter from the side on the stage, stealing the baton out of the conductor’s hand and exiting in full stride almost as quickly as he or she had appeared. Such is life in the house of hybridity. It’s difficult enough defining literary genres signified by a single word, once we’re in the territory of the prose poem or the lyric essay, our footprints disappear behind us almost immediately. The poet’s novel is perhaps not as much of a hybrid form as it is a hybrid action. Aristotle asserted that the poet “should be a maker of plot...since he is a maker because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions.” 2,300 years or so later, Ben Marcus writes, “Plot is the hidden machinery that animates a story.” On a recent October evening, a Denver audience was exposed to that machinery being driven by two poets, who both read from recently published novels: Paul Fattarusio and Michael Friedman. About her own novel, *Cool For You*, the poet Eileen Myles, writes “Time is my real subject and calling a book a novel immediately adjusts the reader’s perception of time.” And time is also relevant to how the episodic novels by these two poets function, but so is a talking dinosaur, a man in love with a whale, a trick with a butterfly knife in the afterlife, and a few very familiar actors. In fact, both of the novels by these authors have been described as comic, which is to say they hold their warped funhouse mirrors up to our own sense of human interaction, delighting, but also somehow surreptitiously illuminating. And it is here that the “tale” of the tribe becomes the “tail” of the tribe. It can be embarrassing if lifted too quickly, but is nonetheless an integral part of the body. Pond begins his own epic poem, *The Cantos*, with an allusion to Homer, and thus to the origins of the Western Canon, to the way in which one defines and understands one’s own tribe via literature. Perhaps it is with the poet’s comedic novel that we can come to an understanding of our own follies. If not, at least we can have a little fun. Hearing Fattarusio read from *Travel in the Mouth of the Wolf*, along with Friedman reading from *Martian Dawn*, was just that – fun!

Noah Eli Gordon’s forthcoming books include: *Novel Pictorial Noise*; *A Fiddle Pulled from the Throat of a Sparrow*; and *Inbox*.



JANE SPRAGUE IN
LOS ANGELES, CA

November. Jen Hofer, Renee Gladman and I ride bicycles from Highland Park to Silver Lake to hear Fanny Howe and Rae Armantrout read at David Lloyd’s. Will is there. Diane Ward and Jackson. One of Fanny’s daughters is there, too. She has just had a baby. The last time I saw Fanny, she was holding a baby. Another daughter’s baby. Fanny reads from new work and also from her *Nightboat* collection, *Glasstown / Lives of a Spirit*. But I’m getting the time all mixed up because actually Fanny read after

Rae. But the babies and the reading got me mixed up. Fanny read from work written in Ireland; the words: my recognition: blood sausage, cows and blossoms, monks and monastery tilted me in time. Rae read first. She gave a terrific reading of new writing and work that will be published soon.

Then, we have to leave. We mount our bikes once more and descend the slope toward Jen’s. Renee has a plane to catch. We make it back to Jen’s in time for food and water before racking up the bikes and driving to Union Station. We say goodbye to Renee and lament the lack of time. Jen and I drive downtown to an empty warehouse. I have to hit the freeway later and Jen will cycle home but, for now, we have a little while to wander, dawdle, talk. She’s fresh off the poetry bus; I’m just back from New York. We wander into a huge warehouse. Cold Storage. There’s a fellow who’s struck up a partnership with the guy who owns the place, it really will be a cold storage facility once construction is complete. For now, they’ve hit a kind

of sweet and unusual partnership: the cold storage guy is a fan of the arts. Raised with that as some kind of family ethic or something. So he’s willing to let the fellow use the place for any kind of thing. Artistic thing. We’re here for the experimental music and the incredibly huge shadows on the wall. The composer or the musicians has fixed small lights to the ground, aimed up toward the giant metal rafters. You’re free to wander round the space while people tune up their instruments: horns, strings, computers, more. You’re welcome to wander through the space and talk, check it out, just don’t mess with any of the equipment near the walls. Fork-lifts, things like that. The space is huge. It’s a Butler building. Or Butler building style. Big box. I tell Jen my dad used to build these. Before his body gave out and the disability checks started coming in. What a life of construction does to the body.

We listen, wander, talk. Then it’s time to go. I have to teach tomorrow, early. We promise to get together again “soon!” when we’re not cramming conversation in around the edges. Fix my bike back on its rack. Kiss. Part. Hit the freeway home.

Jane Sprague is author of the chapbooks *fuck your pastoral*, *The Port of Los Angeles*, *Entropic Liberties (with Jonathan Skinner)*, *monster: a bestiary and break / fast*.

EVENTS AT THE P

ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

ADMISSION \$8
STUDENTS & SENIORS \$7
MEMBERS \$5 OR FREE

FEBRUARY

FRIDAY 2/2 9:30PM FALL WORKSHOP READING

A reading featuring the students of the Fall 2006 Poetry Project Workshops, taught by Larry Fagin, Marcella Durand, Gary Sullivan and Kristin Prevallet.

MONDAY 2/5 6-9PM TEEN SLAM [TEENS \$5 ADULTS \$7]

Semifinal round for the 9th Annual Urban Word NYC Teen Poetry Slam.

WEDNESDAY 2/7 AMMIEL ALCALAY & MICHAEL BROWNSTEIN

Ammiel Alcalay's latest books include *Scrapmetal*, *A Little History*, and two collaborative translation projects: *Selected Poems of Faraj Bayrakdar*, a former Syrian political prisoner, done with the New York Translation Collective and forthcoming from Beyond Baroque, and *Outcast*, a novel by Iraqi born Hebrew novelist Shimon Ballas, with Oz Shelach. **Michael Brownstein** has written many poems and three novels: *Country Cousins*, *Self-Reliance*, and *The Touch*. His global justice manifesto and wake-up call, *World on Fire*, is being made into a major motion picture starring the entire capitalist planet. Out of his involvement in shamanic practice has come a new novel, *Healing Dick*, as well as the related website (healingdick.com) wherein he drums and sings to heal Dick Cheney's heart.

FRIDAY 2/9 10:30PM OPEN 24 HOURS

An evening celebrating the work published by Open 24 Hours Press, edited by **Greg Fuchs** and **John Coletti**. Readers to include **Corina Copp**, **Arlo Quint** and **Erica Kaufman**. Plus a collaborative happening with visual artist Jonathan Allen, frequent Open 24 Hours cover designer. Open 24 Hours is based out of New York City and fashions itself after the mimeo-style of 1960s poetry publishing efforts.

MONDAY 2/12 TALK: MEET THE PRESS: AN EVENING WITH FACTORY SCHOOL DESIGN TEAM

The performative culmination of a series of public statements about small press poetry, anarchism and education, Bill Marsh and Joel Kuszai will describe the progress of Factory School learning and production collective in the context of their 2006 move to New York City. Part lecture-theatrics, part analytic-hijinks, their multimedia performance will demonstrate the range of their work at Factory School, from research and design to publishing and resource sharing. **Bill Marsh** works at the Institute of Writing Studies on the Queens campus of St. John's University and is founding member of Factory School. From April 2005 to January 2007 he curated the Heretical Texts series. **Joel Kuszai** has been involved in critical thinking since 2003. He resides in Queens, where he teaches cultural rhetoric at Queensborough Community College.



WEDNESDAY 2/14 EUGENE OSTASHEVSKY & STEPHEN RODEFER

Eugene Ostashevsky's books of poetry include *Literature and Infinite Recursor Or The Bride of DJ Spinoza*, both available through Ugly Duckling Presse. He translates Russian absurdist literature of the 1930s, and is the editor of *OBERIU: An Anthology of Russian Absurdism*, published by Northwestern University Press. In honor of Valentine's Day, Eugene will strive to bring tears to the eyes of both the loved and the unloved. The American writer and Parisian resident **Stephen Rodefer** is the author of the prize-winning *Four Lectures*, *Villon by Jean Calais*, *Emergency Measures*, *Passing Duration*, *Mon Canard and Left Under a Cloud*, among many other titles. He is presently working on some Baudelaire translations called *Baudelaire OH: Les Fleurs du Val*. He has been called the last beatnik, the first postmodern modernist, the greatest living American poet, and the oldest living teenager. He has none of it.

MONDAY 2/19 MARK LAMOUREUX & MOHAMMAD ALI NIAZMAND

Mark Lamoureux is the author of four chapbooks: *Traceland*, *29 Cheeseburgers*, *Film Poems* and *City/Temple*. His first full-length collection of poems, *Astrometry Organon* is due out from Spuyten Duyvil/Meeting Eyes Bindery in early 2007. He is the editor of Cy Gist Press, a micropress focusing on ekphrastic poetry, as well as the the Printed Matter editor for *Boog City*. **Mohammad Ali Niazmand** was born in Tehran, Iran in 1977. He is of Iranian and Iraqi decent, migrated to the USA in 1988, learned english from the hill of Mt. Tamalpais, to the streets of San Francisco, and the alleys of New York City. He is the author of four collections of poetry including *Wizard Poisonings*, and *Change of Atmosphere*.

WEDNESDAY 2/21 GLORIA FRYM & LEWIS WARSH

Gloria Frym's most recent book of poems is *Solution Simulacra*. Her previous collection of poems, *Homeless at Home*, won an American Book Award in 2002. She is also the author of two critically acclaimed collections of short stories, *Distance No Object* and *How I Learned*, as well as several other volumes of poetry, including *By Ear*, *Back to Forth*, and *Impossible Affection*. **Lewis Warsh's** most recent books are *The Origin of the World*, *Touch of the Whip*, *Debtor's Prison*, in collaboration with Julie

Harrison, and *Ted's Favorite Skirt*. Two chapbooks, *Flight Test* and *The Flea Market in Kiel* appeared in 2006. He is co-editor, with Anne Waldman, of *The Angel Hair Anthology*, editor and publisher of United Artists Books, and Associate Professor at Long Island University. A new novel, *A Place in the Sun*, and a new book of poems, *Inseparable: Poems 1995-2005*, are forthcoming in 2007.

MONDAY 2/26 JULIAN T. BROLASKI & TAO LIN

Julian T. Brolaski is a love poet, and dedicates all his verses to Love. S/he co-curated the Holloway Poetry Series at UC Berkeley from 2004-2006 and the New Brutalism series from 2003-2005. S/he is the author of *Letters to Hank Williams*, *The Daily Usonian*, *Madame Bovary's Diary* and the defunct blog *Swimming for Dummies* (under the name Tanya Brolaski). S/he is writing his dissertation on rhyme in medieval, Renaissance and Apache poetry. **Tao Lin** is the author of a poetry-collection, *You Are a Little Bit Happier Than I Am*, a story-collection, *Bed*, a novel, *Eeeee Eee Eeee*, and two e-books, one poetry, *This Emotion Was a Little E-book*, and one of stories, *Today the Sky Is Blue and White With Bright Blue Spots and a Small Pale Moon and I Will Destroy Our Relationship Today*. His web site is called Reader of Depressing Books.

WEDNESDAY 2/28 ED FRIEDMAN & PAUL VIOLI

Ed Friedman wonders whether or not this brief note will make you want to come hear him read at the Poetry Project. Yes, he was L.A. High School's "Boy of the Week." Yes, he married the former Miss Rodeo for New York State. Yes, he was the Director of the Poetry Project for sixteen years. Yes, he recently appeared on Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*. Yes, his books include *La Frontera*, *Mao & Matisse*, *Away*, and *Drive Through the Blue Cylinders*. Yes, he inhaled helium from a weather balloon and sang (in a very high voice) at the Museum of Modern Art. Yes, he co-edited *Unnatural Acts* with Bernadette Mayer and edited *The World*. Yes his new work is titled *And the great world of mass struggle spread out between two large lemon bushes*. Yes yes yes come to the reading. It will be so great to see you there. **Paul Violi** is the author of eleven books of poetry: *Overnight*, due early in 2007 from Hanging Loose Press, *Breakers*, *Fracas*, *The Curious Builder*, *Likewise* and *Harmatan*. He currently teaches in the New School's graduate writing program and at Columbia University.

OETRY PROJECT



MARCH

**MONDAY 3/5 [SIGN-UP 7:45 PM, READING AT 8 PM]
OPEN READING**

**WEDNESDAY 3/7
CARLA HARRYMAN & ANNE TARDOS**

Carla Harryman is known for her genre-disrupting prose, poetry, and performance. Her most recent books are the novel *Gardener of Stars, Baby*, and the special edition *Tourjour l'épine est sous la rose* translated by Martin Richet from *There Never Was a Rose Without a Thorn*. Books forthcoming in 2007 include a selection of conceptual essays, *Adorno's Noise*, from Essay Press and a poem, *Open Box*, to be published as a special edition by Belladonna Press. She is co-editor of *Lust for Life: On the Writings of Kathy Acker* (Verso, 2006) and a contributor to the multi-authored experiment in autobiography, *The Grand Piano*, a serial work that locates its project in the San Francisco Bay Area writing scene between 1975-1980. Anne Tardos is a poet, composer and visual artist. She is the author of five books of multilingual poetry, and has lectured and performed her works widely in the United States and Europe. Her performance work, *Among Men*, was produced as a radio play by (WDR) West German Radio. Examples of her visual texts were exhibited at the MOMA, New York; the Venice Biennale; Museo d'Arte Moderna, Bolzano; the New Museum, NY; and the Neuberger Museum of Art. Her latest CD is a recording of music by herself and Jackson Mac Low, performed at Roulette in 1999.

**MONDAY 3/12
TED MATHYS & MARTHA RONK**

Ted Mathys's first book of poetry, *Forge*, was published by Coffee House Press in 2005. A 2005 NEA Literary Fellow, his poems have appeared in journals such as *American Poetry Review*, *Aufgabe*, *The Canary*, *Chelsea*, *Colorado Review*, *Fence*, *Jubilat*, *Verse*, and *Web Conjunctions*. Originally from Ohio, he lives in Brooklyn. Martha Ronk is the author of, *In a landscape of having to repeat*, (PEN USA best poetry book, 2005), and *Why/Why Not*, University of California Press, 2003. Her forthcoming book, *Vertigo*, was selected by C.D. Wright for the National Poetry Series, and will be published by Coffeehouse Press. She is Professor of English at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Co-sponsored with Poets House.

**WEDNESDAY 3/14
KIMIKO HAHN & BRENDA IJIMA**

Kimiko Hahn is the author seven books of poems, including: *Earshot*, which was awarded the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize and an Association of Asian American Studies Literature Award; *The Unbearable Heart*, which received an American Book Award; and *The Narrow Road to the Interior*, the title stolen from Bashō's famous poetic journal. She is a Distinguished Professor at Queens College/CUNY. Brenda Iijima's books include *Around Sea* and *Animate, Inanimate Aims*. *Eco Quarry Bellwether* will be published by Outside Voices later this spring. *Rabbit Lesson* is forthcoming from Fewer & Further Press. Chapbooks include: *Color And Its Antecedents*, *Early Linoleum*, *Spacious* and *In A Glass Box*. She is the editor of Portable Press At Yo-Yo Labs and art editor for *Boog City*.

**FRIDAY 3/16 10:30PM
PUPPY FLOWERS**

The long-awaited Puppy Flowers New York Extravaganza is upon you. *Puppy Flowers*, an online magazine of the arts, wants to hand you a free beverage. With our other hand we are tapping on the microphone to announce the night's readers, who have pleasuringly crafted original collaborative works for the occasion: Edmund Berrigan and John Coletti, Aaron Kiely and Tracey McTague, Joanna Fuhrman and Erica Kaufman, Brandon Downing and Brendan Lorber, Ted Mathys and Marcella Durand, and Macgregor Card and Karen Weiser. In addition to these fantastic contributors, editor Chris Martin will read a collaborative work written with the dearly missed kari edwards. There will also be musical and cinematic sundries.

**MONDAY 3/19
TENNEY NATHANSON & BARBARA JANE REYES**

Tenney Nathanson is the author of the book-length poem *Home on the Range (The Night Sky with Stars in My Mouth)* and the collection *Erased Art*. Nathanson is currently at work on a book-length poem, *Ghost Snow Falls through the Void (Globalization)*, and a critical study of the contemporary poets John Ashbery, Leslie Scalapino, Charles Bernstein, Ron Silliman, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, Norman Fischer, and David Shapiro. A native New Yorker, he has lived since 1985 in Tucson, where he teaches at the University of Arizona. Barbara Jane Reyes is the author of *Gravities of Center* and *Poeta en San Francisco*, for which she received the James Laughlin Award of the Academy of American Poets. She is a Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Mills College, and lives with her husband, poet Oscar Bermeo, in Oakland, CA.

**WEDNESDAY 3/21
DODIE BELLAMY & LYNNE TILLMAN**

Dodie Bellamy's latest book is *Academonia*. Her novel, *The Letters of Mina Harker*, was reprinted with an introduction by Dennis Cooper in 2004 by University of Wisconsin Press. She is also the author of *Pink Steam, Cunt-Ups*, and is currently working on *The Fourth Form*, a multi-dimensional sex novel. In January, 2006, she curated an installation of Kathy Acker's clothes for White Columns, New York's oldest alternative art space. With Kevin Killian, she has edited over 100 issues of the literary/art zine *Mirage #4/Period(ical)*. Lynne Tillman is a novelist, short story writer, and essayist. *American Genius, A Comedy*, just published by Soft Skull Press, is her fifth novel. Her previous novel, *No Lease on Life*, was a finalist for the National Book

Critics Circle Award in fiction (1998) and a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. Her most recent story collection, *This Is Not It*, contained stories and novellas written in response to the work of 22 contemporary artists. She is Professor/Writer-in-Residence at The University at Albany, and in 2006 she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

**MONDAY 3/26
PETER O'LEARY & ELIZABETH ROBINSON**

Peter O'Leary is the author of two full length collections of poetry, *Watchfulness*, and *Depth Theology*, as well as a book of criticism, *Gnostic Contagion: Robert Duncan & the Poetry of Illness*. In addition to acting as literary executor for the Ronald Johnson Estate, he is one of the long-time editors of *LVNG*. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Elizabeth Robinson is the author of 8 books of poetry. Her most recent books are *Apostrophe* and *Under That Silky Roof*. *The Golem* will be published as a chapbook by Phylum Press early in 2007. Robinson is a co-editor of Instance Press and EtherDome Chapbook Series. She teaches at the University of Colorado, and sometimes Naropa, and lives in Boulder.

**WEDNESDAY 3/28
SONG FOR NEW YORK: WHAT WOMEN DO
WHILE MEN SIT KNITTING**

A reading of poems that have been transposed into song lyrics which are at the core of the upcoming Mabou Mines production *Song For New York: What Women Do While Men Sit Knitting*. The poet/lyricists reading will be Patricia Spears Jones, Migdalia Cruz, Imelda O'Reilly, Karen Evans Kandel and Maggie Dubris. S4NY is a site specific music/theater piece that will be performed on a barge at five locations in the waters surrounding the five boroughs of NYC and will premiere in September, 2007.

**FRIDAY 3/30 10:30PM
SYNESTHESIA SERIES: CAT TYC AND SARA JAFFE**

Cat Tyc and Sara Jaffe present a night of video, fiction and music. The Synesthesia Series of abstract videos focuses on solitary images & sound on a parallel plane, with a romantic French nod to the collage-process of experiential sense memory expression. Upping the ante are the words and perchance the live music of Sara Jaffe. Cat Tyc is a writer/videomaker whose work has shown at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Anthology Film Archives, Camac Centre d'Art in Paris, the High Energy Constructs gallery in Los Angeles and the Portland Art Center in Oregon. Sara Jaffe is a fiction writer and musician currently living in Western Massachusetts. She is former guitarist for dance-damaged band Erase Errata and proprietor of Inconvenient Press and Recordings, a DIY purveyor of handmade books and audio matter.

THE POETRY PROJECT IS LOCATED IN
ST. MARK'S CHURCH AT THE CORNER
OF 2ND AVE & 10TH ST IN MANHATTAN
212.674.0910 FOR MORE INFORMATION

THE POETRY PROJECT IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE
WITH ASSISTANCE AND ADVANCE NOTICE

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

COMMON INTERESTS & UNCOMMON HOPE

A CONVERSATION WITH HOWARD ZINN

Howard Zinn, historian, writer, activist, teacher & political scientist is perhaps best known for *A People's History of the United States*, his remarkable chronicle of our country's development over the past 500 years. It's not a book for the faint of heart, or rather it's *the* book for those willing to break their heart & rebuild it a hundred times stronger, more perceptive & able to connect with people we've all been trained to think of as less than human. Are you up for it? Providing context for investigations beyond reflexive political answers, Zinn's work provides cause for optimism even while revealing the American empire at its darkest. His years of research reveal, lurking behind often inhumane economic forces, an intractable, ever-present spirit of resistance. In addition to authoring or editing dozens of books, Zinn was involved in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements & has been an outspoken critic of the Iraq War. We had the good fortune to ask him a few questions about where we've been, where we're headed & where poetry fits into the grand scheme.

Brendan Lorber: The genius of the American system is its ability to absorb critical voices, marginalizing them or even using tolerance of protests as proof of its own beneficence. But in the face of growing opposition, an intimidating atmosphere against speaking out has now developed. How can writers resist both marginalization & intimidation, the discouraging sense that the risks for speaking out are high & the potential gains minor?

Howard Zinn: We who write must be honest about the risks, which in our culture lie more in marginalization than in outright suppression. I think it is important to be willing to take those risks. It helps to have some perspective on these risks, to recognize that our risks, in this culture, which tolerates us while it lowers the volume when we come to the mike, is not that of death or imprisonment as in totalitarian states. The risk is diminished when we join others in our resistance. The benefits outweigh the risks because they include the satisfaction of being ourselves, speaking our minds, living our lives as we wish against all odds and intimidation. That means we are acting out a future of freedom even while the authorities are doing their best to constrain that freedom and the culture does its best to limit it. To join the community of free thinkers, free writers, is in itself enormously satisfying.

Lorber: Organizations like Poets Against War encourage us to feel empowered by its collective response to US military intervention. You have discussed specific poets who

provide you with strength and additional insight, but beyond buoying the human spirit, can poets impact policy, or even mainstream culture?

Zinn: I think it's asking too much to find a direct causal link between poetry and policy. But poetry, like the other arts, like music, like the theater, like novels, transform consciousness, subtly, slowly, and so have an effect which cannot be measured mathematically but which I believe seeps into mainstream culture against all barriers, and leads to changes which surprise everyone who hasn't noticed the sub-surface transformation of minds and spirits.

Lorber: What are some of the ways in which voices of dissent have been fractured & how have those tactics been overcome?

Zinn: Voices of dissent are kept out of the mainstream press and media, are confined to small magazines and small radio stations. While for long periods they seem to lead nowhere, at certain points in history, when events have prepared the citizenry to be receptive, the truth coming through even the smallest of apertures becomes immediately magnified and has a powerful effect.

Lorber: Understanding what's come before is critical to seeing where we are headed. How does the Patriot Act compare to the Sedition Act of 1798 or the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917-18?

Zinn: On its face, the Patriot Act, in its own way, does what that older legislation did, threaten people with prison (and indeed imprison them, as was done in 1798 and

1917) if they should speak out against official policy. What makes the Patriot Act more dangerous is that the stakes are much higher than in those previous instances. It comes when the American empire is huge, overwhelming, when speaking out against it is crucially important because the empire has the capacity to kill millions of people.

Lorber: As the overtness of economic injustice & military aggression has grown, many radical poets and essayists have questioned their own decisions to engage in activism through writing rather than more direct means. Each path generates its own set of possibilities. Why did you decide to become a writer & historian, rather than, say, a politician or lawyer?

Zinn: When I decided to go to college under the G.I. Bill after World War II, I almost chose law as a professional goal (dreaming of myself as a latter-day Clarence Darrow, fighting for the poor, the radical, the oppressed). But then I realized that the lawyer has limited freedom, that courtrooms are police states where the judge has absolute power. The classroom, I decided, was a place where the teacher had a certain freedom, able to reach young people who will be tomorrow's citizens. And I had always wanted to be a writer, even as a teenager, because I was reading authors I admired – Upton Sinclair, Jack London, John Steinbeck, Richard Wright and saw the power of the pen.

Lorber: It could be argued that America itself is occupied, not just in terms of having overthrown the indigenous population but

insofar as policymakers represent the wealthiest individuals before everyone else. We appear to be freer to act & say what we want than at other times in the nation's history. But are we being permitted more liberties because, given our level of economic restriction, few people have the resources to actually enjoy the rights that hypothetically belong to us?

Zinn: That is a crucial point, about resources, because this is something not taken into account when people point to the Bill of Rights as a sign that we have freedom and democracy. Take the First Amendment, for instance, which says Congress can make no law abridging the freedom of speech or press. Well, it becomes rather meaningless when you consider that your freedom of speech, while you may possess it in a minimum way, is restricted in its power because you don't have the resources to reach huge numbers of people. You can get on a soapbox and speak to a hundred people. Proctor and Gamble, which made the soapbox, and the soap, can pay for ads and TV time and reach a million people.

Lorber: You've quoted Eugene Debs as saying "It is the master class that makes the war, and the working class that fights it." There's a great effort being made to vilify the Iraqi insurgents, but would it be safe to say that most American GIs have more in common with the people they're shooting at than the people who sent them over in the first place?

Zinn: It is crucial, if we are going to have a different world, that we recognize our common interest with ordinary people everywhere, that we don't have a common interest with our government, as soldiers in other countries don't have a common interest with theirs. In the movie "Merry Christmas" (I think it's a French movie) there is a moment in World War I (based on a true event) when French soldiers and German soldiers, on Christmas eve, moved out of their trenches onto no-man's land and sang Christmas carols together and fraternized, recognizing their common interests.

Lorber: Recently, you wrote in *le Monde* "The history of social change is the history of millions of actions, small and large, coming together at points in history and creating a power that governments cannot suppress." Never before have so many people been galvanized against the policies of the US government. Do you foresee that opposition leading to fundamental changes in

US policy? Or will the current administration simply be replaced with another one from within the two party system, equally beholden to corporate interests & unable to address the fundamental issues that people care about? That is, are we witnessing the beginning of a radically humanist era, or of another chapter in a history of gradual changes?

Zinn: There is no way of knowing at this point. We may succeed in ending this war and one year or ten years or twenty years from now the government may inveigle us into another war (there were sixteen years between the end of the Vietnam War and the first Gulf War, thirty years to the war in Iraq). But there is a slim possibility that at a certain point the government will find it impossible to persuade the people of this, that the revulsion against war will have become

so strong, that the suspicion of government motives will have become so powerful, that the era of war may come to an end. Similarly with domestic issues, where we could go from minor reform to minor reform, let's say in health care, or in raising the minimum wage a bit, but it is also possible, barely possible I admit, that at some point those incremental measures will be seen as inadequate and people will demand a fundamental change in the way our national resources are used, will demand free and universal health care, a basic income for every family, etc.

Lorber: The US military has engaged in foreign interventions hundreds of times since 1776. These wars were not impelled by moral urgency but by the demands of the US economy to maintain profit levels, to turn workers against each other in allegiance to their leaders, to ensure access to new resources and to expand into new markets. Yet despite the declaration of a now seemingly permanent state of war, the massive death toll is not buying the benefits that large corporations have come to expect. If war no longer works the way it used to, what does the future hold for a country whose economy is heavily invested in it?

Zinn: It's complicated, because the war in Iraq has left such chaos that the oil corporations have not been able to benefit, and yet the rise in oil prices has led to huge profits

(forty billion dollars a year for Exxon) and corporations producing weaponry have made billions, as well as those corporations (like Bechtel and Halliburton) given billion-dollar contracts to "reconstruct" Iraq.

Lorber: Is a world without war possible? Most people would roll their eyes at such a question, despite its importance as a goal. You have said, "What is our job? To point all this out. Our faith is that human beings only support violence and terror when they have been lied to. And when they learn the truth, as happened in the course of the

Vietnam War, they will turn against the government." What would people have to be shown to bring us to the point where all war, not just our invasion of Iraq, is brought to an end? What changes would have to occur?

Zinn: Sometimes, as any teacher knows, a lesson doesn't sink in

the first or the second time, but only the tenth time. So the futility of war may only gradually sink into the consciousness of the American people. And indeed of people all over the world. Surely the experience of the last hundred years, of the endless cruel wars, must at some point get through to enough people, so that a critical mass of people refuse to cooperate with war. As Einstein said: "wars will end when men refuse to fight."

Lorber: The myths on which this country is based are very compelling. Many people would prefer not to examine history through the lens you have developed on the grounds that is it too heartbreaking. But could it be said that the opposite is true, that ultimately a critical examination of the conditions in which we live & how we got here is done in the spirit of optimism – that through serious reflection something better can emerge?

Zinn: This is not my prediction, but my hope. By now my "People's History" has sold more than one and a half million copies. That suggests that there are huge numbers of people in this country hungry for a different view of history and of our society. It takes time and patience (not passive patience but active patience) to persist over a long period of time as black people did in this country, and finally see change take place.

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ROBIN BLASER'S COSMIC COMPANIONSHIP OF THE REAL

CHARLES BERNSTEIN'S
AFTERWORD to
The Holy Forest:
Collected Poems of Robin Blaser
Revised and Expanded Edition
Edited by Miriam Nichols
U of California Press 2006



I dwell in Possibility—
A fairer House than Prose—
— Dickinson

Robin Blaser's poems are companions on a journey of life, a journey whose goal is not getting someplace else, but, rather, being where you are and who you are — where *you* is always in the plural.

In the plural might be a good motto for Blaser's courageous and anti-declamatory poetics, his profound continuation, deep into the darkening heart of contemporary North American poetry, of Emily Dickinson's core value: "I'm nobody ... Are you nobody too?" For Blaser, it is not only nobody but also no mind, or "no" mind, for this is a poetics of negation that dwells in pleats and upon folds. Pleating and folding being Blaser's latter day, Deleuzian, manner of extending his lifelong project of seriality.

One poem must follow instanter on the next, a next always out of reach until in hand, in mouth, in ear.

Blaser celebrated his 80 birthday on May 14, 2005, just as this book was going into final production.

The present edition, an expanded version of the 1993 Coach House Press publication of the same name — Blaser's first collected poems — features a number of poems from the last decade and also includes several significant works not included in the Coach House publication. Most significantly, Blaser has added a recent long poem for Dante to his Great Companion series. This astounding work provides a bridge between Blaser's poems and critical writings, marking a direct point of contact to the University of California's companion volume of Blaser's collected essays.

Blaser's work constitutes a fundamental part of the fabric of the North American poetry and poetics of "interrogation," to use his

term. Compared to his most immediate contemporaries, Blaser has pursued a different, distinctly refractory, willfully diffuse, course that has led him to be circumspect about publication. As a result, it was almost 40 years from his first poems to the time when *The Holy Forest* began to emerge as one of the key poetic works of the present. Indeed, Blaser's lyric collage (what he calls "the art of combinations" in

a poem of that title, alluding to Leibnitz) seems today to be remarkably fresh, even while his engagement with (I don't say commitment to) turbulence and turbulent thought seems ever more pressingly exemplary. Blaser's work seems to me more a part of the future of poetry than the past.

Blaser's poems and essays insist on the necessity of thinking through analogy and resemblance — that is, thinking serially so as to move beyond the epistemological limits of positivism and self-expression. At the same time, Blaser has committed his work to everywhere affirming the value of human diversity, understood not only as sexual or ethnic difference, but also as the possibility of thinking outside received categories. There are some remarkably powerful and explicit political poems in the volume, notably "Even on Sunday." But the most radical politics of this work goes beyond any one poem: it is inscribed in the work's compositional practice. Even as Blaser questions the stable, lyric, expressive "I," he never abandons the possibility of poetic agency, through his generative recognition of language as social, as the "outside."

Blaser's "Great Companions" have now gone into the world of an ever-present no-longer-of-this-life: Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, Charles Olson, of his immediate company; Dante, Nerval, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze of his Imaginary. The poems of the *Holy Forest* are points on a map of a cosmos that does not exist

in historical terms, that cannot exist, yet that must exist, if we are to make it to a Century 22 that is more than the name of a clothing store. The points form a constellation that we are not quite ready to apprehend but through which we are already formed. We grope and we stumble, but then, out of the blue or black or ultra suede, something unexpected happens: we are ensnared by the encounter.

Form finds us. Form finds us.

Blaser's *Holy Forest* is a blaze of allusion without symbols, quotation without appointment. In the forest of language, every tree is a poem, every leaf a word. The poet sings the songs of night, jumping, from branch to branch, to a syncopated beat; never, ever, finding home. "To wit – to woo – to wound –," Blaser writes in "Oh!," one of his late, short, I want to call them anti-lyrics.

Citation, citation everywhere: the utter prism of his care.

No other moment exists but this one.

This one.

This one.

The Holy Forest is *wholly* secular, for only the secular allows the promise of an end to what Blake knew as the Totalizing Oppression of Morality. ("We have paid far too much in terror," Blaser writes in a note to his Dante poem, "for our totalities.") Each line of *The Holy Forest* is a glimpse into the unknown, each poem a new way of entering the holiness of the everyday. The frames are restless: no conclusion nor solution, the only resolution the necessity to go on. "We enter a territory without totalities where poetic practice is our stake and necessity."

"This World is not conclusion / A sequel stands beyond," writes Dickinson.

Neither is the poem the end of the poem, nor is the idea of the poem its origin.

The poem is the possibility of possibility.

In his exquisite articulations of the flowers of associational thinking, Blaser has turned *knowledge* into *nowledge*, the "wild logos" of the cosmic companionship of the real

**In Res Robin, Nibor Resalb
Inscipsit Mentastrum (XXC)**

Matter over mind or anyway
mattering, muttering, sponge
warp, cup, meld, then again
clutched, shred, shrift. Blister
origins (orangutans) in souped-
up monkey-wrench. Prattling
till the itch in pines becomes
gash (sash) in the pluriverses
of weft & muck (wept). Pleat
as you may, fellow traversers
on the rippled road to hear &
however, ne'er so near.

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BOOK REVIEWS

JOE ELLIOT
OPPOSABLE THUMB
SUBPRESS, 2006

REVIEW BY SHARON MESMER

In this long overdue full-length collection, Elliot mindfully catalogues oppositional phenomena to create an ideal form that not only partakes of the parts but produces a third, more delicious, thing, delicious because it floats free of all attempts to place it. And that third thing is often not an object, a state of being or an event, but merely a further questioning – a caroming off of the edge of completion into a completely new direction.

The word “work” is of primary importance here, because the book is filled with references to utility and functionality, and questions about the nature of purpose. The first poem, “even if,” addresses these ideas:

even if
it turned out
to work

I don't see
it happening
now when

I have to
go to
work so

whatever it was
going to be
this

will have to do

This opening piece reiterates a bit of the overall sectioning of the book as presented in the graphic layout of the Table of Contents: poems divided into five sections (two longer sections and one shorter one). In “even if,” those “haves” and “going to be’s” and that final “will have to do” act as place markers or pivots from loving to having, from moving to resting, from exhaling to filling – as in these lines from “Rehearsing For Shows I Know Won’t Open”:

Does love have to have . . .
Swinging your arms back and forth like a kid so your walking
becomes as restful and clear as a found object

And if we dare exhale the sail will fill and the boat we are
in tilt and begin to move

Though not in relation to us

And there’s possibly the key to these paeans to the revelatory familiar: revelation is something that falls outside our understanding:

..... Consciousness
doesn't budge, how could it, could only watch
the moving reflection of its feet into hooves into fins, etc.
O smiling etcetera, you never lift a finger.
(from “Office Work”)

The open sound of that wonderfully archaic, stand-alone “O” asserts itself in several poems, and seems to act as a first or final breath of surprise as things constantly become other things:

O, intimate decompositions, ascend into wonder
(from “For Immediate Release”)

Reduced to one enormous NO
O, terrible is the highest thing
(from “Index”)

“Index” is one of several wonderful long poems that are sectioned and convey the feeling of unfolding over time (having unfolded that way to begin with, with the poet as reporter: Joe Elliot as “our” Billy Collins). The others are “The Times Where We Meet,” which is a kind of day-book of the month of January, and “Office Work,” the book’s pièce-de-résistance which yokes the “work” theme to a new idea, that of language and its contents (and, of course, its dis-contents):

... your void has a recognizable shape,
can be spelt and passed around. If that doesn't work
cut the image in half and re-glue it head to toe.
Tell me, isn't this the party to whom I am speaking?

Opposition, spake Blake, is true friendship. And Elliot’s artful poems present opposition as the pivot into an understanding (but not necessarily acceptance – that would be un-poetic!) of the workings of duality.

Sharon Mesmer’s forthcoming books are Annoying Diabetic Bitch and The Virgin Formica.

TRESPASSES
PADCHA TUNTHA-OBAS
O BOOKS / 2006

REVIEW BY C.E. PUTNAM

“if golden dew drop grew where I read anthology of American poetry...would this be snow.”

Trespases, Padcha Tuntha-obas’ first book of poems is a multi-fold examination and celebration of the joys and struggles of living and writing in a foreign language (“the foreign language”) and culture. Taking inspiration from Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s work, *Dicteé*, *Trespases* is an ambitious book that combines personal narrative, language and philosophy as it explores how identity is formed, expressed and limited by language.

In September 2004, I had coffee and cake with Padcha at a nice café in the Banglangpoo neighborhood of Bangkok. Padcha had just moved back to Thailand and had started a new job. Maureen and I had just moved to Bangkok for her PhD research. We talked about cultural/language differences between the US and Thailand, culture & reverse-culture shock, and our current writing projects.

And now (two years later) I find myself, back in The States, after spending some time in a foreign environment and learning a new language (Thai), reviewing Padcha's book, in the rain, in November far away from what I now consider my second home, Thailand.

The book is divided into five sections, and each one, except for the last section of 8 prose poems, uses a different form or constraint. The first section, *sophos symposium*, is a set of philosophical-lyrics that uses some lines from Plato and Wittgenstein. It serves as an introduction to her project in this book

OUR SPEECH shall sit
among exact solitude
should you call for more
reference;

The second poem "a poem composed to call one's self," is an English version of a Dok-Soy, a traditional Thai poetic form of 60 syllables with a complex interlocking rhyme scheme. The name means "lace of flowers." The simple explanation of Dok-Soy and the diagram in the book help with a sense of the form, and reading it aloud can give you an intuitive sense of how the form works. In addition, a Thai version of the English poem (or are we reading the English version of the Thai poem?) bisects the page, as well as a first person narrative that runs horizontally through the poem at the bottom of the page, creating an additional level of both textual resonance and fragmentation.

there's only sound
haloing meaninglessly

(line from the Thai Poem appears here)

meaningless. is that really true.
would no language as such render
the world meaningless. but she hears
its music. it sings, it does spreading
songs so amorphous no artist could
sketch. a pollen. the wind that drifts
through it. but they inform her of
inferiority, she is secondary.
they are other splendid places.

these words but words aren't to be owned. they are

The next two poems use more experimental forms. "trespasses," the title poem, mixes autobiography, grammar textbook language, and a playful and pointed multiple choice TOEFL-like standardized test. "translation in six steps: thai to english" takes a Thai passage from a Thai Ministry of Education (1984) textbook for a 1st grader and steps through the process of translation of this passage

giving the reader both a sense of the nature and feeling of the Thai language as well as the challenges and limits of such a translation.

In the end, for me, this book serves as an intense reminder of the possibilities, problematics, and loneliness of living in language (any language) and how living in language can bring us all closer to each other.

these. my. language. these.
of English. I. something.
must be. significant.
perhaps. scrutinizing. this.
through secondary steps.
deviating. those. prides
those commands. incon-
gruity interlaces. you. me.
we might meet.

C.E. Putnam has perfected.

ISA THE TRUCK NAMED ISADORE
AMANDA NADELBERG
SLOPE EDITIONS / 2006

REVIEW BY ANTHONY HAWLEY

At her very best Amanda Nadelberg sounds like a robot. This I mean in the best way possible. A robot is for everyone. The way a robot talks is for everyone because it always sounds a little distant. Its talk is always ever out of place no matter what the context it sounds a little artificial. Thus a robot is from every place for everyone. The way Amanda talks is just a little distant: "The glove salesman is coming the / glove salesman is coming to sell / us gloves because it is time / for gloves soon. He has / purple and little teeth/and he wants to meet you[...]"

At her very best Amanda Nadelberg sounds a little like a robot and a Gertrude Stein. This I mean in the best way possible. Gertrude Stein is for everyone. The way Gertrude talks is for everyone because she talks of everybody like all were talking: "Every one then is an individual being. Every one then is like many others always living, there are many ways of thinking of every one, this is now a description of all of them. There must then now be a description of all repeating. Now I will tell all the meaning to me in repeating, the loving there is in me for repeating." This is from the book *The Making of Americans*.

This book Amanda called *Isa the Truck Named Isadore* is at its very best because it is everyone. This I mean in the best way possible that is this book is "many ways of thinking of every one [...] a description of all repeating." All in alphabets we tend to forget. Amanda tends to names we tend to forget. What is more lovely than a collection of those forgotten: "Blodwin," "Cadogen," "Dymphna," "Haskel," "Isadore," "Kappo," "Pancrazio."

And what should a dictionary of names like this one do but keep

BOOK REVIEWS

speech healthy for everyone and everyone healthy for speech? There is meaning in sounding out all these names. And there is “meaning [...] in repeating” as in “Xavier:”

Hannah knows
that I tend to
prefer repetition
and Hannah knows
someone who is
named Xavier
with a “z.” Hannah’s
name repeats itself
it is a palindrome.

There is meaning in saying all these names forwards and backwards. In repeating, names are made. This *Isa* holds on to every corner, every side of all the names forwards backwards. And so these poems sound a little like experience sounds like a place like this country somewhere in it we sometimes forget is there where everyone is. And this is a thing like everyone it is always a little distant and not at all.

And this Amanda she is tricky her poems they sometimes go under cover. Because this is also English to remind us that some people try their best to misuse it:

The monsters in
the city are so
big and bad and
pretty did you
hear the chief
making language
—in specific?!!
China, he said, in
specific. Pacifically
China is located
Perhaps the president
is really British, one
accent wearing another.

Sometimes these very poems sound themselves like “one / accent wearing another” and that is under cover. They do this for protection that is this poem “Lech” wants to keep us tuned in to several frequencies and so it is what it is and what it’s not. This is everyone. This is also the so-called “chief” who has guided words into not working. Thus this is English that protects language from those who seek to hurt it. This *Isa* keeps an English well. Keeps it everyone’s and everyone. Read this *Isa*.

Anthony Hawley is the author of The Concerto Form.

THE RORSCHACH FACTORY
VALERIE FOX
STRAW GATE BOOKS / 2006
REVIEW BY BILL KUSHNER

Of course, pleasure should be a huge part of the experience of reading poetry. I certainly derive a great deal of pleasure reading John Ashbery’s poetry. He is so mysterious yet I am always drawn in. I am also currently enjoying Anselm Berrigan’s most recent book, *Some Notes on My Programming*. Berrigan is this way smartass guy who lets you enter at your own peril into the twists and turns of his edgy mind. Each poem goes by so fast you have to hold on tight to the book covers. I like his swiftness, so modern and precise. I like how the inner lives of both these poets are so alive in their

poetry. Similarly, I’ve been deriving a great deal of pleasure reading Valerie Fox’s first go for broke book, *The Rorschach Factory*. Fox’s work has an easy fun way of leaping from here to where am I:

This is me in my get-lucky red scarf
the two ends of which point to infinity.
(from “This Is Not My Cousin”)

so that now you see her, now you don’t. She has, like Alice, crossed over to Wonderland.

So from what school whence she? There is such a bright surface to so many of her poems that I would say The New York School. Her long poem, “Arrange In An Order” with its many “I” lines, seems to echo O’Hara and his “I do this I do that” poems: “I left my car by the side of the road / I left my SOS in the same place I left my habit and my suicide note.”

If there is a wry humor to be found, Fox will find it, and more. Take, please, her poem “The Temple”: “Once I traveled with a sophisticate, a man who could speak / on the upper class straight through an extensive foreign meal. / Poets, we are the upper class. / He spoke of certain poets, I’m sure, / and of the persecution of meter, as well. / I’m a slow class. Only then, when he kept speaking / about we are the upper class did I know / I was his slum.” Ta dum!

Such a romantic am I, I am seduced by her lovepoem titled “You’re No Axl Rose,” which ends: “Tonight, the way you clear your throat makes / you sound like you didn’t shave, / the way you didn’t shave draws blood / with my fingers from my fingers. You could write / a new sentence and steal mine and I would still / love you. You could never happen and I would, / you know, this is how possessive I can be.” It is this poem that so deeply works the elusive language of love which makes me look forward eagerly to her next book. That there are these and so many other pleasures awaiting you in Valerie Fox’s *The Rorschach Factory* makes it my pleasure to recommend this book to you most highly.

A fellow of The New York Foundation For The Arts, Bill Kushner’s most recent book is In The Hairy Arms Of Whitman published by Melville House.

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STEERFORTH PRESS / 2006
REVIEW BY ANGE MLINKO**

Anne Porter, widow of New York School painter and critic Fairfield Porter, is 95 years old, and *Living Things: Collected Poems* presents a life's work created in the interstices of full-time domesticity. She was the wife, muse, and helpmeet of an artist; hostess to his colleagues who would visit their Southampton abode in the summer (one of whom—James Schuyler—assimilated into the household for eleven years); mother of five children (the oldest, Johnny, had a schizophrenic or autistic disorder); and finally a devout Catholic. Or is it firstly? Her spirituality is probably a greater influence on her poems than the decades of intellectuals she encountered, from 1930's Socialists to 1950's avant-gardists, in the course of her bohemian marriage. But then, she knew she was a poet from the time she was small Anne Channing, lost in her family's Georgian manor outside Boston, daughter of an illustrious Brahmin family. Poetry came before intellectual movements. So did God. She discovered two gifts, one for verse and one for faith, while very young.

I can't think of a purer poet in American letters. Here is "In Childhood" whole:

The first time
I saw the morning star
I was a small child
Two years old or three
I woke up sobbing

My mother came to me
Gathered me in her arms
And took me to the window
Look she said
There's the morning star

I soon gave over crying
For there it was alone
In the dawn sky
Bright and very beautiful
As beautiful as my mother.

Compare this poem to Frank O'Hara's "Autobiographia Literaria" ("When I was a child / I played by myself in a / corner of the schoolyard / all alone. ...") Reading *Living*

Things I wondered why there aren't more children in American poetry. They are as lyrical as trees or flowers, and that's exactly how Porter handles them: things of beauty, outward signs of grace. Her other subjects are nature and faith. Her elegy for a fellow Catholic woman, a Polish emigre who worked as a maid and "had no children / And a priest had told you / Adopt is no good ..." ("My Anastasia") is a poignant document of the connection between women that transcends socioeconomic boundaries. In another elegy ("For My Son Johnny") she writes

The maker of worlds and tender father
of sparrows
Who told us what's done to the smallest
is done to him,
Told us also, the least will be greatest
in heaven,
...
So Johnny, now you're one of the greatest
Because here on earth you were
certainly one of the least.

In his biography of Fairfield Porter (*Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art*), Justin Spring wrote: "Anne had last seen her son, to whom she had expected to devote the rest of her life, at Easter."

David Shapiro, another spiritual poet, wrote introductions to this volume and the one that preceded it, *An Altogether Different Language* (Zoland, 1994). Both are included here. In one he confesses that he "tricked" Anne into publishing her poems as a book: "I asked you whether you could give me a January birthday present of all that you had. Instead of refusing, which I feared would happen, you said: 'Oh good, and that will be very good for my children to see.' And so I... had my dear friend Larry Weider type it lovingly, and sent it immediately abroad to a publisher."

This reminded me of another Boston Anne—Bradstreet, who also wrote lasting poems about her home and her faith. It was her brother-in-law who went "abroad" to a publisher in England and published her privately-circulated manuscript without her permission. Shapiro's January—Janus-faced—gift request will surely become lore, because Porter's poems in all their radiance trace a straight line back to Anne Bradstreet, the very first American poet.

Ange Mlinko is the author of *Starred Wire* (Coffee House Press).

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CITY ECGLOGUE
ED ROBERSON
ATELOS / 2006

REVIEW BY MARCELLA DURAND

Per the standard definition of “eclogue” as a short and conventional poem, Ed Roberson’s *City Eclogue* is neither. But if you look at the true etymology of eclogue, you find it is derived from *eklegein*, which means “to choose.” That’s interesting, but let’s continue onto the so-called “false” etymology, which says eclogue is derived from *aix*, goat, and *logos*, speech, meaning “the tales of goatherders,” or, in other words, pastorals.

Ed Roberson has been sometimes known to write in a pastoral vein, which makes a certain kind of sense for a man who has had the intriguing experience of being a limnol-

ogist and a diver (as he wrote in “Program for the Dance” from an earlier collection, *Just In: Word of Navigational Challenges*, “I’m a diver / tankman to porpoises, moray eels, / the lightning / cloud of neon tetras at my hand / I midwife the anaconda / –all 60 / plastic wrap egg babies.”). However, in this collection, he turns the subject of the pastoral to the city. It’s not unheard of to write urban pastorals; however, it is pretty innovative to write pastorals on the human element of the city. Rather than naturalist-like observations on buildings, streets, or power plants, Roberson’s city is only as much as the people of which the city is comprised. “the more people / the more lidded certain sound // and climbing through / the city graphic as through mountains, / you come upon the number’s peaks.” People form the urban landscape—*are* the urban landscape—and the city is formed from the events and

injustices that create the social history of an urban people.

Yet time flows differently for this mortal city: “The flesh form of the city doesn’t move / in the same time as the city’s material / forms move into era and monument.” One era that informs these poems, particularly the first title section of the book’s six sections, is the era of civil rights. By asking how much of civil rights has become immured into monument, into history, we see how time itself flows unequally:

..our North American stele,
the silo’s flashpoint cloud

of the fine segregations
taken as a core from our society,

reads like the streets, the history
of mine shafts, mills

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 -ning) in the cloud

The North American “stele” is not the carved stone that channels divine power to the people; rather it is the active silo, the storage of segregation, the histories of the fight for equal rights that have not yet been fully transmuted into poetry (echoing poetry’s past as the oral repository of people’s history, the “goatherders tales”). Roberson questions how history becomes monument—what are today’s monuments? A silo? A five-minute spot on television? What captures communal memory today? Can poetry still be an oral repository for the people? But the pastoral has never fully taken that encapsulating role on. Instead, it’s extremely pertinent today for one potent feature: its invitation to reinvent language. By “describing” nature, one is forced to find new vocabulary for what one is perceiving. As nature has mutated into new forms, including what used to be its opposite—the city—this means new vocabulary and syntax are called for. And since Roberson is positing that the city is ultimately made of humans, he finds new language for that, as well. That is the vocabulary of “red revolving patrol lights” as ghost (the persistence of the past), of “night- / stick elucidation.” Or the vocabulary of “bus stop posture” or “sidewalk’s grate.” Like John Clare before him, who chronicled the process of enclosure in almost brutal language, Roberson uses language spare and sharp to delineate the inhuman-human borders enclosing us.

“The bridge towers of the Verrazano / are so far apart they tilt away from / each other on the curve of the earth factored in.” His question: “The shadow of flesh casts how deep and far / a landscape of perspective?”—is necessary in deciding how we can perceive the larger landscape about us. Now that we *are* nature, a fact that still seems to elude the monument-makers in power, we need to investigate how far our shadow of flesh will be cast.

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

**FRANK O’HARA:
 THE POETICS OF COTERIE
 LYTLE SHAW
 U OF IOWA PRESS / 2006**

REVIEW BY OLIVIER BROSSARD

In *Variété IV*, Paul Valéry writes: “à l’origine de toutes les fermentations humaines, à la naissance de toutes les écoles, il y a toujours de très petites coteries longtemps impénétrables [...]. Au sein de ces secrètes sociétés, germe et se concentre la vie des très jeunes idées et se passe le temps de leur première fragilité.” The New York School of poets has sometimes been considered as a coterie who lost its tireless animator, Frank O’Hara (1926-1966), forty years ago. In *Frank O’Hara: The Poetics of Coterie*, Lytle Shaw shows that this version of literary history is unsatisfactory. Although the book’s title might suggest that coterie implies a coherent aesthetic program, the author underlines the problematic nature of the term, rarely defined when applied to O’Hara’s poetry. To question its relevance amounts to consider the New York School poets as a group of friends rather than a school or a movement: Lytle Shaw’s book offers a reading of O’Hara’s poetry as a critique of coterie rather than as a programmatic oeuvre which would abide by the rules of a literary society.

Originally meaning a group of farmers in charge of their lord’s land, a coterie is a

gathering of persons defending the same interests against outsiders. O’Hara has been accused of being a coterie writer by critics who felt excluded by his use of friends’ names in his poetry. By examining this accusation and reading coterie not only as a group but also as a form of rhetoric, Lytle Shaw undertakes to write an ambitious study of names and references in O’Hara’s work. One of the most essential questions thus raised is: Who was Frank O’Hara writing for? Was he only writing for his friends to whom he sent his poems in letters and whom he quoted in his work? Or was he writing for a larger audience? It is not certain whether final answers can be brought to such questions. However by raising them, Lytle Shaw maps out the tensions in O’Hara’s poetry between private and public spheres which, never quite merging, endlessly verse into each other.

Summing up *The Poetics of Coterie* is a hard task: it brings into play a wide array of literary, theoretical and sociological analyses in order to expose names as the instable hinges of O’Hara’s work. Refusing to consider the poet’s friends’ names by themselves – as critics have done thus far – Shaw replaces them in a broader typology and poetic practice. The aesthetics of naming allows the poet to redefine biographical and literary ties by recreating a family of friends in his work and inventing a personal literary canon outside of the academic traditions of the 1950s. The book is most successful in showing that names are sites of poetic and personal struggle: their meanings and connotations are open to recon-


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BOOK REVIEWS

textualizations and reappropriations. This extends the modernist tradition embodied by Apollinaire, the Surrealists, Auden and Pound and also for the “combative names” of Mayakovsky and Pasternak which became problematic in Cold War America. Lytle Shaw’s variation on coterie takes an original turn when he examines O’Hara’s art writing as a tense play on “proximity,” reading his poems as “art-critical poetry” against Greenberg’s accusations of “poetic” muddying of thought.

Names in O’Hara’s poetry shirk easy identifications. In “The Shoe Shine Boy,” for example, the average reader versed in New York School writing will take “Frank” and “Jimmy” to be Frank O’Hara and Jimmy Schuyler – yet they may very well be Frankie Cane, the hero, and Jimmy, a minor character, of the film *Never Love a Stranger* (Robert Stevens, 1958). The poem is based on dialogues from the film and lines like “Frankie. It isn’t / like that at all,” which appear in both, hint at the function of

names in O’Hara’s poetry. They are never “like that at all,” never quite what we think they are.

Olivier Brossard completed his PhD on “lyricism in Frank O’Hara’s poetry” at the University of Paris VII - Denis Diderot where he teaches. He is one of the members of the French and American Double Change collective (www.doublechange.com).

**SADDER THAN WATER:
NEW & SELECTED POEMS
SAMIH AL-QASIM;
TRANSLATED BY NAZIH KASSIS
IBIS EDITIONS / 2006
REVIEW BY AMMIEL ALCALAY**

The dominance of Zionist points of view has tainted almost all reception of the Middle East in the United States, including its dominant literary tradition, Arabic, until recently. We now find ourselves in a position where, like other commodities that prove our ability to shop for anything anytime, Arabic writing has become more available. As in all such energy transfers, the movement is contradictory. The appearance of major poets like Adonis or Mahmoud Darwish in the *New Yorker* can be attributed directly to the US occupation of Iraq, yet the pressure for such work to finally appear in mainstream venues must also be attributed to the tireless work of translators and advocates working far outside the mainstream for decades.

A relatively recent manifestation of this work is Jerusalem-based Ibis Editions, founded in 1998 by poets and translators, Peter Cole and Gabriel Levin. Dedicated to presenting writers from the Levant, past and present, Ibis is in for the long haul and their work has been and continues to be exemplary. *Sadder Than Water*, a magnificent bilingual production of the essential Palestinian poet Samih al-Qasim, is no exception. There are crucial poems of our time here, most notably the long title poem, a moving and brilliant tour de force trans-

lated by Nazih Kassis with acuity and tenderness, as well as earlier poems that had international resonance, such as “Kafr Qasem,” dedicated to the victims of the infamous 1956 Israeli massacre of Palestinian villagers in the Galilee.

A book like this can also force us to think deeper about the roles translations from conflicted zones play in our imperial landscape. The predominance of single collections of poetry and novels too often have the paradoxical effect of legitimizing generic categories and new critical receptions of “works of art” as “aesthetic” objects, despite also providing an opportunity for individuals, particularly other writers, to face challenging encounters. What we are now most in need of, regarding Arabic writing in particular, is the extra-literary: the poetics and polemics; letters and newspaper exchanges; biographies and gossip, all the barnacles and detritus that go into situating a culture densely within its time and place. We are told, for instance, in Adina Hoffman’s thorough and informative introduction, that al-Qasem’s “ample journalistic and critical writings over the years have revealed an especially engaged and open sensibility... he has mused on a wide variety of political, literary, and cultural subjects – from Ho Chi Minh’s prison diaries to Israel’s bombardment of Beirut to Meir Kahane’s racism to the artistry of Egyptian story writer Yusuf Idris.”

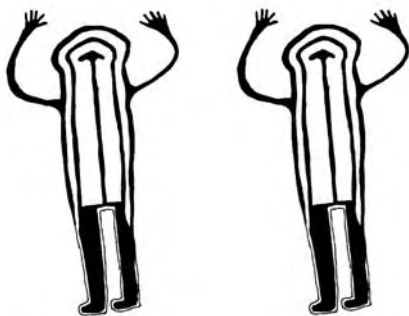
As one of the primary Palestinian poets of resistance, Samih al-Qasem formed part of the international decolonizing movement, a formation that “post-colonial” theories, the rhetoric of globalization, and neo-liberal economics would dispense with. But the bedrock culture of much of the world outside the United States still finds anchor in the kinds of political, economic, historical, and aesthetic assumptions out of which al-Qasem’s poetry emerges. And it these aspects of material and class culture that remain most elusive to Americans, no matter how humanly close we think inspired lines such as these below might bring us to the poet’s world: “You die and remember. / Armies have passed, / and coffins... And you ask: / Was that the peace of wars? /

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Were those the wars of peace? / And you ask how you die and recall / an aged child, / an old man whose childhood hasn't departed, / the torture of domes and silence of graves, / and you are patient with patience – / alone and sad. / Sadder than water.”

Ammiel Alcalay's forthcoming books include Scrapmetal (Factory School), and A Little History (Beyond Baroque).

**THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ROBERT CREELEY, 1945-1975
U CALIFORNIA PRESS / 1982
RESSIUED, 2006**

**THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
ROBERT CREELEY, 1975-2005
U CALIFORNIA PRESS / 2006
REVIEW BY JOEL KUSZAI**

As blogger Ron Silliman has noted, Creeley was by 1965—and age 39—already the “dean” of American poetry. His book *For Love*, published in 1962, was accessible and popular—and remains, along with *Words* (1967) among the works of his most frequently cited. In many ways, Creeley’s reputation since then has largely been determined by the reception of works that are in some cases now fifty years old. The Creeley we know was largely established with the publication of his *Collected Poems (1945-1975)*. So the publication of Creeley’s *Collected Poems (1975-2005)* is a major event, offering a glimpse into the Creeley of the future.

Who is the Robert Creeley we know? That depends on whom you ask. The first volume of the *Collected* has been available for a generation and has had more than a generation’s influence. From Iowa to Buffalo, from Naropa to the Bowery, just about every camp and school claims Creeley as some kind of influence. The first volume of the collected—the contents of which are disappointingly reproduced by California exactly as they appeared in 1982, with no changes beyond an updated cover design to

match the look of the new second volume—collects the early explorations of the syncopated and serialized self.

Man or Mouse? Either he is the big man linking Olson to the Beats—that is, the hipper heir to the stuffy halls of academia, engaging as he did in the “scholar’s art,” but also a badass role model for the “young turks of the lower east side,” as John Weiners described him in an introduction recorded in 1966, or he is the feminine Mouse—hesitant, trembling over a risky precipice—another tradition stretching from Howe to Hawthorne, that “American Nervousness” adding a critical patina of rustica on an otherwise abstract auto-ethnography. In the anxious *For Love* to the fragmentary experiential subjectivity of *Pieces* and *In London*, the “I” a “locus of experience, not a presumption of expected value” (435). Subject and object, the “I” of these poems is worked out in discrete scenes in a hip American idiom. And *this* is the Creeley that has had such a profound influence on poets to come of age after the explosions of 1968 and the whimpering of 1984.

Too bad it is not so simple. Regardless of his work’s critical reception, there has always been much more informal discussion surrounding what people really think of those early poems and the man who wrote them. Even his official biography perpetuates a suspicious biographical reading of the work reducing him to Bob the brawler, the lover, the betrayer. Bob the cad. Discarding the fallaciousness of trying to read the poems biographically, one of the difficult questions nevertheless encountered by contemporary readers is how to deal with the issues of gender and sexuality that are a preoccupation of the earlier work. Visible is the narrative journey of a distinctly male figure, one that constructs the self from the inside out, and with all the confusions of modern life.

Consider the following compressed agonies of American masculininty in these most famous of Creeley verses. In “drive, he sd,” we have a paean to the buddy literature of the fifties played atop jazz. Or perhaps we should really think through how we read the darker ironies of the post-modern poet

husband, the rage of the infamous “For Love I would split open your head...”.

While many of the poems in the early Creeley are occasional, addressed to specific people, many of the others seem generic apostrophic poems to an evacuated or anonymous “you,” the deictic second-person singular often configured as the sexual *other* of the male poet. Reread *Pieces* and *In London*, or *Thirty Things* for examples of this.

In some sense, this sense of deixis is the legacy of the early Creeley, the one thing borrowed to death by younger writers coming into his work.

The publication of the second volume of the *Collected*, including works written from 1975 until Robert Creeley’s death in 2005, provides a new opportunity to reopen the Creeley we know. There are some major works, like “Histoire de Florida,” a serious and long serial work that seems a major work. The poems become even more rooted in experience, place, and specific people. The later Creeley is more domestic, suburban, meditating upon particulars in a way that some might find overly nostalgic. The poems are about aging and death, loss, the friendships of a life now sloping in the decline of age. The work is significantly more citational of friends and fathers, and if in the first volume there is a reference to Zukofsky, the second volume is much more caught up on the sampling/reference/quotation of other works.

The new collected regathers works that registered differently in different publishing contexts. Addressed to Penelope, the section “So There” of the poem “Auckland” in *Hello* (1976) was once given to the title of a book that collected books from that period, and so it’s important to take clues from what seems diminished, lost in the larger collection. There, he writes:

“...Is this
some old weird
Odyssey trip
sans paddle – up

BOOK REVIEWS

the endless creek?
Thinking of you,
baby, thinking
of all the things

I'd like to say and do." (26)

With the second volume of the *Collected*, a sense that the emotional chaos of youthful life has eased into the stabilized solidity of someone finding quiet measure in the company of family, there is also something tragic in the poet's address to himself when he writes:

You've left a lot out
being in doubt
you left
it out

Your mother
Aunt Bernice
in nokomis
to the west
...

your wife
You've
left her
out

No one is one
No one's alone
No world's that small
No life

You left it out. (480-481)

Joel Kuszai is working on an anthology of the writings of Fredy Perlman.

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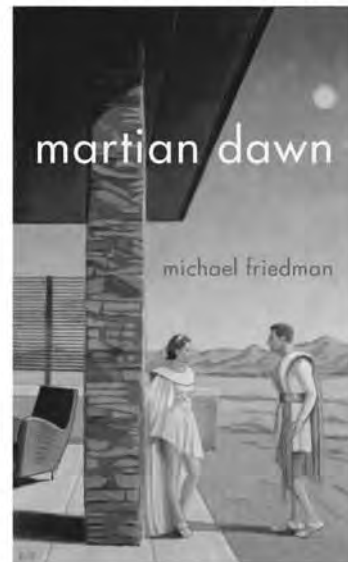
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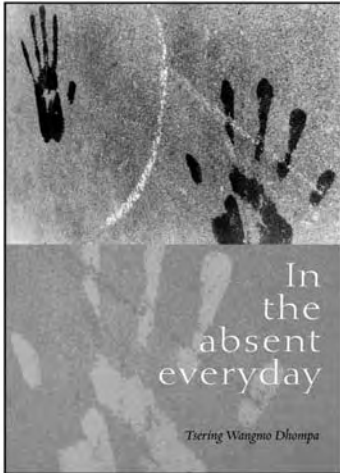
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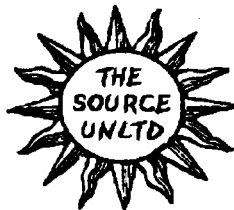
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