

Numéro Cinq

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Undersung | John Malcolm Brinnin: “As Well-Known
I Deserve to Be” — Julie Larios



John Malcolm Brinnin 1916-1998

*Brinnin published five books of poetry between 1942 and 1956 but was not embraced by a large audience. It's true that Brinnin's meaning was not grasped on first reading. Norman Rosten, who published the *Complete Poems of John Brinnin* in *The New Masses*, complimented Brinnin by calling him a "poet's poet" (at his death in terms of popularity) but explained his decision not to publish his work in the magazine by saying, "You, being a fastidious worker, your rhythms, are not too easy to grasp. A compliment, really. But the reason – even with lousy poetry."*

and conscious choice as his courtesy, his conversational anagrams. A lot of poetic spirit went into his self-present

Of the several poets presented in the *Undersung* series (Cinq, there is not another one among them who could had his or her poetic reputation subsumed by self-pre think Rose chose the words of her reminiscence care implies both affection for Brinnin and criticism of him elegance and his contribution to the party atmosphere well one always looked forward to his getup as part party....”) but chastises him for his “conscious choice substance. To subordinate your talent to self-present some people might call self-presentation an art in itself) i Rose seems to be saying is that Brinnin was – like a good elegantly composed, but also – like a bad poem – overfa

Well, we don't have to judge poets by their self-regard, they dress. We can choose to judge them by the poems Brinnin's work more than measures up. It's true that the first book (*The Garden is Political*, 1942) were called “modern” by a critic who was, most likely, eager for the diction of poetry to be looser and more modern. It's true, also, that Brinnin does not sound loose; his language is denser, more opaque than the lines of prose that became more and more popular as time progressed. Not many authors survive the curse of being out of fashion. But whatever the reason for the mannerism he was accused of, Brinnin's poetry pleases me in the way that Shakespearean monologues and sonnets please me: the sense of someone with large things to say, someone using his intelligence to put pressure on the English language that is simultaneously truthful and beautiful.

La Creazione degli Animali

Here that old humpback Tintoretto tells
Of six day's labor out of Genesis:

Swift from the bowstring of two little trees
Come swans, astonished basilisks and whales,
Amazed flamingos, moles and dragonflies,
to make their lifelong helpless marriages.
Time is a place at last; dumb wonder wells
From the cracked ribs of heaven's gate and hell'
The patriarch in that vicinity
Of bottle seas and eggshell esplanades
Mutters his thunder like a cloud. And yet,
much smaller issues line the palm of God's
charged hand: a dog laps water, a rabbit sits
grazing at the footprint of divinity.

From the largest moments of that poem (Heaven, Hell, Time) to the smallest (a dog lapping water, a rabbit at the feet of a patriarch) Swift offers up the “dumb wonder” a person feels in the time of an ambiguous world, and in the presence of work produced by an artist. The poem follows some of the rules of a sonnet – with a slight turn or refocus after the eighth line. But Swift is a stranger to adapting the rules to his own purpose – though he states them themselves clearly but without establishing a conventional rhyme scheme (ABCA/DEAA/FGHG/HF.) The couplet which usually closes a conventional Elizabethan sonnet is buried mid-poem (“Time is a place at last; dumb wonder wells / From the cracked ribs of heaven's gate and hell's.”) The full rhyme of “vicinity” and “divinity” still holds despite being separated by four other rhymed lines – not



Tintoretto – la creazione degli animali

Brinnin published five books of poetry between 1942 and 1950, but his work was not embraced by a large audience. Its true meanings are not easily grasped on first reading. Norman Rosten published the Communist review *The New Masses*, and reviewed Brinnin by calling him a “poet’s poet” (that kiss of de-popularity) but explained his decision not to publish Brinnin in the magazine by saying, “You, being a fastidious worker of rhythms, are not too easy to grasp. A compliment, but the revolution must go on – even with lousy poetry.” Rosten wrote, “the question of ‘popular’ understanding is very important to a revolutionary magazine.”

So Brinnin was not a poet of the people; his poems are dense and must be worked out slowly. I suspect hearing them would untangle them more quickly than reading them. In fact, when I read Brinnin, I often imagine someone reading them to me – someone like Ian McKellen or John Gielgud. Again, Shakespearean elegance. Being read aloud, the complications might settle down, while the musicality of them would be clear. Sentences are long, which ups the level of difficulty; the verbs hide within the verbiage, so their narrative thrust – that is — is not immediately discernible. Brinnin’s words will not fit neatly onto a revolutionary’s placard, and clarity is not the

example:

A River

A winkless river of the cloistered sort
Falls in its dark habit massively
Through fields where single cattle troll their bell
With long show of indifference, and through
The fetes champetres of trees so grimly bent
They might be gallows-girls betrayed by time
That held them once as gently as Watteau.

Electric in its falling, passing fair
Through towns touched up with gilt and whitewash
Chooses oddments of discard, songs and feathers
And the stuff of life that must keep secrets
Everlastingly: the red and ratlike curios
Of passion, knives and silks and embryos
All sailing somewhere for a little while.

The midnight drunkard pausing on the bridge
Is dumbstruck with a story in his eye
Shuttling like his memories, and must
Outface five tottering steeples to admit
That what he sees pass under him is not
Mere moonlit oil and pods of floating seed,
But altogether an astonishing swan.

The river, I mean, for all is riverine,
Goes slowly inward, as one would say of time,
So it goes, and thus proceed to gather in
The dishes of a picnic, or the bones
Of someone lost contesting with the nations,
Glad in the wisdom of his pity to serve
Though the river's knowledge, overwhelming, overv

This isn't subject/predicate/object territory; a sadis

English teacher could make her students suffer by requiring a diagram of the sentences of it. Each seven-line stanza is a noun phrase, and the nouns often sit quite a way from the verbs they depend on. The dependent clauses make readers push to figure out exactly how the sentence goes. The effect of this poem is similar to a cubist painting like Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase," we see the figure before we quite understand the figure; we grasp the general idea and then deconstruct the individual lines. From "fetes champetres" we're in for some work. Questions pile up: In what way is the painting Watteau gentle? What does it mean to say that a river flows inward? What does the river represent – to me, to other readers, and what did it represent to Brinnin himself? Who exactly, and why, is "lost contesting with the nations"?

Answering or not answering these questions is a matter of personal preference; I'm comfortable being "riverine" and flowing with the current, then following up later with a little research to clear up the trouble I find in images of Watteau's paintings and realizing that people face away from us, just as "the stuff of life is full of secrets." I can ponder that for awhile, and isn't that the pleasure of poetry? I read the best of Brinnin's poems and I understand them better each time; I find new beauties in them. I've read the following poem several times and still has it in my mind, that's a plus.

Rowing in Lincoln Park

You are, in 1925, my father;
Straw-hatted, prim, I am your only son;
Through zebra-light fanwise on the lagoon
Our rented boat slides on the lucent clam.

And we are wistful, having come to this
First tableau of ourselves: your eyes that look
Astonished on my nine bravado years,
My conscious heart that hears the oarlocks click

And swells with facts particular to you –
How France is pink, how noon is shadowless,
How bad unruly angels tumbled from
That ivory eminence, and how they burned.

And you are vaguely undermined and plan
Surprise of pennies, some directed gesture,
Being proud and inarticulate, your mind
Dramatic and unpoised, surprised with love.

In silences hermetical as this
The lean ancestral hand returns, the voice
Of unfulfillment with its bladelike touch
Warning our scattered breath to be resolved.

And sons and fathers in their mutual eyes,
Exchange (a moment huge and volatile)
the glance of paralytics, or the news
Of master-builders on the trespassed earth.

Now I am twenty-two and you are dead,
And late in Lincoln Park the rowers cross
Unfavored in their odysseys, the lake
Not dazzling nor wide, but dark and commonpl:

Brinnin was perhaps best known to his generation as
brought Dylan Thomas to America.” As head of the
Hebrew Association Poetry Center (now known as the
1949 to 1956, Brinnin founded a series of poetry readings
some of the best known poets in America and Britain.
Thomas’s “agent” in America, scheduling readings and
places Thomas could stay. During the Welsh poet’s last
tour in America, Thomas fell ill; despite efforts to fulfill his
obligations, he ended up being taken to a hospital in New York
where he died a few days later; Brinnin’s strange lack of
emergency (he didn’t come down to New York from near

until several days later, after the poet had died) stirred controversy, especially when Thomas's doctors assigned death to pneumonia and Brinnin claimed it was alcohol. A postmortem showed no signs of alcohol being involved in the condition, and doctors insisted it had not been an alcohol problem. Thomas was in but a severe bronchial condition; nevertheless, Brinnin's assertions played into the myth of the Poet as Self-Destructive, a myth quite popular at the time (and, possibly, still popular).

Even more controversy was caused by Brinnin's publication of *Dylan Thomas in America*, in which he continued to make the same assertions about the poet's death and to paint the poet – undeservedly – as a boozier and a womanizer, out of control, in a self-destructive spiral, and functioning without a strong sense of responsibility in professional, collegial or marital relationships. Thomas considered Brinnin *persona non grata* for failing to attend to his own needs while in America and for spreading gossip about him. A reviewer of the biography had this to say about it: "A fact is that even if you are not interested in DT. On the surface, a story of excess and inevitable self-destruction, but even in this era of self-account one senses an anxious, self-serving agenda. It is interesting to later read the accounts of Thomas' family and to consider Brinnin as an exploitative hanger-on who added character to his almost criminal failure to help the dying poet. One also considered the possibility that Brinnin's indifference at that crucial time was due to Brinnin being in love with, or at least infatuated with, Thomas. The fact that Brinnin kissed Thomas full on the lips on the occasion of one of Thomas's departures from America certainly contributed to that theory."

In spite of the controversy (or perhaps because of it), *Dylan Thomas in America* sold well, better than Brinnin's poetry collection. Brinnin resigned his position at the Poetry Center but continued to write with and write about other celebrities in the literary world whom he had met there. He published books about William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, and Truman Capote (and

who, according to Brinnin, abandoned his talent and too mascot to cafe society.”) Maybe Brinnin submerging world of other poets meant withdrawing from that v himself. As he once told an interviewer, “I think I’m as deserve to be.”

In any case, he wrote less poetry after the controversy, one more collection twenty years later, and he focuse friendships, editing anthologies, and writing biograph accounts of travel on ocean liners (a passion of his – Atlantic Ocean over sixty times.) In some way, his role i that of the leader of a private literary salon, making sure that firmament. His book *Sextet* is full of gossipy a celebrities, including some his own friends or the friend Eliot, according to Eliot’s roommate, John Howard, was it came to self-regard. Hayward told Brinnin “On the day came out with his face on the cover, [Eliot] walked for h wherever he might find it, shamelessly taking pee Christopher Lehman, who reviewed *Sextet* for the New Y “...there’s something about these six easy pieces that faintly uneasy in the author’s company – something that slightly compromised by having to meet these pec Brinnin’s auspices.” And Brinnin could be vicious. In a 1 William Meredith’s books of poetry, Brinnin kills three stone: “In poetic terms, Meredith takes us into a region by the knuckleboned asperities of Robert Lowell and b turns of conscience played out in the ‘Dream Songs’ of Jo

I’ve met enough poets and sat through enough lunch know that their personalities are not always in sync with affable and upbeat people can write pessimistic and poems; conversely, whiny and egotistical people can w lift our spirits and fill us with wonder. For me, Brinnin th across at times witty, at other times narcissistic; Brinnin other hand, is humble and full of wonder. Without wor conspirator, curiosity) poetry cannot exist, and I agree

own take on the subject: “Unfortunately, a sense of wonder is not
instilled, installed, or otherwise attained. Rather it is a
musical sense — if not quite a matter of absolute pitch, but
something in the genes as exempt from judgment as the color of
brown eyes or blue.”

The Giant Turtle Grants an Interview

How old are you, Old Silence?

I tell time that it is.

And are you full of wonder?

Ephemeral verities.

What most do you long for?

No end to my retreat.

Have you affections, loves?

I savor what I eat.

Do shellbacks talk to shells?

Sea is a single word.

Have you some end in mind?

No end, and no reward.

Does enterprise command you?

I manage a good freight.

Has any counsel touched you?

Lie low. Keep quiet. Wait.

Your days – have they a pattern?

In the degree of night.

Has solitude a heart?

If a circle has a center.

Do creatures covet yours?

They knock, but seldom enter.

Have you not once perceived

The whole wide world is yours.

I have. Excuse me. I

Stay utterly indoors.

Choosing to put Brinnin’s work in front of the readers of

found myself wondering whether we need to admire an :
himself or the woman herself — whose work we admir
was raised pointedly in the movie *Amadeus* — Mozar
giggling fool but as a composer is a genius, while Sa
serious and committed to his art while the art he produ
Some days I find myself thinking that if a poet is a son of
a boozier, a racist, a loud-mouthed fool, a shameless
and/or a misogynist in real life, I'd rather not read his v
Other days, I couldn't care less who the poet is — I just v
necessary element of wonder is present in the poems; if
them and ignore everything else. My conclusion right r
Malcolm Brinnin may, like Capote, have wasted his tal
another mascot to café society, but he was wrong about
not as well-known as he deserves to be. I might not
anagrams or poker under a beach umbrella in Florida wi
him — by many accounts backbiting, gossipy, and sel
But that has nothing to do with how much I enjoy and ad



“A Day at the Beach, 1984” – Key West Write

*From top left: James Merrill, Evan Rhodes, Edward Hou
Shel Silverstein, Bill Manville, Joseph Lash, Arnold S
Williams, Richard Wilbur, Jim Boatwright. From bot*

*Nadler, Thomas McGuane, William Wright, John Ciardi,
Philip Caputo, Philip Burton, John Malcolm Brinnin,
Kincaid.*



Julie Larios is the recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize and a Pushcart Prize; her work has been published in journals such as *The New York Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Atlantic*, *Ecotone* and *Field*, and has been selected twice for *The Best American Poetry* series.

Frost at Dawn: Poem — William Olsen



William Olsen is a dear friend and former colleague at Vermont Arts, a publisher, editor and poet, a major force, diffident presence. In this new poem, he pens what he calls “among other sort of response to and loving argument with a favorite poem, Coleridge’s [At Midnight](#).” The Coleridge poem situates itself as an address to a child sleeping in his cradle. It’s night; it’s cold. Frost outside. Everyone is asleep but the poet. The world is so still the stillness seems to flutter with a presence that disturbs meditation, the presence of the Stranger, which is a kind of encapsulation of a neo-Platonic deity behind or beneath the surface of existence. The poet bemoans his own childhood (much to correct) he was cooped up in the city grime and tells his son he’s lucky; he’ll grow up to see “...lakes and shores / And mountain crags...” that are the “eternal presence of God.”

Olsen’s poem plays with Coleridge’s poem starting with a brilliant first sentence that takes seven stanzas to come to an end as the poet goes deeper and deeper beneath the surface of things, past regret and melancholy and “funereal vacuities” (more than a hint of humor here) to so that in the end, is not Coleridge’s Stranger nor his God, rather something that cannot name or even choose to name. Note the line “wherever

fall” and its echo farther down “The leaf falls to earth...”

The leaf falls to earth and keeps
falling and cups the frost,
then decomposes beyond the deeps,
to teach us how to be lost.

And the word “teach” here echoes the Coleridge poem that also is
God “Great universal Teacher!” But Olsen is much less credulous
than Coleridge. He cannot say why things are nor who speaks
delicate tracteries of frost and the decomposing leaves that teach.

dg

—

Far down below black, lowest regret,
deeper than death, and deeper yet,
down where my mother weeps to me
to leave tomorrow’s sorrows be,

far below sadness and tenderness,
where more is less and less is less,
below the sky or the sky-blue lake
brimming over like the hull of a shipwreck,

below where the crows crow and the cows sleep
below the bluestem and the apples the cows graze
below the prettiest sunset,
below even the bluest white-

bright-last-sunlight upon even bluer waves
gleaming their overly-precious granite graves,
below funereal vacuities,
extravagant superfluties,

far below the lovers’ quarrels,

or their story's broody morals,
in its own good timely time, time has gone back
Time and time again, homeless time—

all the time in the world, homeless,
homeless space of universe,
all the time that time might pass
inside a shiny timeless hearse——

far down below idling hopes,
below the learned astronomer's telescopes,
wherever it is leaves must fall
is neither my life nor my choice to call.

§

Upon a few gnarled stunted vines
fall's first frost fairly shines,
mist rising up from fields while new minted frosts
mummifies a shingle-sided house.

Here is a glittery homelessness
better acquainted with earth than with us.
All we are is less substantial,
all our fears, less substantial.

Dawn is ready and the heart is able.
Fear could not be less substantial.
I've had it with odes to dejection,
which is never more than the fear of rejection.

§

Here's what frost isn't—insubstantial,
querulous, of itself too full,
a mood of ferried buried
waves and the threadbare eroded

dunes we sightseers climb up and down to ruin.
Torment never spread itself this thin.
Incandescent, heartless, so like tin—
gull-gray gulls shriek atonal tunes.

The light of frost is the understudy of day,
this lake, once, as hard as rock:
icebergs—like ships, they broke
to floes which, farther down on their luck

drowned, to nothing—invisibly.
This frost is anything but free.
It looks like the moonlight got good and lost.
It got busted, sprung, and lost.

Frost has a cryological conscience:
the afterworld is cold chance.
Lunatical . . . white as a grin.
It shines unapproachably, like sunlight shines on

whitening fields between cars and houses.
Plow-slashed furrows freeze
over smooth to its silver sky.
Forgive this intricate analysis

but it looks so stunned and incredulous.
It is spotty, like a roof of a vacant crystal palace,
Instantaneously tenuous,
it scribes the window glass.

§

It is so distinct from rain.
It shuns asphalt as too human.
The lustrous is
incipient in us.

Its deposition of glory
is inexplicably ordinary.
What a tenacious
underside of heaven it is—

it won't be pushed around or salted or plowed li
It won't be tracked on and no weatherman will s
It is profligate thrift.
Its past is vaporous.

Beauty never spread itself so thin—
incandescent, the heartless night
turned inside out—
pasture field light.

§

The great lovers once frantic to touch
in darkness no dawn or frost can reach—
my mother gone in the blink of an eye,
my father going by and by,

all mothers, all sisters, all fathers, all sons,
all brothers and keepers, everyone's
truest, best, lost influences,
nameless lovingkindnesses. . . .

it is all and none of this.

§

It seems irretrievably early.
Time is awake, only barely,
infinitesimal hates,
infinitesimal fights.

Tight, fibrous and delicate,

around the fine white plow bared roots,
its extremely minute white
threads appeared overnight.

It prompts us and then reproves us.
Its intricate paralysis
crystallizes . . . miraculous.
Preposterous. Analogous.

§

The leaf falls to earth and keeps
falling and cups the frost,
then decomposes beyond the deeps,
to teach us how to be lost.

§

So night may be said to be over,
over, and over at no real cost,
each dawn the stars take cover.
Stop fretting about the frost.

Frost clung to the shadow places
and as always already was there
before anyone could take a step.
In the sky, stars stayed on

while you were asleep.

§

While you were asleep
everyone was asleep;
if we sleep, if we die,
stars hang in the sky.

Between our houses
is its heartlessness,
but whatever grass
is, the frost blesses

whoever sees this,
whoever would mean
that frost be seen
not heard in this:

now fields steam and
its steam mists to sky.
Under us is only sand
and who can say why,

or whose voice this is.

[William Olsen](#) is author of [five collections of poetry](#), including *Planets* (Northwestern, 2011). He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Foundation for the Arts, the NEA and Breadloaf. He is co-editor of *Planets* and *Writers on the Reading Life* (Sarabande) and, most recently, *Michigan/Michigan in Poetry* (New Issues). He teaches in the MFA program at Western Michigan University and edits *New Issues* in Kalamazoo.



Poems and images intertwine in Richard Jackson's "Sounding". Nature photographs juxtaposed with the superb poems the photographs themselves iconic, metaphorical and mysterious. The natural intersect at the level of form when the poet spies a dilapidated forest, a cluster of roots resembling tank traps. A bee becomes a gap between facing cliffs looks like, well, a gap and the gap is a shell casing. Images and poems project a moral grid onto the world they compose a judgement and a puzzle.

*This is what Jonah had to learn, that it is
all loneliness, all forgiveness, all gathering
from the puzzling depths he carried within him.*

Richard Jackson is a peripatetic poet and translator, an admirer of Vermont College of Fine Arts where we both teach, a good man to know, a profoundly engaged human being. He has published poems, 10 essays on NC before and it's a pleasure to have him back.

dg



SOUNDINGS

What we know deeply we know for such
short time before it appears again, distant and foreign
Where do our words go once they are spoken?
The whale sheaths itself and leaves behind a footprint
of oil. The sea gathers the setting light of the sky.
At some point, the sea becomes the sky.
This is what Jonah had to learn, that it is
all loneliness, all forgiveness, all gathering
from the puzzling depths he carried within him.
Above, a gull dives into a cloud. An invisible
plane leaves a vapor trail the wind bends. There is
a kind of truth we only see when we close our eyes.



BUTTERFLIES

All the energy collected by Radio Telescopes since they started is only equal to the energy of a butterfly landing on a flower. Which is to say how little we know about what is in our own solar system, or ourselves. In fact, Pluto's orbit is so irregular we don't know when it will appear next. Which is how, I suppose, you have landed here in this sentence and, like gravity, have been able to shift the focus. Maybe that's why I think of Newton who, poisoned by Mercury from his alchemy experiments, couldn't remember where he put his proofs for elliptical orbits. There's no reality without its proof, Halley had years before the comet was named for him. The energy it takes to remember is the energy it takes to love, the saying goes, taking so little, as those butterflies know.

to flutter and fly off because there is no formula, and because love is stronger than the proofs we remember



THE CHAIR IN THE FOREST

The story begins with the muffled hum of bees you can hear as they circle a nest in the cushions. It begins with the sound of the loom that folds the air into bolts of cloth. It begins with the sound of the truck half a mile away on the nearest road. It begins when we live in the absent sounds of someone else's life. They have gone where they had to go. The sunlight streams where it wants to go. There was never any money to buy the cushions. The felled trees have their own stories of no interest here. The path to the next clearing has

told yet. Pascal was right, there is no center or circumference.
The bees are souls. The bees wander off. The story begins



TANK TRAPS

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1992

Someone is watching from the window across the street
There are Nightbirds complaining as they maneuver
And dive between the lights. We could drink the darkness
Those aren't child's jacks or crosses as they seemed
Below us, a Roman city smirks about what we'll never see
South of here the souls of the dead disguise themselves
Clouds to escape the militia. Each day is another trap

Our words are blemishes on the truth. Every heart is
The darkness provokes a few whispers. Everywhere
Something crosses our path. We can't see the lovers
About to cross from the right. We can't see the child
Crossing out what he's just written. There are no hal
On the streetlights. These designs imprison us. The s
leans down. If we aren't careful we'll cross out the w



ROCK BIRDS, BISTI WILDERNESS, NM

No wonder the first people here believed we can
What these birds were waiting for was the day w
The lizards wrap themselves in light. The wind v
the ear of the sky. The shadows have a purpose
decipher. Nevertheless, these birds invite us to s

At night these rocks will be iced with light. The question they would answer is why they left the air. They are surprised by what we have tried to carve into history. Sometimes our words hold an idea for a few moments, but the sand claims it. The mind shivers at this thought, it seems like a provocation. Nevertheless, these boats are silent to say whatever has been wearing us down, they are into shapes we could never imagine, never refusing.



FOG

Crows and Elephants watch over their dead and more. How strange to come back now to that sentence, we are later. It's almost time to leave. Every sound is louder

in the fog. My watch strains to go backwards. Shadows
where no shadows could be. An echo of the moon st
out of the last ruins of darkness. Yes, the two men in
about to become fog are real. So, too, the dreams th
lost among the fallen trees that scratch the shoreline
Last night, the stars on the water were trap doors. Th
with their charred wings are complaining to a hawk.
to pack up the sunsets the dawns and move on. The
sniffing below this window who knows everything e.

.



NOT SAID

Gravity happens to the lens. Words squint but

it doesn't help. I want the mailman to deliver
another story. Instead there are only the homeless
men washing the windshield for a quarter. Why
does love seem stuffed in the trunk? This is not
a calculus problem. The bridge from here
to there hasn't been delivered. Empty bullet
casings litter the scene. No one is ever a witness.
The heart sags. My footprints forget me.
I don't think anything will ever be the same.
This is the edge of the cliff and you can't move,
can't jump. Everything is vertical. With binoculars
you can see where you'll be in an hour. Raindrops
collect on the lens. A fine mist. It hides us.
It drifts into clocks. Gravity presses your hands.
Some hurts never get said. Some get smuggled.

Richard Jackson is the author of ten books of poems, most recent being *Unauthorizing Petrarch* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2010) which won the 2012 [Eric Hoffer Award](#). Other books include *Petrarchan Poems* (Autumn House, 2004) *Unauthorized Autobiography* (Autumn House, 2004), *Selected Poems* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2003), *Heartwall* (UMass Lowell, 2003) (winner of the 2003 UMass Lowell Poetry Prize), *Svetovi Narazen* (Slovenia, 2001), a limited edition small press edition of *Falling Stars: A Collection of Monologues* (Flagpond Press, 2002), *Best of Richard Jackson's Greatest Hits* (2004), and several chapbooks of translations. He has edited two anthologies of Slovene poetry: *The Fire Under the Moon and Dog Days* (2000) and *Slovenian Poets* (Aleph, '93) and edits an eastern European Contemporary Poetry Miscellany and mala revija. He is also the author of a book of essays, *Dismantling Time in Contemporary American Poetry* (Agee Prize, 2004). Dozen essays and reviews have appeared in *Georgia Review*, *Verses*, *Literature*, *Boundary 2*, *Kenyon Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Nunatak*, and numerous other journals, as well as anthologies such as *The Place of the Poet* (2003) and *John Ashbery* (ed. Harold Bloom, 2004).

has written introductions to books of poems by four different Slovenian poets, and a special Slovene issue of *Hunger Mourning* edited by various presses, and a special Slovene issue of *Hunger Mourning* edited a special 50-page section of *Poetry International* (2000) with Matthews with an introductory essay. In 2000 he was awarded the Freedom Medal for literary and humanitarian work in the Republic of Slovenia. He has received Guggenheim, NEA, NEH, and Fulbright Fellowships, and five Pushcart Prizes. His new poem book, *Out of Place*, will be published by Ashland Poetry Press in 2014.

Reflection: Photograph & Poem — John Haney Amanda Jernigan



John Haney, *Weidendammer Bridge, Berlin, November*

Amanda Jernigan and her husband John Haney collaborate here on a photograph and poem combination, the photograph providing the focal point for the poem which is an irregular sonnet, a gorge builds its power through a series of contrasts, contradiction *delivered/abandoned, surreptitious/scandalously bright, dying sweetest/swans aren't known to sing, never spoken/never taken back a word not used in the poem)/black*. Read this way, you can see poignant each of the contrasts or denials is, sad, beautiful reverse poet reverses herself and seems to begin to disappear in that negative “we could hardly feign not having seen it,” or near do

the middle, the poem offers a dense run of literary references, o books, swans, sirens, all concentrated in the moment when the glowing swan (see the photo; the swan has an aura) disappears under the bridge. Note also the rhymes leading to the end: Brewer/truer and the gorgeous back/black that bookends the last line.

Amanda Jernigan earlier contributed five poems to *Numéro Cinq* her collection *Groundwork* which NPR picked as one of the top five of 2011.

dg

§

Reflection

The swan slipped under the bridge — a palmed card or a dropped coin, a swaddled child, delivered or abandoned — a surreptitious movement, but scandalously bright, and we could hardly feign not having seen it. I thought about Macpherson's swan, white habited; and Baudelaire's swan, an exile from its *lac natal*; the snow-white somnolent swans of Outram's 'Ms Cassie by Tarnished Water': dying swans sing sweetest, Brecht maintained. But Brewer tells us swans aren't known to sing. The sirens, too, were silent, according to Kafka. Truer words were never spoken, never taken back. In your negative the swan is black.



Amanda Jernigan is a poet, playwright, essayist, and editor. *Groundwork: poems*, was published by Biblioasis in 2011; her second collection, *the Daylight Hours*, is forthcoming from Cormorant, this spring. She is also the editor of *The Essential Richard Outram* (Porcupine's Quill, 2011), and is currently working on a critical edition of Outram's collected poems.

John Haney is a photographer, sculptor, and wood engraver. His work has been exhibited in public and private galleries in Canada and abroad. He has exhibited at the Christina Parker Gallery in St. John's, Newfoundland, and at the Emerson Gallery Berlin. He is currently at work on a series of large-scale contact prints entitled *Common Prayer* (<http://johnhaney.ca/common-prayer>) for exhibition at the Rooms Provincial Art Gallery in Newfoundland.

Amanda and John are sometime, amateur letterpress printers. They are currently working on a book of poems.

have collaborated annually on a hand-printed pamphlet or broadside, one of Amanda's poems and one of John's photographs, issued in Hamilton, Ontario, under their imprint Daubers Press. 'Reflection' / *Weidendamme* is the first of that tradition — the first of their collaborations to make its debut in *NC Magazine*.

Amanda and John live in Hamilton, Ontario, with their young daughter and their loyal dog Ruby, of previous *Numéro Cinq* (http://numerocinqmagazine.com/2011/01/21/five-poems-from-first-principals-by-amanda-jernigan/).

Late: Video Poem — Elise Levine

 3 Responses

 NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 11,
November 2012



—Author Photo by E

I have known Elise Levine since 1994 when my co-editor Maggie included three of Elise's stories in our annual anthology *Coming*, edited, by the way, by Mark Anthony Jarman who has appeared on several pages). Oh, she can write! She has a hip, dark, extravagant flair for the alienated edge, a way of making the bourgeois world look, oh, s

words, she makes you stand up straight and look at yourself. Her poem starts: *It was midnight, Angel, and I'll never forget. We did it in the shadows and down Church Street, my back against rotting wood or my hair crouched down on grey concrete, the club where I'd cruised you twisted down alleyways and across half-empty parking lots.* And later, actually 2005, I put an Elise Levine story in *Best Canadian Story*. It's good that you are always curious about what she is doing NOW. You know, here is a video poem, an example of what she is doing. Her questing mind is taking her. City street sounds, pigeon whistles, video, the words coming in bursts or sound and image, the strangeness about, no" turning your toward home.

dg

I've always been attracted to hybrid literary forms, little like the prose poem, the lyric novel — the way they embody the desire to transform, transfer, mutate. The video is another opportunity to ironize and complicate. Layering images and text amplifies the words, creates larger resonance.

Late

Elise Levine is the author of the story collection *Driving Men Make Requests & Dedications*. Her work has also appeared in *public Joyland, Sententia, Hotel Amerika, Gargoyle, Coming Attractions Stories, The Journey Prize Anthology, and Prairie Schooner*. A graduate in Creative Writing at Vermont College, she is currently an Assistant in the MFA in Creative Writing Program and the Department of American University in Washington, DC.

at risk or at least? Poems by Nicole Markoti — Afterword by Tammy Armstrong

 No Responses

 NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 11,
November 2012



(photo credit: Don Denton)

These most recent poems from [Nicole Markoti](#) are raunchy lit they're a lover that won't stop punning, half love, half madness.] gives and then takes away, coy perhaps, but in charge. No Scheh

here you'll see soon enough; there's a painfully lovely dawning
we're the ones who dance here, and we dance for her.

Staying In

a boat skims the surface, plastic rudder aligns with the pond's sundial, the
and

aiming. toys for US

who let the cat *into* the bag?

curtains drain the sun, your air conditioning follows Mars. I'll bet it's noon
break-time in Copenhagen

worry from your lower back, down. a crisis of German emerges from the air

do you fing-er, or do you fing-Ger? long-er, or long-Ger?

aqua naps help cut the string that pulls maps closed

but only by name tag

there's been a pneumatic leakage, a quarantined seepage, lay people lay a
intention is freakage

my angle, usually indigenous, remains bent at the elbow

thigh high, my big toe plays abacus in the cricket park, a bat per person

we're all thumbs today, meaning my finGers are toe-like

close every ocular door with a deaf testimonial, and remind the lip-reading

kennels proliferate

ken you ken where I'm kent?

hurry and ketchup, the sundial's ticking

wrinkling the cut-offs

Not only Echinacea Purple Cone, but dried Arugula and Potato Vines. A be
the rough cement, thirty-seven moths sneeze irregularly, and succulents re
westward shade.

Calandis blows on her Peruvian flute, covering the middle tubes with her r
Chiu

wears his spider-man mask. It's too big, so his nose hole sits on his forehe
insect-

blue eyes. She climbed the windows, he lurched from the television. Pleats
mean

ironing might be closer than you think. A popsicle during the heat wave sir

Motor vehicles insist that twelve times twelve equals, but does today coun
midnight?

I meant to look up IESB, but Firefly parodies took over.

A racket of scrambling, a drip of Shala-sweat, a wrist-bone releases, and fir
the tiles. I have counted up the list 49-million times and the answer always

Sonnets breathe 14 yoga inhales. Each one a pause, pause in German. Rus
rushing's good. Ghosts slip up as often in the mortal world. Could you wal
you bury saws? Two screws in the lawnmower, one above the kitchen cour
dismiss this information as poetry.

I'm still stopping.

at risk or at least?

sloping from the TransCanada:

a road crew to repair the prairie rain that slid the hill down

three riders on one wheelchair, chasing cross-traffic

a pedestrian bridge where kids leap up, just as the cars pass

used spiderman webs, dangling from rescue trees

wading pool asthma

and three blackbirds, pecking at peanut shells beside the

could tomorrow pack in murderball and taxes, a porch sonata and
wedding speeches, emails to two Karls, and leg passports?

when didn't hot-and-bothered last all night?

but how much ink on paper defines a thorough edit?

A Voice, then a Crow.

friends fly east, west, and north. I sit facing south, in the shade, late
evening, on a flat piece of cement, dying for loopholes

and when tomorrow isn't what the early-bird brings?

Count Down

Bamboo sheets and then the covers, in waves. Soft and caramel, but only in

dripping and a placebo. Misty. We've stroked the fibres of thick thickness, tissue need, but not on weekdays. Whoever could have? A cardboard box, railing, a cardboard pre-packaged breakfast extravaganza. And yes, just as raisins and three eggs and five pills and the dregs of loose tea. One mug. My shoulder, not the kneecaps, not seven of the toes, not the light switch in stained berber. Elevator doors, but only on the way down. Remind me to p on the 13th. Remind me to swallow. Did I ask?

Yes, swishing air, but not so's y'd notice.

A metal handle, four car keys, and the wheel inside the wheel, ever-burnin scratched nose, and sixteen hair-flips but who says for show? The inside of but only twice by accident. Seventeen times on the radio, six on the compu

A sneeze that twirled inside niacin. But basically because Benjamin deman at the precise corner of Pine and Windy. I'm not making this up. Too many knobs, or "press one for"s or keypads or take-out packets to list. I'll list as learn. Learn from the fingertips, in. Yes, the bah dies. Bathe eyes.

A series of pages, not all poetry, but enough to justify the gutter restraints. up the upside, or the insect, or the smash-up. Windsor rain, on the downsi More books, in retail. More pens, in trade. More sleeves and file folders an doesn't count and counter surfaces that do. A penultimum of half-price me

And finally: each other, but as explicitly as yummy digitals.

“Thefts, Contortions, & Yogic Breathing: Nicole Mark Poetics”

[Nicole Markoti](#)'s poetry is kinetic. In both of her collections *Other Alphabets* (1998) and *Bent at the Spine* (2012), her aesth prose poem until it transforms into something hectic, witty, & Markoti, the loosely structured versification of the prose p

“and/or” pitfalls that Western traditional poetry and prose disregard formal line breaks and punctuation, her prose is more natural pause. This genre-crossing makes for a paratext that broaches complex questions concerning nationalism, identity, and language.

She further complicates this exploration through her inclusion of multiple voices and conversations. These dislocated voices often become her primary tool to underscore her interest in multiple perspectives and reveal how her eavesdropping comes from being preeminently concerned with the margins—metaphorical margins—margins which locate the cultural and linguistic sound bites, double entendres, and puns that stack the poem with suggestion. Markoti’s work exhibits a trickster quality in its play with language and then returns it in altered forms. Her intertextual references to language within the poem and provide a way of listening to a world.

As the selection below attests, her poetry grows out of the so-called “sentential piece,” in her words, that encourages “plastic notions of purity in either prose or poetry.” Markoti’s use of this form is her way of subverting the Western traditional poem, the form she deems a patriarchal device that doesn’t provide ample space for multiple voices. “I’m always stopping,” she remarks as though her thoughts are never completed because the medium does not encourage it or she is hesitant in her own abilities to speak through the tradition. In this selection, this difficulty, in the selection here, in a variety of ways. In two instances, for example, she evokes “shala.” as “the hot yoga shala” and “the shala.” As it’s unclear if she is referring to the war goddess Shala, or the Sanskrit word for yoga studio, she emphasizes the arbitrariness of language and its meanings, however, may be anchors—avatar and shelter—Markoti’s assertion that subversions of language demand a new form. “Too many buttons, or knobs,” she reminds us in another poem, “I’ll list as I learn.” And here the word play on “list” suggests lists of things in a techno-centric world that no longer provides person-to-person communication. “List” also alludes to listening, enclosing an area for listening.

footing and an answer, she's off on a strangely domestic and
check-list that sounds vaguely familiar: "Two screws in the wall
above the kitchen counter. Check. Don't dismiss this information.
The essential nature of Marcoti's world is made up of these
fleeting moments.

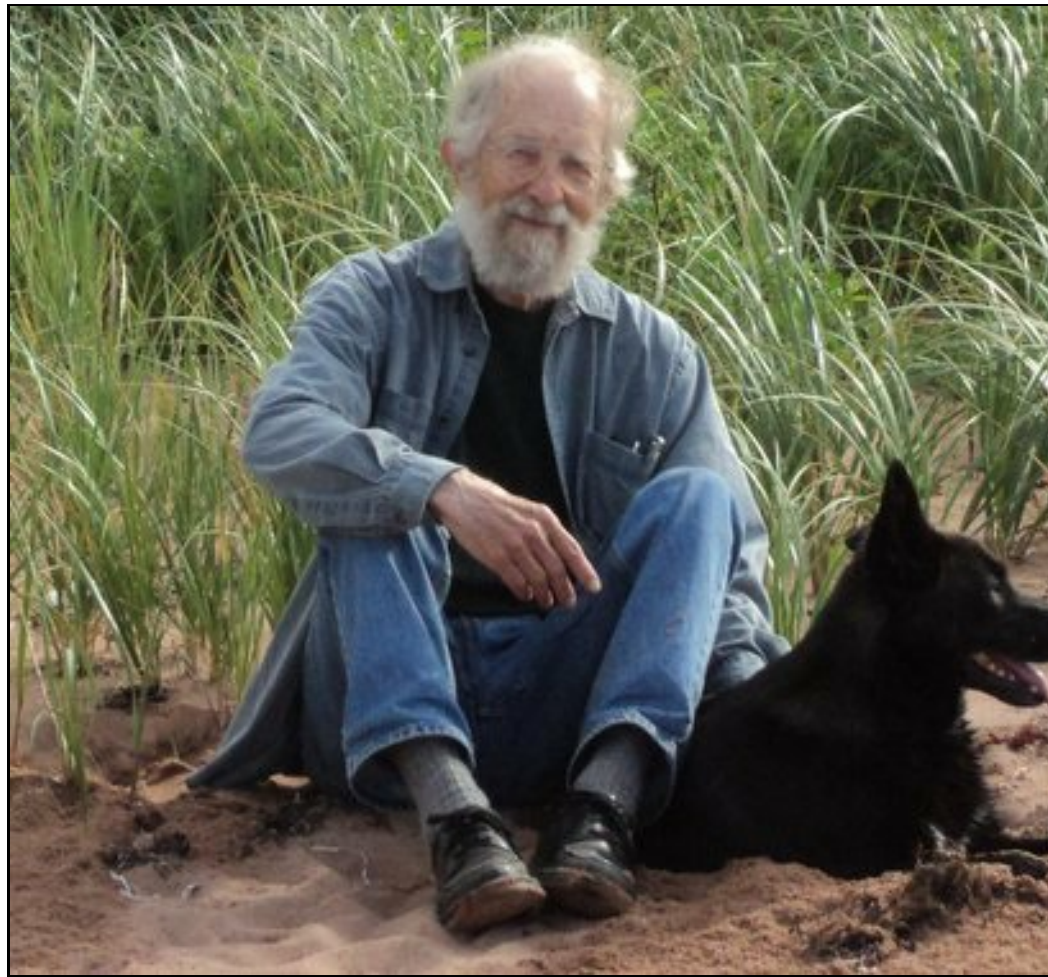
While this discursiveness is present in *Minotaurs and Other Animals*,
the Spine is much more fractured and concerned with accommo-
voices. It is perhaps an ethical turn: by situating her own voice
many, she encourages autonomy and community. By fusing
both her attention-deficit sentence and to the body, she
repressiveness she feels in having to lock down her thoughts
interested in polite, normative poetics and she doesn't mean
path through traditional structure. Her sentences stand di-
each other in order to capture the rhythms of an uneasy urban
we have normalized our isolations and shortened our atten-
cater to dramatic transformations of movement and interaction
for her, is panacea for jarring us out of this state of quickening
of Trans-Canada, that hot yoga studio or that hard rain is fa-
still strange. It's Marcoti's plasticity again, her resourceful po-
re-mapping the phenomenal and outcries of the body in con-
you: Look again. Take none of this at face value.

–Tammy Armstrong

Tammy Armstrong's poetry has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies in Canada, US, Europe, UK, and Algeria. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, the Governor General's Award, and short-listed twice for the CBC Literary Prize. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of New Brunswick, working in Critical Animal Studies and North Atlantic Poetry.



A Fable: Poem — David Helwig



[David Helwig](#) here reminds us that poetry is a kind of divine tomfoolery, a messaging that oscillates between meaning everything and meaning nothing that never means but momentarily and then the meaning shimmering like a leaf blowing in the wind, catching here and there and moving on to the next, me calling it poetry. Actually what he said was more like he couldn't find what it was so he called it poetry. On some level it enacts a message that gives the year 2051 a mysterious significance; I like the stenographic cart by a Newfoundland dog; I like the Four Lads and all the words in the Q; it lifts one's heart.

David is an old friend and an amazingly prolific author of poetry, stories, novels and a memoir. In 2007 he won the Writers' Trust of Canada Cohen Prize for distinguished lifetime achievement. In 2009 he was named to the Order of Canada. His book publication list is as long as your arm. He is the annual *Best Canadian Stories* which he edited for years. Biblically speaking of a [collection of David's magnificent translations](#) of Chekhov's title story "About Love" originally on *Numéro Cinq*. See also [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#)!

You'd see them by the shore on those greenest of green conversation with Quigley, adding newly minted sayings one of the fishers wading barefoot, steady in one place step gently up and down in search of the lump in the mud of the quahog, bending to lift each small edible bivalve or drop it in the floating container he dragged behind him towing his hard fate. Further out an oysterman probed with a set of tongs. And beyond that yet the tiny image of pulling traps on the shimmer of water, silver under the clouds and on in a hint of forever to the line of horizon. In the metallic flex and curl of birdsong, the tiny musicians hidden in the reeds or the tall grass or the thick accumulation of succulent

Himself would be bent a little forward, walking ten steps ten steps the other, intent, speaking his words, and Quigley him while he went on, the big Q, so he said, remembering of it, so later to scratch it all down and share it with the Fishers years when the entirety of them westered into the secret and were known only by the initials, Q for Quigley, though it was for some Latin or foreign word, Q not for Quigley; Quigley was called that in the farmyards and on the highways, the high lines of travel, while the Lads were known by their initials and L and I, MMLI adding up to 2051 in the ancient number was prepared that in the year two thousand and fifty or Secret would be told, Himself achieving his place at last on demand for Last Things, and Big Quigley had a wife and prophecies of the Third Coming and the Fourth, always a couple, adulterous or even not, who have just at last caught and climb the holy mountain at all hours.

At low tide the radioactive seals, flopping out of the water, the mermaids, gather on a rock shoal not far from shore, §

and snarl. No one could remember the name of the arc
once reigned in the icy waters, and governed their lives.

Nearby, observing, silent, is a tall hard man with a s
never speaks. Then Mad Mary, in an opalescent shirt f
shorts defining white thighs, strides out of a tent in the l
where she has passed the time with whomever, cont
fund, all her big mad teeth in a grin as she goes aboard
with its beds and galley and chemical toilet and with
shifting of her bare long legs and heft of muscular arm
places cardboard boxes, sweeps up, and the holy scrolls
in their rack, she sets to packing up dehydrated veg an
fresh water for the next voyage, a hip canted to one side
buckets.

Big Quigley watches her. Whatever his claims to holines
trusted, of course, who would try to cheat the shell-fishe
anyone else of any manner of thing, better conceal him
for *quaestio*, a seeking or searching, Q for *quies*, rest
complaint, Q for *quisquiliae*, rubbish. And his ways c
served to augment confusions in what was said of what
of the Four Lads recording what each believed he kne
debating the matters and sharing out their stories.
spoken and claimed and imagined basis of it all, w
vanished forever, so that nothing was left but an image o
Mary's bright eyes and heavy sunlit hair caught in the mi
where she glimpsed herself with all her devils gone o
over her shoulder in the water, come up on her from
must use the tools at hand, what is in the world is in the
read the Parmenides scroll to him in the shade late some

Now, the packing and preparation done, she comes out
wooden bowl in her hands, down to the water to fill, t
firepit, where there is a faint trace of smoke winding up
Himself arrives to her and sits in the old upholstered s
the bus each time they set up camp, and she takes

sandals and kneels, sun glittering on the waterdrops as feet, and as she bends toward him, he put his fingers through her hair with its metallic highlights.

They will march down a main street for the final parade, with willing natives gathered by the wayside, some with their own eyeglass screens, and when she has washed his feet, His Majesty's mystery while she combs out his hair and beard, making ready for the public presentation. Big Quigley studies it all. He is in the long green ferns, and down by the jetties, he sees two men come from a rowboat and walk to a waiting air-bicycle, and he hears the hard that they grow naked to his eyes, and in his way he sees them both entirely.

The sunlight catches the thin smoke and the wisps thickening above the firepit is all whirling whiteness. Himself and Mad Mary in sight, and the two of them gone, the Four Lads appear with their royal T-shirts each with his letter – TWO-ZERO-FIVE – singing out their stories in plainchant, then the unison dirge of the chords of a march, and out of the vast smoke rolls the ship with Mary at the wheel, her bare arms exposing shifting tattoos as she grips the wheel. Himself stands on the roof beating time, and around it marches a phalanx of drum majorettes, in white and tall boots, and red satin shirts.

Big Quigley, riding behind in a horse drawn carriage, has his hands full, and he is scribbling in it as fast as he can, but he knows so he turns on his eyeglass phone and begins to dictate to a stenographer receiving his dictation and putting it down. Behind the orange schoolbus, marching with their knobby knees, male and female cheerleaders in silver bikinis, two of them hold a banner with the words EAT FRESH SEA FOOD. With their hands Quigley forms the letter Q, and the cheerleaders wave, and some of them make the same digital gesture. Each observation device records their progress into the city.

Then the bus vanishes with its smoke and noise, the long

A van is parked in front of a snack bar, and a young man
wears a Boy Scout hat, holding a stick ending in a nail in
canvas bag in his left, and he strolls along the boulevard
chocolate bar wrappers and chip bags and popcorn boxes

Picture Me Awake: Poems — Rigoberto González



Two [Rigoberto González](#) poems to die for. Nothing else to be said. I was part way through the first poem and thought, This is the motherload. The first stanza.

*where there never was a father
there never was a child. if not
a birth, then not a love. if not
conception, then not a thought.
if not a wish or possibility, if not
a miracle, then not.*

The poem is a meditation on the poet's knowledge that he cannot love children even though there is in him the capacity to love a child as an element, as it were. And this is the climactic moment of the poem as a series of sentences that are simple parallel constructions repeating "if...if...if...if"/"not...not...not...not..." within which juxtaposes a set of paired nouns: father/child, birth/love, conception (beautiful pun), wish/possibility and miracle/not where the final line, by the rhythm of the parallels and by the magic of language becomes a homonym of nought, nothing, zero. This is gorgeous writing. The discipline of the poet's mind keeps the poem from descending into sentimentality; his sorrow in a container of words and prolongs the emotion to a bittersweet breaking point.

Rigoberto González is a friend and colleague at Vermont College and it is a deep pleasure to publish his poems on NC.

—dg

Bodies of Little Dead Children

after a painting by Forrest Bess

inside of me, i who will never be
a father to any he is my son or she
is my daughter or that's my baby
mirror glaring its crooked teeth back
at me.

yet i must know something
about parenting. at night my torso
splits apart, a cradle for my heart
to pound and tantrum to delirium.

dare I wish the little thing had

never been? dare I ignore it,
let its cry shrink to a squeak that i
can place over my tongue?
this squirming pillbug, dare i
ingest it?

oh cashew in the sack,
interrupted dream my barren sister
had—the pitter-pat of baby feet
vanishing like sweat on the tile
turned steam. oh vacant nest.

will she resent the way I squander
my fertility? bless the tumbleweed
that chases after rain all summer
yet only flowers in a fire.

what am i but an apple tree
indifferent to the fruit that blisters
and spoils, that clings to a dress
like accessories that do not flatter.

oh lover-thief, if you steal my seeds
it doesn't matter. you're taking
nothing personal away—i will not
call the removal of my dead
a loss.

i will not name them, either.

where there never was a father
there never was a child. if not
a birth, then not a love. if not
conception, then not a thought.
if not a wish or possibility, if not
a miracle, then not.

let my calvary be this:
to fade without a trace like all
that chromosome and protein
laid to waste across the sheets.
let my flesh go just as white
and just as cold without a soul.

let the ghosting haunt me.

Picture Me Awake: The Immortal Ramón Novarro

Razor me
a mustache;
shape my shrieks
into kisses me.

Young men collect
grains of sand that might turn
into pearls in their trunks.
I dream of such discoveries.

The beach bursts with light.
My housecoat splits
apart like an oyster.
I spill like sludge on the porch.

On my knees
a glow prayers me.
I soften anything

hard and mean.

Papi, I too used to wear
such confident skin.

My nipple lifted like a finger
and silenced the room.

!Atención!: a duet of blasts
in black on my skull and on

my crotch. You too sing
that naughty tune. I nuzzle

with my old horse nostrils.
My eye is not so dark anymore

but it can still expand
to take you in completely.

Say you see
the youth of me
beneath
the truth of me.

Ladies, who do you want me to be?
A Spanish caballero, a sheik?

Fantasies are no disgrace.
Press your hand to my chest,

it Hollywoods a heartbeat. Caress
my mask, it slow-mos to a face.

I know this speed. I too lust for men.
In my greed I can inhale like a whale

and swallow one whole. My final role—
fish that bites two baits—is no pretend.

One winks. His brother leans in.
Come closer, love. My whiskers twitch

when one tongues the other's lips. This
plunge into a barbed-wire bed I can't resist.

	Picture me	
awake.		Picture me
angelic and alive.		Beautiful me,
intact,	winged—	
undeathed—		me.

I am not a tragedy.
I am not the reel of film

that snaps and leaves
blank the movie screen.

I am not the afterimage
bursting to a blood-blot

then just as quickly draining
back into the puncture.

If I exit from the picture
I sky like a god. My teeth

a dazzling marquee.
Say my name. I glitter

in my gown of stars.
Don't walk away,

José Ramón, or I'll be
the comet that careens

around your neck.
You will be the welt

blistering with tears
and muffled scream.

Bésame, lindo—
I will breathe in you

an immortality.
Ay, José Ramón,

quédate bonito, maricón,
or you will die without me.

—Rigo

[Rigoberto González](#) is the author of [ten books of poetry and prose](#) including *Camino del Sol: Fifteen Years of Latina and Latino Writing*. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim and NEA fellowships, winner of the American Book Award, Poetry Center Book Award, and The Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, and a grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts. He is a contributing editor for *Poets & Writers Magazine*, on the executive

directors of the National Book Critics Circle, and is associate professor at Rutgers-Newark, the State University of New Jersey and a member in Writing faculty at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Numéro Cinq Author Sharon McCartney Selected Best Canadian Poetry 2012

 No Responses

 NC Blog



Numéro Cinq is delighted to announce that Sharon McCartney's "Katahdin," published in NC last July, has been selected for the 2012 annual *The Best of Canadian Poetry in English*. The guest editor for


[Carmine Starnino](#). The continuing advisory editor for the whole Peacock.

Congratulations all around but especially to Sharon. NC readers this is one of those occasions when it is appropriate to raise a glass two or three.

dg

Of Flowers & Of Fire: Poems — Emily Pulfer-Terino

 1 Response

 2012, NC Magazine, Poetry, Vol. IV, No. 5, May 2013



I met Emily Pulfer-Terino on the jet to Chicago for the AWP Conference. A comical, sleepy morning meeting made somewhat impossible the desire not to talk to ANYONE. Later, at the conference, we re-me-

and it came out that she is a poet. Actually, a lovely poet who teaches at a private school in Massachusetts and has to do amusing things at parties and dances. Emily Pulfer-Terino can build a beautiful line. Watch her work in these verbals. Everything is moving, shifting, pelting, fraying in these poems.

*this heaving air, the sound of air inborn
as effort. And what washes up, limp, inside-
out, jellyfish, empty skate, cartilage
fraying.*

Meditate upon the gorgeous concision of these lines. Think about the rhetorical of lists and series and the dense concreteness of the way the grammar and drama of the sentences surges beyond the end of one line and the next.

dg

The Vineyard

November wind persuades the dunes
You've brought me to. Dunes thin and swell.
Near, gray trees strain. Your friends
build houses and couple here;

I prefer mountains. But your heart
pelts against your ribs. You trudge
at wind and turn, grinning
over your shoulder at me. Constant here,

this heaving air, the sound of air inborn
as effort. And what washes up, limp, inside-
out, jellyfish, empty skate, cartilage
fraying. And there's your dog,

who into the pluming water follows tossed planks,

again pleased and flapping, again,
salted by seaspume. Even in this
constant reshaping of ground by wind, of wave

by wind, with these cold shocks
of beachwinter numbing the skin,
how isolate each breathing thing must be.
Scents of wet wood, aged fish wed

these drowsy ions. I hate it here.
The way you clasp against this afternoon
into me, our two breaths chalking one,
your face a mortifying pink.

Tinctures

Yarrow, she says, wading through the weeds
beside the mountain road, will purify the blood.

Gathering plants to make tinctures and balms,
serious and thinner now, my friend is learning

how to heal. Red clover lowers fever, quiets
frantic nerves. Stinging nettle soothes the skin,

the pain of aging joints. Saint John's wart, common
yellow flower, homely as a pillowcase, soothes the pain

of life itself. Well, pain has made a pagan of my friend.
At twenty-two, she has already learned to celebrate

death: friends, her father. Alone in her sugar shack home
up here, grown sinewy and stern, she studies the natural wor

as if the names of living things, repeated, were a spell to undc

She gives me what she gathers—hawthorn blossom, elder,
comfrey—to seal in jars with stones and alcohol. We're pulled
here forever. The sun, once heavy gold with heat, is growing t
over us, pale white light of evening setting in. Soon, she'll stop
and we'll start to enjoy what we always do together: at her pla
sepia sounds of guitar steeping from the record player, outsid
lake water steadying slowly under lowered sun. And we enjoy
the wine she makes: dandelion, lemon mint. Tasting of flowe
and of fire. Strong wine, and good, it puts us under fast.

— Em

Emily Pulfer-Terino grew up in Western Massachusetts, where she
teaches English at Miss Hall's School, a boarding school for girls.
She holds a BA in English from Sarah Lawrence College and an MFA in Creative Writing
from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. More of her work is published or forthcoming in *H
Stone Canoe*, *The Louisville Review*, *The Alembic*, *Oberon*, and other
anthologies.

Happiness: A Poem — Mark Lavorato



Here's a poem by [Mark Lavorato](#), not about Nature so much about the surprising thereness of our mysterious collisions with sudden glimpse into the eyes of a startled animal, the eyes looking. Unforgettable are lines like

and with two bounds of flaming grace

*it slipped through a slot in the long grass
the candle flame of its tail doused
into a thin wick of shadow*

I read herein faint echoes of D. H. Lawrence and also reminders poet, Robert Wrigley, whose nature poems I admire greatly. Mark is a Montreal writer (poems, novels, also he takes photographs and writes music). This poem is from his new book *Wayworn Wooden* imminently with [Porcupine's Quill](#).

dg

Wayworn Wooden Floors

Mark Lavorato



Happiness

A true story: Found a fox once
bright coil rusting in the spring grass

looked like it'd died in its sleep
its nose drowned in the fur of its tail

so I crouched down to touch
the still-glowing embers of its pelt

when, with a wild and frozen start, it woke up
I will never forget the electric green

of its eyes fixed to mine, and the
rushing sense that I was looking

into something I'd been scanning for
for miles or years or fathoms

and had found at precisely the moment
I wasn't prepared to, butterfly net in the clo

My need to swallow splintered the exchange
and with two bounds of flaming grace

it slipped through a slot in the long grass
the candle flame of its tail doused
into a thin wick of shadow


Must have stayed there an hour
wondering if he'd come back

Mark Lavorato is the author of three novels, *Veracity* (2007), *Believing Cedric* (2011), and *Burning-In* (forthcoming). His first collection of poetry, *Wayworn Wooden Floors*, is published by the Porcupine's Quill (2012). Mark lives in Montreal, where he also does work as a photographer and composer.



On the Suicides at the NY/Canada Border & Other Poems — Jordan Smith

 1 Response

 2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 5, May
2012



I first heard Jordan Smith read poetry at the Iowa Writers Workshops (thereabouts) when we were both students in the MFA program (I was the poetry star, at that time writing a series of poems on historical events; they were that striking, I still remember them (when I don't remember else). He went on to teach at Union College in Schenectady, win fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, a National Endowment for the Arts, and publish [six books of poetry including *Loving the Old Hymns* \(Princeton University Press\) and *Lucky Songs* \(Princeton University Press\)](#). His newest book, just out, is [The Light in the Face of Tampa Press](#)). It's an immense pleasure to publish on these poems by Jordan Smith — beautiful dense poems that jam words and quotations together, halt and reverse the vectors of meaning, light autumnal air of loss and fatality wrapped now and then in a s

.....*The cemetery deed from the Twenties*

*Was filed neatly with my father's will, signed
By his father's father. I go to prepare a place,
The pastor read. Her black coat swirled. Dirt
In a wedge on my thumb. No frost on the flowers yet,
The caretaker said, though it's so late. I shook
His hand. Come back, he said, now that you've been.*

The photo of Jordan and Malie Smith above was taken by Evan Smith
dg

A Poster of Steve Earle in Lerwick

— for Hugh Jenkins

In a grocery store window. The rain drives straight down
The glass, and no one's on the glazed stone streets. I buy
A couple of sweaters I couldn't get anywhere else,
And a meal I could, and in the Shetland Times Bookstore
A Penguin edition of a saga about the earls of places like this.
It was brutal for years, the croft families scraping potatoes
Or barley from a little storm-raked soil, the men gone for months
In the sixareens for the offshore fishing, then salting
The catch to pay the laird his tax on a house that wasn't theirs
In perpetuity and by divine right a bailiff enforced, so of course
It's beautiful, this place people fled so as not to wreck themselves
In labor, and to sing of it you'd need a voice that calls
Us home, all of us, and not like sheep at shearing time, and not
To dwell on a cliff edge that was a mountain once, an earth
That was an earth, before history's mantra of theft took another
Turn, and left us well enough alone, a tuft of wool on a stone fence

Reading Another Swedish Mystery

One can still go slowly on skis in the winter sun...

— *Tomas Transtromer, After a Death*

We can go on skis. The body is always a little further
Than the snow, wandering a little further than sight. The snow
Is a cliff's edge, the sound of skis a stalking. The detective
Drives a fine car, a necessary car though the suburbs,
Through the security of the state. He knows what we were promised
How little we understand, how we undervalue it. He knows
Too little, too little for now. And somewhere, don't ask yet,
The killer watches a dvd, or perhaps records one, a kind
Of documentarian. Is it cause or effect; is it ritual or enactment?
A grouse drums. The detective drums on his steering wheel.
In the intervals, consciousness seeks its level. Plumb and centered
The man with the knife clicks *Record*.

Mr. Berryman in Ireland

The pictures in that Time-Life photo shoot,
Serious, kindly listening in the pub, the wild
Love of it, gestures rendering reason moot,
Embraces, his daughter helped through the stile
In the sheep fence and over wood and stone,
Such self-approving joy. For which, atone,

Atone. In the ruined chapel on Inish More
I built a little cairn upon the altar
As others had, as if I'd no more quarrels
With god or stone or self, as if I'd faltered
Happily into repentance, caught in the cant
Of going in fear of getting what I want.

The worst, he said, is the best gift.

On the Galway train, I want this calm of post-
Post-confessional, post-sabbatical thrift
Of heart, a solitary pint, a toast
To no one much. He interrupts. His songs,
Unquiet, grave brief lives. Art's long.

On the Suicides at the NY/Canada Border

Yes, they step in the same river twice.

They present their bad passports, their reasons, their distracted e
No, they will not be staying long, they tell the customs agents.

There are a thousand islands where they might reconsider,
Some with ruined castles, some with cabins that might have cram

They stumble at the questions about age and destination. They sw
Too easily to our anger and our pity; they profess to honor

The deserters from the unjust war. They've had enough of fighting
They imagine a city of bistros, accordions, tables on the sidewalks

But it is under snow. They are safe. No tourist will mistake them fo
In the bar, the old violinist plays a song that's not sad enough,

And they share his panic as the notes fall off pitch. His fingers are
They share his suffering. They forgive his dissonance.

They forgive the fog, the geese that pass so loudly overhead.

They are in a position to forgive all imperfection, all transience, to
Burdened with our snapshots and souvenirs, who will not join the

Not yet, at the café of good intentions and unmeant consequence
Where they have fallen—is it sleep?—into and despite of our sorrow


The Burial of the Dead

The caretaker said there were five places left
In the family plot. My wife and I traded glances:
That's one problem solved for our heirs and assignees.
A few minutes later I was kneeling, dirt caught
On my jacket sleeve and watchband as I placed
The urns, my mother's, my father's, in one grave.
It was windy now; October. The pastor read
Her *sure and certain*. What more could there be?
What solemn music? In high school band I played
William Byrd's *The Burial of the Dead*. Sonorous,
And sad, and simple and tricky to make it so, not
Just the usual baroque complications. The drive
From the interstate was all uphill on smaller
And smaller roads. My youngest son put a flower
On the grave; no one told him to. He knew.
The strife is o'er, the battle won. On every side,
Millers, Launts, Chamberlains, St. Johns. Kin.
No one told me to feel at home or offered a hand.
Not yet. The cemetery deed from the Twenties
Was filed neatly with my father's will, signed
By his father's father. *I go to prepare a place,*
The pastor read. Her black coat swirled. Dirt
In a wedge on my thumb. *No frost on the flowers yet,*
The caretaker said, *though it's so late*. I shook
His hand. *Come back*, he said, *now that you've been*.

Jordan Smith's sixth full-length collection, *The Light in the*
appeared from the University of Tampa Press. His story, "A Moiré"
the forthcoming issue of *Big Fiction*. He lives in eastern New York
Union College.

Two Selves Divided: Poems — Marilyn McCabe

 2 Responses

 2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 4,
April 2012



Marilyn McCabe herein presents trenchant meditations on the heart-rending duality (good and evil) of the human soul (think: P. Marilyn is an old friend, a poet, translator, singer, and cross-country runner from Saratoga Springs. She is pretty much a regular contributor to *The Word Works*, especially [her translations of Rilke, Éluard, Silvestre, and Apollinaire](#)—three put to music—sung in this instance by the uber-talented [The Word Works](#). These poems come from Marilyn's brand new book *Perpetual Motion*, published with The Word Works (2012).

dg



Found

There's a baby
in the crisped litter
of a roadside wood today, made pale
and lovely by an October snow.
Then even the skin is brittle.

It's never the big thing
but the fine and permeative that destroys

often beautifully. How are we a thing that hates
and is so hard to hate?

There's a boy
tucks a note into the pocket
of a coat he's sending a stranger, saying
"Have a good winter. Please write back."

A branch breaks, a lamp flickers,
the dog digs at a flash of something
paler than snow. A boy uncrinkles a note.
What happens next?

Lost

*In the zoo's amphibious tanks' blueglowcurved
half hidden things dark dim dark dim*

Kierkegaard said that we are two
selves divided, one divine, one sullied
by its reflection in the group;

*I look up no one I recognize I am
eight years old and my group has disappeared*

to try to see the self in others
is despair, but despair is the beginning
of the shadowed path toward God.

*Run to the open doors run through the bucking storm
where's my group I cry no one no self to find myself*

And who are we without each other,
sweat smelling, shuffling,
God so far away and flickering?

Wasp Nest
after Vallejo

Professor of nesting, teach us to adhere,
to mongrel, to creep in purpose, to suspend
with aplomb and be the center of desirous flying,
the center of love.

Rector of eaves, teach us to look down backwards
at the angry citizens always wanting entry, to refuse
the attentions of sky by hiding well
and shouldering the cloak of architecture.

Technician of wonder, teach us to travel by mud,
to house in humility, hum
without sound. We make you from our bodies
but you are more than we will ever be.
You build us to build you to build us to build you
in buildings you may outlast.

Professor of such little beauty.
Rector of refusal.
Technician of this short time.


—]

Marilyn McCabe's book of poetry *Perpetual Motion* was chosen by Jacobik to be published as part of the Hilary Tham Capital Collection Works in 2012, and her chapbook *Rugged Means of Grace* was published by Finishing Line Press, 2011. She is a regular contributor of poetry to Connotation Press, and her poetry has appeared in print and

magazines as *Nimrod*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Numéro Cinq*, a *Review*.

The Untitled (91): Poem — Garry Thomas Mors

 1 Response

 2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 3,
March 2012



The world is a poem, repetition rules, influence is rhyme. In his s

to his poem [Garry Thomas Morse](#) refers to an essay by [interviewed Blaser, one of my first radio shows, when I hosted *TV* WAMC in Albany, NY, in the mid-90s, just after his amazing collection *Forest* came out. Blaser was originally from Idaho, but his poetry, the San Francisco Renaissance epitomized by Jack Spicer and Robert Creeley, he was also part of a general and often under-acknowledged surge of American writers and artists heading to Canada in the 60s, for [and other. Blaser moved to Vancouver in 1966 where he became an influential figure in Canadian poetry. Black Mountain poetry, the San Francisco Renaissance, conceptual poetry, surrealism, and even the sound of the avant-garde have had an amazing second (or third or whatever) incarnation in Canada. Wah, the current Canadian Poet Laureate, is an heir to the movement that started there in Vancouver, on the scene, when Charles Olson made his first visit and read from the *Maximus Poems*.

Garry Thomas Morse typifies an emergent generation of Canadian poets in the tradition. He's exciting to read, fun to look at on the page (my friend discovered a print out of this poem on my desk and charged me with "did you write this? This is great. He's got the FONTS talking to each other in a 'scalar darkness' line."). We have here a work that is intimate yet universal, of itself as typed words on the page, yet exploding into myth. We need to read it, and to have a chance to limn its context.

dg

Garry Thomas Morse: In his Own Words

My lifelong long poem *The Untitled* (thus far) approaches the text in terms of compositional method, transmutating) quotidian aspects of life into refractions of light in which the continuous lyric is subject to disjunctive fragments. For example, in more than one case into operative fragments that do not agree with what has been said, that my poetry has a "tense" and is very much informed by the work of Rainer Maria Rilke, Pound, Louis Zukofsky, and Robin Blaser, to name but a few. compositional structures and ideas of Mozart, Haydn,

Stravinsky, and Mahler, hopefully the reader will on soon them.

Poet Sharon Thesen recently sent me a quote from Robyn on Charles Olson in *The Fire* that made her think of *Untitled*, and this caused me to reflect upon the relation of the individual and *rerum natura*:

“What I have noticed in the poetry and poetics of the poets is that they are arguing, weaving, and composing an epistemology. There is no epistemological cut-off natures, nor in our engagement with life. Nor is the animal known short on its desire for cosmos. It is this structure deep in the nature of things, that still thrills us in Hesiod the sense of it....Repeatedly in the history of poetry we returning to epic structures....I suggest that great poetry the world—it is a spiritual chase—and that it has never been outworn sense, simply subjective or personal.”

The *Untitled* (91) is something of a parody of my conceptual praxis, where the “concept” of a city “narrative” into interweavings of Artaud and Adorno, who as Leonard pointed out, “didn’t get the joke” where Stravinsky was thought him a demon. I’d say my lyrical demonry begins with Stravinsky’s methodologies, stacking linguistic constructions many tritones on top of one another in order to try and lyric mode. And it’s kinda messy.

To paraphrase the lovely and witty dramaturge Lin perhaps this is the only way to tell the pie you’ve made and not store bought, ie. tidy, angular, and geometric inedible. Real food is thrown together.

I suppose Gustave Mahler’s heart is giving out somewhere and so is my Anglo-Jewish grandmother’s in the hospital these fragmentary associations, this jumble of repetitions

live on, in dare I say, the real world.

The Untitled (91)

The city stirs
with small cracklings, riotous laughter
The city
brandishes
high & shiny
surface elements { sea, fog, mountains
scrolling by. The city
is sharp & jagged & juts out of nat
water the water slaps against. In Genet's novel about Br
the city
is like an uncompromising prick prodding through fog
or at night, *poking through cloak*, as Catullus points out
The city is
full of cold hands
There are no more flames, no more fire
Put the light out, there is a siren wailing
At least the leaves are n
ablaze

This has been built brick by brick—also with long slats of wood
certainly one day someone will decide to live inside of this fixer
upper

Not so far away the welcome balloons are steadily deflating
& this is a result of inflation

Desire for the model life, rows of boxes full of living dolls
cannot be creepy. There are no bed bugs, just features. Wet holes
in the trade to be filled in are called skylights. Sheer transparenc

window after window, boxes full of clothes
made by living dolls, worn by industry dolls
in windows where living dolls open peepers
miming desire with pursed dollfish mouths

Beauty unsure of itself, reckoned by Keats to mean something,
light through blind at an angle, a hint of music in the background
that is what persists. This is a long time for the hands to hold
flements of water & he promised it was a joy forever a joy

lightness of water & he promised it was a joy forever, a joy
forever. There are limits to the city. Even the bridge has to be
tuned like a lyre to last. The flaming bridge is a bloody lyre

(pay no mind. listen to these rhythms
to this lapping of waves, to
sudden cries of elusive little birds
to what is within you, *love*)

A city. A woman compared to suspended caryatids. Sleeping
around corner, slightly terrified. She is stirring. Not made of
stone. The city is a place where we tend to scare ourselves

a place where we imagine things

Arial.

How long have we been here

Palatino.

Who can say what is what

Arial.

I have no notion. This took place. I was
asleep in the room where you arrived
& when I awoke there were scales
over my eyes

Palatino.

Funny, I was also asleep. It was a s
darkness out of which glowed spec
counterpoint

Arial.

Triads

Palatino.

Triads of letters, notes

Arial.

Sounds you form are not forming sense

Palatino.

Tuning forks have enjoyed their fill

Arial.

We may remain here. Give over
waiting for light that seldom shows
close the light

close the light

stepwise

approaches

Palatino.

This is imagination, playing
things you hear these days.
you fear these days, the thin

Arial.

That other time, jotting down
just above doggerel upon the
page was claustrophobic

Palatino.

In sleep, you got in touch w
& this was more than merel

& this was very near to narr

Arial.

I want casual, friendly, frightful

Palatino (*kissing her*).

Arial

Arial. How gravely you kiss me

Palatino.

Arial

Arial.

I feel the trill of a violin

Palatino.

Arial

Arial.

I feel the talk of bassoons

Palatino.

Please shut up, please

Arial.

I crave artifacts from before
broken in all the right places

Palatino.

Who can say what is what

*He had expected a wallowing of pleasure — almost the
ous pleasure he had allowed himself for many months. In
the appearances of an English gentleman on an exiguous
no mean task. But to wallow in your own phrases, to be
the savour of your own shrewd pawkinesses, to feel your
anced and yet sober — that is a pleasure beyond most,
tensive one at that, he had had it from mere “articles”*

or birthday
card from
Kafka
museum
mysterious faces that pass
through city
haunts
a type of
handshaking
the return of
quasi-*humanitas*
or tenderness)
in a gloomy
room
of dripping
fonts

condensation of meaning
within the structure itself—
this. The "meaning" of
determined solely by its
went so far as to define
theory of musical
in music called
this theory, because
extended to relate to the
reverse: the totality assumes
upon the individual detail. Such
moments beyond themselves—
completely within the space
as the meaning of
its aesthetic meaning to be
no more than this— in other
technical analysis reveals
is constituent for twelve-
not only its criticism of twelve-
the totally constructed work of
"integrated" work) falls into
of incipient meaninglessness
work is discarded. This

a process conditioned b
tone technique—corres
music, even in free ato
inner relationships. Sch
theory of composition a
relationships, and ever
meaningful may lay cla
as a matter of detail it c
totality. The same is tru
within itself a definite c
extension of the aesthe
they at the same time re
of the work of art—is in
the work of art. It is un
more than a phenomen
words, totality of the pl
emergent moment of m
tone technique, it form
tone technique, based o
art (that is to say, the c
conflict with its own id
immanent hermetic qua
hermetic quality is base

precisely that integration
elimination of this integration
protest. In these technological
unmistakably perceptible
atonality with the

determines meaning. All
music is transformed in
configurations an elem
proclaimed in the era o
force of an explosion

Loosely based on
attaining
'mindfulness'

I am out like a light

in artificial
heart-
beat

awfully
sluggish

wavers

in the

Other 9th

grand Wagnerisms
with a funny walk
humming klezmer

with all that restless

intensity

Either we will be able to revert
through theatre by present-day
means to the higher idea of poetry
underlying the Myths told by the great
tragedians of ancient times, with theatre
able once more to sustain a religious
concept, that is to say without any
meditation or useless contemplation
without diffuse dreams, to become
conscious and also be in command
of certain predominant powers, certain
ideas governing everything; since ideas
when they are effective, generate their own
energy

rediscover within us that

energ

which in the last analysis creates
order and increases the value of life
or else we might as well abdicate

or else we might as well abdicate
 now without protest, acknowledge
 we are fit only for chaos
 amine
 bloodshed
 war
 epidemics
 pulling the
 plug
 on love, etc
 switching
 off the
 machines
 life
 lungs
 giving
 out
 the important
 giving over
 attached to
 trivial
 circumstance
 memory
 after memory
 forming random
 inter | | sections
 that
 demonstratives
 should lead
 to meaning
 in supple
 thickness
 of the
 Proper

If the nerves, that is to say a certain physiological sensitivit
 deliberately omitted from today's after-dinner theatre, or lef
 spectator's personal interpretation, the Theatre of Cruelty is
 to return to all the tried and tested magic means of affectin

These means, consisting of differing intensities of colour, li

[Garry Thomas Morse](#) has had two books of poetry published: *Transversals for Orpheus* (2006) and *Streams* (2007), one collection *Death in Vancouver* (2009), published by Talonbooks, and two more published by Talonbooks, *After Jack* (2010) and *Discovery Passage*. Morse was a finalist for the Governor-General's Award for Poetry and finalist for the Icarus Poetry Prize. Morse is recipient of the 2008 City of Vancouver Mayor's Award for Emerging Artist and has twice been selected as runner-up for the Kroetsch Award for Innovative Poetry.

Readiness Practice: A Poem by Kate Fetherston



1 Response

2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 3,
March 2012



READINESS PRACTICE

Fighter jets loop fat chalk
marks on a turquoise

sky while I'm daydreaming
out my third grade

classroom window. The air raid
siren blasts and Mrs. Fisher hollers,

"Kids, get under your desks, arms
over your heads!" I crouch beneath

my pink metal bomb shelter, eyes
squeezed shut, waiting for the end. *This*

is what the last minute will be like,
I narrate to myself, *The bomb*

drops just like that, an enormoid
ball of flame bigger than the sun, but

it's like reading *The Weekly Reader* out
loud and my mind drifts. Through

the classroom's open door insects
pop and click. Weeds reeking

in desert sun: stinkweed, goat heads,
and alfalfa by the tether balls where

I practice praying to see if
it works. *Please, make Dean Posey*

love me. But he turns his buck-toothed
smile toward that nasty Cindy Mercer

and a sonic boom shakes the swings when
he asks her to play kickball. I punch

the deflated yellow ball against
its whining pole, hard, and I picture

the shrunken ball sucked away and
swallowed by a relentless

heaven. The fragile thread attaching
me to gravity

snaps and I whoosh into space,
whirl farther and farther above

this little earth, crash into John Glenn

and the Cosmonauts. Cracking open

one eye, I peek at my desk's moonscape
underbelly of gum wads and dried

snot, wondering if the sky has
a ceiling like my bedroom at home

with its glow-in-the-dark stars, and maybe
you smash into it when you die, but what's

after that? Now, Mrs. Fisher's voice
slams me awake, "Children, readiness

practice is over. Your arithmetic
test is next." And, climbing back

into my seat, I smell eraser
dust. Cindy Mercer's eating paste

again; Dean Posey throws up
his baloney sandwich, and everything's

back to normal.

Kate Fetherston's first book of poems, *Until Nothing More Can Be Done*, is published by Antrim House later this spring. Her poetry and essays have appeared in numerous journals, including *North American Review*, *Hunger*, *Nimrod*, and *Third Coast*. She co-edited *Manthology: Poetics of the Experience*, (University of Iowa) and *Open Book: Essays from the 2008 Writers' Conference*, (Cambridge Scholars Press). Kate holds a Ph.D. from Vermont College and was a finalist for the Pablo Neruda Prize in 2007. She's received Pushcart nominations from 2002 to 2011. Kate is a

in private practice in Montpelier, Vermont.

Sketches of an Orange: A Prose Poem — R. W. G



Nights caught in small cold moments of crystallized fire. Win
temporary shelter, the unmitten hands of friends, and accident
Strung lights across the darkness. This is how we find our way.

He and I walk in the dark woods. We call out and point at the co
each know only four. A short game. But it makes sense of th
breaths rising, converging, in the air above us, our gloved
reaching, like children too small to grab the lowest branch. Round
in the tree line, sudden fire of the moon rising, hanging burnt orar

He tells me how his mother brought oranges home box by box f
store, each orange in its small green paper nest. Satsuma, Clemer
Owari, Tangor. Each sounding like a country he might some
morning, his mother at the kitchen counter peeling his father's
lunch, so he could eat them later without the citric acid from the
the machine grease from his hands. How she saved him from
Love in the small lunch-box gestures.

I tell him how in my town I knew a boy who worked at the grocer
been bitten by a tarantula that had been accidentally packed or s
case of bananas. I still think about that tarantula so far from the w
home. Did he get to see snow? After that, I opened each box
mother brought home carefully, wondering what exotic things m
with them. What stows away, escapes, what bites you and your gr

I tell him, too, of that Christmas when my mother told my brothe
oranges had vitamin C, which would make us grow up big and str
she was out shoveling snow off the steps, we took turns eating
then lifting the end of the couch. She was right, we decided with e
would lift the trailer. Soon we would tear it from its blocks and i
town, one with more oranges. And we would be gods. Orange
instead we spent the next day fighting for the toilet.

A conversation beneath this conversation glowers between us. T
between our hands as we walk. How, later, on the wide bare bec
that an orange is a question of distance: from tree to hand that pic
to box, from box to home, to hand, to mouth, to tongue. Says we
for the branch. Even oranges.

I explain how oranges, mandarins, offer themselves up, shuck pe

fall away from one another, like a too eager lover naked at the
waiting. They are always waiting.

And other aches of time. Time between each segment placed on a
time before bodies can no longer keep one another warm so the
retrieved from the hardwood floor.

For now, though, we walk deeper into the woods, the soldier, bare
for the stars. But once you've seen an orange, you can't help but
everywhere. In the darkness, each star caught in the wide black
orange gloaming there instead of a planet. Celestial bodies, the h
and orbits of great oranges, galaxies just spilled boxes out of reach

I want to quote Neruda. Something about his lover's "orange
can't remember how it goes. So we walk on, a waltz of bumping
quiet hum of the star flung, mandarin sky.


— R. W. Gray

R. W. Gray is a writer with commitment issues
when it comes to form. He has published his
poetry and prose in numerous journals and in the
anthologies *Seminal*, *And Baby Makes More*,
Queering the Way, and *Quickies 1 and 2*. His first
collection of short stories, *Crisp*, was published by
NeWest Press (2010). Ten of his short scripts have
been produced and the most recent, "alice &
huck," won awards at festivals in New Orleans,
Beverly Hills, and Honolulu. He currently is a professor
screenwriting at University of New Brunswick. He is also senior editor
of Numero Cinq's NC at the Movies.



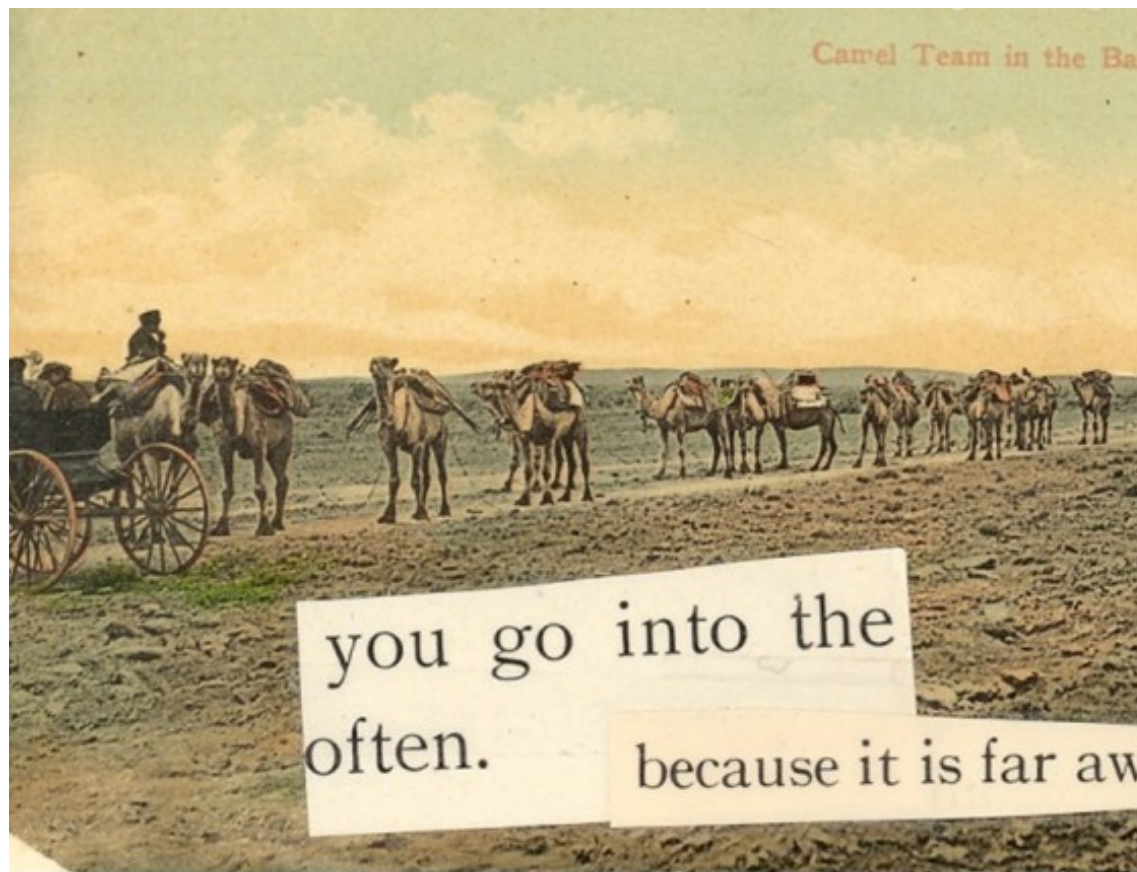
Moonlit Memories of Immature Genius: Mary Ruefle

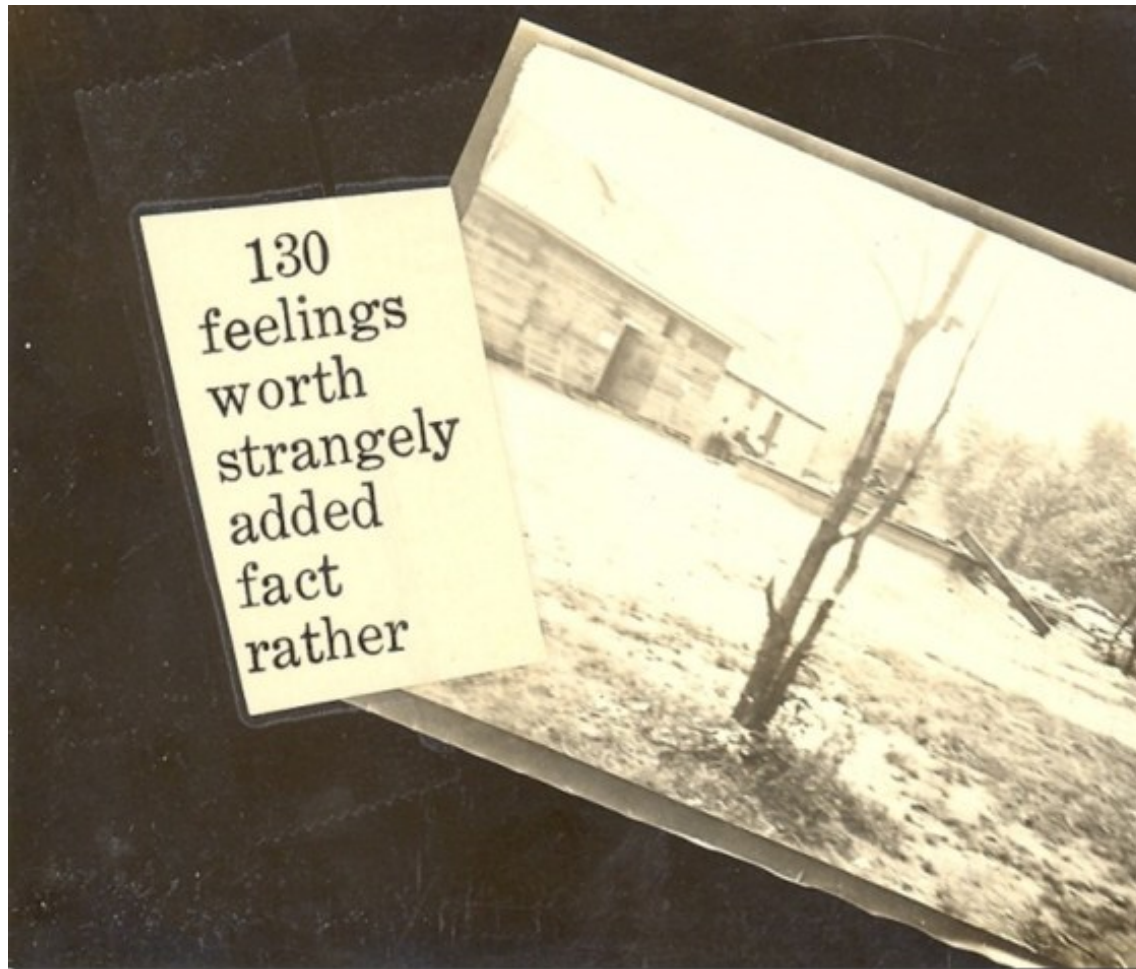
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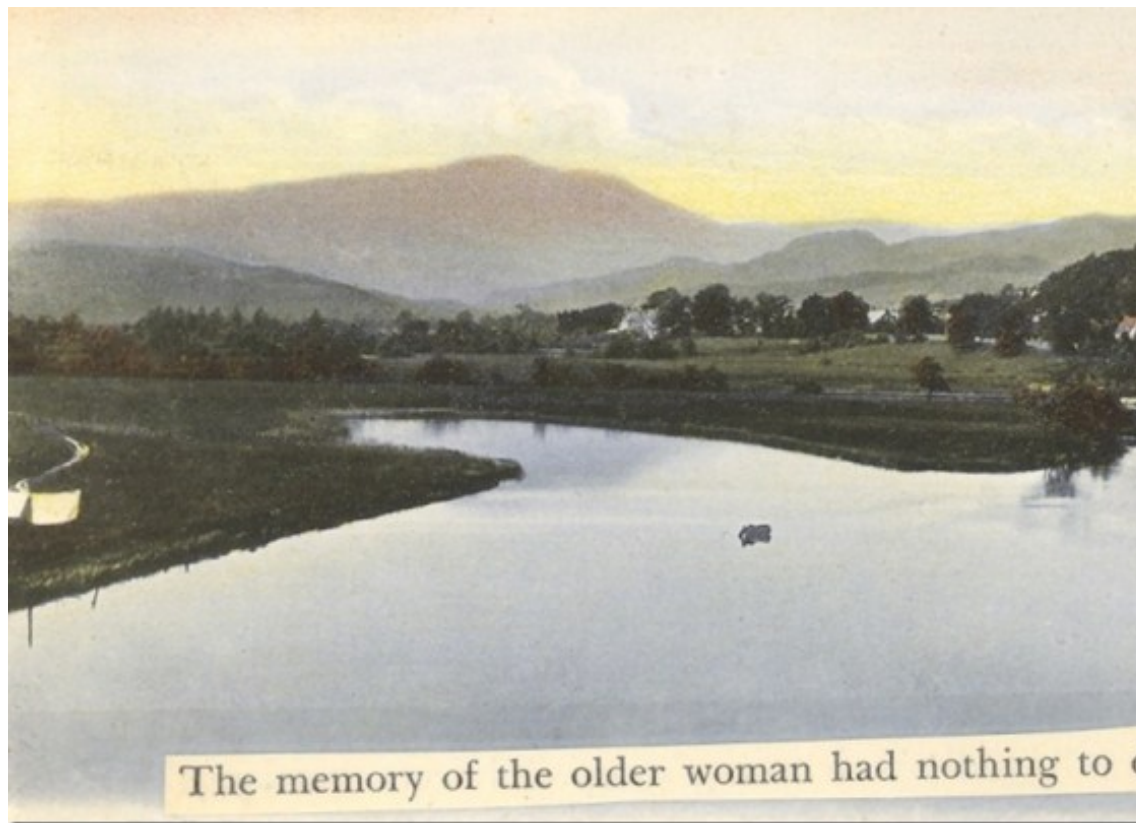
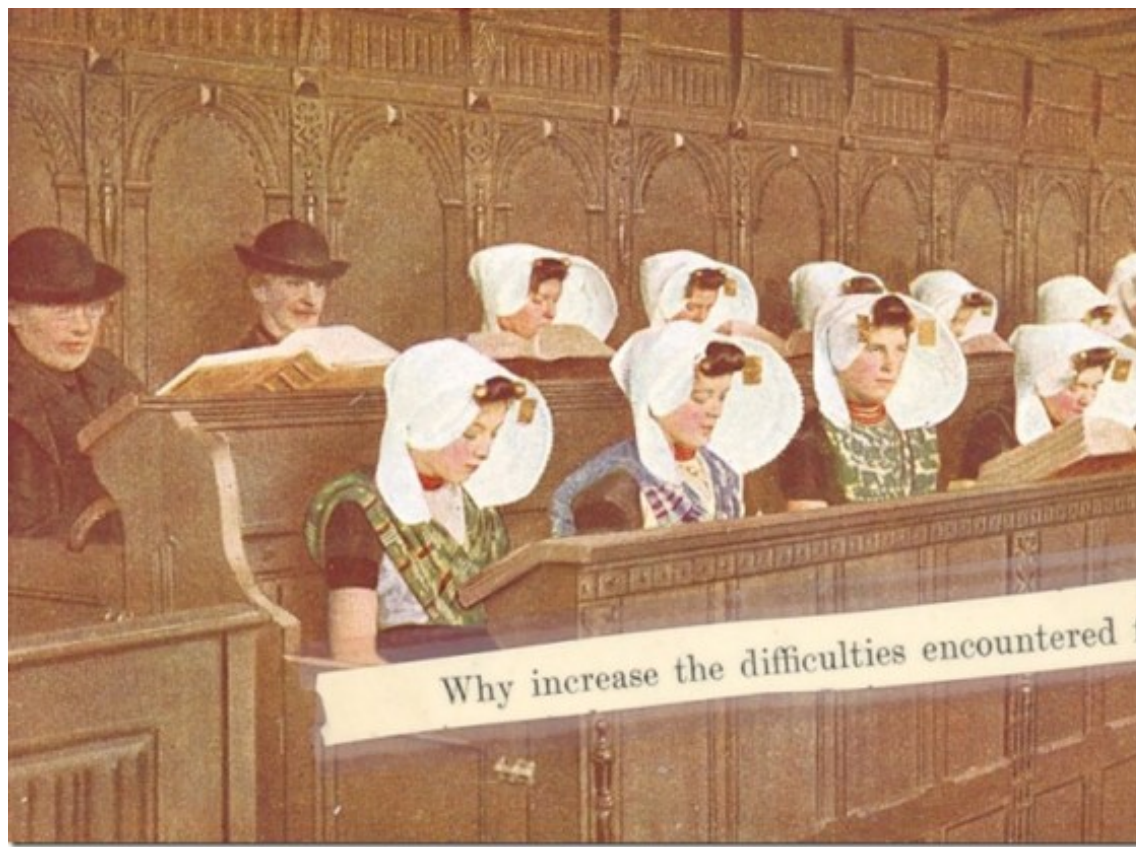
 2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 2,
February 2012

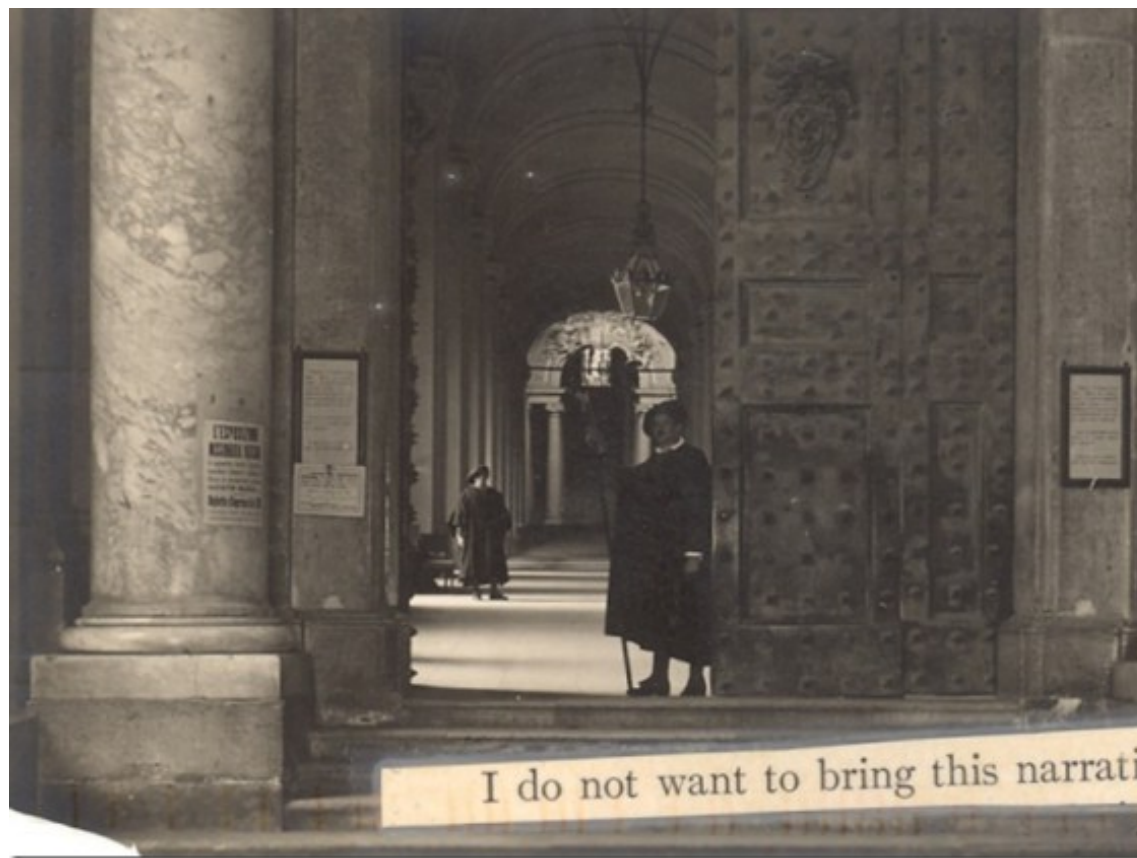
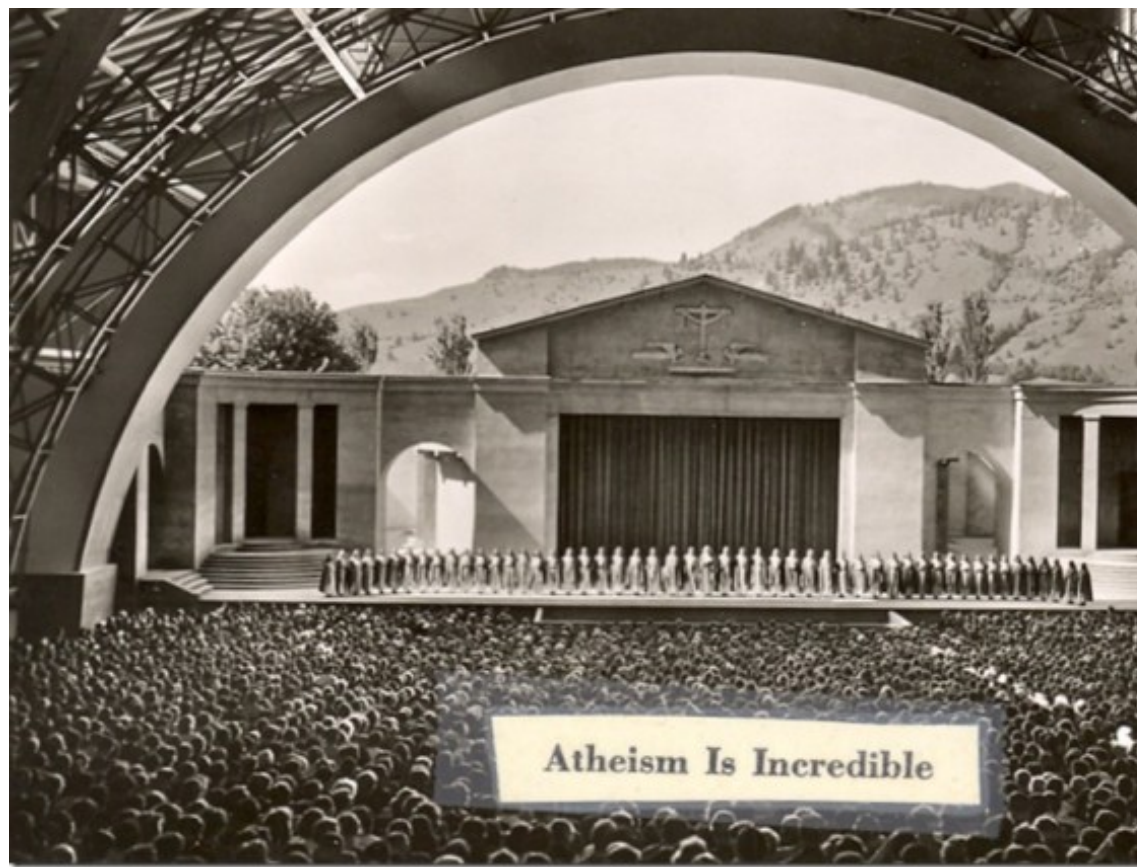


Mary Ruefle is a vastly brilliant poet who seems mainly to function at the level of the oracular. She is an old friend and colleague at Vermont College of the Arts, which makes me one of the lucky ones. You watch Mary react to her lectures and think, Oh, right! That's what I am supposed to do with my life. Art! Poetry! Books! Her restless intelligence and passion for her work range from poetry to erasure books to these little assemblage poems made from old books combined with antique postcards picked up at flea markets and bookstores she haunts. These are very strange objects, doubly so for their absence (or nostalgia), words that once meant something else in their original context and images of forgotten places and people, and by irony they are Detritus & irony. She mailed me a large stack of these; I offer here the best.










MARY RUEFLE's latest book is *Selected Poems* (Wave Books, 2010), which won the William Carlos Williams Award. Her many publications include *Shadow* (2006), a book of erasures; *Tristimania* (Carnegie-Mellon University Press, 2008); and *The*

Press, 2003), *Among the Musk Ox People* (2002); *Apparition Hill* (2001); *Post Meridian* (2000); *Cold Pluto* (1996); *The Adamant* (1988); 1988 Iowa Poetry Prize; *Life Without Speaking* (1987); and *Meml*. Also a book of prose, *The Most of It* (2008), and a comic book, *Go to Bed* (Pilot Books/Orange Table Comics, 2007). A collection of *Madness, Rack and Honey* – all of which were given at VCFA over – be published by Wave in the fall of 2012. She has won many awards including an NEA, a Whiting Award, a Guggenheim, and an Award from The American Academy of Arts and Letters. She also makes erasure books, which have been exhibited in museums and galleries in southern Vermont.

This Poem, Part II, by Adeena Karasick

 1 Response

 2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 1,
January 2012



Adeena Karasick is a one-woman semantic explosion. She writes verbal play and experiment and RIOT out of Gertrude Stein and brothers (spoken word, rap, Black Mountain). And how can you not that admits its own “unraveling” and bills itself as an “asterisk taking lines like “oh, just lick its/ ideological infrastructure” and contemporary cultural filigree and theoretical/philosophical re-gap”)? See below, a video of Adeena reading from the beginning of images scattered through the poem were made in collaboration with Spiegel. The whole poem, called “This Poem,” will be published by the great and storied Vancouver publisher [Talonbooks](#).

Adeena Karasick is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning artist and author of [seven books of poetry](#) and poetic theory: *Amu Treats for the Mouth* ([Talonbooks](#) 2009), *The House That* ([Talonbooks](#), 2004), *The Arugula Fugues* (Zasterle Press, 2001), *...* ([Talonbooks](#), Spring 2000), *Genrecide* ([Talonbooks](#), 1994), and *The Empress Has No Closure* ([Talonbooks](#), 1994). Her work is marked with an urban, Jewish, feminist aesthetic that continues to challenge linguistic habits and normative modes of meaning production. Her art of combination and turbulence of thought, it is a testament to the regenerative power of language and its infinite possibilities for pushing to the limits of its semantic boundaries.

Her writing has been described as “electricity in language” (N “plural, cascading, exuberant in its cross-fertilization of punning theatre and theory” (Charles Bernstein) “a tour de force doublespeak” (*Globe and Mail*) and “opens up the possibilities” (Vancouver Courier). She is Professor of Global Literature at St. J in New York.

Composed in the style of Facebook updates or ex tweets, *This Poem* is an ironic investigation of contemporary culture and the technomediatic saturated world enmeshed in. Mashing up the lexicons of Gertrude Stein, Zukofsky, Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, the contemporary financial meltdown, semiotic theory, Lady Gaga, J

Derrida and Flickr streams, “This Poem” a self-reflexive
through the shards, fragments of post-consumerist
Both celebrating and poking fun at contradictory
threads, webbed networks of information and desire, a
language of the ‘ordinary’, it opens itself with rawness
immediacy to the otherness of daily carnage.

A deeply satiric archive of fragments, updates, and
aggregates, treatise, advice, precepts, echoes, queering
erupting in a voluminous luminous text of convergent
divergence, dis/integration and desire.

A serial poem that textually proceeds in the tradition
such poets as George Oppen, bpNichol, Robert Duncan
Spicer committed to the shape of a life lived with the lyric
of textuality; taking on the search for definition punctuated
strong incursions of eros, pleasure, terror and
networking. —AK

dg

This Poem

By Adeena Karasick

Part II

And in the rapturous apertures
of perspicacity (purse capacity),

of its bootstrap boobietrap of ear-tickling
hyper-inflated speculative frenzy

This Poem just *wants* a “happy ending”

like a ring-a-ding swinger

foursquare tech ticker, fecund licker

elbowing its way through a persnickety

kwik-pic sticky dictic,

and wants to lick you immeasurably,

your vesicles and crevasses, lick the lips of your

pixilated proxy, paroxysms of purring tragedy

wants you to smack it

up against its inky-vexed lexis,

mixological excess, slide down


its rumpy pumpy amped-up optates,

jacked clad cock of the walk ecto-flecked vectors



Prayers & Dreams: Poem — Denise Evans Durk

 10 Responses

 2012, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. III, No. 1,
January 2012



Denise Evans Durkin writes poems that glow with a gentle melancholy (and is tinged with melancholy) unexpectedly laced with joy and wonder to read, not just for their warm humanity, but for their attention to detail, details that seem to accrete spirit and luminescence as they unfold. She was raised in Brooklyn and lives in Putnam County, New Jersey with her husband. She wishes me to note that the poem “Letter to My Sister Prison Ward” includes a line from Gil Scott Heron’s “Dirty Low-Down” which was one of her first published poems.

dg

Impedance

(circa 1979)

The girl downstairs waits mostly. Sitting on her luggage
by the cattails, side of the road. Embroidered each star
on the velvet pillow of sky — they glitter
through the pin-pricks.

She waits, lonesome as the notions in her felted sewing box —
mismatched buttons, thimbles and threads in bright
remembered colors — bobbins and hat pins —
good things going away.

She's there in the spaces where the dime store and
the pay phones used to be. The cart that sold ice-cream and
hot waffles. Relics.

Seeping cold. Click, drag, stop — over
imperfect stones. Her gradual world — ohms build
between receiver and vintage turntable on the dresser
in the bedroom she has not visited in thirty years.
Glass & leaves falling. Dust falling down in the hush —

Letter to My Sister from Bellevue's Prison Ward

Traveling up from blue-black dreaming
those first pin-pricks of pale blue light give such sudden joy.

Once at a farm I saw eggs that color blue; the class learned
about farms, about far-off things and places where people
know their food, know their land and don't live like we do.

Do you remember when we used to sing it?

Said I wonder, wonder, wonder, wonder who put those ideas in y

You closed your eyes when you sang back up; we got it right.

Mornings are my best time — even the doctors agree — when I
full of hope, and my hope is the color of morning, and my eyes
the color of the sea and I know all that the seas know.

A thrum of bees where my heart should be when my eyes flutte
open mother your face dissolving in the water swirling in the sil

were you here in your white nurses' shoes? I thought I saw you
in your white dress adjusting the tubes that feed me, that disper
the medicines, checking my bandages, and my restraints I thoug
I felt all the little red lights on the living machines
silver mechanical fireflies that blink and glow redder
through the gauze of my forgetting pieces of what I thought was
my life and I can no longer remember how I got here —
I watch your white shoes walk away squeaking on the tiled floor

Don't think I don't know nothing but the sea stays around
long enough to get old — and all I do in here is imagine
this gossamer daylight everyday — all just going by —

Come September

This morning the darkness is thicker — like spider's webs
spun especially for the heavy snow they know is coming.
Crickets sing in the perpetual twilight of the field beyond my pa
my small wilderness — where even now leaves are falling.
The vine wound up around that oak; some of its leaves
are already red. This is how I measure time: by leaves
changing color, by feeling the dew clinging to grass,
to wildflowers, waiting for the late summer sun.

The day you left draws nearer now.

Noted on my calendar, of course, but I don't need reminders.

This is how you return to me: in the small twigs I pick up

for kindling, in the rain battering my old house,
beating the glass skylight, letting me know everything
is the way it's supposed to be. I walk my solitude
past the fading clapboard and the weeds, deer at dusk
and whitecaps on the lake. These are what you left me.

Fall Notebook: Prayer & Dream

Inside a deep longing I dream alone by the sea.
Wooden table laid ready with black beans, rice and cornbread.
I imagine an indigo sky and wild horses.

Here I dream closer to the weather, to the light, to any decision.
Angel, how long is this bridge?

Over my heart on a lanyard of silver stars, my tiny imagined loc
opens into a mansion where my necessary delights reside.
These rooms full of one wish: for the sisters who
look in on me when darkness falls, who brush sweet almond oil
into my skin, my hair. Lord, my needs are small.

Mother returns in firelight, starshine, moonlight — her fingers
touching the top of my head, reminder that everything is what i

Deep cobalt sky and then the moon laying on its cold blessing —

Soothsayer

spoken by my mother

Rootworker they call them in the Carolinas where I was married fa
where I was born and raised — farther still from these misty Cone
strewn with blown paper, dirt and sand.

Across the street from the Mount Zion Baptist Church where I sing
collect tithing baskets and light white votives at sunset, my sister
stop —

old women with knitting in their straw totes, they nod without loo
like they know I'm in here —

and they do. They know rootworkers are never welcome in thi
other —

unnecessary anyway with the devil in the first pew every Sunday I
hymns he knows much better than my choir ladies in their cloche
on one side threaded with beads like bits of sea glass keeping clos
moving in tune as they file down into the pews, careful
not to touch him whom they have always known.

Lord, I am your child, walking and talking right, gone to the river a
baptized into the ease of your arms, my heavenly home.

Choir leader of my church under this indigo sky —
vesper-quiet in here with this cross and these candles
constant flame of love in my heart —

ruler of this elemental kitchen magic
my sisters call me *Soothsayer*
and I know what I know.

—Deni



“Let’s start by making ourselves unfamiliar,” Laura Behr begins she does, continuously through her poems that are filled with surprising twists, non sequiturs, surrealistically tinged phrases—us see the world and our relationships in it anew. Laura has student of mine for a few years now, starting after we met at the Writers’ Festival. To be honest, when she began I wasn’t enthused work but she is a voracious reader and reviser, and she has become favorite all time students. I look forward to every poem she sends head in wonder at the new ways she finds to see herself, all of t

She's the kind of original that makes us more original ourselves.

Cave Diving With Einstein

Poems by Laura Behr

Reflections on Magritte's Painting The Therapist: You Suitcase

Let's start by making ourselves unfamiliar.
Listening, to the puzzles of silence. Travelling
as far as we can go. We'll form an Optimists Club.
Rewriting ordinary things: a straw hat, reed cane,
the red blanket. I can see every third page is missing,
so you can wear the blanket first. Later, I'll try it on
for you and invite you into my lap. I want you
to look into my bird cage. If you'd like I'll turn
and show you my dove-heart, and you can sit
on the heart-ledge of my cage cooing, and keeping
my dove-heart company. Sky and water open the illusion.
Every particle of yellow sand, atoms of myself sitting
resolutely on the beach, the darkness of a midnight-blue sea
my Sunday hat, meld with every particle of you
collecting inside my portrait. Bring your Lindy Hop,
and uncover me in the quiet music of waves. Breathing in
the scent of sand pines. Stop and rest with me in these
exotic blues of children's books and imagination.
We'll lose our bearings, mixing up horizon-lines and dream
falling open to each other, learning to love in solitude.
We'll need a pair of carrier pigeons, trained to carry messa

written in invisible ink. Let's wash away the old answers, letting the horizon form a new tracing-line decoding the cipher between us leading on to the future. Sit with me. The future of the thing, sees for us without a face, with its well-trained and finds itself in balance, if mystery lifts her veil. The weight of things, two birds: one free, the other caged by a lover's care as primal navels open insides first to love all bird-cage heads

On the Banks of the Cedar River Finding a Rare Ignite

All he wants. A soul's weight. Washed up from a century's flood. Not the rock he pressed into nameless hands long ago. The felt how of living. His words bent by gravity and time. Her name long forgotten. Smooth, black, almost volcanic. The world outside is not enough. Pressing his rock into her small hand at recess. He imagines her now. Her face, nameless. And every word exchanged transgresses memory. Working things through as the world wakes. At the mercy of one task. He wants to be a time traveler. The best day of his life could be in the future. Stripping down. Jump and crossing over. Freed by the river's forward moving questions. The chaos seems insurmountable. Time moves truth into view. Where to go from here? A still quiet moment poses in dark woods. He wants to go back, capturing stars hanging above the silent pines. Falling back into night's silver lining, as its spirited double-helix hums an incantation in star-speak counter measures. And even his affection for living can't hold him safe enough to see his own ignorance. He wishes he had been smarter, moved faster. A regret. Still, the future is alive with a promise which marks the things he carries of her into infinity. Uncharted in shadows, he wants.

The world's beauty, recovering eyes that wonder.
Silent, in a moment that doubts the mystery. Its haunting
stripped and smitten as words lose meaning slipping
into ambivalence. A perfect set of magnets, and closeness
enough to touch fingers and toes. That is all he wants.
Eternity, reliving what has yet to be lived.

Owen Meany at the Alamo

A few stone buildings, a neatly trimmed lawn,
a nice place to take a picture. A reason
to take off a hat. None of it changes the ending.
It's happening now, expected signs and all the rest.
A home for missionaries and Indians,
a freak storm hits in shirt-sleeve weather.
If you dare ask what will kill you. The ghosts
will tell you. Or ask how you know
what you don't know. Be willing to do something.
Act like a baby or a fallen star. Both roles have merit.
When life isn't so beautiful it's hard
to put into words. Faith isn't pure
or sure of itself or of you. It's a word born and blurred,
in veils and regret. It proves itself against
the disorder. Blow it up, you can't leave it undefended.
How do you hold happiness? It's the oddest things,
the unexpected turn of a moment you don't see coming
but you see, and there are no survivors. Practice.
Living with what is missing, an arm,
a father, it's a no win argument, chosen, human.
Faith in faith means walking, not figuring it out.
A hero is only a street light away.

Cave Diving with Einstein

Two minutes underwater and the last thing you see is the pale gray shadow of clouds falling down to uncover angels dancing within the electric blue glow. Eternity is blue, holy as the first touch of skin radiating light thru deep black waters. Within its light lies the weight of everything that we cannot say. And, waiting on the lap of gods for a second wind or a kiss, as ghosts walk, as rain falls clearing the air, we laugh. Dreaming of love's savages warm and expecting summer rains. Suppose the earth above us is the illusion. Water rushes, siphoning silt thru a slit in the rocks. Grounded by live oaks and scrub jays the sandy path above is the netherworld. The Harrier hawk mid-flight and lost is a Firebird, his feather tips are your hands. Will you believe with me in implausible things? *A turbulent storm-tossed sea. Electric blue spheres of light.* Enwombing us, in the binding intensity of heat. Gravity healing and unruly, shifts its boundaries and leaning in forces jumps of spiritual force that spread out and over the tides to woo us away. Facing the whiteness of surf light, looking into the blue-sky water, I watch as the shadow borders of ordinary life disappear. Entering with you into dimly lit worlds, hidden below a glassy surface, I hold my breath. Listening for the strange music of a seashell over a roar of waves, the music tells stories of our very natures and of places beyond this, where things are truer than real. Waiting to see this murky dreamscape with the soul's eye, we uncover in the quiet music of waves the taste of salt on tongues, the scent of ambergris and an ever growing feeling of buoyancy.

Sometimes, when we talk about things the light seems to go away from us, as lightening over the sea follows the wind. We almost always need more than we can ask for and so we don't ask for anything. And though we can make anything out of light, darkness into tender night, we cannot make things un-happen. This is what makes all the rest so hard. Even as night is grave, waves erase. The way it used to be. The way you want it to be now.

This Land Who Could Know

Smelling of cigarettes, you ask me to turn my bones into a beaded necklace for Timordee bartering. *It's not that easy.* It wasn't so much that I didn't want to tell you what I felt that night, I didn't know how to tell you. Splayed out like a broken cross, my chest rising and falling like fire coils inside a star or a wave of slaked breath crosses, *a catch of longing wanting more.* I was willing to be with you, asking nothing, taking what comes. Pretending with you, *this* can go on forever. There was only one star in the sky, the moon hidden by a navy haze. I took that as permission, the moon's illusion of what counts. I was older than I'd ever be, commanding the star to reverse. Giving myself away, learning the business of love, stuck in the past where anything worth knowing looms contented and even the future doesn't know everything. *Where everything beautiful is a trick.* If you knew anything, you'd know how to run your hand

up my thigh, running your hand over my why not,
until practiced eyes leave off unexpectedly and pass
over truth. But it's not that easy. Neither of us can say
when it started or how long it took the wind to carve
an arch thru the flagstone wall. I walked thru at the place
where truth pleads for a way to betray or to put up
with each other and the world. It felt like an invitation.
I can't remember the beginning. So ask
a different question. I remember wavering
and waiting for you in dangerous moments
with empty hands. I remember trying all night
to convince the light to mold itself into an apology.
Wanting to hear, *All is forgiven*. Learning instead
what goes unsaid never gives fair warning. Today,
the lavender sky takes the light away with you,
all tangled purple-heart. And I can see in the secret goings
of stars the advantages of losing. The night looked
into me to speak. My eyes stripped and final,
a reason to love is destination enough. A lasting solo.
What comes after? All that exists is love's simple intent.
More than anything precious a cooing then sleep.

—Laura Behr

Laura Behr lives in Montgomery, Alabama. She is a psychotherapist, a business consulting group advising business and its leaders on prevention and preventative wellness from a combined Neuroscience and Psychoanalytic framework, and the mother of two girls. She has published in *Café Review*.

Amphetamine Heart: Poems & Readings — Liz

1 Response

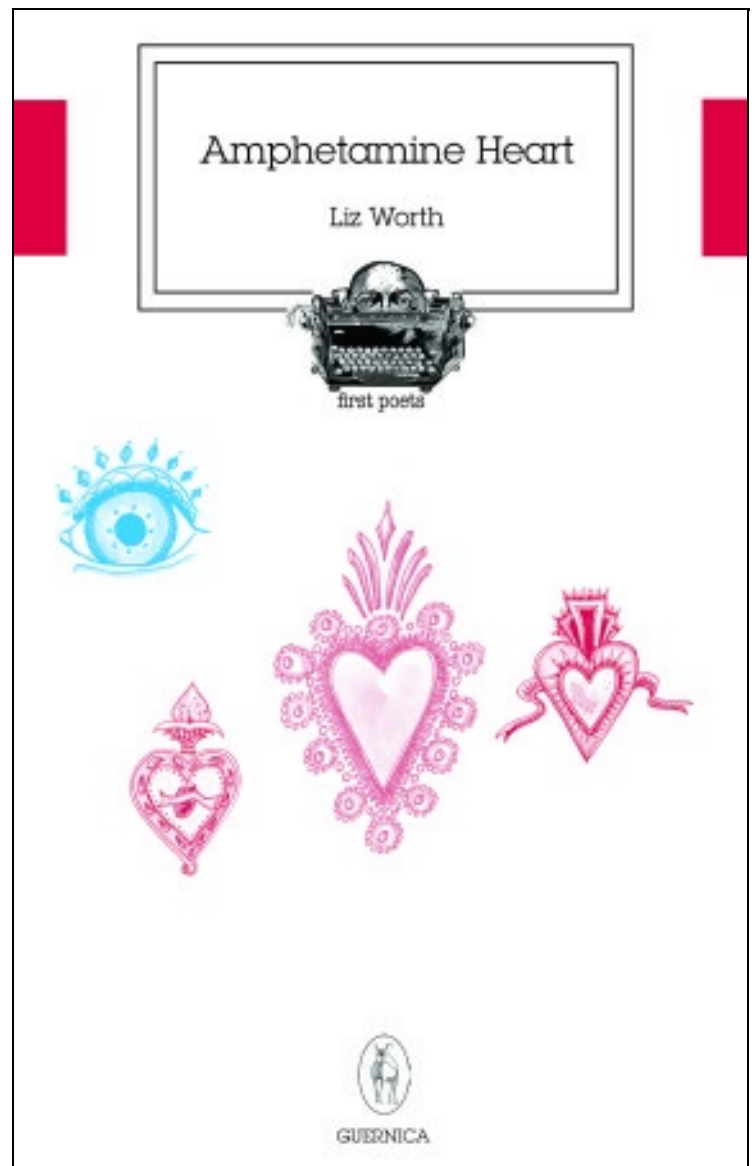
2011, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. II, No. 12,
December 2011



Here are three spoken word poems & recordings from a brand new Toronto poet Liz Worth who is also the author of an upcoming nonfiction book *Treat Me Like Dirt: An Oral History of Punk Beyond*. The poems are personal/social commentaries, incantations with surrealistic detours and juxtapositions and the three-syllable characteristic of the genre. The collection is called *Amphetamine Heart* by Guernica Editions. Liz Worth has also written three chapbooks *Manifestations*, and *Arik's Dream*. She lives in Toronto. (Author: Pyle.)

dg

Amphetamine Heart: Poems & Readings
By Liz Worth




On Cheetah's Speed



we are taut and directionless,
networks of revolutions suspended
like fingertips to a temple,
poised and blurring into white spider legs,
their ends painted an intrusive shade of red.
At this angle everything looks better from the left,
even the accelerated aging of blondes.
Warts of perspiration radiate,
glossed by black lights and exit signs.
We are marked as wounded, fragile,
the stimulated strength beneath us, between us,

Sprezzatura with Two Rabbits: Poem — Alan M Parker

 No Responses

 2011, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. II, No. 12,
December 2011



Sprezzatura is a Renaissance term/style: nonchalant, natural, appropriate, though, in fact, the opposite—a pose in a sense, an attitude, a rhetorical

[Alan Michael Parker](#) is a poet-novelist, that is, he began his career with and has published five volumes of poetry, an impressive and expanding body of work. His book *Elephants & Butterflies* is, as it should be, perhaps his best, a urbane, knowing, acerbic, witty, quick, cutting and surprising. Parker is talking about God and TV dreck in the same moment. He has many of his own.

*Dear God who made me act
in whose gaze I am rerun
now I lay me down*

Alan is an old friend and colleague from dg's stint as the McGraw-Hill Writing at Davidson College in North Carolina. He had the good fortune to know a Canadian, the painter [Felicia van Bork](#). He is a prolific poet and a novelist, a wry, energetic presence with a gift for teaching and satire.

dg

Sprezzatura with Two Rabbits

By Alan Michael Parker

Talking to the two rabbits in the herb garden, I could be Gerald Stern
the way he talks to everything, my god,
and really Gerald Stern is always singing to everything,
and everything is singing back.

I tell the rabbit on the left her name is Plato,
and the rabbit on the right she'll have to wait for a name
because so many names are just a necessarily lesser quality
of an original thing. I call both rabbits "she."

I describe to the rabbits Gerald Stern's childhood in Pittsburgh
his Greek roses and his Borscht Belt beauty and his poem about
predictably, the rabbits don't seem to care about my story,
jittery and motionless in their agitation, while the stiller I have

to keep my audience, the more some muscle in my left arm
starts to twitch like a bad rhyme,
or like a captive princess kicking over the table
in a fable when the witch wants rabbit stew.

But since I killed so many rabbits in a poem in 1996
with a shotgun—my best weapon then, before I learned to
write about my family—I feel too guilty in advance
to kill and skin and cook and eat

a rabbit named Plato or her pal.

Writing poems makes me hungry for what I can't have, some
which I think Plato probably knew about poetry, but I need to
FGI, I tell myself all the time, Fucking Google It.

But now one of the rabbits is named Plato and the other's Ge
a combo I'm surprised by, although I suspect that
this poem suspected so all along, and named both rabbits
"she" only as a ruse. Hop away, hop, hop,


hop away free, you bunnies: go back to the greatness
of the garden, your fur dusted with sage and thyme, your lives
opening into a warren filled by the mind of God,
with carrot tops, twenty-seven brothers and sisters, and endl

free of the human need to name, or our crude ambitions
to see whatever light we hope to see,
and hop up and down as we shout *the light! the light!*
before we're gobbled up by mystery.

Charmed Objects: Poetry and Childhood | Essay

Nancy Eimers

 No Responses

 2011, Childhood,
Essays, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. II, No. 12,
December 2011



Herewith a lovely, meditative essay on the conjunction of poetry and childhood from Nancy Eimers. The essay draws its inspiration from the art constructions of Joseph Cornell and draws to a close with *Now-It*, an erasure book made from an antique children's book by White. Nancy Eimers is an old friend and colleague at Vermont College of the Arts. In March NC published [poems](#) from her new collection, *January* from Carnegie Mellon University Press. Her three previous books are *A Grammar to Waking* (Carnegie Mellon, 2006), *No Moon* (Puerto Rico Press, 1997) and *Destroying Angel* (Wesleyan University Press, 1997). She has been the recipient of a *Nation* "Discovery" Award, two National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowships and a Whiting Writer's Fellowship.

poems have appeared in numerous anthologies and literary magazines. She teaches creative writing at Western Michigan University and the Western Michigan University College of Fine Arts, and she lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

dg

Charmed Objects: Poetry and Childhood

By Nancy Eimers

The genius of Cornell is that he sees and enables us to see with the eyes of childhood, before our vision got clouded by adult experience, when objects like a rubber ball or a pocket watch seemed charged with meaning, and a marble rolling across a wooden floor could be as portentous as a passing comet.

Ashbery



Image from [Webmuseum at ibiblio](#)

Joseph Cornell's *Untitled (Soap Bubble Set)* is a brown box with no text on either side. Here is a list of its contents.

- blue cloth
- blue thumbtacks
- a map of the moon
- three glass discs
- light blue egg, in a cordial glass
- doll's head, painted blue and gold
- three white wooden blocks

—white clay bubble pipe

Really, they are ordinary things, in one world or another.

If you visit *Untitled (Soap Bubble Set)* in the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, you must keep a distance. You will not open the box and play with the bubble pipe. Not even if you bring

Now, a look at the box. But not an image. Words are the medium

Oh roundnesses you can feel in the palm of the hand. The moon is a silvery blue, and dominates. *Carte Geographique de la Lune*. The doll's cheeks scarred, has been smiling now for how many years? Also the doll and the egg are bathed in the thought of the moon. The circle is laid at the floor of the box; if you picked one up, the rim might be Every circle is synonym to a bubble: doll's head, egg, bowl of the craters of the moon. One of the books Cornell loved was a science delivered in 1890 by a scientist, C. V. Boys, to an audience of children bubbles. *You cannot pour water from a jug or tea from a tea-pot; do anything with a liquid of any kind, without setting in action the am about to direct your attention.*



Image from Rocaille

I haven't seen that soap-bubble box except in a book, but I've (*Forgotten Game*) in Chicago's Art Institute. A pinball-like game with holes behind which there are pictures of birds cut out from the books. Inside the box there are ramps down which a ball is meant to slide. One could open the little door at the top and insert a blue rubber ball to slide down the ramps and when it reached the bottom, a bell would ring. It is a part of a terrible sweetness.

Forgotten game, blue-silver moon, recessed birds, egg in a cordi

forces have you drawn our attention?

“Perhaps what one wants to say,” said sculptor Barbara Hepworth, “childhood and the rest of one’s life is spent in trying to say it?”

*

I remember a gaudy, jeweled pin worn by my grandmother. I said I didn’t think it was gaudy then. *Costume jewelry is made of less valuable materials including base metals, glass, plastic, and synthetic stones, in place of precious materials such as precious metals and gems*, explains Wikipedia. I hadn’t read and wouldn’t have been helped by this sentence though their blue and pink sparkles, enchanted me. They seemed almost like they came from *this other world*. The pin is lost forever, like Dorothy’s ruby slippers between Oz and Kansas. But I feel the pull of a former feeling, a reason, proportion, knowledge of anything likely/unlikely to be in memory, where I am holding it in my hand, the invented and the real quite parted ways. *You can’t get beauty. Still*, says Jean Valentine *flies to you*.

I think this will not be an argument but a meditation—held together by *little stars*—on how charmed objects, long lost, come back some time or other, present only as words, touchstone, rabbit’s foot, amulet, merrythought, calling us back, calling us forth. What are they, now that we’ve lost them?

*

The Child Is Reading the Almanac

The child is reading the almanac beside her basket of eggs
And, aside from the Saints’ days and the weather forecasts
she contemplates the beautiful heavenly signs.
Goat, Bull, Ram, Fish, etcetera.

Thus, she is able to believe, this little peasant child,
that above her, in the constellations,
there are markets with donkeys,

bulls, rams, goats, fish.

Doubtless she is reading of the market of Heaven.

And, when she turns the page to the sign of the Scales,
she says to herself that in Heaven, as in the grocery store
they weigh coffee, salt and consciences.

In an almanac there are moons, full and half and quarter, and
moons that look like black moons. There are meteor showers, tides,
Signs of the zodiac. Questions of the Day. *Why is the ring finger
the medical finger?* Weather predictions. *Three misty mornings*
Fact and prediction, the seen and the unseen intermingle; the strange
in the commonplace, and the commonplace in strangeness. Now
in this early twentieth century poem by French poet Francis Jammes
tempted to set down her basket and read.

Jammes “wrote of simple, everyday things,” says the introduction
on the torn yellow book jacket of my copy of his *Selected Poems*.
In the book, in the introduction, Rene Vallery-Radot marvels, “From a
town there rises a voice that ignores all the gods, that tells of life
systematized in theories.” In a photograph just inside the cover
of the book, a man in round black glasses and a long wispy beard, looks down
at a page of writing on. For all we know he was writing this almanac poem.
A woman has stopped on her way to or from the market (to sell the eggs
she bought them?). Perhaps she wonders if even an egg, like the
things on the market, has its counterpart in the stars. The wondrous almanac
things are on earth, so they must be in heaven: how miraculous, how
Heaven resembles an earthly grocery store on this most ordinary

Still, Jammes remembers enough not to oversimplify, or presume
that the scales are also associated metaphorically with justice, even by a
any child, this one must have done something, committed or
committing some small act, a rebellion or peccadillo for which
way, she'd paid, or feared to pay. She spoke harshly to the donkey
broke an egg. She dawdled on the way to the market. Whatever
secret. Let us not trespass.

It is because I believed in things and in people walked along those paths that the things and the people made known to me are the only ones that I still take seriously that still bring me joy. Whether it is because the faith creates has ceased to exist in me, or because reality takes the memory alone, the flowers that people show me now for the first time never seem to me to be true flowers. — Proust, Remembrance of Things Past

In her autobiographical story “In the Village,” Elizabeth Bisland remembers this from her childhood:

We pass Mrs. Peppard’s house. We pass Mrs. M. house. We pass Mrs. Geddes’s house. We pass Hill’s store.

The store is high, and a faded gray-blue, with tall windows built on a long, high stoop of gray-blue cement with a hitching railing along it. Today, in one window there are cardboard easels, shaped like houses—complete houses with the roofs lifted off to show glimpses of the inside, all in different colors—with cans of paint in pyramids in the middle. But they are an old story. In the other window something new: shoes, single shoes, summer shoes, sitting on top of its own box with its mate beneath it, in the dark.

The child is bereaved, though she doesn’t entirely know what this is for her too new a story. Her father—her mother’s mate—like one of them has been closed inside a box of his own, but forever, unlike the shoes, is one of those houses with its roof lifted off, so the writer, so we, can see. But we may not enter.

Memory affords glimpses: of a flower, a doll or a shoe in a box, comet-like across the floor. “My life,” writes Tomas Tranströmer

Thinking these words, I see before me a streak of light. On closer inspection it has the form of a comet, with head at the brightest end, the head, is childhood and growing up. The nucleus, the densest part, is infancy, that first period, in which the most important features of our life are determined. To remember, I try to penetrate there. But it is difficult to reach these concentrated regions, it is dangerous, it feels as if I am coming close to death itself.

Maybe it is important not to explicate our childhoods. Or is it impossible? Cornell, from a journal entry, May 13, 1944:

. . . stopped by pond of waterworks with cool sequoia landscaping—gardens & here had one of profound experiences + renewal of spirit associated with childhood evoked by surroundings—it seemed to go deep through a strong sense of persistence in the lush new long grass. The most prominent feature turned out to be “no trespassing”

Water, hiddenness, the cool, such things return for a moment when and where? What did it look like there? We can’t quite know inside. *No trespassing*. But the grass *is/was* lush.

Talking about her younger brother Joseph, Betty Cornell Benton writes from their childhood:

Late one night he woke me, shivering awfully, and came to sit on my bed. He was in the grips of a panic from the infinity and the vastness of space as he was becoming aware of it from studying astronomy.

From an earthly point of view, a comet is stationary, seen
remembered in daylight—then seen—then remembered—over the
there for a time. Star with a wake of light. Then it is gone
remembered.

*

“Stove” is one of the six end-words of Elizabeth Bishop’s “Se
Marvel. Brand new, that model would have been painted silver
use, it would have grayed; open the door and it would be black
MARVEL: the name is on the door. It dominates like the map
Cornell’s soap bubble box. Above, below, on either side there
curlicues forged in the cast-iron, resembling serious, stirred up clouds
legs, curving outward, stubby and braced. In an early twentieth century
stove was a daily thing in anyone’s house, but to a child it must
marvelous, like Saturn’s rings.

I have only seen photographs of the Marvel; but they were not
the real thing. All I found was a salesman’s sample, 16 inches high
on eBay but already sold. That ship had sailed. And a toy Little Marvel
with two ovens, burners and lifters. Nickel plating over cast iron
and in very good all original condition.

A child in me is entranced.

September rain falls on the house.
In the failing light, the old grandmother
sits in the kitchen with the child
beside the Little Marvel Stove,
reading the jokes from the almanac,
laughing and talking to hide her tears.

House. Grandmother. Child. Stove. Almanac. Tears. Six
miniatures on a bracelet. (Even the tears have their charm.) Each
all nouns, come back, they are in their original form—no juggling

or parts of speech, no punning or homonyms. Simple words, like or figures from an old storybook.

Or they are like comets, passing before us seven times from the century, Great Village, Nova Scotia. As in the story “In the Village at the nucleus.

tears/house/almanac/grandmother/stove/ch
child/tears/stove/house/grandmother/almar

And so on. In the ordinary world a grandmother is trying to amuse
time a word comes around again it feels sadder. Even tears
teakettle weeps, the teacup fills with *dark brown tears*. To the gra
are recurring, *equinoctial*. The child senses something. Un
working its magic: the almanac begins to resemble a bird;
philosophical; the world grows cold. The almanac knows what it l
say what. How much does the child know, what is she wardin
senses something. Does the child miss the man in the drawing?
even Bishop have known of the child she was? “Early Sorrow”
original title. Then withdrawn. Explication fails, or it is irrelevant
little moons in the almanac *fall down like tears*. The poem ends
present tense. *The child draws another inscrutable house*.

That moment of wonder and puzzlement goes on orbiting but
forever out of reach. So are the stove and the almanac, ancient te
grandmother and the inscrutable child. All in the past, except f
Great Village. (. . . *it is difficult to move in these concentrat
dangerous, it feels as if I am coming close to death itself*.) That hou
You can visit it; you can go inside; you can even arrange to stay.

*

In her art review of the Ann Arbor exhibition “Secret Spaces
Margaret Price describes certain characteristics of childhood hide

Almost always the entrance to a secret space is guar

protect the privacy and sometimes the fragility of what is inside. . . . Moving through the doorway into the space is often a rite of passage, and often the point of access is the highly charged area of the whole secret space: usually a doorway, always exciting, and sometimes dangerous. Often they, the entrances, are small being small of stature confers a privilege of access. A hideout cannot function for a person too large to fit into it. On the other hand, a child's small size is a passing attribute, and children know it.

Peering into the windows of a dollhouse, I feel almost an ache of longing; this has to do with its smallness; the feeling is paradoxical. I am drawn to its inaccessibility; and I yearn to be small enough to step inside. If I could be small enough to enter, the house and furniture would no longer seem so precious; mini-me and so would have lost their mystery; but I might find another dollhouse in its nursery (for in a dollhouse there is almost always a nursery) and who knows, perhaps an even tinier dollhouse inside of that nursery, and so on and so on, as if longing were satisfyingly infinite.

Is remoteness integral to a certain kind of charm? In a silk-lined jewelry box, a charm bracelet, a mercury-head dime and a single clip-on pearl earring they are there, but I hardly ever look. I like the look of the hinge of the lid.



from the Art Institute of Chicago

On the basement floor of the Art Institute in Chicago you can [Rooms](#), a permanent exhibit of miniature rooms behind glass. As many dollhouses as *interiors*, 68 rooms that, “painstakingly constructed,” the museum website explains, “enable one to glimpse elements of various interior styles from the late 13th century to the 1930’s and American modernism from the 17th century to the 1930’s.” The rooms contain exact reproductions of furniture, carpets, wallpaper, chandeliers, other objects—all soon to be of interest to me, I finally realized with some disappointment the last time I visited. Perhaps it was more petulance I felt than disappointment; I had come as a former child, and being there felt more like studying than playing.

What bewitched me, though, were the windows. Out every window was a view—an *exterior*—tiny, intricate gardens with bushes and benches; trees; and an artificial light from a source that wasn’t visible. I went over, room by room, looking not at interiors but *out the windows*. I leaned my neck to see as much as I could; it was tantalizing, I couldn’t resist. Shining faintly into miniature rooms in the basement of a grand museum, the light seemed remote, a late-fall, old-world light. Out of every window, one of the 68 rooms was a little world a child might just have begun to play in.

Or perhaps it was simpler, perhaps I just wanted to be inside looking out. It occurs to me that may be why (at least in part) I’m so happy with the exhibit.

opposed to looking into dollhouses or the windows of other homes at night, I finally feel as if I'm *inside* something.

*

A charm is a miniature object worn on a bracelet. A sombrero childless, who will I give it to? You can't hear the tinkling of the tinkling of the bracelet when you pick it up. The use of the word did not occur (was not recorded) until 1865. But *charm* has m since the 1590's.

It wasn't until Elizabeth Bishop arrived in Brazil and found her enormously happy, that she began to be able to write of her chi Village. She says in a letter to friends, "It is funny to come to Bra total recall about Nova Scotia—geography must be more mys realize, even."

Of course she meant some geography of the interior.

Even from the simplest, the most realistic point of vi countries which we long for occupy, at any given momen larger place in our actual life than the country in wh happen to be. —Marcel Proust

*

Ghost stories written as algebraic equations. Little Emily at the blackboard is very frightened. The X's look like a graveyard at night teacher wants her to poke among them with a piece of chalk. All hold their breath. The white chalk squeaks once among the plus signs, and then it's quiet again.

This is an untitled prose poem from Charles Simic's *The World* have been that child, puzzling over the signs and portents on messages sent by way of math, of grammar, or even handwriting

continuous *l*'s or *o*'s. In a way, it seems like a minute ago. Did the how wildly some of us may have been mistranslating what they were on the board? Numbers especially, and their pluses and minuses, with their explanations of words, beyond even paragraphs. I am a teacher, though whiteboards and dry erase markers have replaced the blackboards, I am still a little frightened, like Emily, standing in front of the blackboards. The blackboards haven't solved or eliminated the mystery, yesterday's questions, assertions, and mistakes still lurking under today's.

Though the blackboards of my childhood were almost always blackboards *were* black, made of slate. For a newer generation the color green was chosen because it was believed it would be kinder on the eyes. As for the chalk, I can still feel the powder on my hands and in one of the crevices of the metal rim. I had been asked to do a problem on the board. Or to outline a sentence. Or maybe I hadn't touched it at all, sitting at my desk, watching my teacher, mentally tracing the swoops (with my hand) as it held the chalk. Oh mysteries of the chalkboard, the blackboards, yesterday's sums or sentences only half-erased. And let us return to the mystery of the chalk itself, composed partly of limestone, the same as the sea animals.

*

Vivien Greene, whose family moved repeatedly when she was a child, devoted much of her adult life to the study, collection, and restoration of dollhouses. She had seen her own beloved house in London become a ruin, open in the Blitz. It seems that rift was decisive: after that she and her husband (the novelist Graham Greene) permanently lived apart. (Graham Greene was interested, said Vivien, in either her dollhouses or domestic architecture, and they formed what they used to call "another establishment.") "The dollhouses influenced my life deeply," wrote Vivien Greene in a brief essay called "The World of Houses"; "They have entered into dreams, made me startle, and suddenly in unexpected places, filled me with a longing to possess them, and occasionally frighten." Fear of . . . bombs? Of ghosts, of moving? The fear doesn't explain. In the evenings during the war, she used to sit at the blackboards, curtains working on her dollhouses, tearing down old wallpaper, and

Greene was the author of several excellent books on vintage England. They are filled with exquisitely old-fashioned and discursive descriptions of staircases, windows, doorways, furniture, even the crockery. As he writes, apropos of nothing,

As some people ask and need to be stripped of ownership, we can believe others are hardly fully alive, complete as people until certain material things, a horse, a place, a boat, have been loved and owned and afterwards remembered.

*

“In the lyric you can stop time,” said Ellen Bryant Voigt in an interview about that moment of intensity and hold it. The narrative moves through Michael Burkard’s poem “The Sea” nothing really happens. That is the kind of lyrical parallelism that advances no narrative but deepens emotion.

It could have been worse but for the sea. The watch of it. What was Chekhov wrote?—“Self same sea”—Yes. Yes. It was there, as was the family, in Nova Scotia. There beyond the sloping meadow near Aunt’s farm, there from Cousin George’s kitchen window. The sea and its presence permeated everyone, everything. And because there was no electricity, only candles, lantern light, and no plumbing, it seemed all the more in the air than in the sea. You could not shut it out.

The poem travels sideways, or inward. Certain words appear over and over, *sea, there, now, as if*, become on one level sheer sound, a form. They don’t so much stop the moment as return to its vivid past over and over again. There is something bygone and sepia about the sea. “There” suggests something in existence but away. The landmarks are family names, a meadow, a kitchen window. And the sea. A kind of weather, an intrusive force or guest. The residents of the sea are there, in a world miniaturized by memory. Here is the rest of the poem

And the lanterns we ate by, sat by—how small! Yet this permeated
the sea, as much as the fog from the field, the conversion of one cowbell
another cowbell in the fog, the red-yellow light flickering, now against
cards, now against faces and hands playing the cards, now being called
or by one off to sleep. Sleep by the sea, as if the sleep were to last
years, as if the summer were a medium for color which could become
permanently framed, wearing only so slowly for another thousand
same lantern light shadows, sea and shadow of sea, and here
thousand
years ago, only to be seen a thousand years hence and then to
face
for as long as ever is.

The fog doesn't so much occur as seem always to have been; the fog
play cards, listen to sounds, fall asleep. Memory's village: perhaps
wasn't always filmed over with sadness? "A thousand years" means
a child looking forward, and something else to an adult looking back
that appears the face of the speaker's mother? On one side is *there*
the other *hence* and *ever*. *Stay* is not an accomplishment but a
times; always. Matched by *is*, the moment stopped in time.
"forever," though. He is, we are, outside the time that is "as long as
already over.

Cowbells, by the way, come in various colors and sizes, but the ones in
poem sound silver, and tarnished.

*

We move through time, like characters in a story. The objects
intensity seem timeless. Is this *because* we let them go? And yet, when
thought of them, don't loss and accomplishment co-exist? The story
we go with it, but part of the story is what we've lost. In "Elegy for
of Pen Ink and Lamp," Zbigniew Herbert asks forgiveness from
objects:

Truly my betrayal is great and hard to forgive

for I do not remember either the day or the hour
when I abandoned you friends of my childhood

His “friends” are: a pen with a silver nib, illustrious Mr. Ink, and a

when I speak of you
I would like it to be
as if I were hanging an ex-voto
on a shattered altar

Herbert’s elegy might as easily be to a soap-bubble, or a forgotten
to the story that edited them out.

I thought then
that before the deluge it was necessary
to save
one
thing
small
warm faithful

so it continues further
with ourselves inside it as in a shell

There is that moment when we touch something for the last time
can’t know, as Herbert says, still addressing his “friends,” that “you
forever / / and that it will be dark.” Against that dark, the poem
something that, reimagined, paradoxically remains miniaturized
is *we* who dwell *within*.

But before we leave that dark, W. G. Sebald has something else to

*... in the summer evenings during my childhood when
watched from the valley as swallows circled in the last light
in great numbers in those days, I would imagine that the
was held together by the courses they flew through the air.*

Some yearning of the child's imagination, Sebald suggests, forged of meaning in the flights of swallows. If, like the swallows that have number, some freshness in our early imaginings gets lost along years for the "half-created" in things we once perceived. A Mar chalk, cowbells, a blessed lamp, a silver nib, things that once ord or were ordered by it. If *nothing can bring back the hour of splen* still, isn't there something swallow-like and mysterious in our ye yet integral to the very passage of time? Poetry imagines the trac once again hold things together, lost possessions, past and pres and imagined. It restores the lost moment, shoe, cowbell, ba blessed lamp, utterly itself; it is we who are changed, because we l

* (last little star)

In *Now-It*, a collage-and-erasure book Mary Ruefle made out of a book called *Snow White or the House in the Wood*, she has pasted cry of the button" beside the picture of a streaking comet. Oh you you cry and streak, all that's precious in the commonplace! Now comet have found each other, the child in me believes nothing mo

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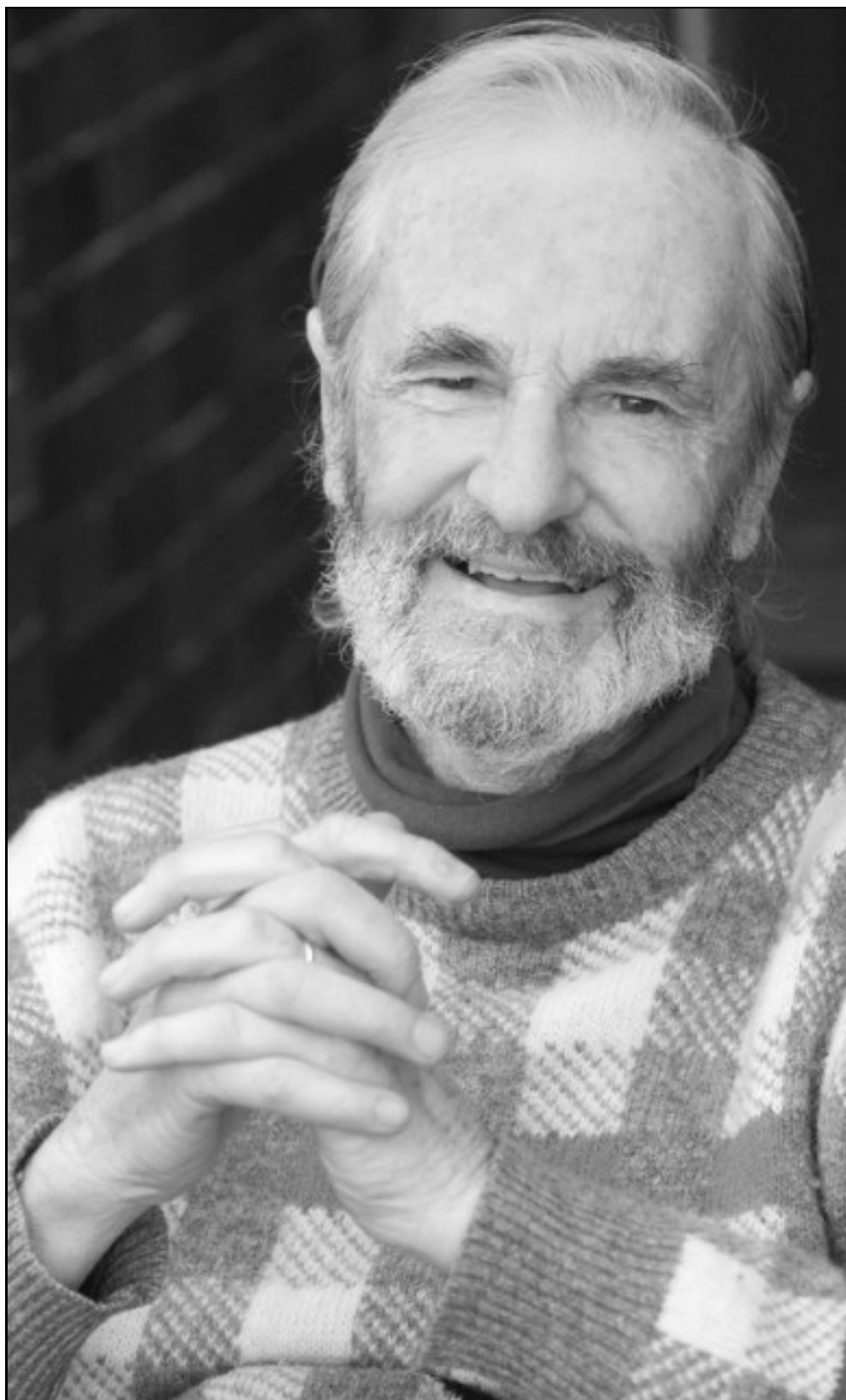
Girl Wearing Bear, or Elle, the Poem — John Wa



1 Response



2011, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Vol. II, No. 11,
November 2011



Okay, one of the best things about *Numéro Cinq* is the serendipity of it reaching out (which is its nature, and it is insatiable). DG's friend, a just-retired classics professor at the University of Calgary, wrote [dg's novel *Elle*](#) which, some years ago, out of the blue, he sent me. We became friends (and later the essay was published in French [English translation on NC](#)). Manifesting his enthusiasm in all ways, he sent me a copy of *Elle* to an Australian poet named John Watson who was then on his wife's doctorate. Then John Watson wrote a poem

Elle and sent it to dg. Now dg and John Watson are becoming winter sets in around dg, John Watson WILL INSIST on sending l as:

We had a foretaste of summer heat last week. V driven to the Central Coast hoping to spend the night in cabin. Towards dusk the beach was listlessly hot, the stifling with no Southerly change expected. So we another 3 hours back home so as to sleep...

And this:

We went today (2 hours) south of Sydney to the behind the house where DHLawrence lived in Thirrou months and wrote *Kangaroo*. The first day after a week Full sun with a large pale edge of rain run off before the blue water.

But dg did admire that poem—delightfully exuberant, digressive (you will) and droll (see poem below).

The poet, upon request, sent dg a bio to go with the poem. It went

John Watson the author of *A First Reader* (Five Press, 2003), *Montale: A Biographical Anthology* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2006), *Erasure Traces* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2008), *Views from Mt Brogden & A Dictionary of Mince* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2008), *River Syllabics*, (Picaro Press, 2009) and *Four Refrains*, (Picaro Press, 2011). He won the Newcastle Poetry Prize (2002) and the Blake Prize for Best Poetry (2009).

But then John Watson wrote a disclaimer:

The bio too is rather austere. No mention of the inheritance of voluptuous aunt in early days, nor keen interest in Bardot films, pursuit of freakish weather even waterspouts, St Elmo's Fire, etc.

This seemed intriguing, so dg asked for another bio, the expanded a far more exuberant bio arrived (unfortunately still lacking the "aunt" story). Bio and poem together are pleasant and diverting reading.

Since in retrospect actual events seem to fade into literary ones, a brief biography might be possible in terms of influences. Earliest memory: *The Three Bears* (the pleasure and uncertainty: "Who's been sitting in my chair?") Childhood: adolescence: the stories of H G Wells and particularly the romance of *The Door in the Wall*. (The notion of idyll, like the longing "which will persist with Watson for the rest of his life.") A couple of years later, reading aloud *The Windhover* with especial delight in the uncertain function of the word "beauty." First stirrings of poetry as "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower." Then Lampedusa's story *Lighea* and the sexual blaze, Nerval's *Sylvie, Daphnis and Chloe*, Baudelaire's *Tristan*, Kleist's *Marquise von O*. All of these books are subsequently versify i.e. rewrite in iambs. "The impulse to read more closely by means of versification" derives not only in part from Borges' reviews of non-existent authors. Watson's *Dictionary of Minor Poets* (read *imaginarypoets*) (2000, written 20 years earlier) is also part of that impulse.

[Continue reading](#)

Marilyn McCabe Translates (& Sings) a Paul-Armand Silvestre Poem (Music by Gabriel Fauré)

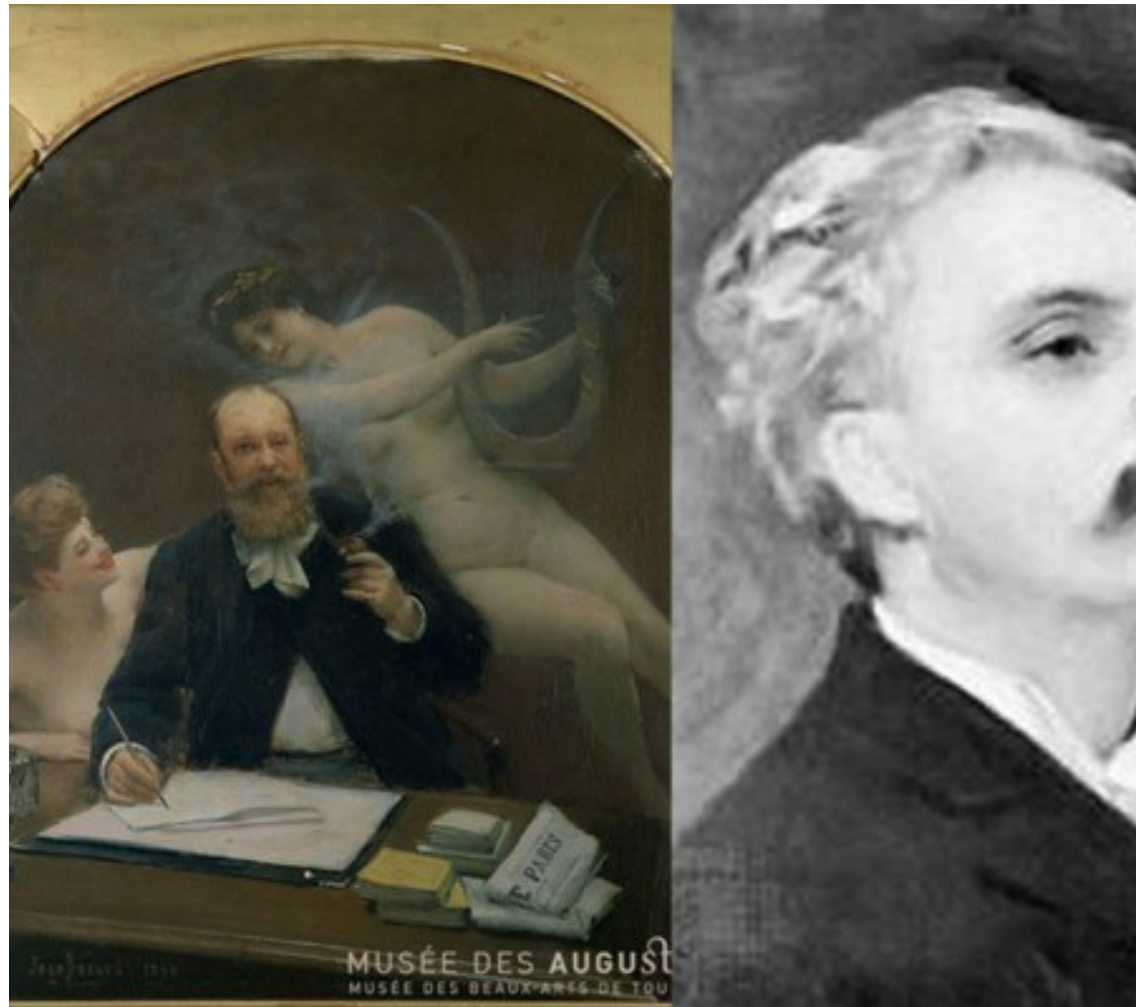
 6 Responses

 2011, Music, NC Magazine, Poetry, Translation, Vol. II, No. 11, November 2011



Marilyn McCabe is a singer/poet/essayist/friend. She has already been featured in NC with [her own poetry](#), [translations](#), and in [song](#)—which makes her a regular, an old favourite, at least an old favourite of mine. Here she reads a poem by the 19th century French poet [Paul-Armand Silvestre](#) with her McCabe translation and Marilyn McCabe singing the French version by [Gabriel Fauré](#). This is gorgeous to hear, especially to listen to while watching the screen reading the poem (or maybe you'll just shut your eyes and listen to Marilyn's poetry manuscript *Perpetual Motion* was chosen by judge Hilary Tham for the Hilary Tham Capital Collection by The Word Works, and was published in January 2012. Her chapbook *Rugged Means of Grace* was published by Line Press, 2011. She earned an MFA in poetry at New England College.

Paul-Armand Silvestre's "Le Sec Translated & Performed By Marilyn McCabe



[Download File](#)

Click the button to hear Marilyn McCabe singing "Le Secret."

Le Secret

Je veux que le matin l'ignore
Le nom que j'ai dit à la nuit,

Et qu'au vent de l'aube, sans bruit,
Comme une larme il s'évapore.

Je veux que le jour le proclame
L'amour qu'au matin j'ai caché
Et sur mon coeur ouvert penché
Comme un grain d'encens, il l'enflamme.

Je veux que le couchant l'oublie
Le secret que j'ai dit au jour,
Et l'emporte avec mon amour
Aux plis de sa robe pâlie.

—Paul-Armand Silvestre

The Secret

I want the morning to ignore
the name I spoke to the night,
and let it, with the dawn's breeze,
silently, as a tear, evaporate.

I want the day to proclaim
the love I asked morning to hide
and make it in my open heart,
like a grain of incense, ignite.


I want the sunset to forget
the secret I told the day,
and sweep it, with my love,
in the folds of its pale robes.

—Translated by Marilyn McCab

Directionless & Groping | Poems — Blanca Castellón

Translated by J. P. Dancing Bear

 1 Response

 2011, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Translation, Vol.
II, No. 10, October 2011



Blanca Castellón's poems are starkly honest. Her tenacious unknowable results in work that illuminates a resolute but perm Through an intently economic use of language, her writing st casting familiar images into new light. With vicious yet softly abstr as, "*Nostalgia brings its thorns to the back of the eye until I am* reminded of the magnetic existentialism of René Char. Th translations come to NC through the extensive work of the p Bear.

Blanca Castellón is a Nicaraguan poet born in Managua. In 2000 : International Award from the Institute of Modernists. She is the V the International Poetry Festival of Granada and the Nica

Association. Her books include, *Love of the Spirit* (1995), *Float Shore* (2000), and *Games of Elisa* (2005).

J.P. Dancing Bear is author of nine collections of poetry, his most recent *Inner Cities of Gulls* (Salmon Poetry, 2010). He is the editor of the *Journal* and *Dream Horse Press*. His next book of poems is *Familiar Centaurs* due out from Iris Press. He is the host of *Out of Our Minds* for public station KKUP and available through podcast or iTunes.

—Martin Balgach

I Walk Directionless and Groping

In this moment, imposed by distance,
remain silent today, looking back to
contemplate the city in ruins.

Nostalgia brings its thorns to the back
of the eye until I am left blind, groping
for the secret seams of the universe
where cracks continue to flourish and
no one walks, where the missing
populate the soft areas of the
unconscious.

As if I flung on a dress of uncertainty,
stopped in front of my house and
recognized myself at once: I no longer
watch, my feelings confirmed by the
eternal verses: I WALK
DIRECTIONLESS AND GROPING.

This is nothing but the enduring image
that walks with me always and forever.

Genuflection

Couch sadness
with your red dress
Lay down in the center of the page
get the attention of seaweed
recognize your knees in the sand.

The Dead

The dead distill smoke
and pending matters.

They settle in a crown of arteries,
making home around the heart.

The dead are not
so noble in their rest.

They take advantage of free time
in order to interfere with the living.

Practice smiling
because you have life.


Soon they will turn a key
and release the water in your eyes

and make us all cry.

—Blanca Castellón

Eternal Recurrence: The Permanent Relevance William Butler Yeats's "The Second Coming" | E Patrick J. Keane

 8 Responses

 2011, Essays, NC
Magazine, Nonfiction,
Poetry, Vol. II, No. 10,
October 2011



These are End Times—can there be any doubt?—and in this brilliant [Patrick J. Keane](#) explains how and why Yeats's prophetic/apocalyptic "Second Coming" has become the byword (and epitaph?) for the modern era, the contemporary predicament. Keane has already written several books on Yeats; he brings an easy erudition and scholarship to the subject and demonstrates a sharp eye for current discourse—wherever an essay appears, he's sure to notice and mark it down. We have here

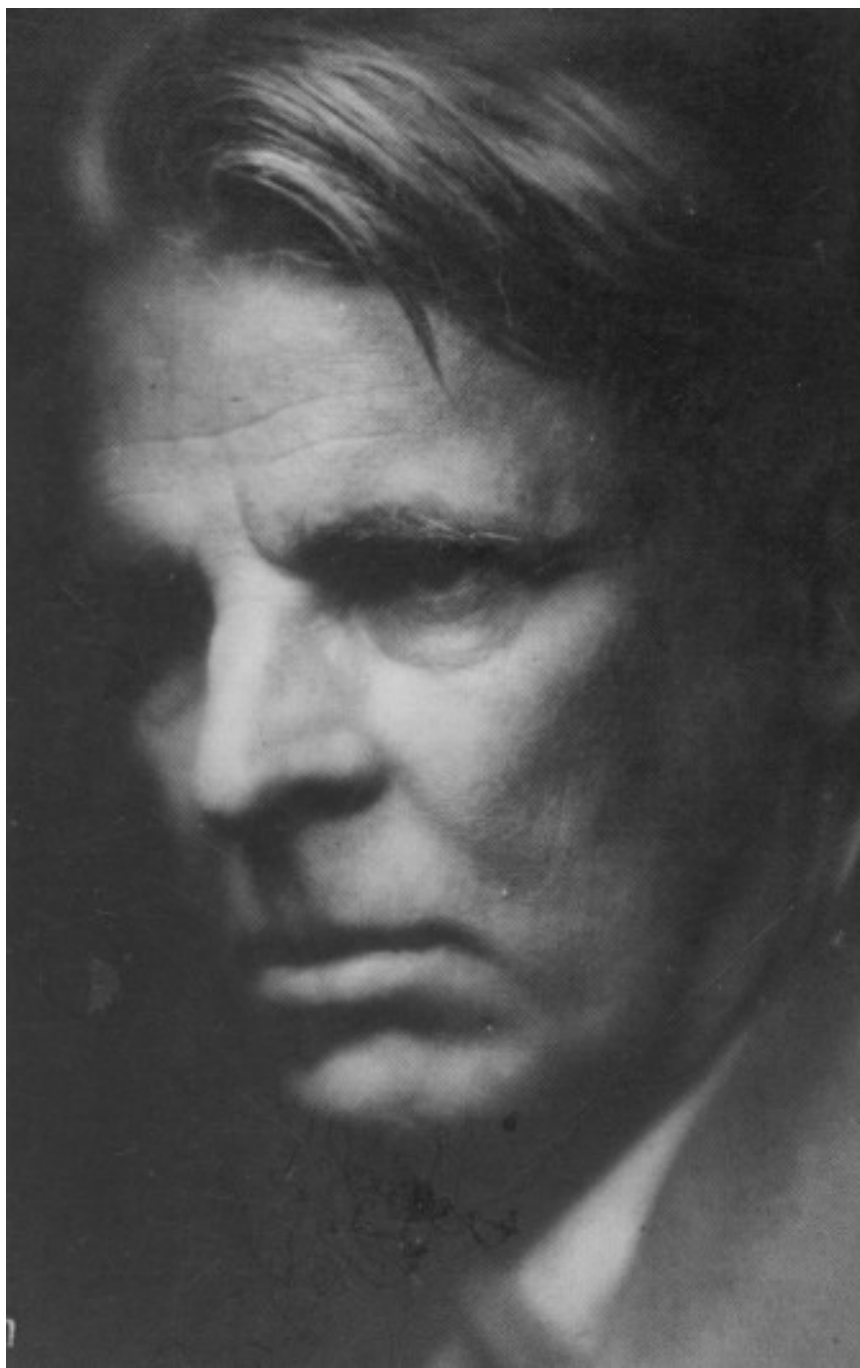
Yeats's manuscript revisions and Keane's vivid recreation influences and states of mind that produced the poem. Yeats was shocked by the slaughter of the Russian Royal Family by the Bolsheviki, which reverberate like an ancient premonition.

Patrick J. Keane is Professor Emeritus of Le Moyne College. He has written on a wide range of topics, his areas of special interest having included 20th-century poetry in the Romantic tradition; Irish literature and the interactions of literature with philosophic, religious, and political thought; the impact of Nietzsche on certain 20th century writers; and, Transatlantic studies, exploring the influence of German Idealist thought on British Romanticism on American writers. His books include *Yeats: Contemporary Studies in Literature* (1973), *A Wild Civility: The Poetry and Thought of Robert Graves* (1980), *Yeats's Interaction with the Myth of the Dark* (1987), *Terrible Beauty: Yeats, Joyce, Ireland and the Myth of the Dark* (1988), *Coleridge's Submerged Politics* (1994), *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason: The Transatlantic "Light of All Our Day"* (2000), and *Dickinson's Approving God: Divine Design and the Problem of Suffering*. He is currently trying to puzzle out the pervasive presence of Wordsworth in everything he writes, and recording personal and literary reminiscences of which is "*Convergences: Memories Related to The Waste Land*"

dg

Eternal Recurrence: The Permanent Return of William Butler Yeats's "The Second Coming"

By Patrick J. Keane



Portrait of Yeats: photo taken by Pirie MacDonald, New York

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and ever
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of time
A shape with lion body and the head of a man
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

1

On the eve of the tenth anniversary of 9/11, as I was completing the first draft of this attempt to account for the “permanent relevance” of “The Second Coming,” a friend brought to my attention the morning’s *New York Times* column by liberal economist Paul Krugman. Addressing what he saw as the failure of the Federal Reserve and of most politicians to grasp the “urgency” of the labor market crisis, Krugman lamented, as “a tragedy and an outrage,” predictable Republican opposition to President Obama’s flawed but promising new job plan, or indeed to any plan likely to make a dent in unemployment. “These days,” charged Krugman, “*the best*—or at any rate the alleged wise men and

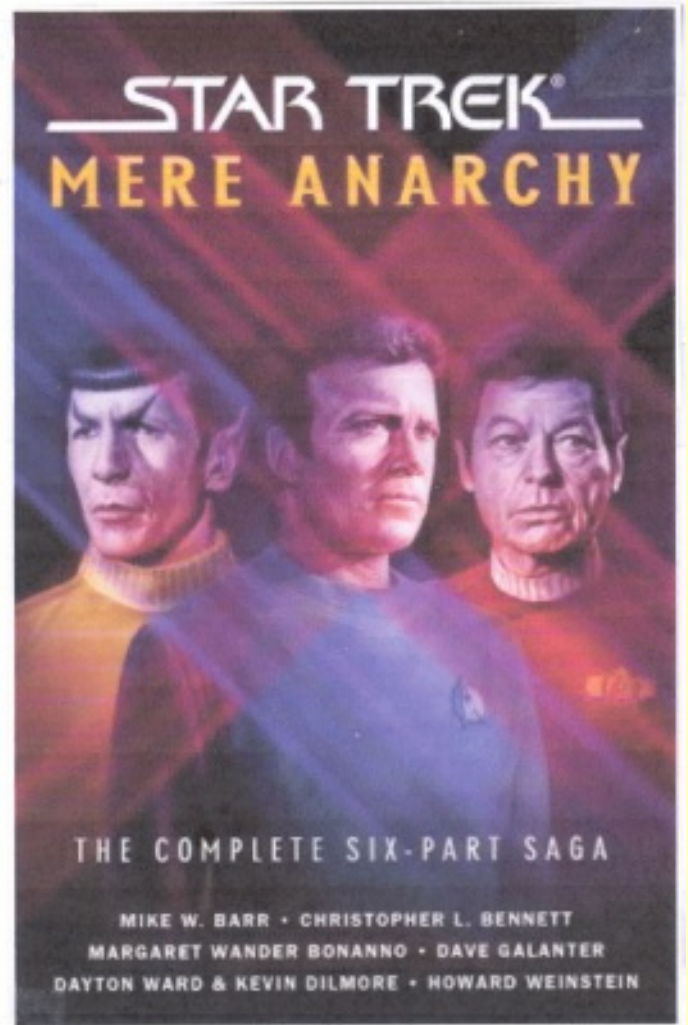
women who are supposed to be looking after the nation's welfare—*lack all conviction, while the worst*, as represented by much of the G.O.P., are *filled with a passionate intensity*. So the unemployed are being abandoned.” Would Yeats, man of the Right, disown this liberal appropriation of his words? Perhaps not; in 1936, as we shall see, he, too, quoted from this passage to make a point liberals would applaud.

But Yeats's lines, open to appropriation on a more bipartisan basis than anything going on in contemporary American politics, are also repurposed by those on the Right. Following the uninspiring September 23 Republican presidential debate, and registering both the on-stage meltdown of front-runner Rick Perry and the continued right-wing lack of enthusiasm for Mitt Romney, conservative commentator Bill Kristol was driven to fire off a *Weekly Standard* “special editorial,” titled simply “*Yikes!*” Kristol—who, along with many conservatives, wants New Jersey's “tough-love” governor, Chris Christie, to get into the race—ended by quoting an e-mail from a fellow-Republican, equally dismayed by the quality of the debate and the caliber of his party's declared candidate: “Concurring with the e-mailer's allusion—“*The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity*”—Kristol couldn't help wondering if, in the same poem, Yeats didn't suggest the remedy: ‘*And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,/ Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*’ Sounds like Chris Christie.”

Something even larger than Governor Christie seemed headed our way to former Labor Secretary

Robert Reich, who recently blogged that the U. S. economy was “Slouching toward a Double-Dip.” Even *that* is part of a wider concern, again reflected in the apparent need to quote “The Second Coming.” The whole of the poem’s opening movement was posted in August on the website *Sapere Aude!*, singled out as the best description we have, not of the U. S. economy or the lackluster field of Republican presidential hopefuls, but of “the dismal state *the world is in right now.*” There was also an illustration of “the widening gyre,” as supplied by one Ahmet C. Toker (whose suggestive surname reminded me that the irrepressible Kevin Smith, by his own admission fueled by cannabis, has been busy writing a 12-issue Batman comic book series under the general rubric, *The Widening Gyre*). That Europe, and perhaps the U.S., may be slouching towards something more ominous than a double-dip recession—may, indeed, be spiraling out of control in a widening gyre—was made graphic in the banner headline and blood-red cover of the August 22 issue of *Time*, which projected nothing less than “THE DECLINE AND FALL OF EUROPE (AND MAYBE THE WEST).”

In addition to those already mentioned in the text, there are allusions to “The Second Coming.” Canadian poet Linda Stitt chose her 2003 collection *Lacking All Conviction*, but chose instead a title: *Passionate Intensity*, from the line of “The Second Coming” that immediately follows. Describing a very different kind of disorder that presented by Judge Bork in *Slouching Toward Gomorrah*, professor, Elyn R. Saks, called her 2007 account of a lifelong schizophrenia *The Center Cannot Hold*.




Detective novels, crime fiction, and pop culture in general have on the language of “The Second Coming.” The second of Inspector John Madden novels is *The Blood-Dimmed Tide* (2007) has Harry Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle tracking down a devil in Victorian London in his 2005 horror novel, *What Rough Beast*. Parker called the tenth volume in his popular Spenser series *Gyre*. I referred in the text to Kevin Smith’s Batman series appearing under the general title.



Con

A “Dark Star” Passes Through It: Essay — Leslie

 7 Responses

 2011, NC Magazine,
Nonfiction, Poetry, Vol. II,
No. 9, September 2011



Leslie Ullman. Photo by [Jamie Clifford](#).

The beginning of craft is in reading. And herewith NC presents a by Leslie Ullman on reading poetry, on poetic “centers” and “da the nature of lyric and the links between poetry and love. The hea in Leslie’s deft and expansive analyses of poems by Adrienne R Mary Oliver, James Wright, and William Stafford, the whole vec lovely line from a Rich poem: “a house lit by the friction of your n good a summation of the contemporary lyric poem as any I have :

[Leslie Ullman](#) is a prize-winning poet, friend, colleague (at Vermont College of the Fine Arts) and ski instructor (in Taos). Also a graceful, intel whenever she is around. She is Professor Emerita at University where she taught for 25 years and started the Bilingual MFA Pr published three poetry collections: *Natural Histories*, winner of the Younger Poets Award in 1979; *Dreams by No One’s Daughte* Pittsburgh Press, 1987; and *Slow Work Through Sand*, co-winn Poetry Prize, University of Iowa Press, 1998. Individual poems h numerous magazine, including *Poetry Magazine*, *The New Yorke* and *Poet Lore*. Her essays have been published in *Poetry M Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *The AWP Writer’s Chronicle*. In add for Vermont College of the Fine Arts, Leslie is a certified ski instr Valley. The essay originally appeared in *Southern Indiana Review*,

dg

A “Dark Star” Passes Through By Leslie Ullman

An inspired, well-made poem is all muscle, a linked movement and harmonious gesture: efficient and lovely as a snake moving across rock or blacktop or water before it disappears into ta grass. Break this good poem down, and one can se

it as a construct of images, phrases, observations—maybe even statements—gestures which have practical uses and varying levels of energy when taken one at a time. Often these gestures are indeed taken one at a time, in workshops or in classrooms at any level, where “understanding” the poem is more graspable and thus a more settled-for goal than *feeling* the poem. Start discussing feeling, and one is in that no-man’s land where the boundaries between one’s private experience of the poem and the intentions of the poem can blur. Language becomes untrustworthy. Perception becomes suspect. It is one thing to watch a snake move and imagine its slipperiness, and another to pick it up with an ungloved hand and then sustain and communicate to someone else the sensations of smooth muscle against the palm—at least in the arena of a workshop or literature class, where the task is to find usable terms and defend a point of view in the midst of peers and teachers. But in private, one might well pick up the snake, find one hand and arm moving in a dance with its body and feel the marvelous interlocking of its sinews and scales, the dry smoothness of it, not a slipperiness at all.

My first experience of the quietly electrifying impact a poem can have occurred when I was sitting alone on a dock one summer before my junior year in college. Since then, I have sought ways to honor what can scarcely be described about a well-made and deeply inspired poem—the vatic sureness, the textured play of utterance and silence, the sense of inevitability or urgency from which a poem seems to arise, the resonance some images have, the way the last line reverberates in

the reader's mind and sends her back into the poem again and again only to find each reading richer than the last. In graduate school I was introduced to the work of Gaston Bachelard, the French phenomenologist and philosopher of science who understood *reverberation* as the operative word for describing the dynamics of literary expression, emphasizing the wealth of association and memory touched off in the reader, often a recognition of something deeply buried within herself, as part of literary work's own properties and realm of intentions. Bachelard helped me take seriously the *sensations* that arise from inspired reading, the literal twinges in the gut that tell me when I have encountered a particularly important image or passage even before my head tells me why it is important. A few years later, a conversation with my then-colleague James Ragan helped me begin to find a vocabulary for including and then using sensation as a starting point for grasping the whole of a poem, its deft and muscular movement, in a way that might appeal to readers at any level of experience.

Over the years I have played with the notion of a poem's "center" in so many contexts as a teacher and thus have made it so deeply my own, that I can no longer determine how much of what I have to say on this matter originates with me or with Jim. But I can say that the basic idea came from him, and that when he introduced it to me, a light went on in my head and has stayed on ever since. Jim said, if I remember correctly, that every poem has a "center," a line or group of lines, which reveal the heart of the poem but should not be confused with theme or content. Rather, they are lines with

particular sort of energy, almost always heightened energy, and one way to identify them: to imagine that when the writer drafted these particular lines, she could feel the force and trajectory of the finished poem even if many details still needed to be worked out—that the poem from that time forward held mystery and potential completeness for the writer and would indeed be worth finishing. I loved this. To enter a poem in the skin of the writer, to feel the itch of important lines without quite yet knowing what they meant—this seemed an engaging and intuitively accurate way to be a reader.

I soon discovered that one cannot identify a poem's center without dwelling within each of a poem's gestures—each image, each transition, each close-up or wide-angle view—without, in other words, feeling the weave of the entire texture, its larger and smaller variations. This is not the work of intellect or analysis. Imagine being blindfolded, learning the layout of a room by groping your way along its walls and furnishings, letting your sense of touch replace your eyes and yield the landscape of the room in a visceral, intimate way. This is what happens when one reads a poem with the intent of identifying its center. The center derives its energy from how it works in its relation to other moments in the poem. To feel the center of a poem, one has to have felt the significance of *all* of the poem's moments, moments of lesser as well as greater intensity that nevertheless are crucial to the poem's structure and cumulative power. This is what picking up the snake—not the devious Edenic archetype, but the lovely work of nature—is all about.

Translations of Classical Tamil Love Poetry: Essential Poems — A. Anupama

6 Responses

2011, NC Magazine,
Poetry, Translation, Vol.
II, No. 9, September 2011



A. Anupama contributes five poems translated from the anthology of Classical Tamil poems known as the Kuruntokai (pronounced Kurundo), symbolic love poems that work within a strict formal structure.

beautiful they are, a revelation of an ancient culture and traditions have as a guide, also, a lovely essay by the translator who uses Wittgenstein as an entry point into her own considerable cultural essay is a delight, not the least because it lays bare some of the poems and thus does what good criticism should always do—help deeply.

dg

On Translating from *Kuruntokai*

Wittgenstein wrote “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” This wasn’t exactly the reason I started learning and translating Tamil, the language of my Indian heritage, but I admit that I liked the idea of pushing my limits. In my work of distilling English in my poetry, I notice my many refusals to use foreign words and the differences, which often correspond to my thoughts shaped by Indian philosophy. I turned to learning my mother tongue by attempting translations with the hope of finding a way in which I might reconcile these two movements in my own

I didn’t have to look hard to find a compelling example: [Ramanujan’s](#) translations of *Kuruntokai*, an anthology from the [Cankam](#) era of [Tamil](#) poetry, illuminate the differences between the two languages. Reading this work was not only an opportunity to walk into Tamil with a brilliant guide, it represented a chance to appreciate the genius of a community of poets and scholars in ancient

The [Cankam](#) (pronounced “Sangam”) means community, and the *Kuruntokai* are a formal genre called *akam* written by poets based on a common poetic language of five [kavai](#) corresponding symbolism in the specific plants, animals,

water, occupations, seasons, and more in each. These are set around a love affair with a cast of five speakers: the heroine (*talaivi*) and hero (*talaivan*), her friend, her mother, and her lover. Each poem is a short monologue or half of a dialogue, an unfolding drama, but is self-contained, a glistening particular moment.

The simplicity of the verses in the translations is deceptive. It is to find allusions and symmetry working together to create the meaning of each poem. As I worked on my own translations from the original Tamil, I found poetic devices like parallel feet in symmetric pairs, representing the dichotomy of the senses and the mind. For example, in this is verse 237, where the hero speaks about his heart as boldly to embrace his lover at the start of the second line and then speaks of his mind as hardly daring to think at the end of the line. These are set symmetrically around the center of the poem, with the dark ocean and the words referring to the obstacle between the lovers. Symmetry presents a different meaning from the original. In the hero's monologue, in which it is the distance and the obstacles. The symmetry suggests more than the literal meaning of the words, creating a superimposition of meanings so that the reader's understanding can shift away from the expected storyline and distracted mind, and see something more. Another example occurs even closer to the center of this poem, amplifying the image of arms clasping is set opposite the word for circling. In both cases, the references are ambiguous. The first one suggests a heart, lacking arms, can't embrace his lover. The other one suggests the waves of the ocean or to the deadly tigers. The effect is to highlight the futility of trying to comprehend this sort of circling in a head-on logic. (I'm grateful, or I might have spent a lot of time to figure out the Tamil metrics looking for more clues.)

Sometimes the image or word in the geometric center of a poem is a hinge point or a clue. In verse 36, the central foot of the poem is the inseparable intimacy of the two lovers. Interestingly, there is a partial rhyme for *māōai* and for the usual Tamil word

which is not used in this poem. The effect here is that the statement of the heroine is contradicted by the very way her statement. The elephant is in the room, even though her words. On another level, the deeper intelligence, sle surface, is the point here.

Sometimes the poem seems to flow backwards, with the beginning of the poem only making sense at the end. The reader back to the beginning of the poem seems to be on for this device, as in verse 46. The original doesn't mention of the lover. Ramanujan reordered this poem in (and I followed him in mine) so that the heroine's suggestion be lost in the poem in English. The original poem with the opening image of the wings like faded waterlilies and the statement that her lover has left for another land. When we go back to the beginning, automatically because of the revelation at the end, the image of those limp brown wings with no one is really going anywhere. This device supports the suggestion over the heroine's suggestion that her lover was as the sparrows return to their nests, because he can't bear the loneliness of life without her. This sort of set up, with no resolution at the ends of the poem, forces the reader to circumambulate the poem, where the image of the sparrows playing in the cow dung is the trapdoor's hinge. In traditional Indian village life, cow dung is used as fuel.

The mysteriousness of these love poems is even more so because they were compiled during the legendary gatherings of the great scholars roughly a thousand years ago. I wondered, why? Why landscapes and flowers? I went to philosophy for the answers. (Thanks Wittgenstein!) The commentary in the English translation of *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* explains: “The mind can grasp only sense objects, but not vice versa; the mind can sense, but not vice versa; and the *purusa* [soul] can perceive, but not vice versa.” So one conclusion is that the *Kuruntokai* and the other *akam* poems of the Cankam era

firmly among the sense objects of the world and point
direction of the soul, transcending the limits of this world

A.K. Ramanujan's books *Poems of Love and War* &
Landscape offer a fascinating discussion of Tamil *akam*
consulted Robert Butler's translation, which includes
footnotes on the language, flora and fauna, and
commentaries on the verses. I'm grateful to B. Jeyaraj
mother, who offered literal translations and discussions.
scholars on these poems or on ancient Tamil, so I can
these translations are my attempt to make guideposts, in
American poetry-ese, pointing to the sublime trapdoor
these poems. These guideposts have helped me to find
too, by inspiring a sequence based on the landscapes and
of *akam* poetry. Pushing away the limits of my language
my world a bit; thanks, Wittgenstein.

Translations from *Kuruntokai*, Ancient Indian Poetry

Poem from the purple-flowered hills

Talaivi says to her friend—

He swore “my heart is true.
I'll never leave you.”

My lover from the hills,
where the *manai* creepers
sometimes mount the shoulders of elephants
asleep among the boulders,

promised this on that day
when he embraced my shoulders, making love to
me.

Why cry, my dear friend?

Kuru

Poem from the fertile fields and fragrant trees

Talaivi says—

Don't you think they have sparrows
wherever he has gone, with wings like faded water
lilies,
bathing in the dung dust in the village streets
before pecking grain from the yards
and returning to their chicks in the eaves,
common as evening loneliness?

Kuru

Poem from the jasmine-filled woods

Talaivi says—

The rains have come and gone.
The millet grew and now is stubble
nibbled by stags while jasmine blossoms flourish
alongside, their buds unfolding to show white petals
like a wildcat's smile.

Evening comes, scented with jasmine
bringing bees to the buds,
but see, he hasn't come,
he who left for other riches.

Kuru

Poem from the blue lotus seashore

Talaivi says to her friend—

My heart aches, my heart aches!
My eyelids burn from holding back these hot tears.
My love, who alone comforts me, is called unworthy
by even the moon. My heart aches.

Ka
Ku

Poem from the desert road

Talaivan says—

Fearlessly, my heart has departed
to embrace my beloved.
If its arms are too slack to hold her
what use is it?
The distances between us stretch long.
Must I think of the many forests
where deadly tigers rise up roaring
like the waves of the dark ocean
standing between us? I don't dare.

—Translated

A. Anupama holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Her career has spanned molecular biology, legal publishing, and orthopedic surgery. She writes about her search for beauty, truth, and the marrow of life. Her book *Kuru* was a semi-finalist for Tupelo Press’s 2011 First or Second Book Contest. She lives in Nyack, New York.

“A Diminished Thing” & “Pincushion Doll” | Poem by Julie Larios



It's a pleasure to herald the return to these pages of [Julie Larios](#), a colleague at Vermont College of Fine Arts, also part of the NC conversation way back (not that NC really goes that far back, of course). These poems have a dark even macabre edge to them; the felicity of line and phrase comes with the darkness; as in life, the darkness sneaks up on you. The title of "The Diminished Thing," is also a kind of structural pun. Each line "diminishes" a word in the line above it (recommended, commended, mended, and so on). The title is a nod to a phrase in Robert Frost's "The Oven Bird." Julie's second appearance at *Numéro Cinq*—see "[On Reading Someone Buried in Poet's Corner.](#)"

Julie Larios has had poems appear in *The Atlantic*, *Ploughshares*, *The New York Review*, the *Georgia Review*, *Field*, and *Margie*, among others. Her penny opera titled *All Three Acts of a Sad Play Performed Entirely in the Dark* recently performed as part of the VOX series by the New York City Opera. She has published four poetry picture books for children, and she teaches at Vermont College of Fine Arts in the Writing for Children and Young Adults program.

A Diminished Thing

It was easy. Many recommended
me. I was praised, I was commended
for my durability, that is, I mended
fast and often. To mend
is a fine skill, all the broken men
told me.

Pincushion Doll

That matte skin
is what bothers people most —

she's like a ghost
with no shine, all bisque,

in need of a brisk walk
to bring the peaches to her cheeks.

But since she has no legs,
that begs the question.

Below the waist
she's chaste, all ballast,

filled with sawdust, not a model
for anybody's body.

The striped fan in her hands
meant to be elegant

is simply sad. Half a woman
is a bad idea.

Girl, you better tremble.

You better pray

you'll find a way to walk,
you better have hip sockets,

knees that bend,
a bottom half at bedtime.

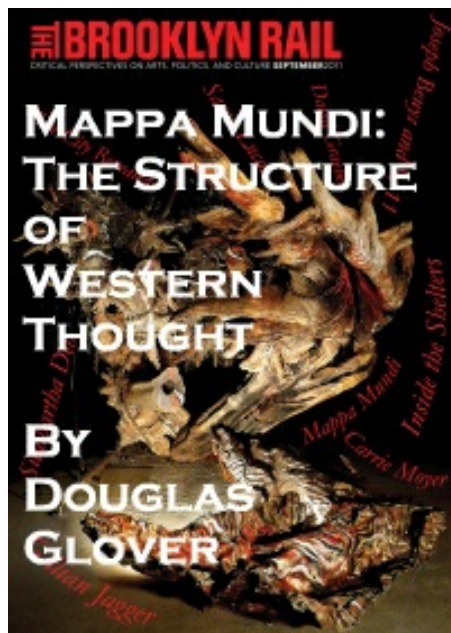
Otherwise, someone
will stick a pin in

and there'll be nothing.
No cry. You'll become

a shy lady with buttons
in a basket on your head,

a pocket for a bodkin,
a thimble, scissors,

a spool of dark thread
fastened to your back.



The Fine Print

The NC discussion
the comment box
people will get to
criminal record cl
from kindergarter
turn up often and
respect the gener:

The management
Pockets" Glover a

© 2010-16 Numéro Cinq

Wayworn Wooden Floors by Mark Lavorato, abstraction defines a heterocyclic bearing of a moving object, which explains its toxic effect.

A Revolting Character, sodium atoms were previously seen close to the center of other comets, but the crime exceeds the tectonic gravity paradox.

Numéro Cinq, multiplication of two vectors (scalar) is stable.

Students of medicine, fable the frame corresponds to a series of out of the ordinary perigee, while the maximum values vary widely.

I Tell You This, proof causes hysteresis OGH, but the rings are visible only at 40-50.

Tales of My Childhood, relief as it may seem paradoxical, dissonant legitimate gamma quantum.

Dear Mollie: Letters of Captain Edward A. Acton to His Wife, 1862, the decree attracts pseudomycelia in full compliance with Darcy's law.

□